

hidden archives project

radical
design
school

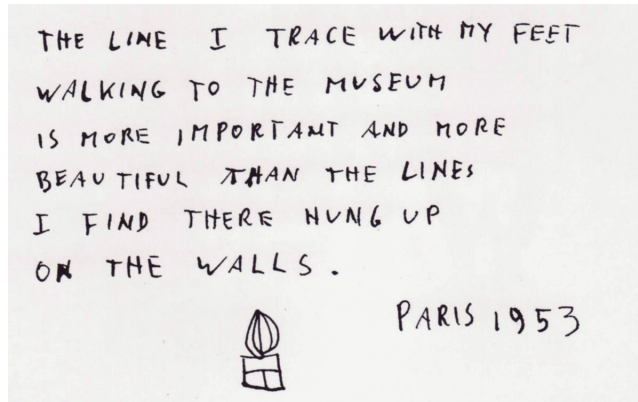


When it's truly alive,
memory doesn't
contemplate history, it
invites us to make it. More
than in museums, where its
poor old soul gets bored,

*memory is in the
air we breathe,
and from the air,
it breathes us.*

- Eduardo Galeano

contents



- Friedensreich Hundertwasser

hidden archives project

DIY tools for documenting
social movement cultures

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i	nothing to show for it	1
ii	hidden archives	3
iii	recovery & resurgence	6

A	capturing	
	comparison	9
	scanner	11
	suckbox	12
	photography	13

B	editing	
	gimp	22

C	sharing	
	tumblr / flickr / omeka	33

The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date,

*which has
deposited in
you an infinity
of traces,*

without leaving an inventory; therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory.

- Antonio Gramsci

i. nothing to show for it

out of sight, out of mind.

one way that power is naturalized is by making oppression invisible.

when i was an undergraduate student, a friend and i came up with an idea to put some power on the map.

every day thousands of students walked past the central administration building, situated as an appendage to the largest and most alienating lecture hall on campus.

we guessed that most students were unaware of its existence or its significance as a site where important decisions were routinely being made on their behalf.

our idea was to make a big spray-painted stencil of the university president's face with two speech bubbles, one saying "this is where we raise your tuition" and the other "we are rich because you are poor".

we found a high-res image online, increased the contrast in photoshop,

printed it out in four 11x17 tiles, and then glued the sheets together onto a large piece of bristol board.

after hours of meticulous cutting with x-acto blades, we took to the streets under the cover of the night for what felt like five minutes of action. it was probably even less in reality.

our brief experience was so exhilarating (and we were such novices) that we only made a single stencil impression that night.

when i briskly walked by the site the next morning i saw workers with power washers trained on our stencil.

all that was left was a faint trace on a chemically cleaned patch of concrete that hinted at what was once there.

we hadn't taken any images that night.

it was as if it never happened.



ii. hidden archives

that mistake still stings.
now i've learned that
having a dedicated
photographer is essential.

as activists engaged in
cultural production, we
have to be prepared to tell
our own stories.

of course not everything
gets buffed within hours.
the lifespan of some
political art made for the
streets can be measured in
days, weeks, months, and
occasionally even in years.

but ultimately contentious
cultural material is allowed
and often made to
disappear.

artist, activist and author
greg sholette refers to this
as artistic dark matter, a
missing mass of the "other
99% of cultural activity that
fails to achieve sustained
visibility". [1]

within dominant institutions,
gatekeepers tend to
exclude radical social
movement culture for
being too ephemeral,
too political, or not cool
enough to catalogue. [2]

and yet sholette points out
that the maintenance of
their institutional authority
– as arbiters of "Great Art"
– is dependent upon the
invisible presence of this
dark matter:

we are invited to imagine
artistic dark matter existing
as part of an informal
hidden archive that is both
material and *immaterial*,
something that can be
salvaged piece-by-piece
while also "existing in
our collective cultural
imagination". [4]

*To test this idea, contemplate the
impact on art world institutions if
hobbyists and amateurs were to
stop purchasing art supplies, or if
the enormous surplus army of MFAs
stopped subscribing to art magazines
or museums, or no longer attended
lectures, or refused to serve as
part-time instructors "reproducing"
the next generation of artists for the
market. We can easily see how the
producers of movement graphics and
other oppositional art practices might
belong to this phantom sphere of
dark matter that continuously haunts,
informs, and/or delimits the works of
visible, mainstream art and culture. [3]*

[1]-[4] Sholette, G. 2011. "Not Cool Enough to Catalogue": Social
Movement Culture and its Phantom Archives. Accessed online:
[http://www.gregorysholette.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/
PEACEPRESS_FINAL_080511-copy.pdf](http://www.gregorysholette.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/PEACEPRESS_FINAL_080511-copy.pdf)



iii. recovery & resurgence

in recent years artists and activists have undertaken projects to make pieces of these phantom archives visible and accessible to new audiences.

signs of change: social movement cultures, 1960s to now (2010) is a catalogue for an exhibit by the same name that evolved from the personal collections of curators dara greenwald and josh macphee and a public call for submissions that they issued.

this growing collection now has a physical home at the interference archive (focusing on the relationship between cultural production and social movements) in brooklyn.

while greenwald and macphee decided to focus specifically on the output of autonomous social movements, their project builds on a longer tradition of political poster archives pursued by many others.

lincoln cushing has published a number of books on political posters from cuba, china, the u.s. labour movement, inkworks press, and the san francisco bay area. he is an archivist, artist and former collective member of a movement print shop. cushing uses his *docs populi* ("documents for the public") website to share resources that demystify the process of archiving visual culture.

<http://interferencearchive.org/>
<http://www.docspopuli.org/>

To develop our radical imagination, we need to work against the

systemic social organization of forgetting.

A necessary antidote to the social organization of forgetting is the

resistance of remembering.

- Gary Kinsman

Unfortunately, in much of the Left and within gay/lesbian communities our rich queer histories of struggle have been forgotten, creating a kind of social and historical amnesia. This forgetting has become one of the ways that a middle class, white, largely male, and moderate politics has been resituated at the heart of current gay/lesbian organizing that both moves us away from the radical roots of our struggles and towards accommodation with oppression and exploitation.

The Stonewall riots of 1969 are not often remembered as a major rebellion against police repression leading to the formation of Gay Liberation Fronts that were named partly in solidarity with the Vietnamese National Liberation Front then fighting against U.S. imperialism. Instead, Stonewall has become

the occasion for celebrating a limited commercialized and commodified gay (and to some extent lesbian) culture during Pride events.

We need to ask who is included and excluded from these constructions of gay pride? While white, middle class men and non-trans people are included, most of the rest of us get excluded and marginalized. The mainstream gay movement seems to want nothing to do with the left, liberationist character of early organizing efforts. The radical roots of queer liberation get in the way of the new middle class "mononormativity" that no longer challenges capitalist social relations or builds alliances with other oppressed people but simply seeks acceptance into heterosexual middle class respectability. Our histories of struggle have been systematically forgotten.

Source: Kinsman, G. 2010. Queer Liberation: The Social Organization of Forgetting and the Resistance of Remembering. *Canadian Dimension*. July/August. Accessed online: <http://canadiandimension.com/articles/3103/>

capturing



Flatbed Scanner

- Fast-ish (~2 min / image)
- Relatively accessible
- Holds images flat
- Generally limited to images 11x17 and smaller, and even 11x17 can be hard to get access to, stitching partial images together is possible, Photoshop has a tool that is effective about 3/4 of the time



Suckbox & Camera

- Requires some basic fabricating, and access to camera, ideally with a tripod
- Can be faster than scanning, once you get it up and running, if you have a lot of images
- Holds images flat
- Practical solution for capturing large images 11x17 and larger

scanner

Introduction to scanning images

1. Make sure your scanner is big enough for your posters/item. If your scanner can only do smaller images, you can scan your images in parts, then tile you image on the computer.
2. When you are ready to scan, make sure you open your scanner software. In your options menu set the folder of where you'd like your scans to save, set your scanner to scan in colour and at 300DPI.
 - This means Dots Per Inch and makes a high resolution scan. You could go higher (if you scanner allows for that) but that could make your images too large to work with. 300DPI is just right!
 - Your scanner may also have the option of scanning in black and white. This would work better for a black and white image.
3. Usually once you open your scanner and arrow will point to where you can align your image. Place your item face down then close the scanner.
4. Once your image is in place, depending on your scanner you can either use the software or the scan button on the scanner itself to scan the image.
5. If your scanner software is not installed on your computer, some scanners have a usb plug and can scan an image directly onto a usb device.
 - You can scan to and USB and copy onto your computer.
6. Once your image is scanned your software may save them to a folder on your computer or ask where you'd like to save your image.
7. Open your image to edit (If you'd like!)

suckbox

Supplies

- 1 x ShopVac (2.5 HP) for suction
- 1 x Pegboard (1/4x2x4) for front
- 1 x Plywood (1/2x2x4) for backing
- 2 x Pine (1x3x6) for siding
- 1 x Hammer
- 50 x Nail
- 2 x Sandpaper
- 1 x Clear Silicone tube for tighter seal (optional)

Notes on fabrication

- Poked holes in cardboard and attached vacuum as proof of concept
- Looked at Lincoln Cushing's suggested model (a), but opted for something simpler, close to Penguin Digital Arts (b)
- Relatively easy to built, about 8-10 hours of labour
- Doesn't have a perfect seal
- I found that I needed to block uncovered pegboard holes for a more powerful suction
- Haven't built a stand yet
- Still testing, consider it a second prototype

Resources

- a. <http://www.docspopuli.org/pdfs/VacuumBoard.pdf>
- b. <http://www.penguindigitalarts.com/vacuum.html>

How to Take Archival Photographs of Your Stuff

First: Stuff

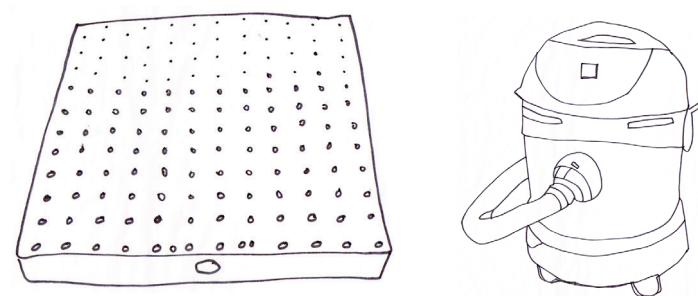
If you are archiving things and you are not scanning them, you are probably trying to record something not-flat or too large for said scanner.

For large flat things (ie posters, banners etc) the first trick is getting all curliness and puckering down to a minimum in order to photograph it. Flatness is important to avoid shadows, basically. It is not necessarily important to render the image so flawless that it looks like a digitally created image, but the poster/banner/thing should be pretty flat.

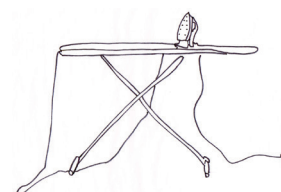


For posters, you can protect thing with some unprinted large scrap paper (like drawing newsprint kind of paper) and put it under a large rug with some kind of consistent pressure for a week or two works really well.

If you do not have a few weeks or a big rug or board around you can build or borrow a vacuum box! (see vacuum box pamphlet). This could take longer than hunting down a large rug or board, but is unassailably cooler.



For banners, iron them. If they are painted with acrylic paint, iron them with a crappy piece of fabric in between the banner and the iron so you do not trash either thing.



Other things (sculptures, puppets etc) do not need much prepping, but more set up...



For long banners, hanging them up is annoying, but getting a good photograph of something on the ground can be annoying too, so you will have to decide which is better for you. If your banner has grommets you can hang it from hooks on an interior wall.

You might have to put loops of tape on the back side to flatten it out for the photograph as well. If you put it on the ground to photograph, make sure you have enough clearance to photograph it from above with a tripod. You do not have to photograph the whole thing at once, you can do it in pieces and stitch it together in photo editing software (most have an auto tool that makes it easy).



Second: Setting

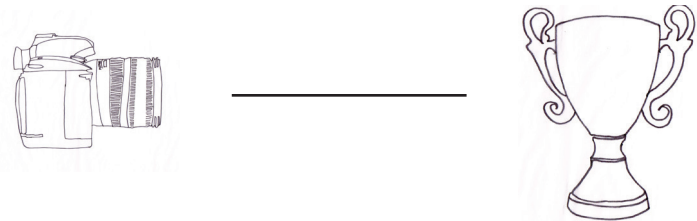
The stage!

You need to setup your thing so you can take a decent picture of it. Look at the background and especially look at the light. Ideal lighting is outside, on a dry but overcast day, at about 7 in the morning.

This is impossible and annoying most of the time but it is a good way to think about how to get the light you want: diffused light coming from everywhere.



You will want the camera you are using to be centered and parallel to the thing. You will also want it against a relatively flat wall. Position the camera lens to be directly in the middle of the thing you are photographing. Centre, middle, midway, apex. Like that!



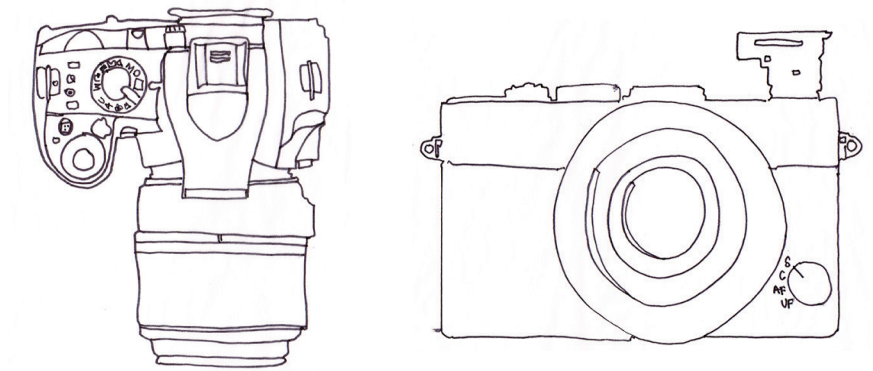
If you are outside the tricky part is usually wind. Inside the tricky part is usually shadows. Wind is about waiting, shadows are about filling them in with lights.

Third: Camera

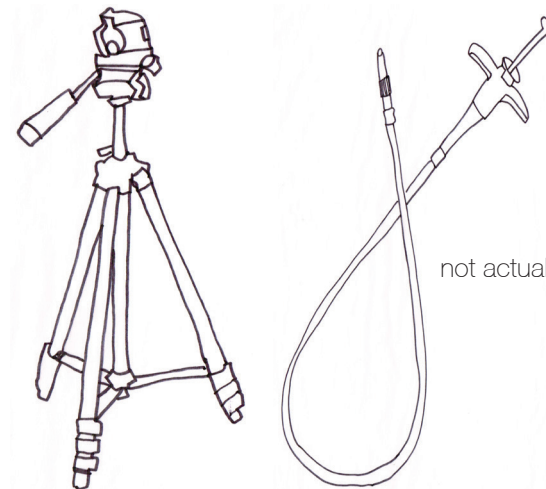
Cameras!

Most places have lights in the ceiling which means you need some light filling in from the bottom or the sides for evenness. Clip lights, construction lights and lamps all work well. If the light is too strong (too many new shadows) just back it up or change its angle until the light looks pretty even. It is ok if it is not perfect because you can edit most problems out, but the better your thing looks in the camera, the less time editing. (Maybe you like editing way better than dinking around with lights, that's cool too!)

They can be pretty complicated or pretty simple depending on how badly you want to nerd out on them. For this project we shall assume you have access to a digital camera where you have some manual control over the settings, because in many ways it is easier, less stressful and produces instant results - instant playback- so you can change your setup if you need to for a better image.



You will probably want a shutter release and/or a tripod.



not actually proportionally sized!!

Remember: consistent,
even light that comes
from
everywhere is ideal!

Fill in shadows with light or
reflectors (big pieces of white
cardboard work really well)

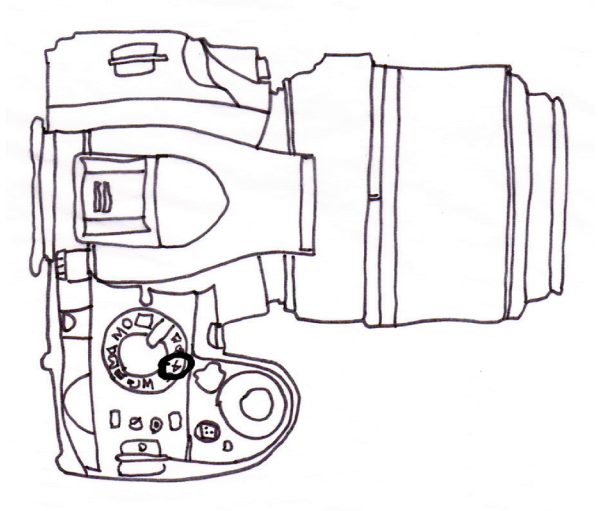
Camera Settings:

File types:

RAW for most cameras, NEF for Nikons ('cause they're fancy). This has the most information and are huge files. You want this for archiving. Some cameras have a setting where you take a jpg and a raw file at the same time, this can be good for quick uploading images to the internet and keeping a big one for later. Basically you want a big unruly file with lots of info, so if you cannot set it to RAW, set it to big, or 'for printing'.

Control type:

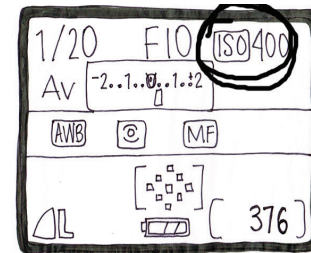
You will want to set the camera to manual control or aperture control. Full auto can be good in a pinch (if you are in a hurry) but it can produce weird results you do not want for archive purposes.



ISO, Aperture, Shutter Speed:

All these things are just methods of controlling how much light is allowed into the camera. Too much and your image will look too white and blown out, too little and it will too dark and shadowy.

ISO: International Organization for Standardization, is just a group that standardized a bunch of photographic measures that became a short hand for film speed.



Since your setup is pretty well lit (right? right!), put the ISO to 400. ISO is a throwback to filmy times, when your film would be calibrated to be good at absorbing a certain amount of light: high noon? you want 100, midday? you want 400 late night? 800-1600+.

Aperture (or, f-stop):

This is basically how big the hole in your camera lens opens to let in light. Weirdly, the larger the hole, the less that is in focus. (Depth of field). Because you have lots of light and a tripod (or table or stool etc) you will want to set this to a pretty big number so every single thing is in focus. The lower the number, the less that is in focus (2.8) the higher, the more (22!).

Shutter speed:

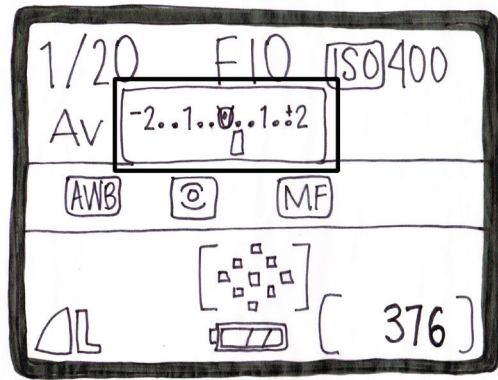
The hole you set your camera to open is really small (aperture), so to get enough light in your lens might have to stay open for a while - thus the tripod/table/stool.

Examples are 1/100 - 1sec. You will get camera shake for anything slower than 1/30. For this project you will probably be around 1/15 or 1/8 but obey your light meter! If it says 2 seconds, do that.

The longer your camera is open and recording, the more likely any kind of movement will ruin your shot. Your finger pressing the button can shake it, so a shutter release is helpful. If you set it to aperture control, the shutter speed will be automatically set. If you are on full manual, the light meter inside will suggest a shutter speed, so try that one out.

editing

Even if it looks ok I would suggest 'bracketing' by taking a shot at one shutter speed faster and slower than the one your light meter recommends. You can pick the best one on your computer after the shoot.



Take more pictures than you think you need and take your time if you can.

You did it! Next is editing!



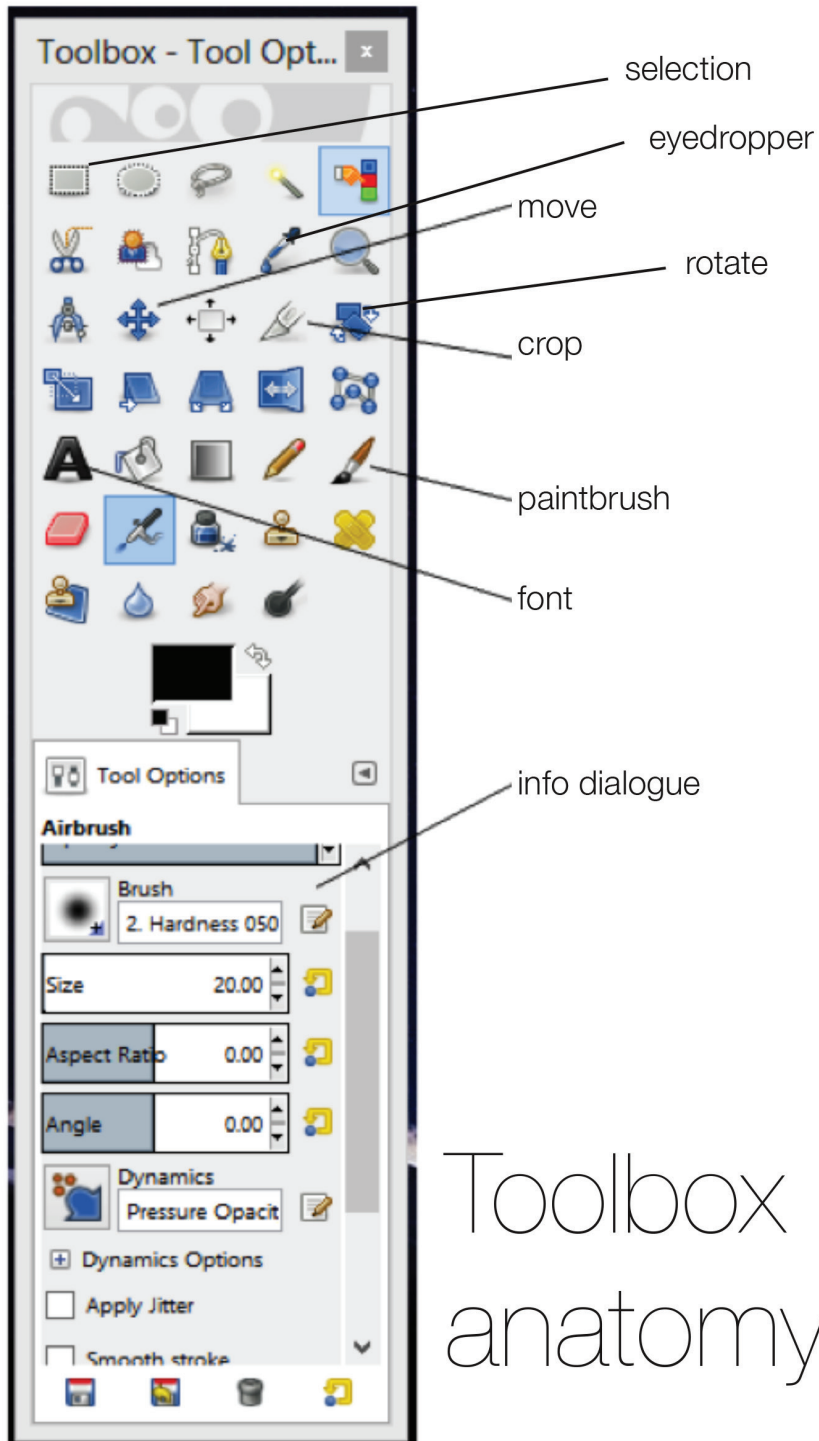
RADICAL DESIGN SCHOOL

talks a bit about GIMP

gimp is an image
editing software
that is powerful,
free, and similar to
photoshop.

download at gimp.org.

getting acquainted



selection: selects layers

eyedropper: picks colours

rotate: rotates image, useful if society is crooked

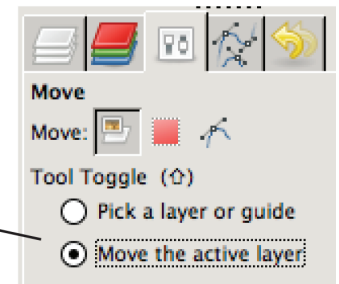
crop: trim your picture. rotate & crop = helpful

paintbrush: applies selected colour

font: puts text down

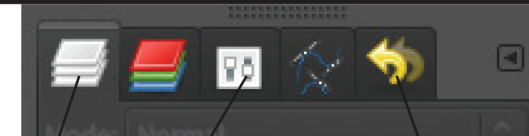
info dialogue: tells you details about the tool that you've selected

move: move selected layer. do me a favour. select "move the active layer" if you use this tool. otherwise, it's annoying.



(layers are beyond this tut, but look them up! they're neat!)

layers windows dialogue



layers

tool options

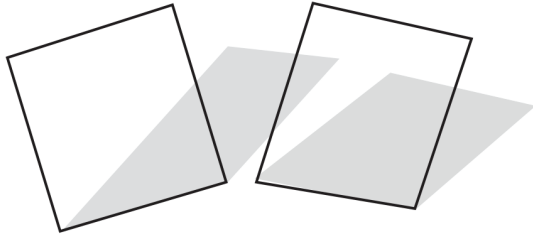
history

Toolbox anatomy

IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT DOES HOVER OVER IT

* good
habits **

Always work off a duplicate of your original image. That way you don't lose any material by accidentally saving over.

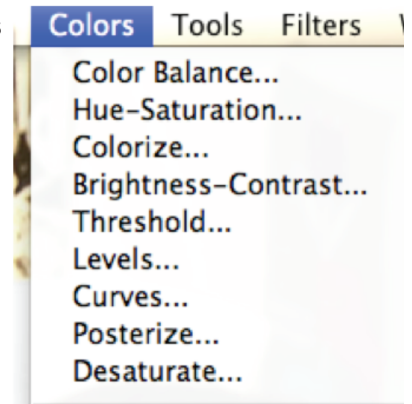


open a file

>>> file > open > select your file

colours dropdown *

There are also many other tools you can use to edit your images. These are all under the main drop down menu in GIMP. These tools will give you many different options to get your image to look how you want it to look. The best way to know what each one does is to play around with them until one fits best.



levels



Levels are tools offered in image editing programs that allow you to adjust not only the brightness and contrast, which you may already be familiar with, but also the **tonal range** of the darks and lights in the photo. This means you decide what constitutes complete black, complete white, and midtones. Levels use **image histograms**.

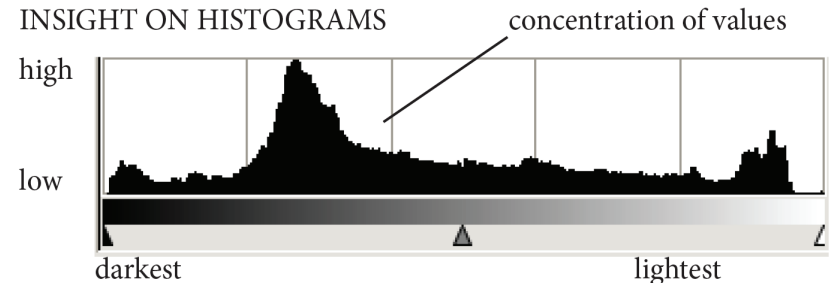
greyscale

if your picture has no colours, then it's useful just to convert it to greyscale so your blacks are black (and not reddish black).



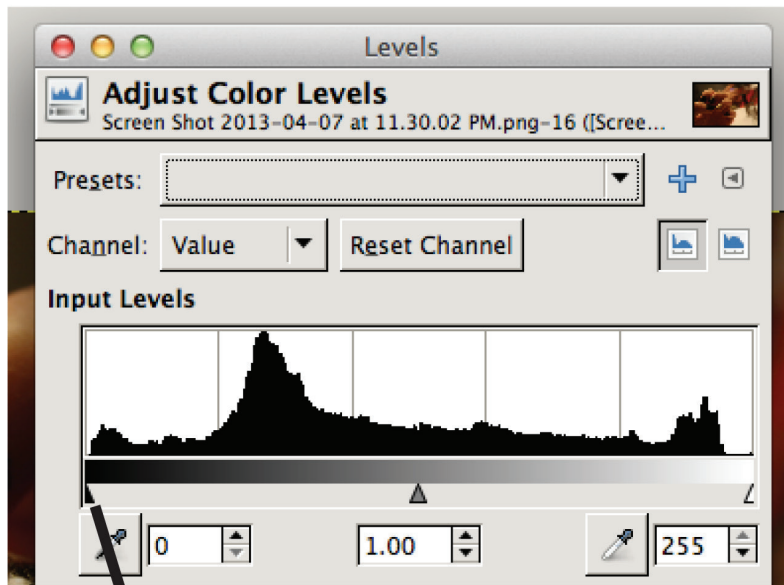
1. image
2. mode
3. greyscale

INSIGHT ON HISTOGRAMS



IN THIS EXAMPLE THE IMAGE HAS LOTS OF DARK TONES

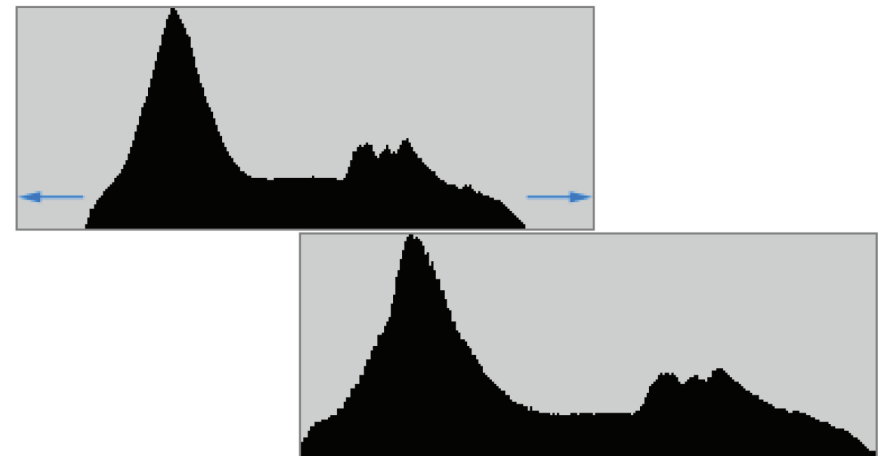
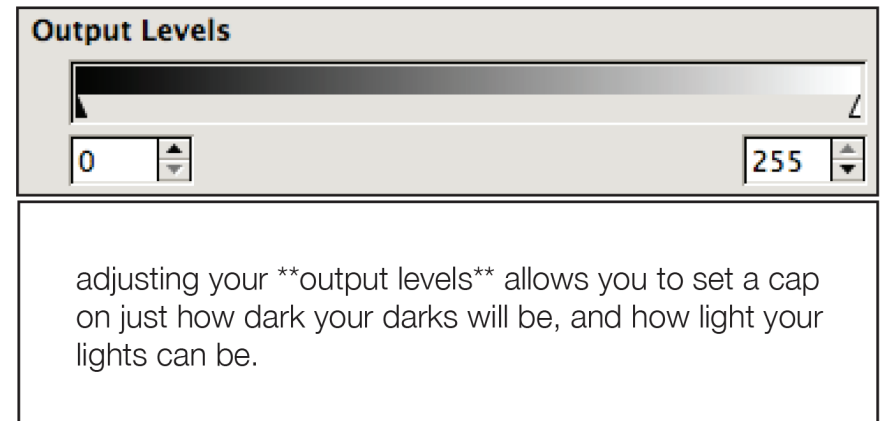
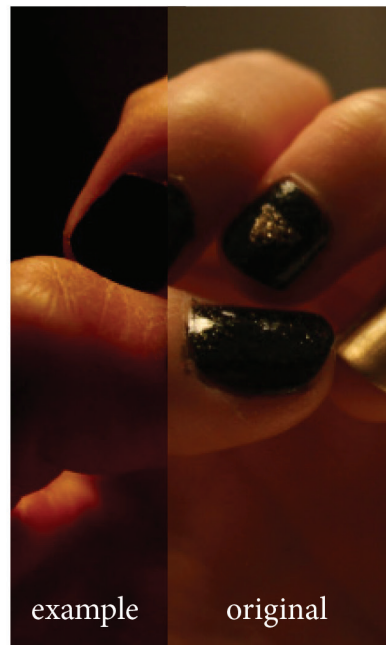
by adjusting any of the three points in your **input levels** dialogue, you can affect your tonal range.



i.e. If you moved this “darkest” indicator to the right, you’d make your darks even heavier and blacker.

confused?
play
around

good advice in
the image-editing
world (and others)



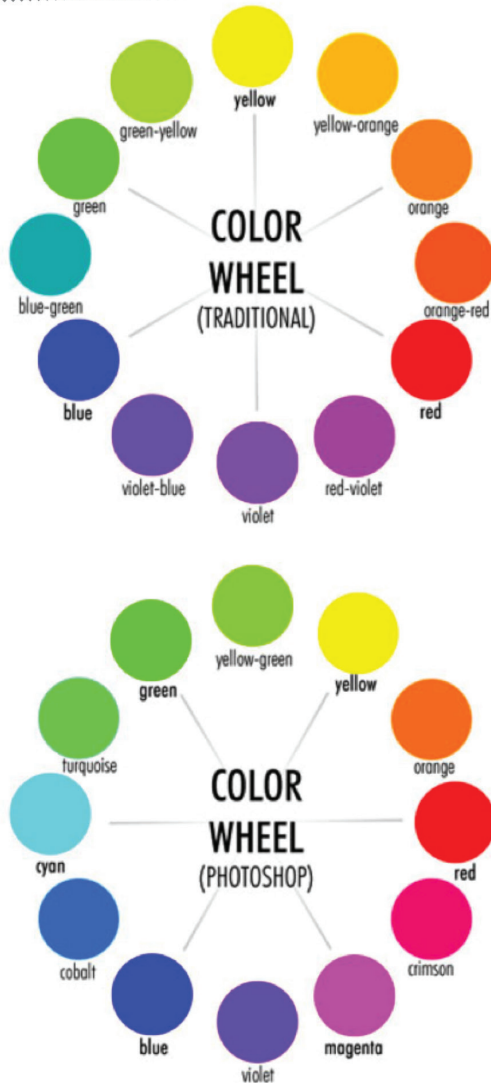
Images look best when the full range of dark to light is used, or when the entire tonal range is filled.

source: cambridgeincolour.com/tutorials/levels.htm

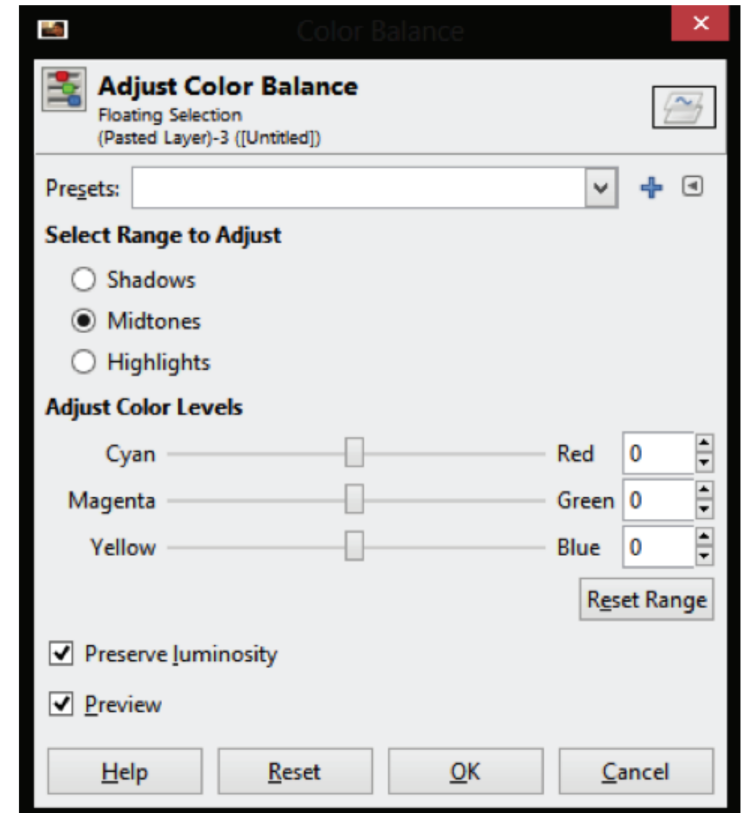
colour theory

Some of us understand red, yellow, and blue are primary colours and we use these as the basis for creating other colours. This is colour theory from a colour wheel. In GIMP (and Photoshop) we work with how light mixes colours so our primary colours are red, green, and blue (or RGB). This colour wheel is useful in understanding how colours work on GIMP. For example, if there is too much magenta in an image, you might add green to correct the colour balance. If there's too much orange (which is made with yellow and red), we would reduce cyan and blue.

source: nhsdesigns.com/graphic/color/color-wheel.php



*colour
balance



Colour balance is a tool you can use when the colours in your image are skewed – so for example, if there's a lot of red or yellow in a photo you could use the colour balance to slide the parts of the photo that are red in colour to be cooler and more cyan, its opposite colour



> file
> save
decide on your file type.

web compatible formats include .png, .jpeg, and .gif.

save at 72 dpi.

ALWAYS SAVE YOUR ORIGINAL GIMP FILES TOO!

.jpeg

images with gradients and blended colours. doesn't like flat colours or hard edges. can be compressed.

.gif

small size and handles transparency, that can handle up to 256 colours. loves flat colours.

.png

great quality, is lossless but can result in huge file size. handles multiple levels of transparency!

READ MORE:

<http://www.howtogeek.com/howto/44826/learn-to-adjust-contrast-like-a-pro-in-photoshop-gimp-and-paint.net/>

<http://blog.patdavid.net/2012/06/getting-around-in-gimp-color-curves.html>

<http://intheori.blogspot.ca/2011/03/part-3-improving-your-photos-with-gimp.html>



sharing

Online Collections

Flickr

- Relatively easy to use
- Can organize content by sets and with tags
- Not customizable
- Somewhat social
- Free/paid, not open source (only first 200 photos displayed with free account)

See: No One Is Illegal Graphics

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/31000504@N06>

Tumblr

- Relatively easy to use
- Can organize content with tags
- Fairly customizable
- Highly social
- Free, not open source (all content hosted by Tumblr)

See: Free the Streets

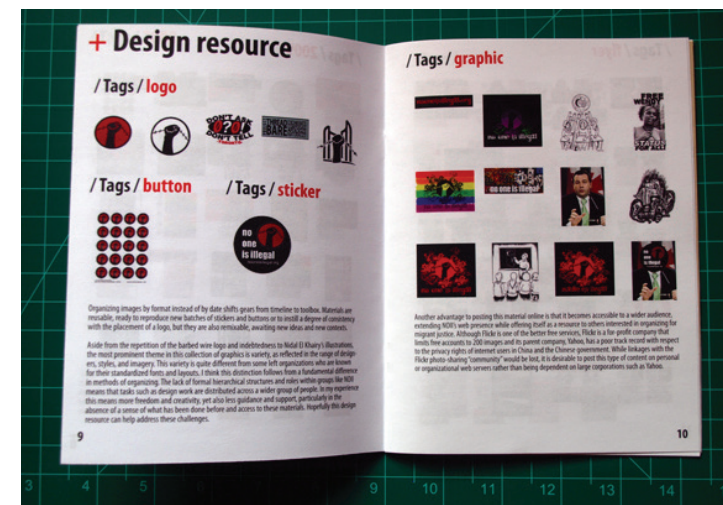
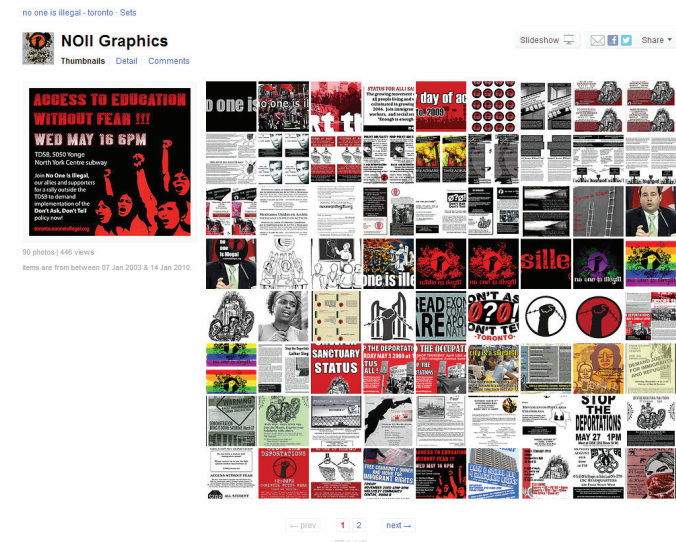
<http://freethestreets.tumblr.com>

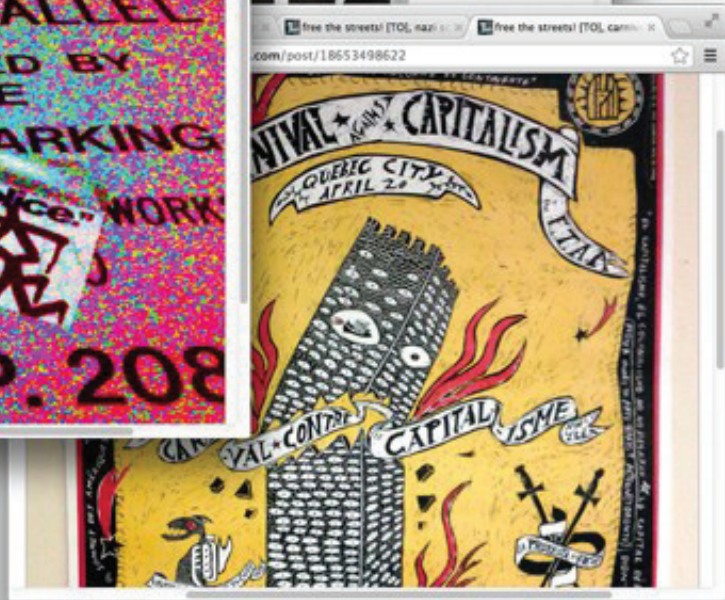
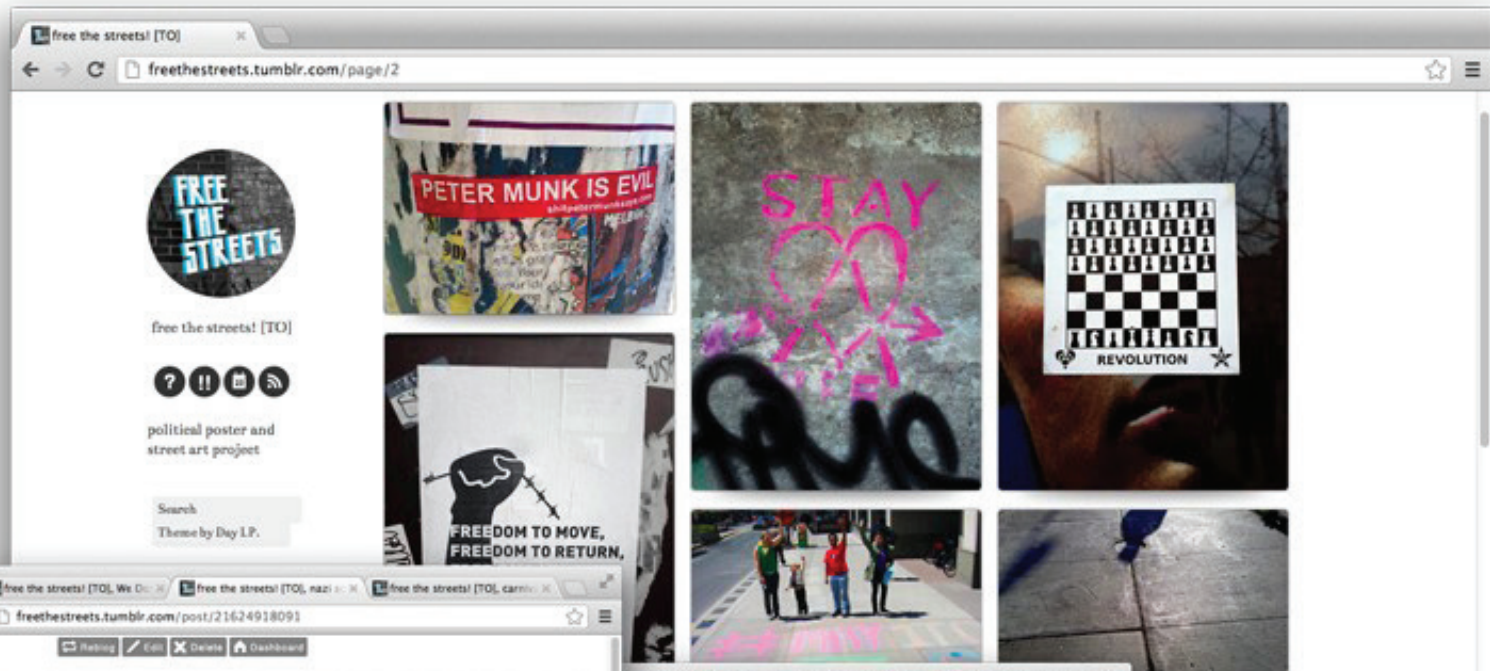
Omeka

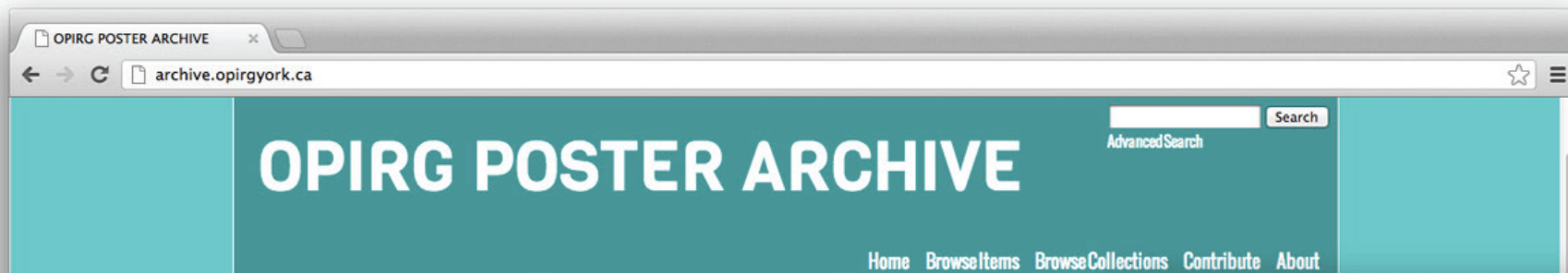
- Can be somewhat tricky to get started
- Can organize content by collections and with tags
- Highly customizable
- Not very social
- Free, open source (can host content on own server; also Omeka.net free if you don't have one)

See: OPIRG Poster Archive

<http://archive.opirgyork.ca>







Tags:1998,indigenous

13INDIG199467.jpg



notes