

**ERYFILI DRAKOPOULOU**

**TRANSGENERATIONAL  
SKIN ARCHIVES:**

**FAMILY PHOTOS AND  
IDENTITY IN CHANGE  
THROUGH THE  
PRACTICE OF ARCHIVING**

**HOME OF  
PERFORMANCE  
PRACTICES**

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**TRANSGENERATIONAL SKIN ARCHIVES:  
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THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF ARCHIVING**

**ERYFILI DRAKOPOULOU  
MA PERFORMANCE PRACTICES**

A Thesis presented by Eryfili Drakopoulou to Master Performance Practices,  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts in  
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**HOME OF  
PERFORMANCE  
PRACTICES**

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**2021**

## SYNOPSIS

In the context of my master's thesis 'Transgenerational Skin Archives: Family Photos and Identity in Change Through the Practice of Archiving', I researched family photographs as skin archives conditioned by the transgenerational transmission and used for multiple narrations of identity. Fascinated by the idea of identity being largely formed in relation to what has been transmitted through the family tree, without having been experienced by the descendant, I approached family photographs as traces of the past, and used the analogy of skin to manipulate them in quest for what can be recognized in the present perception of identity.

The focal points of my field were philosophical aspects around the skin, like the skin as a milieu, meaning the skin as whole environment and not as an interface, archiving as a practice to reimagine the past, the present and the future, the indexicality of photography and in particular the practices that constitute family photography, as well as the examination of my family tree through the lens of transgenerational transmission. Consequently, the methods I initially employed combined the use, analysis, and classification of autobiographical ancestral data with practices of archiving, semi-structured discussions with my family, and the creation and analysis of my family tree (genogram as termed by family therapists). Next, I conducted experimentations guided by the analogy of the skin and the

use of a skin simulation formula on the photographs. Last, I applied collage as an approach around identity, relationality of photographs, and dramaturgy.

What became significant through my process and findings, was tackling the notion of fixed identity by locating its roots in the ancestors through their photographic archives, and engaging with the practice of archivization as a tool for alternative narrations of history. Unbounding the skin from the human body and releasing personal archives for public interventions, enabled questions to emerge regarding skin boundaries, spatiality, and common practices of family photography, and highlighted the significance of collectively reappropriating personal archives as reflecting on a wider perception of history.

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## DECLARATION

I, Eryfili Drakopoulou, hereby certify that I have personally carried out the work depicted in the thesis entitled, 'TRANSGENERATIONAL SKIN ARCHIVES: FAMILY PHOTOS AND IDENTITY IN CHANGE THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF ARCHIVING'.

No part of the thesis has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma prior to this date.

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## INTRODUCTION

The collection of my life's archives started off with a tarot card that a clown gave to me on my eighth birthday, notes that I would pass around with my classmates during class, the paper of a gum that the first boy I liked offered to me, the thousands of photos I started taking in my teenage years, the tickets of every performance I went to, each and every one of my tobacco packets, my small journals, my recordings, and my web cam video diaries. At some point, I realized that I was unconsciously wishing someone would find these archives in the future, understand me through them, and make something out of them. I realized that I am living through my archives, and therefore, I have already planned the preservation of my memory. However, the archivization of my life, started before I even knew it. My father took hundreds of videos from my birth, up until I took over the task. Every now and then, I access the now digitalized videos and I watch them as if I am watching the life of someone else, and each time I am led to my parent's photographs. I have always been fascinated by the stories behind the photographs of my parents in their youth. Gradually, from looking at them as testimonies of an unrecognizable past, I started viewing them as testimonies of my past as well. A past I had not lived in, but which somehow has shaped me. I found justice in this idea, when I discovered the theory of transgenerational transmission that supports the formation of identity and a life

trajectory, as dependent to one's ancestors' lives. Already working with the skin as a palimpsest of experiences, and an access point for discovering identity, I decided to research what emerges in relation to identity, if one blends the idea of the skin as an archive of transgenerational transmission, with family photographs as testimonies of the lives of our ancestors. I did that by looking at these photographs as skin sites and as archives in constant change for continuous re-narrations of present identity.

The research became even more urgent to me because of the significance of approaching today's personal archives as fragments of a 'collective autobiography' (Giannachi, 2016, 91). The human subject of the 21st century archive, actively remembers, shares personal memories, and therefore, changes the communal understanding of the wider history, by intervening upon it and rewriting it. By making personal archives public and accessible, and by bringing others to intervene on them, the new narrations that are produced affect how histories are perceived whilst opening the space for reimagining the future through the reimagined past. The archive 'must subject itself to constant change, precisely so as to redefine our presence from what is other to it' (Giannachi, 2016, 29), and so in my research, the multiple narrations that can emerge through archiving practices on family photographs, are perceived through their constant transformation. Like the skin that constantly regenerates itself

deriving from the DNA archive, identity as well is in constant change, even if it derives from the archive of transgenerational transmission. Family photographs are also archives in change even if they trace a specific time and place, because only by renewing/ re-viewing them, we can question and reconstruct what they divulge to.

Archiving became the depository, a part of my research field, a method, a mode of reflection, and most importantly, a practice in itself. Approaching my research through the practice of archival art, I noticed that many archival art works, some of which I discuss in this thesis, that deal with family photography, are concerned with performing a change to reimagine the past, but not so much with the future possibilities of change in mind. Furthermore, to my knowledge, an approach that looks at skin as an analogy outside of the human body, in relation to personal archives, family photographs and transgenerational transmission, has not been a topic of artistic research. On that account, the aim of my practice as research, was to explore family photographs as transgenerational skin archives, and I propose that they act as access points for identity in constant change, through an interdisciplinary practice that reimagines history.

The purpose of this thesis is to guide the reader through my artistic research, my process, and my findings so far. The structure of the thesis follows the anatomy of the skin as one

more conceptual layer of alternative skin usages, and as a metaphor to disseminate the conceptual aspect of my artistic research. Each chapter corresponds to a main layer of the skin, from the deepest to its outmost (Illustration 1). In the first chapter, The Hypodermis, I present the field of my research which includes (a) philosophical approaches on skin, (b) archiving, (c) family photographs, and (d) transgenerational transmission, as the connective tissue that binds the research together whilst supporting its grounds. In the second chapter, The Dermis, I guide the reader through the process of my practice, by elaborating on my methods which include autobiographical data with archiving, experimentation, and collage, as the components that keep the skin alive and functional. In the third chapter, The Epidermis, I discuss the findings of my process and my main experiment, a performance installation named 'Cutis Archiva' (2021). These findings are the skin cells that have emerged from the archive of the skin, ready to shed off for new cells to find their way in the future. They have informed my research in exciting new ways and have offered new perspectives on how I would further continue my practice as research in the future.

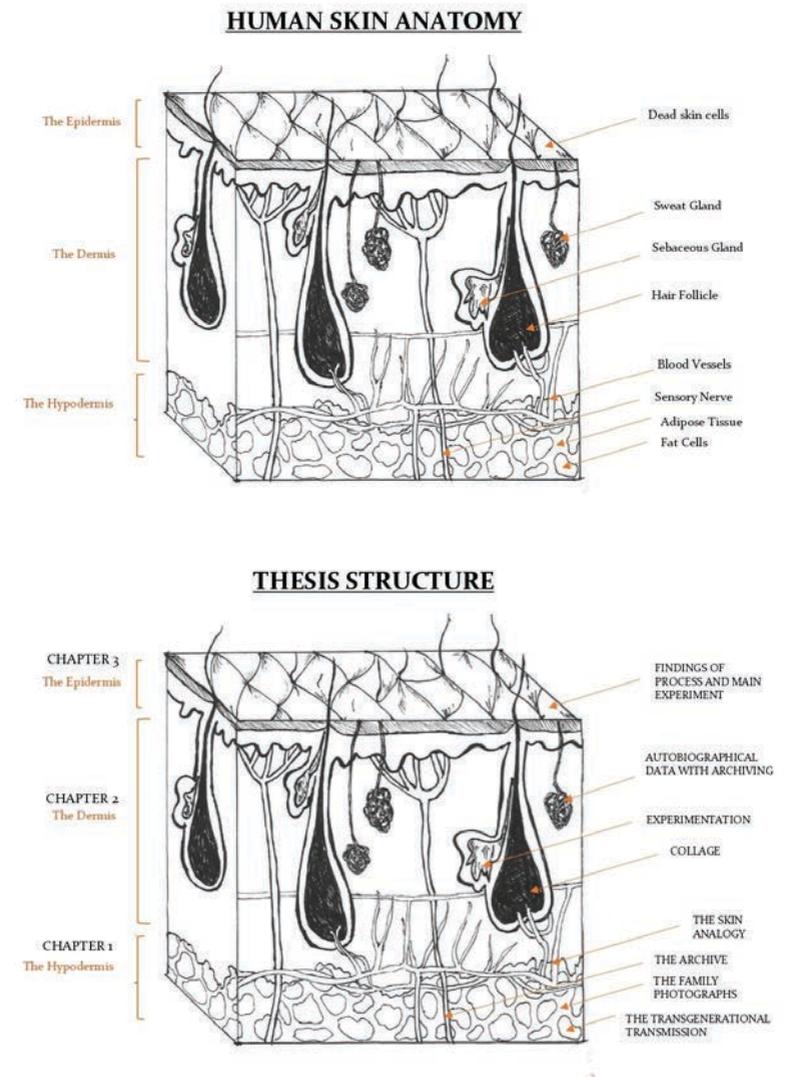


Figure 1. Explaining the structure of the thesis in accordance to the three main layers of the skin. Eryfili Drakopoulou, (2021).

## THE HYPODERMIS

The hypodermis, also known as subcutis, is the lowermost and deepest layer of the integumentary system. Yet it is not really part of the skin but rather what supports and connects it to the muscles and bones. Its blood vessels, nerves, and fat cells in my thesis become an analogy for the different fragments of my field, creating together the structural support for the practice and my discoveries. The connective tissue of my research consists of philosophical aspects around the skin, archiving processes, family photographs, and transgenerational transmission.

## THE SKIN ANALOGY

Skin is one of the most important organs of the human body and it belongs to one of its eleven main systems, the integumentary system, along with hair and nails (Roberts, 2016, 292). Its surface can cover up to two square meters and its structure consists of three main layers, the outermost epidermis, the dermis, and the hypodermis (Roberts, 2016, 38). The human skin is in constant state of loss and regeneration, as the outmost part of the epidermis sheds thousands of dead skin cells every minute, which are immediately replaced (Roberts, 2016, 294). The way I came to look at the skin as an archive was initially through an article by scholar Dr. Lisa LaJevic, who was proposing skin scarring as a palimpsest, meaning scars as places that contain traces

of the past, present, and possible futures. In her visual essay, she extends the idea of the whole skin as a record of the body's experiences, and explores memory, subjectivity, and relations between self and the other, through the layered meanings of scars (Lajevic, 2013, 93-94). By engaging with the idea of the palimpsest at the beginning of my research, I realized its significant ability to behold the past while being available for future inscriptions. Fascinated by this, I moved further than just scars, and I started looking at the whole skin as a palimpsest which soon came to be the skin as an archive. Biologically speaking, the skin does carry the archive of its DNA (active past) which is constantly shed off through the natural skin shedding (every present), and its surface is indeed transformable (multiple futures).

Skin is a biological, philosophical, and psychological enquiry. Although skin has historically been the locus of disciplining the body through knowledge or control, humans have the capacity of redesigning and reinventing themselves from the outside in, by modifying it. Tattoos for instance have historically signified 'royalty, religion, social status, indication of bravery, mean of punishment, identification (e.g., heroes, slaves, convicts), medicinal purposes' (Birarello & Quiroz, 2014, 78). Many artists have worked with the surfaces of their skin intending to tackle issues of identity, by intervening upon it. While the French artist ORLAN is undergoing an operation that will radically change her face, she claims that

the skin she owns is not correspondent to who she truly is and thus she proceeds to reinvent herself (Oriach, 2001). Skin often becomes the space where the individual discovers or uncovers their identity. It beholds the psyche, the personality, the identity and is an active surface 'imbued with conscious and unconscious meanings' (Cavanagh, 2013, 2). According to Steve Connor, a British literary scholar, the history of looking at the skin in medical terms, started with the skin as a screen, shifted to the skin as a membrane, and today has come to the skin as a milieu, a term proposed by French philosopher and author Michel Serres in his philosophy of the senses (2004, 26). The skin as a milieu means that skin is not perceived as a membrane or an interface but rather as a whole environment where body and world meet and because of contingency, they share touch (Connor, 2004, 27). The milieu is the environment of mingling, where all senses meet, and is a common skin shared between different bodies. Dr. Franziska Schroeder, a saxophonist and theorist, argues that the 'body skinned' is the performative body that actualizes the skin as milieu. 'It is a body incised into (...), transplanted, trans-placed, and transformed' (Schroeder, 2009, 61). In my research, the skin as milieu trans-places out in photographs, touches, and is touched by them, and archives the memories of their bodies in itself. In this way, the skin as milieu is the place where identities co-exist and inform one another, therefore every intervention on it and every new narration of it, affects the whole environment.

Looking specifically at works that have merged photography with human skin, Thomas Mailaender, a French artist that often works with found objects, in his work 'Illustrated People' (2015), projected on the skin of models, original negatives from the Archive of Modern Conflict's Collection over a UV lamp, creating an ephemeral exposure that would disappear with daylight, which he then re-photographed. Although the element of ephemerality and the conjunction and transformability of found archives over a body archive are elements related to my research, Mailaender's artistic work, like many that use skin, remains on the surface, exactly because it deals with the physical skin. Transgressing the skin through tattoos or cuts, is also somewhat outside of my proposition since it again implies that skin is a surface to be trespassed to reveal something underneath. If seen as a boundary, then its interior 'represents a biological and physiological understanding' and its exterior 'represents a cultural, from where life and communication is played out' (Nedergaard, 2016, 391). In contrary to other senses, skin 'is susceptible to endogenous and exogenous sensation, that is, it can be felt both on the inside and the outside' (Connor, 2004, 54). In order to move further than its surface, I decided to look at skin outside of the body, engaging with photographs as part of the milieu. Skin as a milieu offers new ways of looking at the skin, encompassing a whole environment, not bound to the human body, and always touching, and being touched by others, creating a common skin with a common archive that

also acknowledges individual histories.

I chose to approach the notion of skin manifested in family photographs through the materiality of shininess. According to Steve Connor, the shiny skin is immaterial, impenetrable, and invulnerable but at the same time it contradicts itself by being pliable. Like photographs, it becomes an object to be looked at, but it also perplexes its objectivity through its elasticity (2004, 53-55). Although shiny skin creates a division and a fantasy of uninterrupted exterior, I was interested in applying the shininess to the whole environment that is the skin as milieu, and interrupting the delusion of impenetrability through touch, by using family photographs. This impenetrability was even disturbed in the photographs, by accessing and reconstructing them, instead of regarding them as impenetrable, as frozen testimonies of the past. Indeed, the photograph is the first site of multiplication of skin, where touch, sight, and image meet. As Roland Barthes, the French theorist and philosopher states,

*'a sort of umbilical cord links the body or the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed' (2000, 81).*

Therefore, I suggest the analogy of photographs becoming the skin milieu where body and world meet, not only because the milieu encompasses everything but also because the photograph itself conveys touch, which means it can touch back, creating that common skin. Skin is simultaneously an

impermeable and permeable surface that absorbs and is absorbed, mirrors and is mirrored, writes and is written, swallows and exposes, archives, and flakes off. Therefore, the archive of the skin can be considered as a continuous process of becoming.

### THE ARCHIVE

The archive as a term has been approached by various European theorists such as the French philosopher Jacques Derrida who analyzed the 'archive fever', as well as the French philosopher Michel Foucault, according to whom the archive operates 'as the system of its functioning' and the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, who defines the archive as an 'apparatus' (Giannachi, 2016, xv- xvii). The aforementioned theoretical approaches are often cited and used to create a basis for further analysis or reflection. However, instead of focusing on a specific departing point, I regard the many affordances and characteristics that an archive and the discussion around it has to offer. The word archive derives from the Greek word *arkheion* (ἀρχεῖον) which means both the records and the place where these are kept, while 'implicit in archiving is also the practice of preservation' (Giannachi, 2016, 3), suggesting a selection of what is worth surviving in time and what is not. During the Roman times, the processes required for archivization were 'inscription, categorization, preservation, and dissemination' (Giannachi, 2016, 3). These processes which are still used today, and are embedded in

how we understand archivization, raise questions of what can be classified as an archive and what can eventually become an archive even unintentionally. In my research, it is important to consider both the archive as a trace, and archivization as a process and a practice when dealing with family photographs and prompting for new narrations to emerge. Derrida states that 'archivization produces as much as it records the event' (1995, 17), and this is important because it suggests that what is discovered as an archive, or what becomes an archive through time and analogous practices, does not only preserve a trace of the past, but also, produces further traces of its entire trajectory. Hal Foster, American art critic and historian, reflects on how the contents of the archive are 'indeterminate' and he argues that what makes a work archival is not only that it emerges 'with' or 'through' the archives, but it 'does so in a way that underscores the nature of all archival materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private' (2004, 5). These contradictions need to be highlighted, to enable the practice of archiving to move further from referentiality and enable the transformations that can ultimately affect the perception of present identity. Lorie Novak, American artist and scholar, in her work 'Fragments' (1987) manipulates and transforms a family photograph, to challenge the linear narration of the archive, and its authorial control. Novak uses the archive to trace history, while 'she attempts to reach beyond the constraint of the family snapshot' (Hirsch, 2012, 214). She reappropriates the domestic space by projecting

the photograph in an interior private space, bending the borders between real and fictional, individual, and collective memory.

Scholar Gabriella Giannachi argues that archives are 'sites of discovery of unknown pasts and possible futures' (2016, 3) and according to Derrida, from the moment something is recognized as an archive, it becomes not a question of the past but of the future (1995, 36). In this research, neither the past nor the future is taken as fixed. The archives enable the re-construction or reimagining of the past through its traces and create future memories. A way of reconstructing the past is the act of remembering. Remembering is a creative process that actively rebuilds our memories, therefore there are often different subjective memories over collectively witnessed events. Yet individual memory is modified over time and with every recalling of an event, thus the human brain is always already performing a reconstruction. Memory is interconnected to the formation of individual identity, and by extension, the archive becomes crucial in the perception of a wider social identity (Giannachi, 2016, 62). Through both individual and collective remembering we re-create ourselves, which affects the collective memory, and therefore the larger sense of community.

The ways of handling personal archives, through remembering and preservation, ultimately characterize the

relations between the present communities (Giannachi, 2016, 146). In the work 'May Be Opened After...' (2007), Matthew Buckingham, an American artist preoccupied with archival art and the role of social memory in contemporary life, questions the conventional aspects of a time capsule that tend to resist change and reassure preservation, by making his time capsule non-spatially specific, undateable, uncatalogued in content, and nonspecific to its opening date. Although spatiality, dateability and classification were key in my archiving practice, the aspect of change was crucial in challenging the stability of identity, through the photographic archive. Although the archive is a trace of the past, it is affected by all the presents that occupy it, and it should also always be available to be transformed in each of the futures it alludes to.

### **THE FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS**

Family photographs are archives that can serve as access points to the past, while through manipulation, they can even transform it. The family photographs were employed as the primal material of my practice and were the connecting point that brought together the notions of skin, archive, and transgenerational transmission. Family photography includes photos with specific context that are handled in specific ways. They capture members of the family, and their depictions are repetitive, limiting, and idealistic, as they demonstrate almost solely happy moments, particular poses, events, and specific frameworks of representation (Rose, 2010, 11).



Figure 2. Example of classic Western family representation in one of my archives. (c.1943)

For this reason, family photographs have been criticized 'for perpetuating an idyllic image of the nuclear family, cementing only dominant visions of its classed, gendered and racialized identity' (Rose, 2010, 11). Marianne Hirsch, a Romanian and American based academic who has written extensively on matters of postmemory, feminist theory, and family photography, argues that family photographs are as personal as they are public because of the archetypes assumed when one is photographed. At least in the western world, family representations, are almost universal and scarily alike in terms of repetitive context in posture, spatiality, and appropriate timing. For instance, a classic example, at least of the 20th century, was the alignment of children behind their sitting parents, in a photographic studio, in formal clothing and with neutral expressions, conveying the strong bond and unity of the family (Illustration 2). According to the British cultural geographer Gillian Rose, apart from the visual content, images become family photos through specific practices of 'production, circulation, display and viewing' (Rose, 2010, 20). She argues that family photography is a cultural practice that is manifested through the 'doing of photographs' (Rose, 2010, 16), which include the making, developing, dating, storing, displaying, looking, touching, and revisiting. Through my practice of archiving that I elaborate upon in chapter 2, I used these practices, and I further extended their treatment, while questioning the photographs' indexicality.

If photographs are 'only and for certain what-has-been' (Barthes 2000, 85), 'an imprint of a scene' (Rose, 2010, 30), then they are the proof and the evidence that someone did exist, and something did happen. American art critic Rosalind Kraus, following Barthes, has argued that 'photographs are therefore indexical images: they are a sign connected to its referent by some kind of physical connection' (Rose, 2010, 29). The family snapshots serve as an index of what happened in the past, and furthermore, as referential points of what is supposed to happen in the familial and social context further in the future (Vaughan, 2005, 33). Because of their everydayness, their indexicality frames the present behaviors, and underlines how these have been learnt or have failed to be learnt, setting the parameters of how we allow to see ourselves in the present and future. By projecting new narrations on them, we can manage to reinterpret the past of our ancestors and the future that awaits us and our descendants. Matthew Buckingham, in a 2010 talk with Apex Art is wondering; 'Are the stories we use to navigate adequate to our experience or do we need new versions or whole new stories in order to navigate into the future'? The artist proposes thinking around 'what-could-have-been' instead of what Barthes had famously stated as 'what-has-been' (2000, 77) regarding photography and its indexicality. The 'what-could-have-been' repropose and repurposes the recorder, the maker, the subject, the timeframe, and the future viewer of an image (Buckingham, 2010). Davide Meneghello, an

Italian artist, and archivist whose work deals with historical representations of queerness through photography, text, and installation, in his work 'Again He Holds Me by the Hand' (2016-2019), performs actions of collage, enlargements, isolations and cut-outs to repurpose photographic archives under the queer gaze. Meneghello addresses 'what-could-have-been' by employing operations of projection, fiction, and identification, and making public historical photographs be seen differently than before. It is through this way of thinking that I approached the family archives without largely intervening on them. I studied them in relation to my family tree, re-archived them according to my findings, and exposed what they can reveal themselves on 'what-could-have-been', through the skin analogy and the making- public.

Family photographs have a specific spatiality and so making mine public was significant in the first place. The family photographs are mostly kept inside the house, either displayed around (which varies culturally) or inside photo albums, envelopes, and boxes. The printed photographs have specific practices and modes of dissemination, and this spatiality is very important when considering that the private becomes public. Since I work with photographs that have not been published before, the literature is pointed towards domestic and printed photography. Author Julia Hirsch distinguishes family photography from formal to candid. The formal characterizes the images where families are

expressionless, facing the viewer and conveying a portrayal of unison and stability, largely based on the ideals of family portraits during the Renaissance. On the contrary, candid photography captures personality, feelings, impulses, and accidents. The accident that destroys the formal photography is what creates the candid (Hirsch, 1981, 82). In the way I handled the photographs, some formal images became candid because of consequent choices or accidents. The photographs I gathered at the beginning of the research were both formal and candid, but what later drove their selection, and their in-between relation was the punctum.

Barthes has distinguished the photographic meaning through a semiological approach, separating it into the studium and the punctum. The studium, which encompasses most of the photographs, is general, codified, 'derives from an average effect' (Barthes, 2000, 26), and engages the viewer because of the cultural, social, and historical meanings. The punctum on the other hand, is specific, personal, and indexical; is 'that accident that pricks me' (Barthes, 2000, 27). The way I decided to approach the indexicality of the photographs and the 'what-has-been' of its context in relation to formal photography and its staginess, was by looking for the punctum at each photo. The punctum became the open window to the 'what-could-have-been', further pointing to what could have been transgenerationally related or transmitted.

## THE TRANSGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION

Transgenerational transmission was studied in relation to family photographs and supported by the field of epigenetics and the study of the genogram, a tool used in transgenerational psychotherapy. Epigenetics is the field of biology that studies the heritable changes caused by behavior and environment, not changing the DNA sequence but rather the gene expression and how these genes are read. The etymology of the word is self-explanatory as the word genetics comes from the Greek word genesis (γένεσις) which means origin, and the prefix epi- (επί-) which means that something is added upon the DNA. There is still much debate between the experts on the validity of transgenerational transmission in the genes. However, there is substantial research on the collective and transgenerational trauma (i.e., in genocides). Apart from the collective trauma, for instance over the second generation of Holocaust survivors, transgenerational transmission in the family tree has been researched and practiced in psychoanalytic therapy. Family therapists have researched, developed, analyzed, and practiced how the past of the ancestors is reflected in the lives of the descendants, manifested in ways that shapes their present being. An important tool of their practice is working with the genogram. Genograms are annotated family trees that denote the living members of the family, as well as of all the generations before, going back at least up to three generational cycles. Birth and death dates, dates of marriage,

education, divorce, immigration, professions, abortions, secrets, substance abuses, achievements, illnesses, or any other significant events, are added through specific symbols. Then, relations between the members in the same generations or across them are annotated through designated symbolic lines, and the historical, political, and social environments of each generation are also taken into consideration. Based on the idea that identity is largely formed and impacted by the transgenerational transmission, this therapy method is used to unravel patterns across generations. It tackles the reasoning behind the patient's behaviors, generational coincidences, and further life choices that seem to connect in one way or another to their ancestors. The transgenerational transmission refers to assimilated memories, traumas or mechanisms of previous generations that have been passed on through heredity. One of the patterns that appear when studying a genogram is what the field identifies as 'the anniversary syndrome'. This includes 'repetitions, invisible and unconscious family loyalties, and unconscious identifications with a key person in the family history, loved or unloved' (Schützenberger, 1998, 60). It might manifest through repetitions in significant dates, illnesses, choices of names or other behaviors. Some of the ways I worked with my genogram (appendix A) in relation to the family photos was repetitions, as well as present manifestations of ancestors' experiences in other forms, for instance transformation of physical abuse into overprotective

relations or seemingly unrelated illnesses. Hirsch proposes the term 'postmemory' mainly in relation to the generations that the Holocaust or other traumatic events have affected, but the way she suggests photographs as 'instruments of remembrance' (2012, 21) and 'agents of postmemory' (2012, 249) is worth mentioning in relation to this research.

*'Photographs in their enduring "umbilical" connection to life are precisely the medium connecting first and second-generation remembrance, memory and postmemory (...). They affirm the past's existence and, in their flat two-dimensionality, they signal its unbridgeable distance' (Hirsch, 2012, 23).*

In a similar way that photographs can carry the postmemory within them as active archives of what-has-been, I propose the photographs as skin archives carrying traces of the transgenerational transmission.

## THE DERMIS

The dermis is the layer of the skin that lies beneath the epidermis and above the hypodermis. Together with the epidermis, they compose the cutis, the living skin. The dermis includes blood vessels, sweat glands, hair roots and sensory receptors. It provides strength, flexibility, sensation, and controls thermoregulation. For skin to function, the dermis needs to operate smoothly. In this chapter, I aim to navigate the reader through the dermis of my practice that enabled my process, developments, and connections, by elaborating on the methods chosen, including autobiographical data and archiving, experimentation, and collage.

### ARCHIVING AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ANCESTRAL DATA

The method of autobiographical data included first, the excavating, gathering, classifying, analyzing, and acting upon the family photo archives, second, the semi-structured discussions with some members of my family, and third, the creation of my genogram. It is important to clarify that I am using the term autobiographical which refers to 'my' data, alluding to the formation of identity through the transgenerational transmission that I described in chapter 1. Dr. Mark Edward, an English academic whose interest lies on the idea of self in research both as subject and object, uses the term 'mesearch' to define 'the creative inquiry into self as a living archive' (2018, 36), that acknowledges identity in constant

change. I use the phrase 'autobiographical ancestral data', stretching the argument of transgenerational transmission for my family's data to be considered autobiographical, in how they form my identity.

The collection of the photos begun in December 2020, when for about two weeks, I delved into the boxes and envelopes of my grandparents and parents, to find photos of their past. Following the logic of transgenerational transmission that points to the information that has been passed through heredity and not experience, I decided to only work with photos that have been taken before my birth, underlying the connection of my ancestors' experiences to heredity. As I was going through the archives, I tried to organize them by size, style, or age, knowing also that someday I might inherit them, thus performing my first classification, which enabled me to make sense of the chaotic number of photos I was given. I spent days sitting on the floor scanning the photos, rarely ruling any one out, as I did not want to leave out any part of the history. After I scanned the photos, which ended up being more than 1,500, I separated them first into categories of the owners, (i.e., F. Olga & Vangelis, G. Grandma Eryfili, J. Mom) and then in each category I further categorized them by indicating their numerical order and who they depicted. For each family member, I assigned a name code (i.e., Dimitris, GGiorgos, GERifilh, TakisV, Negative) which in the future enabled me to find the photos of particular individuals

more quickly. After my first classification and identification, I spent time going through the photos with my parents and grandparents, to first learn the identity of the people I did not recognize, second to fill in members of the family tree that I was not aware of, and third to give my family the space to say stories of the past, or remember any other information, triggered by the photos we were seeing. In the following months, I continued working with this method that I would call a semi-structured discussion. I decided that I did not want to follow any particular form of interview or prepare talking points. I did prepare questions, but it was important to maintain this informal familial atmosphere, which made their responses genuine and allowed their thoughts to flow more naturally. Furthermore, knowing these people well, I knew when to be silent and give them time to remember or express themselves, when to create a dialogue, and when to respect their resistance to respond. A discussion I had with my maternal grandfather was particularly precious to me, as I got to understand him and his background much better. However, the semi-structured approach came with some limitations. For example, I got so fascinated with the stories of my maternal grandfather that it was not until later that I realized how I had failed to give space to my maternal grandmother, which I regret. In March, I also got to speak on the phone with my paternal grandfather who was the only one I had not talked to. In this small conversation I learned more things about his family and managed to double-check

facts I have heard from my father. I learned stories that most of my family does not know, and this urged me to diligently preserve history through the archives. All this personal information that I gathered, which will not be published, was helpful on a personal level of the research; to realize connections, decisions, and behaviors and to help me work on my genogram. It assisted me in making and studying my family tree, affected the ways I viewed the photographs, and formed crucial decisions on how I chose and handled the relations between them.

From January on, I continued working on the classification of photos in various ways. Each time I wanted to do an experiment I would select the photos accordingly. Sometimes they were selected according to who they depicted, sometimes according to their context, and others in relation to one another and the specific areas I wanted to explore, for example representation of masculinity. I created an index of all the family members that have been photographed at least once, to further familiarize myself with all the unknown faces and again to be able to directly find a subject if I wished to. As I delved even deeper into my family tree, I created a new categorization that enlisted the photos according to repetitions, and the 'anniversary syndrome' that I recognized through the meticulous observation of the photos and the genogram. For instance, some categories of repetitions focused on visual context like getting married, kissing, showing

affection, comical, family in row, dancing, smoking, portraits, and some were more general categories such as sentimental and symbolic. The punctum, candid photographs, and the 'what-could-have-been' even in the formal photographs, determined the final 196 photos and their dual relation, resulting to 98 double faced images that were used for my performance installation 'Cutis Archiva' (Appendix B). The repetitions in terms of life events such as miscarriages, immigration, honoring the dead, education, profession, and illnesses played a major role in these relations. All these categorizations were put together, first to get to know the archive and order it into its many possibilities of approach, and then to discover what it can be revealed through them, considering that I was preparing to make the archive public (Appendix C). A very simple example that can give an idea of how the studying of my family tree and the categorization of photos were combined, is a photo of a relative of mine with her newborn baby and another relative from the other side of the family tree, with his newborn baby. They are both hugging the babies closely to their body, looking at them and leaning their heads on them (Illustration 3). Although a surprising match in their similar aesthetics, this dual relation of the final photograph was chosen in consideration to the unfortunate events relating to these babies and the repercussions both events had in the two families. By finding the associations of stories and the repetitions through the photos, I was looking for what can be revealed in the present through their merging.



Figure 3. Example of how studying the family tree impacted the choices of curating the double relations of the photographs. Eryfili Drakopoulou (2021).

When each of the coupled photos were combined, as well as placed next to others, they began revealing new stories and therefore when the archive went public, this became the access point for the collective narrations.

Finally, the creation of the genogram was a long process of the autobiographical method that could frankly be endless. I cannot claim that I managed to do a proper genogram as it would be done by a professional therapist, but what I did manage to do was extremely helpful for my practice in setting the intentions behind each decision taken on the collection of the final photographs. To create my genogram, I first designed the family tree I was aware of at the time, and then through the discussions I had, I filled in further members. I had tremendous help from the book *Genealogy of Eressos, Lesvos: 150 years, 1850-2000* (2000) written by Xaralampos Demiris, a former banker who also happens to be a distanced relative of mine, and whose passion in genealogy led him to collect all the family trees of the village Eressos in Lesvos. Because my maternal grandfather and both of my grandmothers' families come from Eressos, I was able to trace the family tree way back to the 18th century and in some cases to the ends of the 17th century. I was also able to pinpoint long and short distance relations across the two families. For example, I discovered that, going back enough, members of my parents' different families were actually related. These little discoveries helped me understand further the complexity of

the family tree and how it is deeply rooted in the past of some ancestors. I understood its flow and its progress through the generations which was essential for reconstructing aspects of my identity through the photographs. After I gathered all the ancestors, I used a software called GenoPro<sup>1</sup> which is designed for the creation of genograms. The genogram, which I kept next to my desk for all the months I was working on the research, started growing further with new information and notes about each person, as well as the relations between members. Understanding the way genograms work and how family histories can affect the descendants was essential in the archivization of the photos and the categories that I described earlier. Dr. Monica McGoldrick, family therapist, director of the Multicultural Family Institute, and key figure in genogram writings, explains that knowing one's family, creates new understandings of one's own self, how one stands in the world (2011, 19-22), and how every pattern in the family tree 'is part of the many-layered pattern that becomes your identity' (2011, 29). The author explains thoroughly the repercussions of past events that descendants might be unaware of but very much impacted by, such as

- replacement children,
- choices of names that honor the dead or a lover,
- anniversary syndrome which means reoccurring

<sup>1</sup> <https://genopro.com/>.

events across generations,

- family secrets as a source of power or vulnerability,
- triangular relationships between two members in conflict with a third one,
- illnesses that carry a generational purpose such as remaining close to family,
- order of birth,
- marital patterns,
- family's culture,
- myths or sagas, and others (McGoldrick, 2011).

Considering all these, I used the family tree to identify such patterns, like replacement children and triangular relationships. Then I looked at the patterns that the photographs revealed, such as 'anniversary syndrome' and family secrets, which allowed me to enrich the genogram and my understanding of the transgenerational transmission further.

### **SKINS WITHOUT SKIN, CUTIS EXPERIMENTS**

A compelling example of how photographic archives can relate to the skin, is 'The Lost Pictures, 1962-65' (2004-05), a work by the Kenyan trans-media artist Allan deSouza. The artist took images that belonged to his father, printed them, and placed them for six months around his house in places where his daily life and actions would ultimately transform them, like the shower and the kitchen. deSouza was exploring

the processes and connections of memory and forgetting through photography, by transforming and erasing the archives through the everyday actions of his body. Although in the beginning I considered applying a similar approach focusing on how my skin could transform my archives, after my skin analogy became clearer, I chose to explore the skin outside of the human body. Specifically, in my experiments, I regarded the testing of engagement and interaction with online and live audiences, collage techniques, book binding, and incorporation of different materials in the photographs. One of these experiments took place in February 2021, during the artistic residency at OT301<sup>2</sup> in Amsterdam, where I did a live-stream experiment<sup>3</sup> in which the audience was invited to lead the collage making and the narrations emerging through the photos. I was interested in seeing how the audience relates to personal archives of others, what information is revealed, and how a collaboration of different agencies can affect the decisions taken. I learnt that for most people, engaging with someone else's personal archive is more purposeful in the decisions taken, when given some background stories or context. At the same time, being distanced from the owner, can give clearer personal agency, and leave the space open for imagining what stories can emerge.

<sup>2</sup> OT301 is a nonprofit project in which public functions, workspaces and housing are combined to contribute to the fields of art, politics, and subculture. Find out more here: <http://www.ot301.nl/>

<sup>3</sup> For more information about this experiment, please click the following link: <https://4bidgallery.wordpress.com/2020/05/04/11w/>

This experiment later affected some decisions I took in 'Cutis Archiva', regarding how much is revealed in order to on the one hand, give a contextualization, but on the other hand, to not make it so specific that it becomes restrictive. For example, although in the suitcase station (see chapter 3), I provided the index of all the family members that have been photographed, I did not include their faces, which would explain who belongs to which name, and what position they hold within the family, in order to detach the imagination from referentiality. This detachment was necessary to unchain the archive from the past and the facts and be used for alternative associations by the audience.

In general, I experimented with various materials, most of which I either found or collected such as envelopes, ropes, hair, papers, and cardboard. Later, as I started to look further into textures and materials in connection to the skin, I focused on one with which I further experimented in various ways. I followed a recipe for making skin medical simulation, by using glycerin, gelatin, and water. For the purposes of clarity between the skin analogy and the skin material, I will now call this material, cutis. In Latin, cutis (plural cutēs), signifies 'the living skin, the skin that protects, that expresses and arouses and that is the subject of care and beautifying attention' (Connor, 2004, 11). I started experimenting with various ways of implementing the photos in the cutis, by initially placing the photo inside it, then having photos from both sides of it, and



Figure 4. Example of the dual characteristic of the photographs after their sealing in the skin simulation formula (cutis). Eryfili Drakopoulou (2021).

making collages either before or after the photo's adhesion to it. I tested sewing and cutting, as well as adding hair before it had dried. Then I continued by trying other materials on it, looking for skin-like textures that could potentially correspond to the handling of the photos, their punctum, or the bigger context. I worked with napkins, bubble wrap, oil paper, coffee filters and nets. Some materials were purposefully brought in to explore the possibilities of likeness to the skin, and others were randomly tested, and skin qualities were introduced by them. With each material, I tested the order of their layering and the thickness they required. Yet from the beginning, I realized the cutis' high stickable capacity and so I started placing my experiments on windows and mirrors to check their durability. At the end, I decided to focus on the initial formula, maintaining the glossy looking skin, with one photo on the one side and one on the other, forming the collage (Illustration 4). The materiality of the cutis was used to address the parallel relation of the shininess of photographs with the shiny skin as the ideal skin that signifies preciousness and intangibility. At the same time, it was used to address the paradox of this intangibility since the shiny skin invites touch and suggests that it has already been touched (Connor, 2004, 59). Connor, to whose theory on glossy skin I have based my argument on, suggests that,

*'The gloss of the photograph signifies its more than human perfection, and therefore its vulnerability to the attentions of fingers, and the scratches, creases and corrupting smears of greasiness they can impart' (2004, 59).*

This vulnerability became evident in the performance installation, through the handling and the unsealing of the cutēs by the audience. The materiality set the parameters of attentive touch based on specific qualities of care (handling softly and gently). The cutis left traces on the audience's skin, and it made the malleable approach of the archive explicit in relation to the concept of identity in change.

### 'A COLLAGE I'M ALL SEWN UP'<sup>4</sup>

Collage was the method proposed in the research that would link the photographic archives with the transgenerational effect and the skin archive, through experimentation. Kathleen Vaughan, visual artist, and scholar, proposes eight characteristics of the collage method in artistic research, among which four of them are worth mentioning; (a) the 'juxtaposition', in terms of how multiple fragments create new meanings by coming together, (b) the 'situated artist/researcher', in terms of how collage resonates with personal, historical and cultural structures, (c) 'open-endedness', in terms of not being definitive, and finally, (d) collages as 'products that reflect, reveal, and document the process' (40-42, 2005). At first, I started off with a traditional approach of collage but as I engaged with the cutis, I started looking at collage through the aforementioned characteristics; bringing

together multiple historical traces and challenging them through my skin analogy. The photos became active agents of the skins, and I became more minimal in my choices as I started to consider the role of the audience in performing the collage. When the repetition factor took prominent position in the practice, I focused on the ability of the skin to carry the repetitions within, as a whole environment. Therefore, the collage focused on the repetitions, the interrelations of the photos, the design of space and the actions of the audience.

The word collage comes from the French word 'collé' which means glued, but further than this, 'a collage fragments space and repurposes objects to contextualize multiple realities' (Gerstenblatt, 295, 2013), something that was designed to happen in the actual space of the performance. Collage 'challenges objectivity and a singular reality' (Gerstenblatt, 295, 2013) and this became very important when I realized that the research was not about unraveling aspects of my identity in relation to my ancestors, but rather looking at identity in constant change even if it derives from that inherited archive. 'Retouching Bruises' (1975) by Ulay, the renowned German artist who worked with performance art and photography, was a series of one hundred polaroid photographs of himself and his partner, marked by each other's fingerprint, exploring performativity of identity. For Ulay, photographs were an object of exchange, 'a microscopically thin, light sensitive skin' (Jones, 2015, 8). The photos of this work evoke what

<sup>4</sup> Title and lyrics of the song Exquisite Corpse, in Hedwig and the Angry Inch (1999) by Stephen Trask.

media theorist Laura U. Marks calls 'haptic visuality', which elicits 'tactile qualities of skin suggested through the visual texture and depth of photographic imagery' (Jones, 2015, 8). The indexicality of fingerprints is used to archive the contacts of the past while establishing new threads with every future experienter (Jones, 2015, 9). These aspects of his work that question embodiment, skin, and photography, and most importantly his definition of identity as 'existing only through change' (Jones, 2015, 11), influenced and defined my process from the beginning. Identity as a form of collage then, determined the broader way of approaching identity as something that derives from an archive but can be read in different valid ways. Collage made explicit the multiple and endless narrations that one can identify in their own and in others' archives.

## THE EPIDERMIS

The epidermis is the outermost layer of the skin. Its etymology derives from the Greek language and means that something is epi (upon) the skin (derma). This layer is responsible for most of the protective functions of the skin such as preventing pathogens to enter, protecting the system from the sun, and controlling thermoregulation. It consists mainly of keratinocytes, skin cells that are shed daily and renewed every 4 weeks, deriving from the stratum basale, the last of the four to five sublayers of the epidermis (Roberts, 2016, 294). The epidermis of my research are the findings that emerged through my process and my performance installation, like skin cells that emerge in the surface of the skin, ready to shed off. My purpose in this chapter is not to let them flake off, but rather collect them and reflect on the new perspectives they can offer to my practice.

### 'CUTIS ARCHIVA' REFLECTIONS

On the 19th of May 2021, with a performance installation titled 'Cutis Archiva', I had the chance to share my research during the final performances in the context of my master studies. The audience entered the theater, where ten 100cm x 65cm transparent plastic sheets were hanging from the ceiling, hosting eight to ten cutēs each (Appendix D-1). One of the plastic sheets included the instructions, which were inviting the audience members to engage with the cutēs, by peeling

them off and rearranging them when they would identify a narrative or an association. A bag of ice cubes melting slowly on one cutis was also hanging inside the space. At the edge of the space, a table with a found suitcase on, was available for individual encounters with the audience. The suitcase consisted of a fingerprint table sheet (index), a red ink pad and about thirty small folders. Each folder contained a lock of hair, an original photo negative, and a small note (Appendix D-2, D-3). The instructions were guiding the participants to dip their fingerprint in the red ink, mark a name on the index, mark the negative inside the small folder, and take that folder with them (Illustration 5). The aim was to enter into an exchange of skins and to build the foundations for a shared archive. Although, I was preparing for this performance for months, I do not consider it the final result of the research, but rather an experiment regarding the choices I make to disseminate and share my work. Indeed, through this performance installation, I learnt a lot on how I can continue to further develop my practice as research, and how to actualize the process of making- public more efficiently.

The choice of not being physically present in the space as a performer or even as the creator was made quite early on when I started envisioning the performance, without this meaning that I did not question other alternatives throughout the process. By looking at photographs as skin sites, I wanted to explore their performativity as performing bodies. I describe

this work as a performance installation because it was performed through the cutēs, and more importantly through the audience. It was not so much a performance without performers, but rather one that was actualized and activated through the presence and interaction of the audience with the set. The next time I present this experiment, however, I would like to test being in the space either as the artist as archivist and curator of the archive, or as a performer, and see what the impact on the audience's narrations might be. This performance installation could also be characterized as 'archive as performance', considering that my practice of archiving also became the practice of the audience. Archives are classified and systematized, which results in their displacement from their initial context, and the recontextualization of them in different ways. For Allan Sekula, American photographer and writer, a photograph loses its meaning when it is abstracted from its maker or prior user and placed elsewhere. He argues,

*'In an archive, the possibility of meaning is 'liberated' from the actual contingencies of use. But this liberation is also a loss, an abstraction from the complexity and richness of use, a loss of context' (2003, 444).*

Yet even abstracted from their context, the photographs share this loss with the rest of the photographs of the larger archive, creating what Sekula calls 'a relation of abstract visual equivalence between pictures' (2003, 445), while positioning them in a larger systematic and linguistic order that seeks

to stabilize the speculative element of photography and discipline the researcher (Rose, 2000, 558-559). However, in my viewpoint, this abstraction becomes a way for the archive to exist under new meanings and interpretations, which was encouraged in my performance installation. Photographic archives are transformed by the archival practices and at the same time, the researcher is produced by the archives in matters of handling, materiality and embodiment applied, as well as by the desire to look for something else within it (Rose, 2000, 566). I recognize, that although this transformation did happen during my practice of archivization, as well as during the audience's interactions with the archive, I did not give the space for this change to be emphasized during the performance. By treating my archives as malleable, I was materializing the transformability that they can exercise on the formation of identity/-ies, which corresponds to the idea of perpetual re-generation. However, the identity that was formed, was never set, and therefore, the new narrations created by the audience became ephemeral and the witnessing of the change was compromised. On the one hand, this is justifiable, as the fact that the narrations could emerge in million different ways, is related to their ephemerality. On the other hand, my goal was to initiate collective moments of reimagining by accessing my archive and so the witnessing of change should have been more emphasized.

Some of the ways I could rework on these questions would

be by; reconsidering the number of images, which in my performance might have been overwhelming and hard to navigate through; offering more insights on the stories and the people behind the photographs, thus creating more clear understandings of my logic of archivization which would then open the space for further identifications; incorporating ways of tracing the effect that the creations and the witnessing of the audience has on my personal relationship with the archive; curating a gradual process of introducing the audience to the archive that would enable collective compositions with the audience's individual and collective agencies.

### **THE MYSTERIES**

What is revealed and what stays in mystery was another element of my practice that I have been reflecting on even before the performance installation. In my process, I went through steps of excavations that I found necessary for dealing with archives. The family tree, the indexes, the punctum in each photo and the interrelations inside the larger archive, were layers of my archiving practice that floated around in the performance, but were not exactly underlined and therefore, were inaccessible to the audience. I believed that by beholding these elements, I was making the archive less personal and bound to my identity, thus more accessible. I have now realized that such archives are so personal that on the contrary, making them more readable and contextualized could offer a clearer understanding to

the audience. The only truthfulness that can be attested is the reading that a photograph carries through its indexicality. However, considering how a photograph is recontextualized when it enters a new archive, and the friction between fiction and reality was also something that emerged, not only for me as the owner and the archivist of the photographs, but also for the audience as the new archivists of a mysterious content that is and is not what it appears to be, as it is constantly transformed.

One of the operations I employed in relation to the indexicality of the photographs, was the use of mistranslation through a soundscape I created and played throughout the performance installation, in which I mistranslated the writings of the backsides of some of the photographs (Appendix E). These varied from dedicating a photograph to a friend, a spouse, or parents, specifying it with the date and the place that was taken, indicating who was photographed or to whom the photograph was sent to, including some brief updates about the owner or the subject of the photograph. I mistranslated the writings partially, and only the parts that would not result in losing the original meaning and value, from Greek (that they were written in) to English. I use the word mistranslating, inspired by Iranian artist Dr. Tara Fatehi Irani<sup>5</sup>, whose work deals with the ephemeral interactions and mistranslations between memories, words, the body,

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Fatehi Irani was one of my two mentors during my Dissertation by Practice and the operation of mistranslating was proposed and discussed in one of our tutorials. An intriguing example of mistranslating in her work, is 'No pressure, but find me a bed out there: performing the day-to-day (un)translatability' (2016).

and sites. This operation aimed to avoid the false idea of universalization of a family model and to respect differentiation of the origins of archives even if they are or become part of a wider context. Furthermore, the mistranslation assisted as one more layer of my body's misplacement, performing the archive through my voice. Misplacement could be recognized all over the performance, from making the photos public, asking the audience to rearrange the cutēs, mark their fingerprint on the index, and take with them a piece of my hair. Misplacement was approached in terms of spatiality, deconstruction, incompleteness, and fragmentation through a constant archivization.

The last mystery I will elaborate on is the analogy of skin and its dramaturgical role in the research and the performance installation. The skin as I described in chapter 1, was viewed through Michel Serres' concept of the skin as a milieu and, from the entire space to each plastic sheet hanging, and each of the photographs attached in the hanging sheets, were a part of the milieu and a milieu in themselves. The transparent materiality of the sheets hosting the photographs, enabled dramaturgically the approach of the skin as an archive, and family photographs as skin sites layering upon one another and becoming the milieu. This enabled different subjectivities to come through, and the archives became dependent on the actions of the audience. The cutis served as a container, a protection, and a sealing of the photographs, which often failed to keep up with its materiality as it was handled by many

pairs of hands. A further unraveling was performed, as the cutis often broke off, was unpeeled, or forced to leave its place, thus leaving behind visible traces. The reversed technology of ice dripping on top of one of the photographs which was already placed in a pile of ice cubes, was initially employed to reveal the technology behind the cutis, by reversing its formula. Secondly, it was used to support the analogy of the skin by resembling a preservation of skin trans-placement dependent on the ice. Thirdly, in contrast to the idea of preservation, it was then used to unseal the photograph and expose its layers, revealing their dual relation in new ways. The exchange of the skins with the audience was happening through the very touch of the cutēs, the traces of the cutēs on their fingers, the marking of their fingerprints under the names of my ancestors, the gifts of photo negatives and hair locks, and most importantly through activating the whole space as a living skin and constantly regenerating it.

### **FUTURE ARCHIVES**

The photographs performing in the installation went through a process of skin-ing, of sealing, of archiving and then of unsealing and re-emergent archiving. Archives in constant change continue to affect and be affected by every new rearrangement, look, touch or resealing. My practice also continues to evolve with the new demands and the offerings that the new archives bring with every change they go through. For instance, the next phase of the 'Cutis Archiva'

experiment, is a new archivization process of the transformed archives. In this loop of archiving with a twirled temporality of 'what-has-been' and 'what-could-have-been', there is space for further aspects of approaching an archive that although were present in an underlying level in my practice, they were not seminal for it.

The matter of inclusivity in terms of heteronormative representations of family, deliberation on what is considered a family further than a biological one, and what it means to make family photos public and ask an audience to interfere with them, are questions I want to tackle through the practice of archiving, and then through the relation I ask the audience to have with them. The constitution of the archive itself constructs the body as well, (Rose, 2000, 561) therefore, there is a responsibility in how archives are regulated and asked to be transformed, and these will be some of the ways I will continue developing in my practice as research.

## CONCLUSION

Skin is often considered to be an interface, a surface that enables interaction between the inner and outer world. However, in the context of my research, skin as a milieu is a common environment that connects, touches, and affects everybody, while also being affected. In addition, the skin analogy conceptualizes the layers of archives and identities and is significant to my practice on family photographs.

Archives instead of frozen time capsules, here are studied as capable of producing while they record (Derrida, 1995, 17), and as tools for questioning history, and reflecting on collective memory.

Photographs are considered to carry the trace of the past. They are the proof of what happened in the exact moment they were taken, and, in this way, they can also say a lot about the wider context of that time. Although they are often staged and depict specific life events, in relation to one another and in search for the punctum, they can reveal stories well-hidden and under covered.

Studying the transgenerational transmission in the psychotherapeutic field means discovering how identity has been conditioned by the patterns across generations, and by reoccurring choices or consequences in relation to specific

events in the ancestor's time. What is argued is that when these are recognized, the descendants can break through them and utterly change the disturbing effects in their identity.

Taking all these insights into account, the most important outcomes of my practice as research have been (a) strategies of looking at identity and archives as constantly transforming through multiple and collective narrations, (b) the insights that the transformations performed on the photographs can bring to the wider understanding of history, and (c) the importance of dealing with personal archives for collectively reimagining the present and the future through the past. Through my research I have managed to develop my own practice of archiving through which history is reconstructed. My practice is situated in the field of artists as archivists, and in particular among those who work with family photography. In my process, I go through meticulous research on the family tree by studying the genogram, I collect the archives which I classify and recategorize for each purpose accordingly, I study and analyze them, and I look for the relations between them. My archiving continues with their treatment, which exposes their punctum while sealing them. Through becoming cutēs, the photographs adopt new capacities and ask for a different kind of handling which affects the subjectivities that emerge. After the encounters and reconstructions with the public, they can continue being used in the same or in new ways, which I plan to discover soon.

The questions I wanted to explore during my dissertation were how skin can be used as an analogy for family photographs as a transgenerational archive, how personal archives can become public and accessible, and how the transgenerational transmission can be pinpointed and transformed through family photographs. In this thesis I have presented my research and my findings and have argued that family photographs can be used to understand and then reconstruct the past, the present and the future, through archiving. I have also explained my approach of the skin as a milieu, unbound of the human body, and how I use the analogy of the skin in relation to family photographs and my archiving practice. I have showed how I merge the different fields in an interdisciplinary manner by regarding the skin both as an analogy, a lens, and a conceptual framework. The research is situated in the field of archival art, but it also corresponds to artists who work with the skin, physical or not, and identity. Therefore, what I hope to contribute with this research, and its future trajectory, is the intersection of transgenerational theory, family photography, archiving as extended performance practice for what-could-have-been, and skin analogy, along with communal exchanges, through the medium of performance installation. I understand the implications, politics, and restrictions of using family photography and I will continue my practice with this concern as a driving force. In developing my practice, I plan to include photographs of other families, initiate collective family tree

making, make new considerations of skin analogies, queer the family archive, experiment more without performing live bodies, and ultimately proceed with archives further than photographic ones.

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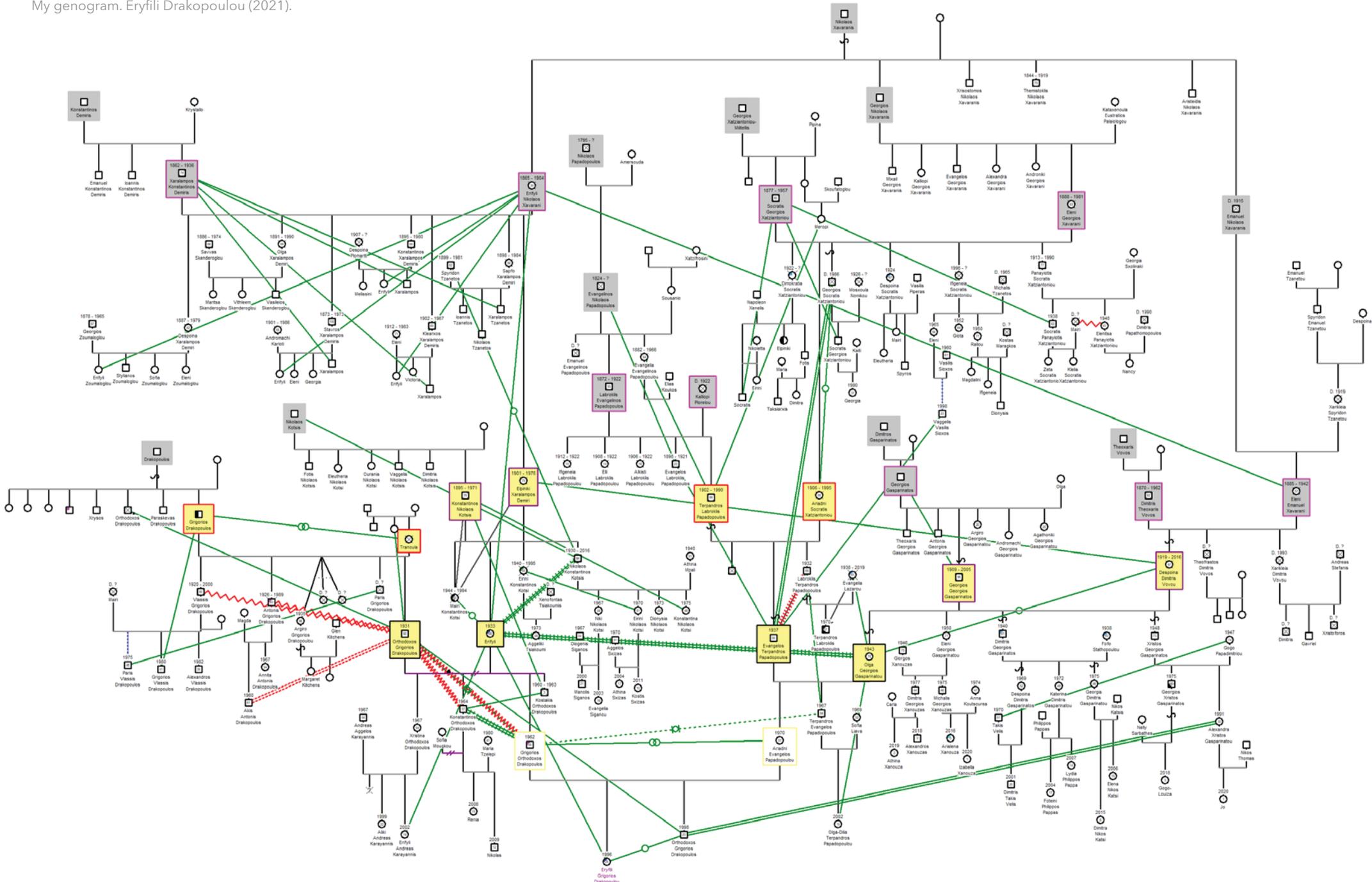
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# APPENDIX A

My genogram. Eryfili Drakopoulou (2021).



## APPENDIX B

To watch abstracts from 'Cutis Archiva' and access my process through visual archives, visit:

<https://eryfilidrakopoulou.wixsite.com/portfolio>.

# APPENDIX C

(C) Designing the relations of the cuties for the performance installation.

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9

looking  
back  
mourning  
family bond  
honoring



9

Features  
unfulfilled  
dreams  
loss



9

compassion  
support  
brotherhood



9

underlying  
secret Δ

invisible  
loyalty

# APPENDIX D

D(i). 'Cutis Archiva' (2021). Photo credits: Fenia Kotsopoulou.

HOME OF  
PERFORMANCE  
PRACTICES

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D(ii). The suitcase station in 'Cutis Archiva' (2021). Photo credits: Fenia Kotsopoulou



HOME OF  
PERFORMANCE  
PRACTICES



## INSTRUCTIONS FOR ARCHIVIZATION

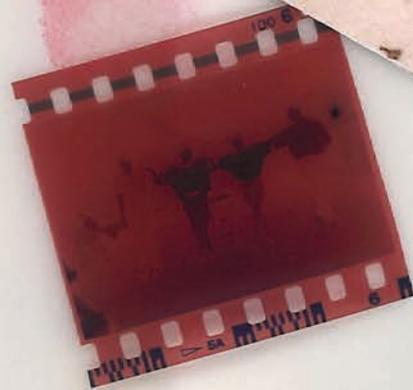
1. Open the fingerprint table folder.
2. Dip your fingerprint in the red ink.
3. Mark your fingerprint on the table sheet.
4. Open one of the small folders.
5. Mark a negative with your fingerprint.
6. Put it back and take it with you. It's yours.

PHOTO  
PRINTING  
14 18A, 1958

Thank you for sharing your ancestral archive with me. We have now entered into an exchange of skins.

I have an inked mark of your skin and you have my hair, my dead epidermal cells. The marked negative you received, is an open invitation to continue the transformations and reconstructions.

CUTIS ARCHIVA ENITI



D(iib). The contents of the suitcase station, 'Cutis Archiva' (2021).  
Photo credits: Fenia Kotsopoulou



**HOME OF  
PERFORMANCE  
PRACTICES**





- 12 Μαρτίου 1964

Τότε που είχα κοντά μου τα λατρευτά μου πρόσωπα μα που μου έφυγαν και έμεινα μόνος και απαρηγόρητος.

- Congo le 21<sup>st</sup> of July 1963

Για να θαυμάσετε φωτογένεια και μην ενοχλήσετε τα μάτια μου γιατί τους χαμένους ορίζοντες.

- Memento of our new built house.

- 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1954 Rotterdam

Απελπισμένοι έμισαθ σε κύματα αφρισμένα και αν δεν αλλάζουν καιροί... κλάψα Χαράλαμπε

- Ενθύμιόν σχολείου χωροφυλακής 1 ώρα πριν τας παναγυρικός εξετάσεις ενώπιον του αρχηγού της χωροφυλακής.

- Ελλιαϊκος. Evening in the garden. May 1953

- My dear Eryfili, I send you this photo so that you can look at me when you remember me and remember me when you look at me. A thousand kisses, Eryfili

Χαριόφειμ σ'εκει βεβα  
 σ'εκει που σου  
 τ'η ν'η ευφάσσαν  
 φωτογένια και μου  
 'ενοχλήστε κ'η φάσσαν  
 τ'η ν'η φάσσαν  
 χαριόφειμ σ'εκει βεβα  
 Μ'η σ'η  
 σου  
 Βαγγέλιος

χαραγμένο μου  
 εριγυρμένη  
 σου σ'εκει αν γω  
 χαριόφειμ σου τ'η ν'η  
 με εβίωσας σ'εκει βεβα  
 ευφάσσαν μου τ'η ν'η  
 ευφάσσαν σ'εκει βεβα  
 Μ'η τ'η ν'η  
 σου

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