

FRAGMENTS | Cho Laam Yuen

Artist statement

Upon entering the Tamiment Library's digital archive, I faced an opportunity to access the archive in a new way. Browsing through various collections and their images, I realized that by virtue of them being online, all the materials could be freely removed from their appointed locations and be wholly transferred to a place of my choosing, as opposed to being in the physical archive and being restricted to my best attempt at reproducibility: taking a photo of the original.

However, I soon encountered a problem with the very transferability of the digital image. The fantasy of being able to casually drag and drop the image onto my desktop, allowing for closer examination, was shot by the reality that the image was anchored onto the web page. Changing tactics and attempting to take a screenshot lowered the resolution of the photograph, bearing once again disappointing results. The only other option was the old-fashioned manual download, but even so, the digital archive found a way to surprise me. Opening the jpeg on my desktop revealed that only a quarter of the photograph had been downloaded, and only after three additional downloads did I possess all four parts.

As a result of downloading, the image had become disembodied from its whole. This drew my attention away from investigating the body of the photograph and towards the process of digitization. My initial hypothesis was that the original image must have been rescanned in quadrants and digitally reconstructed as a whole, reflecting the fragmentation from the download. However, upon further research into the archive's digitization protocol, I discovered that the image in its entirety was scanned to remain as faithful as possible to the original material. While this disproved my hypothesis, it became all the more interesting that even though the archive sought to maintain the image as a whole, it effectively became disassembled upon leaving the archive.

My project seeks to emphasize the fragmented download and the archival process of digitization, creating a new lens through which these photographs can be viewed. The fragmented images draw attention to how the materiality of the photograph changes by being transferred through the archive, both internally and externally. I seek to transform the act of viewing these images by further dismantling the parts from its whole, effectively distorting the very frames of reference that situate the viewer, warping the continuity of forms, reliability of size and fluidity of composition. Thus, I attract the spectator's gaze towards the elements in the periphery and odd details that surfaced before my eyes in my process of reassembly.

Click [here](#) to view the project.

International Brigades Archive, Moscow: Selected Images (ALBA.PHOTO.177)

Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives
Special Collections, Elmer Holmes Bobst Library
70 Washington Square South New York, NY 10012
New York University Libraries

1. Item 177_183018, 1937; 2. Item 177_183013, 1937; 3. Item 177_183029, 1937; 4. Item 177_190096, Undated; 5. Item 177_183030, 1937; 6. Item 177_183028, 1937; 7. Item 177_183023, 1937; 8. Item 177_183010, 1937; 9. Item 177_190042, Undated; 10. Item 177_190034, Undated; 11. Item 177_183039, 1937; 12. Item 177_190020, Undated; 13. Item 177_190012, Undated; 14. Item 177_190011, Undated; 15. Item 177_190008, Undated; 16. Item 177_183017, 1937; 17. Item 177_190002, Undated; 18. Item 177_179036, Undated; 19. Item 177_179040, Undated; 20. Item 177_179075, Undated; 21. Item 177_191128, 1937-1938; 22. Item 177_191035, 1937-1938; 23. Item 177_191034, 1937-1938; 24. Item 177_191025, 1937-1938; 25. Item 177_191017, 1937-1938.