

Documentation in Motion

Toward a Lived Archival Practice

Greta Grinevičiūtė

How to Read This Text

This text is a document, a method, a residue, and an invitation. You are welcome to choose how you want to experience it.



Option 1—Take it for a walk

Put on headphones. Listen while moving. Let the rhythm of your steps carry the rhythm of the words. Let the text arrive through breath, wind, and ground.

Recording Note/Listening Context: This is a home recording layered with the ambient sounds of my daily walks—footsteps, breath, the occasional rustle or distant voice. You may hear my dog Pūga breathing beside me; she tends to stay close, and her presence became part of the rhythm I trace in this work.

The audio is unpolished. My pronunciation is far from perfect. Still, I chose to record this myself—to preserve the tone and pace of my own voice, and to let the documentation remain personal, partial, and present.



Option 2—Read it whilst listening to me walk

Let the background presence of my movement—footsteps, air, environment—become part of the reading. Not a soundscape, but a kind of company.

Option 3—Read in stillness

On the screen, on the page. Let the structure hold you. Return whenever you wish.

None of these options are “correct.”

Each is a way in.

Documentation, too, is a way in.

Introduction

In the early phases of my artistic research,¹ documentation sat quietly in the background—necessary, practical, and somewhat burdensome. It was a way of recording rehearsals, saving images, and collecting fragments that might later prove useful. Like many artists, I understood documentation as something adjacent to the work, not as part of its thinking.

By “thinking,” I don’t mean that the work itself thinks in an autonomous sense, but rather that the process of making is already entangled with reflection, decision, and relation. In choreographic and artistic research, thinking often happens through the work itself, rather than in advance or apart from it. It unfolds through doing—in the movement, in the material, in the body’s negotiation with time, space, and attention. Documentation, I began to sense, was not separate from that process. It could participate in it.² This shift, from viewing

¹ My artistic research project “Interplay Between Choreography and Cinema: Toward a Resonant Artistic Practice” is a long-form choreographic and interdisciplinary practice, a process that developed over several years in which choreography develops gradually, often across several interconnected projects. This approach allows for gestures, ideas, and questions to resurface and transform over time. Because the practice moves between stage, screen, and site-specific contexts, it becomes inherently interdisciplinary, combining choreographic logic with cinematic, sonic, and documentary strategies.

² This shift draws on feminist epistemologies, particularly Donna Haraway’s concept of situated knowledges (1988), which challenges hierarchical, detached modes of producing knowledge and instead foregrounds relationality and partial perspectives. Within choreographic epistemologies, such as those discussed by Susan Leigh Foster (2011) and Erin Manning (2013), knowing emerges through embodied practices, temporal rhythms, and collaborative processes. In this context, documentation is understood not as neutral evidence but as an active participant in shaping the artistic research process.

documentation as proof to treating it as a collaborator, is situated within feminist research ethics and choreographic epistemologies, where knowing emerges through relation, rhythm, and reflection.

Slowly, the foundational assumption I carried about documentation—as something peripheral to the creative process—began to unravel.

What if documentation wasn't a trace of the process, but one of its engines?

What if the act of recording, returning, and noticing could shape not only what I remembered — but how I created?

This article emerges from this shift. Below I reflect on a process that developed over several years, which formed a documentation practice that is not separate from the work, but resonant with it, responsive to the rhythms, scale, and ethics of the practice itself. Rather than seeking a fixed archival system (such as institutional templates, timestamped rehearsal logs, standardised image banks, or linear progress reports) I began to ask a different question: What kind of documentation structure is already present inside the way I work?

Drawing from choreographic thinking, feminist research ethics, and my own evolving methods of tracing process—through walking, speaking, filming, transcribing, and categorising—I describe how a documentation system grew not from design, but from lived attention. While these acts may seem intimate or analogue, they are always mediated by devices, software, and the languages they afford. I do not attempt to fully theorise these technologies here, but I acknowledge their role in shaping the rhythms and forms of this archival practice. This article offers not a model, but a proposition: that documentation can become an active collaborator, a site of resonance, and a methodology in its own right.

Contextual Grounding: Documentation Beyond Trace

At the beginning of my research, documentation served a functional purpose: to preserve, archive, and record. Yet within the field of artistic research, documentation is rarely neutral. It reflects and affects the work. It carries assumptions about what should be remembered—and how.

Like the books we read, the films we watch, or the exhibitions we visit, documentation can shape creation in subtle and often unnoticed ways. At some point, I encountered texts “*Artistic Experiments as Research*” (Bippus 2013) and “*Connecting Worlds*” (Balkema 2004). At first, they didn’t resonate with me directly. But over time, their voices began to return—especially when I found myself questioning the purpose of documentation.³

ELKE BIPPUS: Artistic experimentation involves openness to departures... to accommodate novel insights, and is fundamentally critical of prevailing knowledge cultures.

ME: So, in this light, documentation might not be an afterthought, but part of the epistemic unfolding—not a trace, but an operator?

ANNETTE BALKEMA: Exactly. Documentation stages the conditions for thought to circulate differently.

Their writing shifted something. Both Bippus and Balkema inspired me to look at documentation not as a passive reflector, but as an active methodological partner—capable of generating knowledge, not merely preserving it. The document becomes not an after-image, but a participant in the process.

This shift aligns closely with feminist and choreographic approaches to research, where embodied knowledge (Haraway 1988, 580), lived time (Foster 2011, 6-10), and attentional practices (Manning 2013, 133-148) shape the conditions of knowing. In these frameworks, documentation is not simply about what happened, but about how something was held—how it moved through relation. Instead of asking how to document “correctly,” I began to ask:

³ The dialogue in this article is written in a fictocritical mode—interdisciplinary practice that seeks to ‘blur the boundaries between the fictional, the factual, and the theoretical’ (Maroto 2013, 65). Rather than presenting direct citations, I construct imagined conversations that draw upon, reinterpret, and weave together ideas from theoretical texts. In this case, the responses are influenced by „Artistic Experiments as Research“ (Bippus 2013) and „Connecting Worlds“ (Balkema 2007) but they are not verbatim quotations.

What kind of documentation form resonates with the way I work?

What kind of archive emerges from the rhythms, textures, and ethics of my own practice?

These questions gradually reshaped not only how I documented, but how I created. Over time, the line between documenting and making began to blur.

Daily Practice as an Archival System

The development of my documentation method did not begin with a plan. It began with a walk. Each morning for nearly five years, I have followed the same route with my dog Pūga, walking around five kilometres a day. Over time, this repetition evolved into more than a routine. It became a slow structure for thinking, observing, and collecting—not material, but states of being, moving and thinking. What emerged over time was not a system of categorisation, but a rhythm, a sequence of gestures that gradually became a daily archival practice. This practice unfolded in distinct phases (overleaf):



GRETA GRINEVIČIŪTĖ

1. Grounding phone calls
2. Analogue looking
3. One-take dance recording
4. Spoken reflections/voice notes
5. Transcription and return

Each phase contributed differently to the process: some offered grounding, others generated material, and others revealed thought in motion. Together, they formed a documentation practice not aimed at preservation, but at orientation—an embodied loop of return, resonance, and slow emergence.

1. *Grounding phone calls.* Each walk began with a call—usually to my grandmother first, and then to my father. What started as a spontaneous gesture gradually became a quiet ritual. These simple conversations—sometimes short, sometimes mundane—offered grounding through relation. They became small acts of reaching toward what had been lost, reactivating faded ties. Though never intended as part of the research, they marked the first phase in my rhythm of attention. Over time, these calls mirrored the logic of my documentation practice itself: unplanned moments that, through repetition, became method.

2. *Analogue Looking.* As the call ended, my attention shifted. I entered what I came to call analogue looking—a perceptual state marked by slowness, absorption, and non-instrumental presence. It is not a technical reference to analogue media, but a way of sensing before capture: a gaze that lingers without composing, that absorbs rather than frames. This way of looking draws from the material poetics of analogue film—grain, blur, soft edges—but lives as a felt attentional mode. Over time, it began to inform how I approached the gaze in choreographic cinema: not just where the camera looks, but how it looks. How it can touch, hesitate, and remain unfinished.

3. *One-Take Dance Recording.* At a familiar spot on the hill, I danced. No choreography, no score, no plan. One song and one take. I set up a static camera—sometimes handheld, always simple. The goal was not to perform but to witness what was happening that day with my body. This was the only digital gesture in the practice, and yet it retained the softness of analogue attention. It did not aim to represent a

finished action, but to register a state: imperfect, unpolished and present.

Afterwards, I often chose a short fragment from the footage—accidentally or intuitively—and shared it on my personal Instagram account. Not for aesthetic refinement, but to mark presence. To let friends, allies, and collaborators witness a trace. A small act of showing, without spectacle.



4. *Spoken Reflections/Voice Notes.* After dancing, I spoke aloud—without script, sometimes hesitantly. These voice notes became a space for processing: not yet analysis, but fragments, questions, affects. They captured a thinking-in-motion, a soft dialogue between what had just occurred and what could not yet be named. In time, these became my most vital trace—where thought first emerged.

5. *Transcription and Return.* Later, I transcribed the voice memos. Not to extract clarity, but to return. The written form revealed rhythms, hesitations, and repetitions. I began to see what I was circling. Some thoughts appeared incomplete but necessary. Others reappeared weeks later in altered form. Most of the transcripts led nowhere—or dissolved the same day—but a few lingered. I returned to these again and again, re-reading, annotating, sometimes rewriting them into other forms: scores, questions, voice-overs, theoretical fragments. They began to enter my artistic and personal life in layered ways, shaping my thinking

on haptic visibility, feminist epistemology, relation as a creative tool, collective ethics, and shared authorship.

The transcription phase was not about fixing thought, but watching it fold and unfold—an act of slow recognition. The walk, the dance, the voice, the gaze—these were never intended as an archival system. But they formed one. Not through categorisation or design, but through rhythm, repetition, and return. It emerged not from theoretical planning, but from the contours of daily life: from the need to walk, to care, to accompany Pūga, and to stay present within the body's unfolding. Documentation began where routine met relation.

This was not documentation as proof. It was documentation as orientation. As a daily act of aligning with the process—through the body, time, space.

From Traces to Thinking

*"I'm speaking again.
But I'm not sure who to /.../
Or what I'm answering /.../"*
(Voice memo transcript, March 12th, 2023)

The first time I listened back to my own recordings, I felt embarrassed then distance, and then recognition. I wasn't documenting thoughts. I was finding them. As if they had been walking just behind me the whole time.

The act of recording was not about remembering what I knew. It was about noticing what I hadn't yet understood; I was already thinking.

I return to the transcripts.
To the pauses. The circling.
The sentences that never finished, but didn't need to.

And I begin to realise:
This is not annotation; this is rhythm.
This is not argument; this is phrasing.
A thought that hums beneath another.
A breath that shifts the weight of a question.

*“What if the archive doesn’t preserve the work,
But gives it a place to continue mutating?”⁴*

I start layering.
Text beside drawing.
Image beside sound.
Carroll’s categories tangled with my handwriting.
A rhythm of inputs and intrusions.
Not a structure for clarity,
but a field of attention.

The archive begins to act on me.

I don’t return to it to explain.
I return to be disoriented again.
To follow what felt important—before I could name it.
In this way, the documentation becomes rehearsal.
A space of movement.
Of unfinished arguments.
Of soft collisions.

And reading becomes something else.
A tactile act.
A pulse beneath theory.
A kind of listening.

*“Do I need to understand what I’m doing
for it to be part of the work?”*
(Voice memo, September 6th, 2024)

At some point, the traces I had gathered—voice notes, transcriptions, fragmentary sketches—began to accumulate. Not just in quantity, but in pressure. The archive became too much to carry, but too alive to discard. I realised I wasn’t simply storing material. I was generating a texture of thought. Something slow, recursive, provisional.

This aligns with what scholar Elke Bippus calls the experimental system of artistic research (2013, 130), a method not aimed at certainty

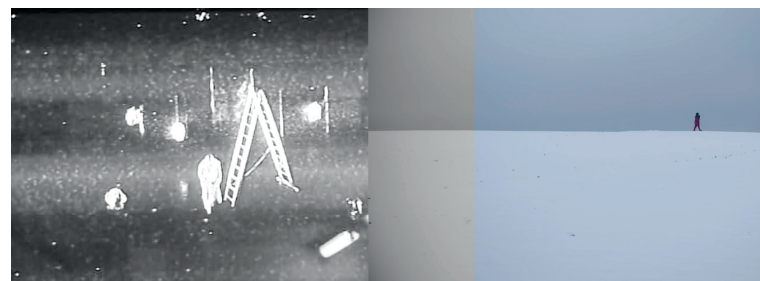
⁴ Laura U. Marks, paraphrased in the margin of a hill walk transcript. Her work focuses on the multisensory dimensions of film and video. In *“The Skin of the Film”* (2000, 162), she introduces the concept of haptic visibility—a mode of embodied, tactile viewing that privileges texture, closeness, and sensation over distant, optical mastery. Her framework informs the way I approach visibility and attention in my own artistic practice.

or proof, but at the emergence of possibilities within the process itself. The document, here, does not explain the work — it extends it. It creates a rhythm of returns.

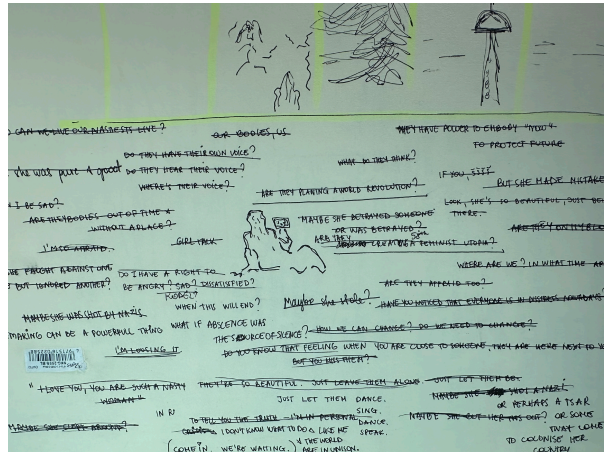
I begin to build with the fragments.
Do not arrange them. Do not decode them.
I just follow them.
Sometimes a line spoken out loud leads to a visual form.



Sometimes a failed explanation becomes the beginning of a movement score.



Sometimes the same question returns three weeks later, wearing a different language.



I don't delete repetition.
I start to trust it.

In this sense, the archive is not a mirror.
It is not a static record of what happened.
It is an atmosphere—living, shifting, unresolvable!
It shapes how I move through the work.
Not by providing answers,
But by reminding me how I got here.

*"The archival becomes the choreographic."
(Field note, November 2nd, 2024)*

This process could be described as an auto-ethnographic choreography of thought. A thinking-through-practice that privileges not only the outcomes of making, but the conditions under which making becomes possible. It does not aim for coherence. It cultivates relations.

Returning: Documentation as Cognitive Method

Rather than seeking a fixed system of documentation, I began to understand the value of *returning*. Returning not to summarise or organise,

but to listen again—to what had been said, what had been skipped, what had been mumbled or misheard.

The archive became a site of resonance.

Not a place to clarify meaning, but a place to stay with it.

Over time, the daily accumulation of voice recordings, transcripts, and notes began to reveal something more than personal routine. What first appeared as an informal practice—tracing thoughts aloud while walking—gradually exposed a deeper methodological function: it allowed me to observe how my thinking developed over time.

These observations did not arise through analysis, but through return. I re-listened to voice notes while walking again, sometimes days later. I scrolled through folders of recordings, letting titles trigger memory. I re-read partial transcripts, often without looking for anything specific. Slowly, patterns emerged—not as conclusions, but as rhythms. Ideas resurfaced with different words, or collided with fragments I had forgotten. In this way, the archive didn't clarify—it reverberated. It allowed me to trace the shape of thought as it unfolded, hesitated, or returned changed.

The repeated act of speaking and recording in motion enabled a reflective loop, where language was not fixed but iterative. Ideas surfaced not as clear propositions, but through approximation, rephrasing, hesitation. The transcription process made visible the temporal unfolding of thought—how a concept might surface incompletely, return later in altered form, or shift register entirely.

This echoes what philosopher Robin Nelson describes as know-how becoming know-that (2013, 3-22), where embodied or intuitive processes are later named, articulated, or situated within theoretical frameworks. My documentation was not simply preserving the residue of thinking. It was structuring the space in which thinking could occur, reoccur, and be re-examined.

At this stage, documentation began to function not only as a record but as an active system of thought. It created conditions for recursive attention—allowing me to return to earlier ideas with a different lens, to recognise when a question had remained unresolved, or when a contradiction had persisted across time.

Repetition, in this context, ceased to be redundant. It became an indicator of conceptual friction—something I could feel when the same phrase surfaced again and again in my voice notes: *"Is this care or control?"* At first, it passed unnoticed. But weeks and months later, it

returned—in a different tone, phrased differently, emerging again in transcripts I had forgotten I'd written.

That seemingly small question began to trouble the core of my working methods. As a solo artist leading collaborative processes, was I enacting care—or exerting control? If I claimed to be working from within a feminist epistemology, which foregrounds situated knowledge and non-hierarchical structures, did my authorship reflect that—or did it default to directional power?⁵

This recurring thought didn't just reflect tension—it reshaped my practice. It pushed me toward unfamiliar and uncomfortable group authorship processes that, over time, began to radically inform my solo work (which, I must say, is never truly solo). The same friction extended into my cinematic thinking: does the camera gaze care for what it sees—or does it organise, stabilise, contain?

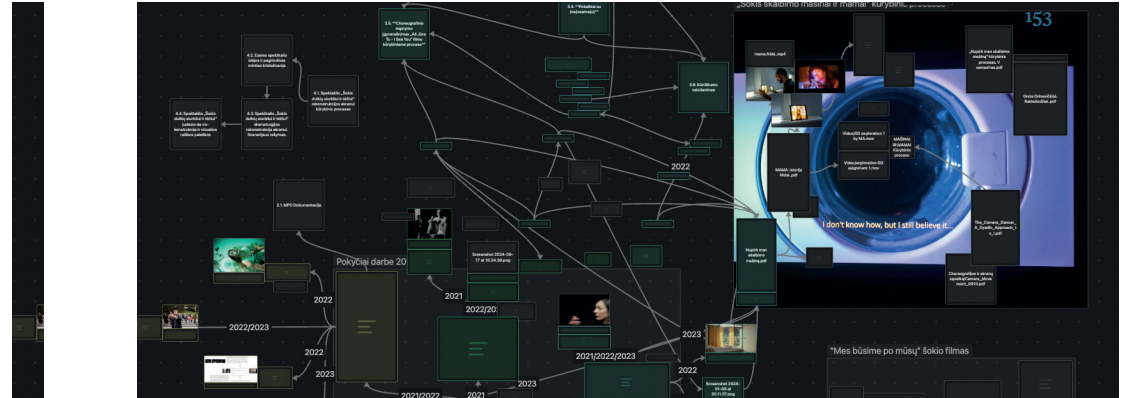
The repetition didn't resolve the question. It made me accountable for it.

The documentation thus shifted from being a practical tool to an epistemological one—making it possible to track not only what I thought, but how my process of thinking evolved through time, rhythm, and relationality.

This threshold—when documentation exceeds memory—required a shift in approach. I turned to the open-source tool Obsidian, which allowed me to create a non-linear, hyperlink-based knowledge architecture. The platform enabled me to preserve the fragmentary nature of my practice while beginning to map the relationships between concepts, themes, recurring questions, and theoretical frames.

At the heart of this system was a modified version of Noël Carroll's categorisation of dance films—originally designed to distinguish between dance for the screen, dance for the camera, and dance film (Carroll 2001). While Carroll's distinctions provided an early entry point into the field, they remained too rigid to account for the cross-modal, relational, and processual nature of my own practice. I began expanding and adapting his categories, not to fix them, but to allow them to host more

⁵ Feminist epistemology challenges dominant, universalizing forms of knowledge and instead values situated knowledges — perspectives grounded in embodied, partial, and relational positions (Haraway 1988). In the context of authorship in this article I question whether my creative practices actually foster collective, non-hierarchical meaning making or whether they unconsciously reproduce existing power structures.



complex artistic logics. Some nodes became extremely dense (e.g. dance film), while others served as anchors for more speculative thinking.

The digital archive became a field of conceptual cross-fading: one where choreographic knowledge, cinematic structure, and philosophical reflection could co-exist. The structure was not imposed from outside—it emerged from within the rhythm and friction of the material itself.

This kind of system-building was never about reaching clarity. It was about making visible where attention had gathered, where themes had persisted, and where questions kept returning. It was a response to excess—not to manage it, but to remain in relation with it.

Documentation as Resonant Methodology

What began as a means to trace and preserve artistic practice has become, over time, one of its most vital structuring forces. Not because it offered clarity or proof, but because it allowed attention to return—again and again—to what remained unresolved. In this way, documentation became a relational and reflective system: not an archive of work, but a space for work to keep unfolding.

Within my process, documentation shifted from being a logistical necessity to a resonant methodology. It allowed for temporality, recursion, and slowness. It made space for contradiction, re-articulation, and emergence. Most importantly, it moved in rhythm with the work—it adapted to its scale, its questions, its resistances.

The archive I needed did not come from something external. It emerged from the logic of the practice itself. Through walking, speaking, filming, diagramming, and listening. Through returning to

thoughts not as answers, but as invitations. Through designing a system that did not explain, but noticed.

I do not propose this model as a template. Instead, I offer it as a reflective invitation—particularly for artists engaged in long-form or interdisciplinary processes—towards noticing the textures of their own practice. These questions arise from my own research, but they are offered to open space rather than close it:

- ★ What forms of attention already live inside your practice?
- ★ What rhythms or rituals could become part of your documentation system (walking, consistent returning to studio, particular drawing practices etc.)?
- ★ How might you return to your material—not to organise it, but to be changed by it?
- ★ And what would it mean for your documentation to become not just a record, but a collaborator?

To document, in this sense, is not to close something down.

It is to stay with it.

To keep it breathing.

To keep listening.

REFERENCES

- Bippus, Elke. 2013. "Artistic Experiments as Research." In *Experimental Systems: Future Knowledge in Artistic Research*, edited by Michael Schwab, 121–134. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Balkema, Annette W. 2004. "Connecting Worlds." In *Artistic Research*, edited by Annette W. Balkema and Henk Slager, 59–62. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Carroll, Noël. 2001. "Toward a Definition of Moving-Picture Dance." *Dance Research Journal* 33, no. 1: 46–61. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1478856>.
- Foster, Susan Leigh. 2011. *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*. London: Routledge.
- Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14 (3): 575–599.
- Manning, Erin. 2013. *Always More Than One: Individuation's Dance*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Marks, Laura U. 2000. *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Maroto, David. 2023. "Valid Fictional Contributions to Non-Fictional Debates: Ficticritical Writing in Artistic Research." *Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis*, no. 109: 65–83. <https://doi.org/10.37522/aaav.109.2023.160>.
- Nelson, Robin. 2013. *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.