

HRAIR SARKISSIAN
"ISTORY" /
TAYFUN SERTTAŞ
"FOTO GALATASARAY"
INTERPRETATION PACK

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INTRODUCTION TO SALT

SALT explores critical and timely issues in visual and material culture, and cultivates innovative programs for research and experimental thinking. Assuming an open attitude and establishing itself as a site of learning and debate, SALT aims to challenge, excite and provoke its visitors by encouraging them to offer critique and response. SALT hosts exhibitions, conferences and public programs; engages in interdisciplinary research projects; and maintains a library and archive of recent art, architecture, design, urbanism, and social and economic histories to make them available for research and public use.

An essential part of SALT's programming is developing ongoing, collaborative partnerships with schools, community and civic organizations through its Interpretation Program. SALT Interpretation is free, and seeks to engage young people through exhibition tours, moving image programs and artist-led collaborative projects. SALT also creates online curriculum guides (Interpretation Packs) for schools and youth organizations, which feature discussion topics, activities and educational resources to accompany each exhibition.



SALT's activities are distributed between two landmark buildings located in walking distance to each other, and also shared via www.saltonline.org. The first building, SALT Beyoğlu, whose program and circulation interiors are dedicated to exhibition and event spaces, opened April 9 on Istiklal Avenue. The second building, SALT Galata, is the former 19th century Imperial Ottoman Bank headquarters designed by Alexandre Vallaury. SALT Galata opens November 2011.

THE ARCHIVE: "FOTO GALATASARAY" & "ISTORY"

As a cultural and research institution, SALT supports the notion that archives can become a shared and common resource with the participation of a multitude of users. Hence, an archive is never “complete” and is of value only when engaged in public use. Reflecting this belief, Tayfun Serttaş’ *Foto Galatasaray* and Hrair Sarkissian’s *Istory*—exhibitions both opening in November at SALT Galata and SALT Beyoğlu, respectively—focus on the role of the archive, examining how changes in digitalization technology and a move towards more accessible archival spaces have heightened the archive’s potential to make history available to the widest and most diverse users possible.

The *Foto Galatasaray* project is a revisualization of photographer Maryam Şahinyan’s Beyoğlu studio archive. Taken over a 50-year period from 1935 to 1985, Şahinyan’s photographs now represent a unique register of the extensive shifts in demographics and socio-economic transformation that took place in İstanbul. Consisting entirely of black-and-white and glass negatives, the physical archive of Foto Galatasaray is a rare surviving example of the classical photography studios of İstanbul’s recent past. Changing hands after Şahinyan left the studio in 1985, the archive was transferred to a storehouse belonging to Yetvart Tomasyan, owner of Aras Publishing. Twenty-five years later, approximately 200,000 negatives in the archive were, over the course of two years, sorted, cleaned, digitized, digitally restored, categorized and protected by a team under the direction of artist/researcher Tayfun Serttaş.



Hrair Sarkissian, *Istory*, 2011

Courtesy Kalfayan Galleries, Athens-Thessaloniki

In 2010, Hrair Sarkissian spent two months in İstanbul documenting the history sections of various semi-private and public libraries and archives in the city, from the Archaeological Museum and Topkapı Palace libraries to the Atatürk Library in Taksim, the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Ministry General Directorate of State, and the Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre. The second exhibition in SALT’s Modern Essays series, *Istory*’s photographs of rows of shelving caught in time and racks of files that appear rarely opened—of dark and oppressive spaces shot in large format and with only the light available—express the complexity of information these archives contain.

TO EDUCATORS

HOW TO USE THESE MATERIALS

This SALT Interpretation Pack has been designed as a resource for you and your students as you explore the concept of the archive—a focal point of both the *Istory* and *Foto Galatasaray* exhibitions. It is our hope that, as a resource with the objective of stimulating dialogue, the following materials will not act as an authority on the concepts they introduce, but rather will encourage students towards further exploration and study, towards active discussion, and towards critical thinking about the exhibitions and their themes.

Included in this Interpretation Pack are:

- *Opening Discussion: The Archive*
- *Maryam Şahinyan & Foto Galatasaray*
- *Unit One: Open Access*
- *Unit Two: The Portrait*
- *Closing Discussion: Archives of the Future*
- *Additional Resources*

Each unit includes classroom activities, multi-media resources, terminology and opportunities for discussion; we encourage you to adapt, shape and build upon these materials to best meet the needs of your students and teaching curriculum. for discussion; we encourage you to adapt, shape and build upon these materials to best meet the needs of your students and teaching curriculum.



Photo by Maryam Şahinyan
Foto Galatasaray / İstanbul – Beyoğlu, 1936
Glass Negative, 12x16cm

OPENING DISCUSSION: THE ARCHIVE

Over the course of two months in 2010, photographer Hrair Sarkissian explored a selection of İstanbul's archives—institutions housing historical texts, primary source documents, manuscripts and multimedia. Those he captured for the *Istory* exhibition include:

- İstanbul Archaeological Museum Library
- IRCICA Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture
- Government Office Ottoman Archive
- Beyazit State Library
- Koç University Library
- Topkapı Palace Library
- Atatürk Library
- Çelik Gülersoy Library
- Garanti Bank Archive & Library
- Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre

While, historically, archives have centered on preserving the physical—documents, photographs, letters, texts—with advances in digitalization technology, more and more archives today are hosted online. Materials once boxed and filed away in the basements of institutional libraries—materials, in many cases, accessible only to researchers, by appointment—no longer exist exclusively as physical spaces. Images and letters may be scanned, objects photographed, and record upon record of history digitalized and made available for public use. An example of an online archive is Maryam Şahinyan's photography studio archive. Exhibited in the context of Tayfun Serttaş's *Foto Galatasaray*, these images represent the extensive shifts in demographics and socio-economic transformation in İstanbul from 1935-1985. A less conventional example of online archiving can be seen in the Foundling Museum's *Threads of Feeling*—a collection of fabric samples taken from the clothing and blankets of babies left at the London Foundling Hospital between 1741 and 1760.



Photo by Maryam Şahinyan
Foto Galatasaray / İstanbul – Beyoğlu, 1961
Black & White negative, 9,5x14.8cm

As an entry point for students to explore the themes of *Istory* and *Foto Galatasaray*, we suggest leading a discussion around the nature of archives, focusing on the present shift from physical to digital archiving. What do these developments mean for the things we collect and the institutions that house them?

DISCUSSION

- *Have you ever visited an archive? If so, was this archive a physical space or an online collection?*
- *What do you see as the benefits (or disadvantages) of digital vs. physical archiving?*
- *Do you believe historical records and media should be accessible to the public? Besides digitalization, how may research institutions and libraries make collections more accessible to their communities?*



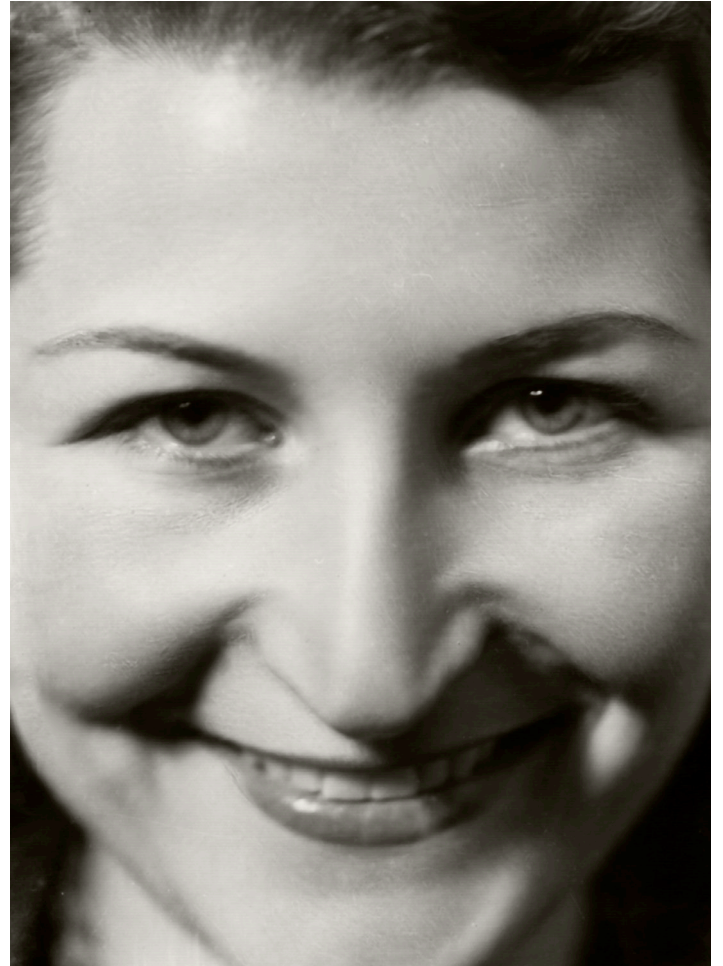
Flowered silver ribbon with note sewn to it, Foundling 2275, *Threads of Feeling*, The Foundling Museum

MARYAM ŞAHINYAN & FOTO GALATASARAY

The *Foto Galatasaray* project is based on the revisualization of the professional archive of Maryam Şahinyan (Sivas, 1911 – İstanbul, 1996), who worked as a photographer in Galatasaray, Beyoğlu from 1935 to 1985. The archive is a unique inventory of the demographic transformations occurring in İstanbul after the declaration of the Republic and the historical period it witnessed; it is also a record of a female İstanbulite studio photographer’s career. Armed with the wooden bellows camera her father originally took over from a family that immigrated from the Balkans in the aftermath of the First World War and the black-and-white sheet film she continued to use until 1985, Şahinyan, in a sense, arrested time—both against the technological advancements photography was experiencing and contemporary trends. In the end, she created an unparalleled collection without compromising her technical or aesthetic principles.

Şahinyan was a devout Armenian woman, and her identity created a closely-knit circle that formed the basis of Foto Galatasaray’s clientele, setting it apart from İstanbul’s other studios. With the exception of four passport photos, no photographs exist of Şahinyan herself, who throughout life remained behind the camera, scrupulously taking hundreds of thousands of photographs, retouching them, and painstakingly numbering and dating each film she developed. Spanning half a century, her work impartially traces the ethnic, social, cultural, religious and economic transformations taking place at the center of the city.

After exploring the evolution of archives with your students in the previous discussion, ask them now to consider Maryam Şahinyan’s artistic and professional practice. Although by profession a photographer, Şahinyan was strongly committed to saving, preserving and storing the negatives of her subjects—activities characteristic of an archivist. How did Şahinyan’s meticulous practice help create a window onto life in İstanbul during the days of Foto Galatasaray?



Maryam Şahinyan

UNIT ONE: OPEN ACCESS

INTRODUCTION

In the process of photographing İstanbul's archives, Hrair Sarkissian observed that some institutions' resources were more accessible than others. Although many archives house public records, paradoxically, public access to these materials can often be limited. Some archives require visitors to be researchers hosted by cultural institutions or universities. Others are open to the public, but by appointment only. One way today's institutions are finding to overcome these kinds of barriers and meet the demand for open access to information is to digitalize and share materials freely online.

As described in the Opening Discussion, this approach can be seen in the context of the *Foto Galatasaray* project. These images, over the course of 75 years passing from photographer Maryam Şahinyan, to Aras Publishing owner Yetvart Tomasyan, and, finally, to Tayfun Serttaş, have never had a forum or a space to be considered by a wider audience. After two years of preparation, what were once negatives in boxes have become a vivid representation of the past, now available for public use, research and debate. The archive will be open to online public participation in 2012, when the tens of thousands of people photographed at *Foto Galatasaray* may be identified.

Access is becoming more than permission to enter a space. As both *Foto Galatasaray* and *Istory* demonstrate, accessibility can mean making information available to as many people as possible by sharing resources online; it can mean stimulating critical discussions around the past; and it can mean presenting information in a context that is objective, comprehensive and encompasses a wide range of perspectives. In **THE PUBLIC DOMAIN**, examining the nature of accessibility, students will critique the success of their neighborhood institutions in sharing resources with the public. They will have the opportunity to put some of those institutions to the test in **OPEN ARCHIVE TOUR**, a self-guided tour of the archives and libraries portrayed in *Istory*.



Hrair Sarkissian, *Istory*, 2011

Courtesy Kalfayan Galleries, Athens-Thessaloniki

OBJECTIVES

- *To develop a more layered understanding of “accessibility”*
- *To, as a class, apply higher standards to public institutions in terms of making information accessible*
- *To discover İstanbul’s research institutions as valuable resources and potential spaces for learning*

TERMINOLOGY

Accessibility — a term used to describe the degree to which a product, device, service, or environment is available to as many people as possible

Archivist — a person who maintains and is in charge of archives

Critical Thinking — purposeful, reflective judgment concerning what to believe or what to do

Librarian — a specialist in the care or management of a library

Objectivity — expressing or dealing with facts or conditions as perceived without distortion by personal feelings, prejudices, or interpretations

Perspective — a particular way of regarding something; a point of view

Private space — a space designed for the exclusive use of its occupiers

Public information — information, facts and knowledge provided or learned as a result of research or study, available to be disseminated to the public

Public space — a social space such as a town square that is open and accessible to all, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age or socio-economic level

THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

1. As an introduction to this activity, lead your students in a discussion around accessibility (see definition on p. 10). What does it mean for a space to be accessible? What does it mean for information to be accessible?
2. Invite students to brainstorm arts, cultural and educational institutions in their city (these can include museums, libraries, universities and arts organizations). Write these on the board.
3. After you have created a substantial list, ask students to consider which of these places offers public access to its resources. This is a good opportunity to research independently in a school library or computer lab. Remind students that public access can mean that an institution admits anyone for free, that its resources are available online—for example, in the form of a digital archive—or that it presents information in an objective way, considering multiple perspectives. Circle those institutions students consider to be “publicly accessible.”
4. Give students an opportunity to discuss their findings—are they surprised at the number of institutions in their community that are accessible, vs. those that are not?

DISCUSSION

- *Of the institutions your class brainstormed, are there any that make resources available both in a physical space and online?*
- *After this activity, which of your community institutions do you believe is the most accessible? What characteristics does this institution have that others may not?*
- *How do online forums like Wikipedia, Wikimedia Commons and OER Commons create new models for sharing resources?*
- *In your opinion, whose responsibility is it to make public information accessible?*



Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin - Michael Morris, *Heterotopia*, Installation view from Ars Sanat Galerisi, Ankara, 1992. *Heterotopia* is part of the Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin archive at SALT Research.

OPEN ARCHIVE TOUR

Now that students have considered the qualities of accessible institutions, it may be interesting for them to visit some of the archival spaces Hrair Sarkissian photographed in the context of *Istory*—in an Open Archive Tour. The following research institutions are open and free of charge to students. Note that the tour may be completed in one day, or spread out over four fieldtrip sessions.

Depending on where your school is located, the starting point to this tour may vary. If you begin at Taksim Square, the tour can be structured as below:

Atatürk Library

Mete Caddesi 45

Taksim / Beyoğlu, İSTANBUL

Hours: Monday to Saturday, 8.30 – 17.30

SALT Research

SALT Galata

Bankalar Caddesi 11

Karaköy, İSTANBUL

Hours: Tuesday, Thursday-Saturday 10.00 - 18.00,

Wednesday 10.00 - 20.00

İstanbul Archaeological Museum Library

İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri Alemdar Caddesi,

Osman Hamdi Bey Yokuşu Sokak

Sultanahmet / Fatih, İSTANBUL

Hours: Monday to Friday, 9.30 – 17.00

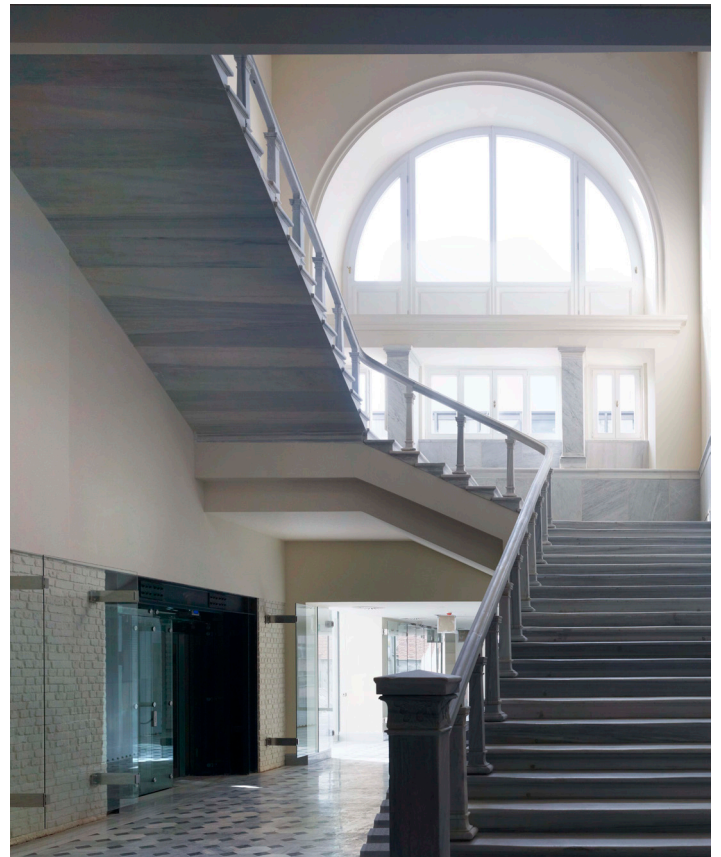
Beyazıt State Library

Turan Emeksiz Sokak 6

Beyazıt / Eminönü, İSTANBUL

Hours: Monday to Saturday, 8.30 – 17.00

Print the worksheet on the following page and ask students to fill one out for each institution visited. Encourage students to ask librarians and staff questions as they explore these institutions.



SALT Galata

DISCUSSION

- *Had you visited any of the tour's research institutions before? Did anything about the spaces surprise you?*
- *Which of these institutions do you believe was most accessible? Which was the least?*
- *What role did librarians and archival staff play in facilitating your access to each institutions' resources?*

OPEN ARCHIVE TOUR: WORKSHEET

STUDENT NAME:

NAME OF INSTITUTION VISITED:

DATE:

What kinds of research materials does this institution carry?

Is this space free for everyone? If not, who has to pay?

What are this institution's hours? Do these hours impact who can access the space and who cannot?

How does the design of this institution (building layout, furniture, etc.) contribute to or inhibit its accessibility?

Are there any research spaces in this institution that are inaccessible to the public? (I.e., that are open only to researchers, or by appointment?)

On a scale of 1 – 10 (10 being the most accessible), how would you rate this institution in terms of public accessibility? Why?

UNIT TWO: THE PORTRAIT

INTRODUCTION

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. In Maryam Şahinyan’s studio portraits, over a 50-year period we see evidence of changes in dress, accessories and hairstyles; in family structures; in class demographics; in the differences between generations; and in representations of gender. Adding an additional layer to its role as a visual record of İstanbul’s history, the Foto Galatasaray archive is a collection of portraits, meaning that to explore its images is to look through a window onto the families and communities of this period—to see the things and people that were important to them, to catch a glimpse of the ways they related to each other and represented themselves.

In THE PORTRAIT: SESSION ONE, your class will study the portraits of the Foto Galatasaray archive as a collection. Considering the year each photograph was taken and the changing social, cultural and economic conditions in İstanbul during the studio’s lifetime, what observations can students make about the archives’ subjects? In SESSION TWO, students will collectively assemble their own portraits, creating an online album that will, like Şahinyan’s archive, serve as a representation of their lives in İstanbul today.

OBJECTIVES

- To consider *photographic archives within a social and historical context*
- To explore *the ways design, dress and style reflect different periods in time*
- To deconstruct *the idea of a portrait*

TERMINOLOGY

Demographic — a characteristic used to classify people for statistical purposes, such as age, race, or gender

Portrait — a pictorial representation of a person



Photo by Maryam Şahinyan

Foto Galatasaray / İstanbul – Beyoğlu, 1941-1943

Glass Negative, 10x15cm

THE PORTRAIT: SESSION ONE

MATERIALS: printer, computer access

This activity can be completed at the *Foto Galatasaray* exhibition and Open Archive space at SALT Galata.

1. Ask students to get into pairs. Each pair will choose one image from the Foto Galatasaray archive to study in the context of this activity. Groups should print a copy of their selected image.

2. Ask students to record the following information about their photographs:

- Who are the subjects in this photograph? (This description should be very basic, i.e. “woman with two babies,” or “young couple.” Encourage students to be objective and not to make assumptions or generalizations.)
- What are these subjects wearing? How is their hair styled?
- Are there any objects in this picture? Describe them.
- What year was the photograph taken?

3. Students will now research the social and historical context of their images. Either in SALT Galata’s Open Archive space, or in a school library or computer lab, give students 45 minutes to conduct research. Information for students to look for can include the historical setting in İstanbul the year the photograph was taken; design and style trends; current events in the city; and the cultural demographics of Galatasaray. Ask students to keep in mind how (if at all) the impressions they initially had of their subjects change as a result of this research.



Photo by Maryam Şahinyan

Foto Galatasaray / İstanbul – Beyoğlu, 1966

Black & White Negative, 10x15cm

4. Finally, give students the opportunity to share their findings with the class. Each pair should present its portrait, offer background information around the context of the image and, if possible, provide an informed interpretation of the photograph's subjects.

5. After all groups have presented, ask the class to arrange their images at the front of the room in chronological order (from oldest to most recent). Now that the class has a more comprehensive understanding of the years in which the Foto Galatasaray studio operated, can students recognize the progression of time across the archive?

DISCUSSION

- *How did your interpretation of Foto Galatasaray's subjects change after researching this period in İstanbul? Did you discover anything that surprised you?*
- *Do you think portraits are accurate representations of the past? Why or why not?*
- *How does viewing a photographic archive like Foto Galatasaray as a full collection vs. as individual images impact the perspective of the viewer?*



Photo by Maryam Şahinyan
Foto Galatasaray / İstanbul – Beyoğlu, 1940
Glass Negative, 10x15cm

THE PORTRAIT: SESSION TWO

MATERIALS: cameras (optional), scanner, computer access

1. Now that students have studied the portraits of the past, it is time to create their own contemporary photographic archive. As a homework assignment, ask students to each bring one image to contribute to a class album - this can be a traditional family portrait, like many of the Foto Galatasaray collection, or any image of students by themselves, with friends or family that they feel represents themselves at a given point in time.

2. Using an online hosting site like Picasa or Flickr, create an album for your students. (You can make this album private for your class only, meaning that students can upload and comment on their photographs, but the album is not open to the public.) If students have brought image files, they may upload these directly to the album. If their photographs are not digital, scan the originals then upload.

3. Students should note in the description text of each image the year and the place the picture was taken, as well as a general description. (Note that this description should be similar to those used to describe Foto Galatasaray portraits in the previous session—very basic and no names necessary.)

4. Organize your students' archival images in chronological order. As a class, name your album, then invite students to browse and comment on their collection.

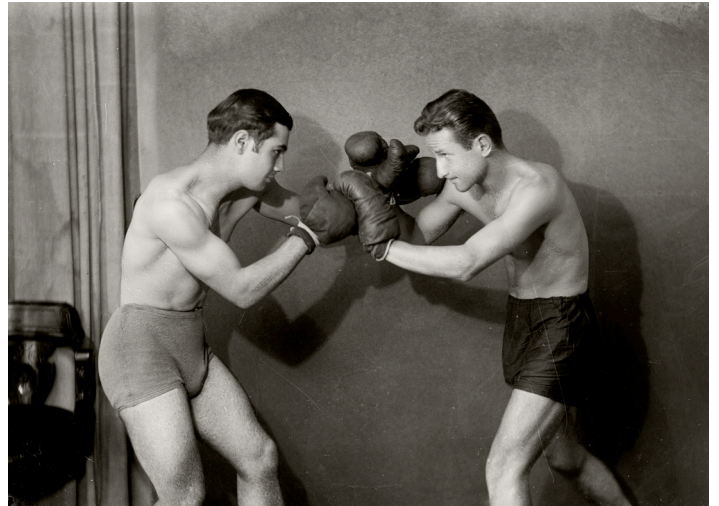


Photo by Maryam Şahinyan

Foto Galatasaray / İstanbul - Beyoğlu, 1941-1943

Glass Negative, 9x14cm

DISCUSSION

- *When you look at the class' archive as a collection, do you notice the progression from past to present in terms of dress or style?*
- *Why did you choose your particular image for the class archive? Do you feel it represents you accurately given the year it was taken?*
- *If, 20 years from now, a high school class studied your portraits, how do you think they would interpret the lives of you and your classmates?*

CLOSING DISCUSSION: ARCHIVES OF THE FUTURE

After visiting the *Istory* and *Foto Galatasaray* exhibitions at SALT Beyoğlu and SALT Galata, and engaging in some of the supplemental discussions and activities included in this Interpretation Pack, your students have explored their city’s research institutions, critically examined barriers that inhibit public access to information, and created their own online photographic archives.

As a conclusion to your students’ experience of the exhibitions, we suggest leading a discussion around the recent surge in online sharing sites like Wikipedia, Wikimedia Commons and OER Commons—examining the potential of these sites to function as archives of information. Innovations in cloud computing (see definition below), combined with a growing focus on making information free and accessible to everyone, have fostered an environment on the web that is more and more community-oriented. Museums share images of their collections online, chefs post recipes, newspapers offer articles to users for free. The largest reference work on the Internet, Wikipedia, today has almost 20 million articles written collaboratively by volunteers all over the world, in 282 different languages.

As we see an increase in information collected, shared and interpreted online, an important question becomes whether or not these sites have the capacity to be objective, comprehensive sources of information. With unlimited accessibility to their contents and a world of contributors, have cloud networks like Wikipedia become a reliable, multi-perspective source of information—the “new archive”?



DISCUSSION

- Do you use any resource sharing sites like Wikipedia or Wikimedia Commons on a regular basis?
- How do you think the growth of these sites has increased public access to information? Do you believe this impact is positive or negative?
- One criticism of Wikipedia is that its editing process relies on users’ consensus rather than levels of expertise, meaning that the majority is always “right”. Do you agree with this logic?
- After studying the nature of archives, do you believe that online sharing sites qualify as archives? Why or why not?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WEB RESOURCES

SALT Online | saltonline.org

Hrair Sarkissian | hairsarkissian.com

Tayfun Serttaş | tayfunserttas.com

OER Commons | oercommons.org

Wikimedia Commons | commons.wikimedia.org

Wikipedia | wikipedia.org

BOOKS & ARTICLES

“The Best Online Cultural Archives.”
The Telegraph. 13 September 2011.

ORGANIZATIONS

Aras Publishing

Beyazit State Library

İstanbul Archaeological Museums

DIGITAL ARCHIVES

Foto Galatasaray

Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin archive

SALT Research

Threads of Feeling, London Foundling Hospital



Hrair Sarkissian, *Istory*, 2011

Courtesy Kalfayan Galleries, Athens-Thessaloniki

