

DIGITAL ARCHIVES

A SHIFT TOWARDS THE METEOROLOGICAL

NATALIE KOERNER

My PhD research (in architecture) centres around digital archives— data centres and the cloud. The cloud is an important realm in the spatial imagination of daily digital archiving practises. Data centres exist for most users only as placeless representations of stylized, clinical rows of blinking lights arranged in potentially endlessly repeated server rack units. To most, data centres remain as physically inaccessible as the cloud itself.

I navigate the threshold between the physical, the imaginary, the object and the metaphor in order approximate the materiality, spatiality and temporality of today's digital archives. There are two overarching themes, the geological and the meteorological. My goal is to make digital archives more palpable in the spatial imagination. The lack of visualizations for data centres and the cloud strengthen the cloud as a

territory of sovereign power shrouded in vagueness.

My artistic research explores the notion of archiving and temporalities through a series of furniture objects. These artefacts function as autonomous, functional objects that can be explored practically and physically—as such they take on a life beyond my research. I would like to exhibit two pieces that I am currently working on:

1.) Glass cabinet: It is based on the dimensions of one the three cupboards that made up Carl Linnaeus' herbarium. Unlike other botanists of his time, Linnaeus kept his herbarium sheets unbound and stored them instead in a cabinet which, as has been argued by recent scholarship, functioned as a spatial tool in the development of his classification system. The walls of the cabinet are made up of glass

panels that measure 1 U—a dimension that describes a data rack unit height that fits one server. The glass has been stained with the minerals that are found in digital technologies.

2.) A waterfall curtain: It is made up of white horse tail hair strands that I have arranged in horizontal waves to resemble a thin waterfall. In Spanish, long thin waterfalls are often called Cola de Caballo (horsetail). Depending on how long the waterfall is, the accumulated age of the horse hairs changes. The curtain is an interpretation of a temporal section.

“DIGITAL ARCHIVES FORM THE CORE OF MY RESEARCH, WHICH IS STRUCTURED AROUND DATA CENTRES AND THE CLOUD. I NAVIGATE THESE TWO RESEARCH OBJECTS AS BOTH REAL AND IMAGINARY SPACES.”