

Archival Ghosts

By Giulia Giannola



Archives frequently boast a mysterious ambiance, featuring numerous shelves and ancient documents that recount stories of transactions, objects and people. This wealth of information allows for the tracing of historical events, contributing to the inherently fascinating atmosphere of these archives.

Drawing from my past experience, I had the opportunity to work at the Historical Archive of the Bank of Naples Foundation. During this engagement, archivists often shared anecdotes about characters they developed a particular fondness for during their research. Additionally, some recounted that, according to popular belief, these spaces may even be inhabited by ghosts, adding an intriguing layer to the historical narrative encapsulated within.

"Archival Ghosts" seeks to harness the captivating atmosphere of archives by bringing to life characters and works of art mentioned in historically significant archival documents through artistic holographic projections.

Project Objectives: The primary goal of this project is to utilize hologram technology to create ethereal manifestations, or "archival ghosts," within archive spaces. These



holograms, accompanied by audio narratives derived from relevant historical documents, will serve dual purposes: enhancing exhibition experiences and providing informative insights during archive visits.

Implementation: The project has garnered support from four archives, with the APE Creative Grant earmarked for developing the initiative in at least two archives initially. The inaugural holographic exhibition took place in September

Above, Portrait of Giovanni Battista Guillichini, held at the National Archives of Arezzo (Italy). On the right, the rendition

2023 at the State Archives of Arezzo, in collaboration with the Biblioteca Riccardiana of Florence. Recent outcomes: On October 7th the exhibition in Arezzo marked a significant moment, as a holographic installation was created for the exhibition "Dalla terra al mare aperto, l'avventurosa vita di Giovan Battista Guillichini". ("From Land to Open Sea, the adventurous life of Giovan Battista Guillichini"). Positive feedback highlighted the successful integration of Guillichini's travel diary, career documents, an holographic bust, and an audio containing an excerpt of his diary, offering a multifaceted perspective on his life. The Archive of Arezzo expressed interest in retaining the hologram until December for ongoing exhibitions and daily visits.

"Archival Ghosts" thus emerges as a dynamic project, blending technology and history to breathe life into archival narratives and enrich the public's connection with the past.

Upcoming endeavors at the State Archives of Modena: Building on this initial achievement, the project now shifts its focus to the State Archives of Modena, where it will spotlight the Este family, influential rulers in Modena and Ferrara during the 16th century. The forthcoming installation will showcase the original project of the fountain at Villa d'Este in Tivoli, near Rome. The fountain, commissioned by Cardinal Ippolito d'Este following his defeat in the Papal election, is a symbol-laden masterpiece, featuring iconic Roman

symbols such as the Pantheon, the goddess Roma, the she-wolf with twins, and the Trajan Column. Potential Extensions: The project envisions future extensions to the State Archives of Trento, exploring materials related to the prince-bishops who governed Trento for eight centuries, and the State Archives of Naples, subject to material selection. The collaboration with these archives aims to expand the project's scope and historical reach.

Accessibility and Collaboration: The holographic installations and accompanying audio content will be shared freely with the State Archives of Arezzo and Modena.

Beyond the installations, the project aims to make the archival documents accessible online through the Archives Portal Europe, fostering collaboration with the respective State Archives.



On the left, the original project of the fountain in Villa d'Este in Tivoli (Italy), part of the series ASMo, Estense archive. Above, the rendition.

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