

## Contextualizing Archival Objects

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When an item is archived, it is pulled from one world and logged within another—moved from a studio, for instance, or an artist’s home, into the new setting of a larger collection of items. How do we understand the original context of an archival object? How might researchers try to re-inscribe an archival item back into the world it is drawn from?

- Select an item from the Downtown Collection.
- Visit a space related to the item. [You might start by looking at this dataset of art venues related to the Downtown Scene.]
- Take photographs of the site and the way it is used; keep notes on your experience of visiting this site
- Organize these images, captioning each one
- Write an introduction that relates your chosen item to your chosen space
- In your introduction, make reference to [A History of the Downtown Scene](#) by Marvin J. Taylor and [The Counter Archive](#) by Tamar Barzel
- Questions to consider:
  - What might fieldwork tell us about an archival object that studying the history of the material might fail to disclose?
  - What is lost as we archive objects? What is saved?
  - When we look at an item in an archive, what are we looking at?