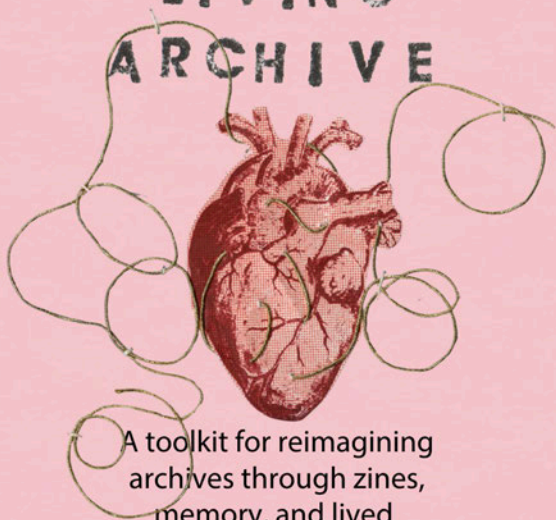


THE LIVING ARCHIVE



A toolkit for reimagining
archives through zines,
memory, and lived
experience



HISTORY ISN'T JUST
WHAT WAS RECORDED
IT'S WHAT'S REMEMBERED
AND FELT...

I AM

London's outskirts.

cardboard boxes.

Fragments that were histories

"East" and "West"

an ancient vase

or an old VHS tape

passed from one person to another.

a container

an archive

OPENING

The Living Archive is a socially engaged art project and toolkit by Ioana Simion (Artizine), commissioned by Culture Within Newham as part of the East London Creative Communities programme, in collaboration with REinsTate. It explores memory, identity, and archiving through zines — DIY, hand-made publications that centre personal voice and lived experience. Rather than treating archives as official or distant, this toolkit approaches the archive as something close to the body: emotional, and shaped by everyday life. It begins from the belief that memory is not only factual or chronological — it is felt, fragmented, sensory, and constantly changing.

Many stories are never recorded because they don't fit traditional ideas of history or importance. The Living Archive exists to make space for those stories. It invites participants to treat their own experiences as worthy of care and preservation. Not to fix them in place, but to build a relationship with them.

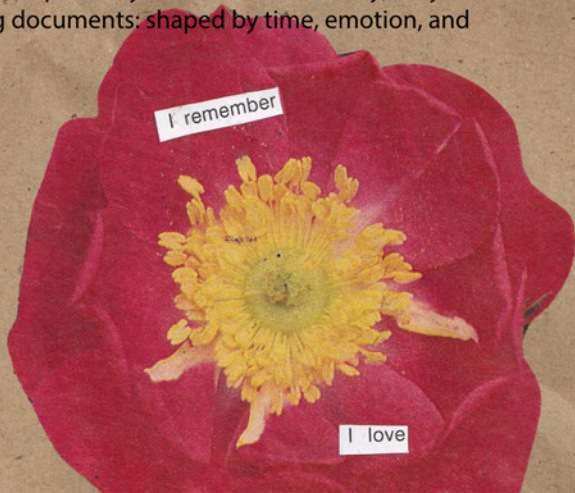
At the core of the project is zine-making as a form of self-archiving. Zines do not require permission, expertise, or permanence. They allow you to document, question or release your stories on your own terms.

WHY ZINES

Zines are powerful archival tools because they are both document and expression. They hold memory with feeling, not just information.

Permission-free and DIY, zines can be made by anyone, at any pace, about whatever matters. Historically used for self-representation, collective action, resistance, and storytelling outside institutions, they centre personal voice and lived experience.

As self-published works, they exist without approval — no editors, no gatekeepers. Only you, and what feels true. They are not made for profit, but for connection. Because they are autonomously made, zines give you permission to revisit, revise, discard, or protect your stories. In this way, they become living documents: shaped by time, emotion, and attention.



I TAKE CARE

OF MYSELF



BY

KNOWING

MY

STORY

Zines invite us to practice correspondence — like letters that move back and forth — building language over time and encouraging conversation rather than conclusion.

Ephemeral, imperfect, and changing, zines allow archives to remain alive. A zine can be a container, holding what you're not ready to lose. It can also be a release, a soft goodbye or a closing chapter...

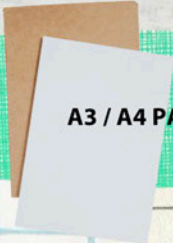
When we make zines as personal archives, we preserve with intention. We become *history makers*, *artists of memory*, not just recorders; choosing with care and creativity what travels forward.

In this toolkit, zines are not just handmade books. They are archives of feeling, rituals of remembering, and spaces to experiment with the **past**, **present**, and **future**.

It's time to create the pages that are missing from our own history books. This is where the work begins.

MAKING YOUR ZINE

Zines are simple to make. You don't need specialist equipment or artistic experience, just a few basic materials and a willingness to experiment. Below you'll find what you need to get started, followed by simple folding instructions.

A white rectangular sheet of paper is shown, partially overlapping a brown cardboard piece and a green textured paper strip. The background features a collage of colors including blue, yellow, and green, with a grid pattern at the bottom.

A3 / A4 PAPER

A pair of blue-handled scissors with silver blades is shown, positioned diagonally. The background features a collage of colors including blue, yellow, and green, with a grid pattern at the bottom.

SCISSORS

A white glue stick with a green cap and a small green square of glue are shown. The background features a collage of colors including blue, yellow, and green, with a grid pattern at the bottom.

GLUE STICK

A stack of various colorful magazines and paper scraps is shown. The background features a collage of colors including blue, yellow, and green, with a grid pattern at the bottom.

MAGAZINES/ SCRAPS

A collection of colorful pens and pencils is shown, fanned out. The background features a collage of colors including blue, yellow, and green, with a grid pattern at the bottom.

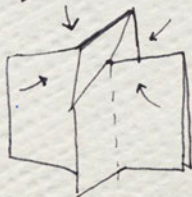
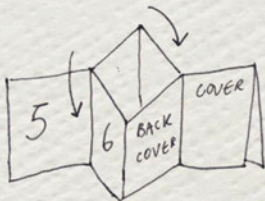
**PENS
ART TOOLS**

FOLDING INSTRUCTIONS

Start with an A3 or A4 sheet of paper. Fold it in half three times to create 8 rectangles.



Unfold the sheet, and cut along the center crease, halfway through the page.



Open the sheet fully, then fold it lengthwise. Push the two ends toward each other so the cut section pops open, forming a diamond shape.



Keep pushing inward until it folds into a booklet.

HOW TO USE to THIS TOOLKIT

The toolkit is organised into three temporal entry points. Each section approaches archiving from a different relationship to time:

PAST

PRESENT

FUTURE

from

Within each chapter, you will find:

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

for gentle engagement
and noticing

CREATIVE PROMPTS

for digging deeper into
memory and meaning

ZINE PRACTICES

invitations to actively
create zines in response



our song



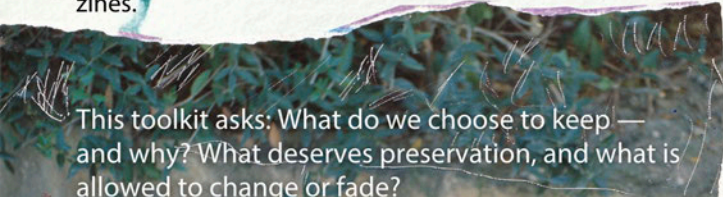


Forgot

You can move through the toolkit chronologically, or enter wherever feels most relevant. It is designed to be revisited, adapted, and reshaped over time.

I started to believe

The Living Archive Toolkit is not an academic guide. It is a public resource developed through creative practice and community engagement. Rather than offering rigid instructions, it provides ideas and methods that can be adapted across different contexts, encouraging participation from everyone through making and sharing of zines.



This toolkit asks: What do we choose to keep — and why? What deserves preservation, and what is allowed to change or fade?

How can archiving help us understand who we are, where we come from, and what we want to carry forward?



EVERYTHING
EXCEPT YOU

RELIQS OF

Spirit, Mind and Body



WHAT IS AN ARCHIVE?

Selection record **time**

Remembering

Evidence

MEMORY

An archive isn't just storage. It's a relationship with time. It can exist in a photograph, a smell, a scar, a drawing, a ticket stub, a voice recording — any trace that carries memory forward.

What's one word you'd normally use to describe an archive?

We keep things not because they are historically significant, but because they matter to *us*.

**TRADITIONALLY,
ARCHIVES ARE
IMAGINED AS:**

**WHAT IF AN ARCHIVE
COULD BE SOMETHING ELSE?**

organised

Messy

OFFICIAL

HAND **made**

Permanent

emoTiOnaL

SELF ARCHIVING

LIVED EXPERIENCE

Continuity

EVERY DAY

hiStory

Grounding

Resistance

REFLECTION PROMPTS

What do I choose to remember?

What do I allow myself to forget?

What deserves space
in my story?

Self-archiving is the practice of building an intentional relationship with your own history. It reminds us that we are history-makers, that everyone's story matters.

Knowing your story is taking care of yourself and archives keep us grounded in this world. When we historicise the Self, we place lived experience into public space, making room for stories that are often erased, overlooked, or undocumented.

PERSONAL VOICE

This toolkit invites you to see record-keeping as an act of love and resistance, a way of proving life existed, continuing a relationship with something or someone, and imagining new futures.

EMOTIONAL ARCHIVING

Emotional archiving means working with intuition, memory, and feeling. It's about looking at your own history with love, and listening to others with love. It accepts that memory is human — partial, shifting, and alive — and that its value isn't accuracy, but deeper meaning.

It means holding contradiction and change. It means treating everyday life as worthy.

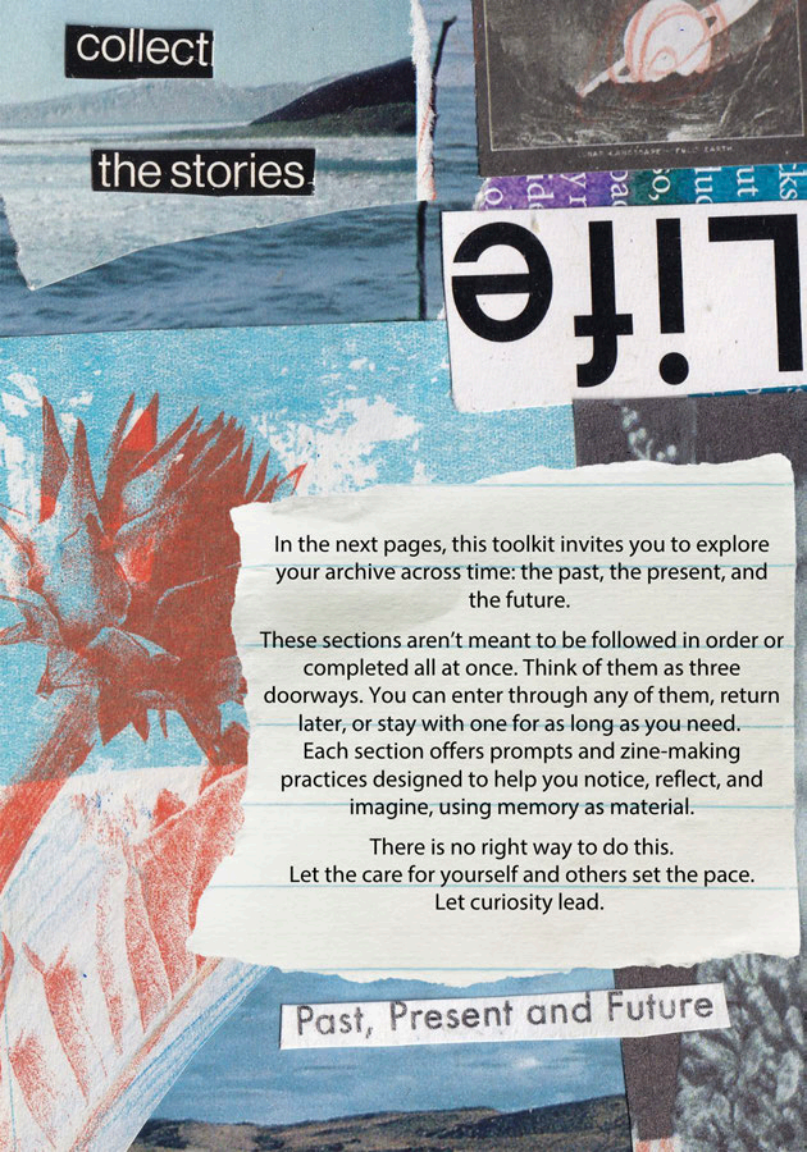
A personal archive doesn't need to be complete, only honest to the moment it was made. It can evolve, just as we continue to change with time.

Anybody can start an archive.

Anybody can be an archivist.

Archivists can also be: keepers of stories,
memory workers,
listeners.

I WAS here



collect

the stories

Life

In the next pages, this toolkit invites you to explore your archive across time: the past, the present, and the future.

These sections aren't meant to be followed in order or completed all at once. Think of them as three doorways. You can enter through any of them, return later, or stay with one for as long as you need.

Each section offers prompts and zine-making practices designed to help you notice, reflect, and imagine, using memory as material.

There is no right way to do this.
Let the care for yourself and others set the pace.
Let curiosity lead.

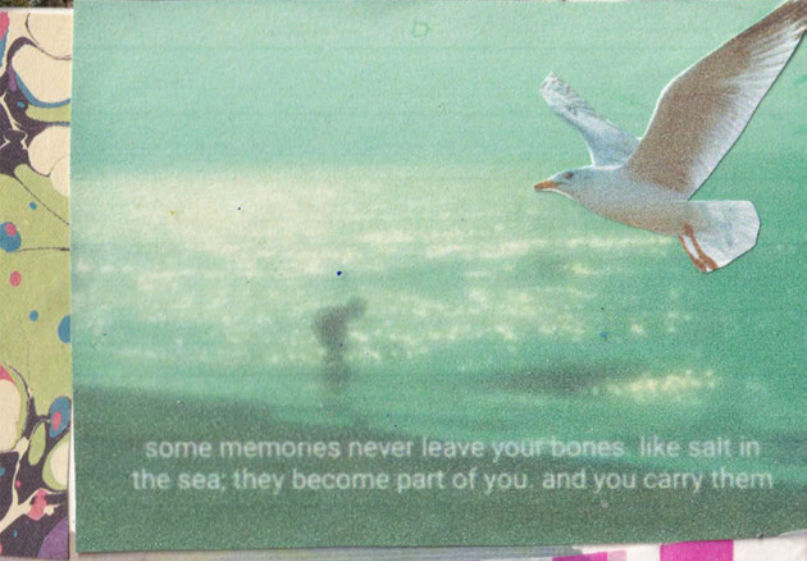
Past, Present and Future

My dearest,

i will always find you

i hope you recognize my chirp





some memories never leave your bones. like salt in
the sea; they become part of you. and you carry them

past

Storytelling

Noticing

Excavation

The past isn't something we observe from a distance — it's something we feel deeply.

Memory rarely arrives in order. It comes in fragments: a smell, a texture, a sentence someone once said.

Sometimes the body recognises something before the mind can explain it.

Remembering, in this way, can be understood as a form of love, a quiet language through which we return to people, places, and moments that have shaped us.

In this section, we gently explore where you come from, not to prove or document, but to notice.

Instead of asking "What happened?", we ask:
What lingers?

What still shapes the way you move through the world?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

When does your body recognise something before your thoughts do?

Which memories from your life feel sharp? Which feel foggy?

Do your memories appear as images, sounds, colours, or sensations?

Take your time.

You don't need to answer everything.

CREATIVE PROMPTS

Digging a little deeper.
Follow curiosity, not obligation...

Look at a photograph (physical or on your phone).
Write what's happening outside the frame.

What isn't visible?

Revisit an old journal entry or message. Rewrite it from who you are today.

What has shifted?

Walk around your home and gather a few objects of affection you've kept over time.

Ask gently: *Why did this survive when others didn't?*

ZINE PRACTICES

Create a collage in your zine using receipts, everyday scraps, torn images, overlooked materials.

Notice the instinct to keep. We accumulate objects and traces, often without knowing why. The past gathers quietly in drawers and pockets. Collage becomes a way of observing those habits.

As you work, ask:

What did I attach meaning to?

What have I been carrying unconsciously?

Write a memory using only sensory language — no facts, only feeling. Focus on: smell, texture, sound, colour, temperature, atmosphere.

Let sensation lead the page. Cut and paste words from magazines if it helps loosen control. Rearrange them into a short poem.

This practice shifts memory away from accuracy and toward experience. It shows that archives are not only records of events, but traces of how they lived in the body.

A photograph of a woman with blonde hair, seen from the back and side, looking out over a body of water. In the background, there are several industrial cranes or structures on the horizon under a hazy sky. The water is dark blue with some ripples. The woman is wearing a dark top.

Even libraries don't keep everything.
Some books are removed; some are
never returned.

Your archive works the same way.
Think of it as an ecology, not a vault
where everything must be saved.

Archiving is an act of intention, a
practice of choosing what feels true
enough to carry forward.

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always

sun



breathe



love



present

Sensory Embodied Reflective

The present is where the archive breathes, and where most of our living takes place. Many archives have traditionally been associated with the past — with capturing, cataloguing, and fixing stories into records. This section invites you to challenge that structure by bringing archiving back into our daily, embodied practices.

The present reminds us that identity isn't a finished book, but something still unfolding.

We are always in the process of becoming
Archiving the present begins with attention: looking with love, listening with care, and allowing yourself the time to simply exist within a moment.

So, what feels alive right now? You don't need to archive everything... only what feels meaningful, necessary, or resonant.

*It seems like every day the city sheds its skin to start again tomorrow;
there is no room here for memory.*

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What moment from today feels worth remembering?

What feels true about who I am right now?

What am I learning, shedding, or growing toward?

✿ Day Tripper

CREATIVE PROMPTS

Taking Field Notes

Go outside & move slowly.
Observe without judgement.
Write down weather,
overheard words, rhythms,
colours, small gestures.
Notice what draws your
attention and what you
almost ignore.
Field notes are not facts.
They are traces of presence.

Letter to Your Present Self

Write without advice, only
acknowledgment.
Write as someone who sees
you clearly: what you've
survived, what you're trying,
and what you're learning.
This becomes part of your
archive, a reminder of:

"I was becoming."

"I was here. I mattered."

ZINE PRACTICES

Make a zine using tactile materials: scraps, rubbings, fabrics, embossing, stitching, tape, graphite smudges — anything your hands want to touch.

Notice what your body responds to: softness, friction, smoothness, weight.

Texture can hold memory before language does.
It can carry comfort, tension, familiarity, resistance.

As you build the page, ask:
What does this surface remind me of?
Where have I felt this before?

Archiving through texture shifts attention from what happened to how it felt.

Make a zine about something mundane: the kettle boiling, waiting for a bus, walking home.

Describe it slowly, using precise, sensory language.

When attention deepens, the ordinary becomes luminous. Meaning often hides in what we overlook.



LOVE



The present passes quickly. Archiving isn't about capturing everything, it's about acknowledging that ***you were here.***

future

Imaginative

Playful

Manifesting

The future is not about prediction, but about imagining possibility. Some memories hold long-term value, while others naturally fade, and both are part of the ecology of remembering.

Forgetting is not a failure of memory. It is part of the cycle — like compost, like aging, like being human. In this way, imperfection becomes part of the archive itself. Beauty can reside in the transient, the overlooked, the fragmentary. In this section, we explore how zines can carry us forward by imagining possible futures, experimenting with memory, and building archives that remain alive, playful, and open to what might emerge.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What memories do I want to protect?

What might my future self need to forgive?

How do I want my archive — and myself — to evolve?



looking

forward to

watering

my flowers,

CREATIVE PROMPTS



Write in future tense.

Make a list beginning with: "I will..." Dream big. Let it feel slightly uncomfortable.

Mythologise a memory.

Add meaning, symbolism, emotional depth.

This isn't inventing, it's honouring the weight an experience carries.

Design your archive building.

Imagine a physical space that holds your life.

What is displayed?

What is hidden?

Who is allowed inside?

ZINE PRACTICES

Make a zine as a personal 'memory garden', a space you can return to and tend over time.

Name your garden:

*E.g. Garden of Becoming,
Garden of Survival,
Garden of Softness.*

Choose up to 10 "plants."

These can be memories, people, feelings, dreams, anything that feels alive in you right now.

For each "plant," add a small marker: a name and a date, a short note about why it belongs here.

il lavoro

A garden is never finished. It grows wild; it rests, it returns to the soil. It's an eco-system just like our memory.

**To tend a garden
is to believe in the
future.**

This practice invites you to see archiving not as preserving everything, but as cultivating what matters. It asks you to care for memory as something living — not fixed or permanent, but changing with you.





MANIFESTO ZINES

A manifesto is a public declaration of belief, intention, or refusal. It is a statement of where you stand and where you are heading.

Historically, manifestos have been used in art, politics, and social movements to claim space, challenge systems, and imagine new futures. They are often bold, urgent, and unapologetic.

In this toolkit, the manifesto becomes personal.

A way to: **name what you stand for
& choose your direction.**
speak from the future,

Step into your future self.

Write from their voice. Speak from where you are becoming, not where you have been. Let the page hold your hopes, principles, refusals, and desires. Turn these into a manifesto-style zine.

A manifesto is not a promise. It is a direction.

A MANIFESTO CAN NAME:



TONE & LANGUAGE

Choose a voice that feels true:

Devotional:

I vow.
I return.
I keep.
I offer.

Urgent:

No more.
Enough. I/we will not.

Tender + Fierce:

I/we deserve.
I/we choose.

Spoken-word / Performative:

Use short lines.
Create repetition.
Think of breath & rhythm.

DESIGNING THE PAGE

Use bold hand writing or large type for declarations.

Include a symbol, made-up stamp, or mark of authorship.

Add margin whispers, smaller lines that feel like a second voice.

Sign and date your manifesto, like a contract with yourself.





Just Evidence
True Feelings

In This Life

I am

Yours

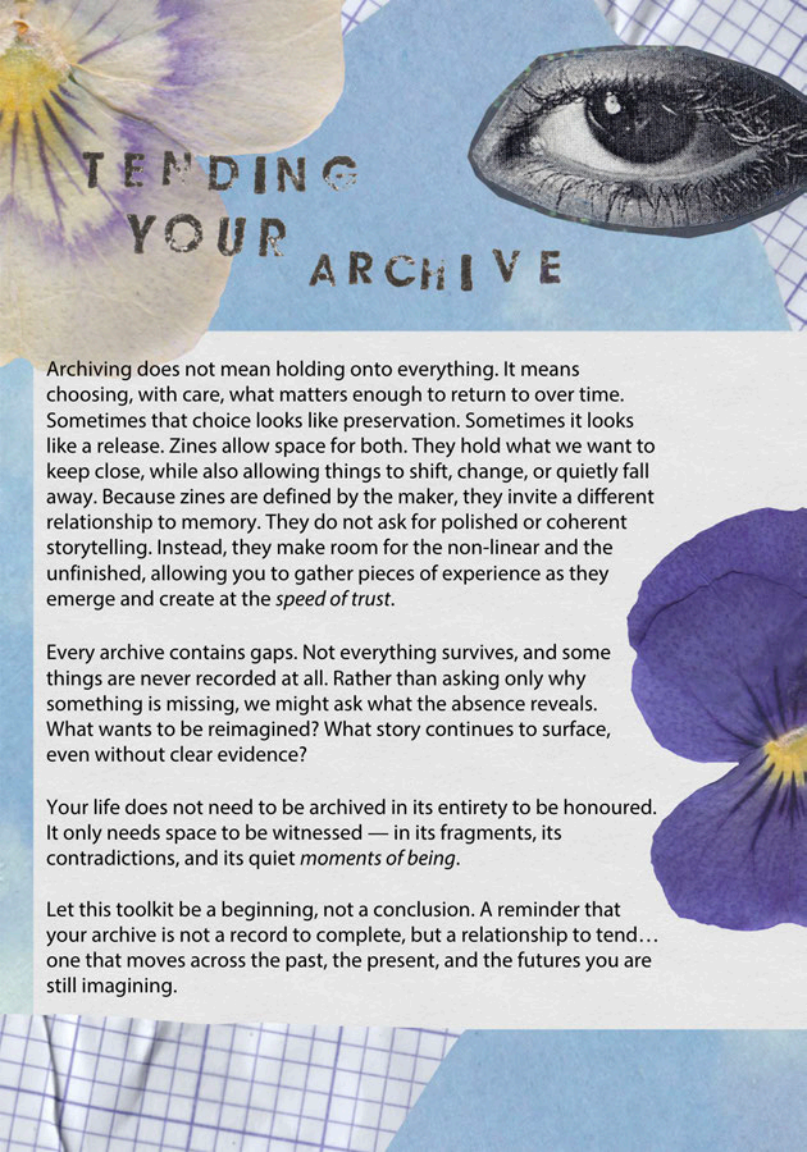
Trust the silence and moments of
uncertainty. Uncertainty is part of the
archive.

Allow memory to exist in process.
Some stories take time to reveal
themselves.

Integrate forgetting into the design of
your archive. Memory is imperfect,
and so are we.

Let your archive be a space of trust.
Making zines is not only art-making,
it is a practice of truth-making too.

Is it past, present or future?



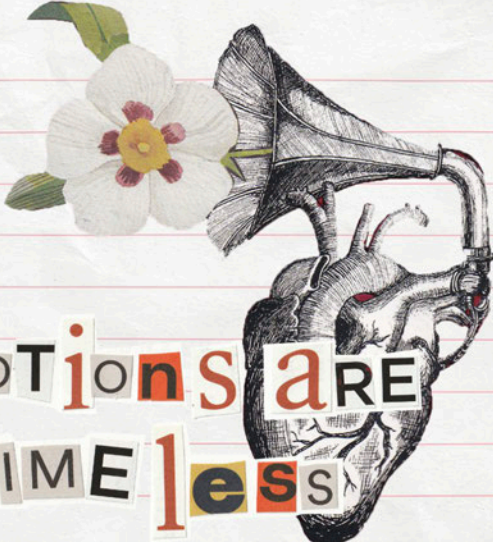
TENDING YOUR ARCHIVE

Archiving does not mean holding onto everything. It means choosing, with care, what matters enough to return to over time. Sometimes that choice looks like preservation. Sometimes it looks like a release. Zines allow space for both. They hold what we want to keep close, while also allowing things to shift, change, or quietly fall away. Because zines are defined by the maker, they invite a different relationship to memory. They do not ask for polished or coherent storytelling. Instead, they make room for the non-linear and the unfinished, allowing you to gather pieces of experience as they emerge and create at the *speed of trust*.

Every archive contains gaps. Not everything survives, and some things are never recorded at all. Rather than asking only why something is missing, we might ask what the absence reveals. What wants to be reimagined? What story continues to surface, even without clear evidence?

Your life does not need to be archived in its entirety to be honoured. It only needs space to be witnessed — in its fragments, its contradictions, and its quiet *moments of being*.

Let this toolkit be a beginning, not a conclusion. A reminder that your archive is not a record to complete, but a relationship to tend... one that moves across the past, the present, and the futures you are still imagining.



EMOTIONS ARE TIMELESS

If you're using this toolkit, thank you for becoming part of its story. Please treat it with care, so it can continue moving through many hands and remain part of Newham's living archive and beyond.

This toolkit is a free public resource available in libraries across Newham (physical copies) and online via @artizineuk and the Culture Within Newham website.

The Living Archive is a project by Ioana Simion (Artizine). It was commissioned by Culture Within Newham as part of the East London Creative Communities programme and delivered in collaboration with REinsTate.

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