

Vida Sačić, *Soft Archives*  
Karas Gallery, Zagreb

Vida Sačić's new series of works, presented at Karas Gallery, deals with questions of home, belonging, and intercultural exchange. Since the concept of the 'archive' is broad enough to encompass all the issues explored, it is hardly surprising that the artist has chosen it as the framework for the exhibition titled *Soft Archives*. Indeed, the etymology of the word 'archive' derives from the Greek *arkheion* – house, dwelling, address – the residence of high magistrates, the archons. Archives are traditionally seen as 'hard': they consist of material objects and documents. This raises the question: what, exactly, are soft archives, and what might they teach us?

Working with typographic relief processes, from printing plates and wood to metal type, Sačić defines herself as an artist of the "printed word". At the same time, she situates her practice within a specific temporal and geopolitical context, noting that she grew up in Croatia during the 1990s and established herself professionally in the United States, where she now lives and works. The exhibition *Soft Archives* includes the very dimensions essential to understanding her practice – medium, origin, and the effort to connect two cultural traditions – thereby making the archive a key method for interpreting the work presented at Karas Gallery.

Although printing plates and metal type constitute a "hard" archive – material, structured, and at times rigid in terms of its own possibilities – the artist finds new ways of opening to open up a space of freedom within it. That freedom is visible in the vibrant sheets of paper on which she experiments with text, structure, the printed word, and the bringing together of several traditions, some familiar and secure, others new and exciting. Beneath the surface of these sheets of paper, however, lie deeper layers of archival practice that form the backbone of *Soft Archives*. Several invisible archives shape these works on paper, creating what might be called a 'soft' archive.

One such archive is profoundly collective: an archive of shared knowledge and collaboration. In preparing this exhibition, Vida worked closely with fellow artists who generously shared their knowledge and introduced her to the process of papermaking. Aidan Frierson, co-founder of Chicago Pulp, a hand-papermaking studio in Chicago, and Charles Ryan Long, a papermaker who cultivates his own fibre plants, embody a mode of practice grounded in collaboration and mutual support. Papermaking itself is a demanding and time-sensitive process. While it may be a relatively new medium for Vida, the discipline it requires is not unfamiliar to her. Her long-standing engagement with printing and typography likewise requires rigour, perseverance, and a deep sensitivity to process – qualities that carry over into her exploration of papermaking.

Another archive emerges through memory, lifelong learning, and ambition: an archive of personal histories, influences, and role models that inform Sačić's work, shaped not only by curiosity but also by gratitude for what those role models—in Croatia and elsewhere—have given her, helping to form her as an artist. Now Sačić is giving something back, returning in order to move forward. For her, this entails, among other things, a creative and intellectual

**GALERIJA KARAS**

engagement with the past, brought into the present. Her practice thus connects not only cultural but also temporal trajectories, negotiating between multiple points of origin. In doing so, she constructs a new material archive – one that enables her to find a sense of belonging within this in-between space. Her prints reflect precisely this condition, combining Croatian and English words, often printed from type she has spent years collecting as an integral part of her practice.

The type she has collected across Europe constitutes another significant archive. Sačić preserves historic type, carrying it across geographical boundaries and reactivating it within new cultural contexts. For example, she keeps and uses the only surviving historic wood type from her native Varaždin, originally used to produce promotional material for Varteks. The transfer of these letters from a Central European to a North American context is not merely a logistical undertaking but a symbolic and intercultural act. Carried from Croatia to the United States and back again, these materials bear personal and cultural histories while generating something new.

Several such archives converge in a kind of amalgam that forms the key context of *Soft Archives*, culminating in works in which earlier phases of Sačić's practice – from collecting type to printing – are transformed into the abstraction of handmade paper. Brought from Chicago to Zagreb, these works carry one place into another: fibres formed in Chicago are exhibited in Zagreb. Between these places, within these atmospheric landscapes, language recedes; letters and words are reduced to a minimum or disappear altogether. Meaning is instead inscribed into the very materiality of the paper itself, offered to the viewer through texture, colour, and form.

At times, Vida prints on handmade paper, bringing together her hard and soft archives in order to evoke earlier works and personal histories while simultaneously offering what she has learned through collaborative practice – where the textual meets the experiential. These dense yet inviting surfaces carry multiple social histories. What emerges from these processes is not merely a new body of work but also a community: a living archive that brings together people, materials, and histories. It is an archive that remains open and generative, continuing to evolve towards future forms – for Vida and for us.

— Ivan Bujan, June 2026, Chicago

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