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*Bright Archive* By Sarah Minor  
Rescue Press

Publication Date: October 20, 2020  
Paperback, 9780999418697  
\$18, 172 pages

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# BRIGHT ARCHIVE

By SARAH MINOR

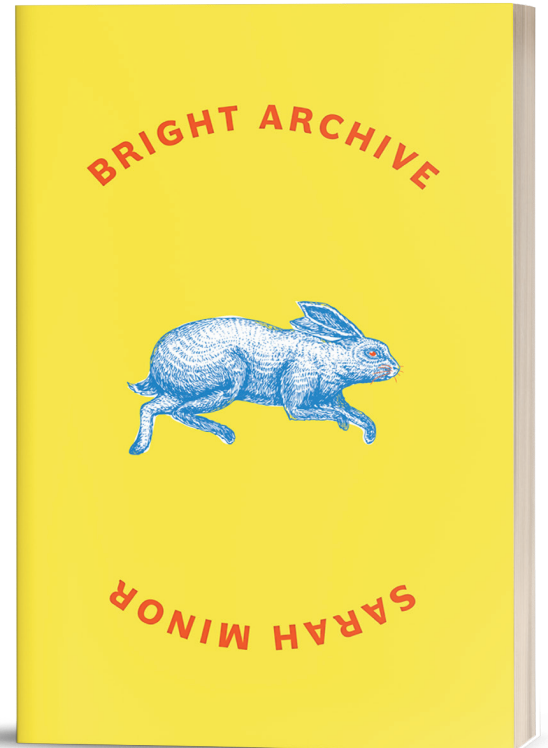
“Sarah Minor’s sense of what an essay is, what it can look like, and what it can contain is way beyond what almost anyone else is even attempting...Prepare to read differently: *Bright Archive* is a miracle.” —**ANDER MONSON**, editor of *DIAGRAM* and author of *Gnome Stories* and *I Will Take the Answer*

**DEBUT ESSAY COLLECTION *BRIGHT ARCHIVE* IS  
A RADIANT KALEIDOSCOPE OF STORYTELLING**



Sarah Minor’s thrilling debut *BRIGHT ARCHIVE* includes nine formally inventive essays, each distinct from the next, reaching beyond the classically confined trajectories of literary nonfiction. A visual artist and writer, Minor’s work takes us from the ecovillage Damanhur and the Temples of Humankind to landscapes of the American West. She considers materials, memories, and crimes with care – turning over pearls and Lascaux cave paintings.

Nearly every essay contains braided narratives, bringing together the analytical and the felt, using elements of



memoir, concrete poetry, archival research, interview, performance, and design in a radiant kaleidoscope of storytelling. Many essays are designed so that the text moves on the page in thoughtful shapes. More than an experiment, *BRIGHT ARCHIVE* explores particular subjects in thrilling, cohesive forms that show readers a new angle, introducing an adventurous new voice in creative nonfiction.

Sarah Minor is Assistant Professor of English & Creative Writing at the Cleveland Institute of Art. She holds a PhD in Creative Nonfiction from Ohio University and an MFA in Creative Nonfiction from the University of Arizona. Her work has appeared in *Gulf Coast*, *Diagram*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *Ninth Letter Online*, and *The Atlantic*.

# Q&A with Sarah Minor

## 1. When did you know you would collect these essays in a book?

I used to think in essays as a kind of unit of time or expression, and maybe I still conceptualize my ongoing work, in that sense, as a way to imagine writing towards the expansion of one idea up to a particular limit—an “essay length.” At first I thought I was making a collection of works all about Iowa, or about domestic spaces. Then in my MFA I took an incredible class on “the collection” as a concept, which taught me to think about a book’s completeness in terms of the depth of the connections it fosters between short works, or the ways paired works create a sense of pacing or arc through their ordering, rather than the definition of a finished book according to a certain page count or a narrative conclusion. Because of this I think I’ve been able to make short works more freely, and to trust that a range of essays made over a period of living and thinking will eventually coalesce and thrive in a collection according to the conversations that are taking place across and between those pieces, instead of their relying on shared subject matter.

## 2. Do you consider yourself a literary or visual artist first and foremost?

I like this question because I know how I feel today and how I’ll feel next month will differ. The answer to this question is also often a joke to myself. When I’m stuck on a piece of writing and everything I make seems awful I tell myself “I’m probably more of an artist” and go sit with some tedious embroidery or fiddle in a design program. Months later, when I’m feeling out of my depth standing beside a loud table saw or spending my fourth hour shaking at the top of a creaky ladder I can think, “It’s ok that I’m bad at this because I’m really a writer.” I’m also interested in always being both people at the same time, which often confounds and disrupts the regular order of things.

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*“I still find myself wondering if the process of making a visual text is simply one way I force myself to write.”*

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## 3. Which essay took the longest to write and what was that process like?

The oldest essay is “Into the Limen: Where an Old Squirrel Goes to Die.” It’s been nine years since the first draft I tried to write as a blueprint with each section as one room in a house. The visual essays I make take a very long time to finish because the research is time intensive, and also because whenever my writing shifts, expands or clarifies the form also needs to change, and vice versa.

Because these visual essays at one time received a lot of negative feedback during grad school when many people were confounded by my work, I still find myself wondering if the process of making a visual text is simply one way I force myself to write, and that I ultimately end up asking my readers to engage with a text that demonstrates its own process very explicitly. I think there’s more to it than that, but it’s true that blowing up a page visually makes a person more willing and interested in reconsidering each word. Often a slight improvement in page design will help me to realize something I hadn’t before about how a piece could develop on a large or small scale and this was true even in the final designs for the print book not a month ago.

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## 4. Are there certain books or artists that particularly inspire your work? What are you reading now?

I often read to listen to other writer’s voices, to hear their candor and rhythms and the sense of self that accompanies these things. While writing this book I was primarily reading essays. Lately, I’ve been reading more short fiction and poetry, but right now I’m reading Ariana Reines’ *The Sand Book* and re-reading T. Fleischmann’s *Time Is The Thing A Body Moves Through* because I’m teaching it this semester, and feel endlessly in awe of that book’s form. I think Catherine Lacey’s *Certain American States* is up next.

## 5. What can you tell us about your book that’s forthcoming from Noemi Press in 2021?

My second book *Slim Confessions: The Universe as a Spider or Spit*, is an image-text about the history of movie slime, about loneliness, about a summer I spent birthing lambs on a farm in Iceland, and about physical touch as approximated by visual media. Perhaps the book is also a joke I’m having with myself. If *Bright Archive* is a project obsessed with the utterances of white spaces, with reorienting margins and upsetting the traditional print page, then *Slim Confessions* is a book in which white space is not allowed to exist, and where images behave like moments of silence instead. The book has almost no paragraph breaks and its form thinks about the horizontal shape and vertical motion of a screen. It’s a much shorter book, and claustrophobic, but in a different way than *Bright Archive*. It’s also more personal, but very fleetingly so.