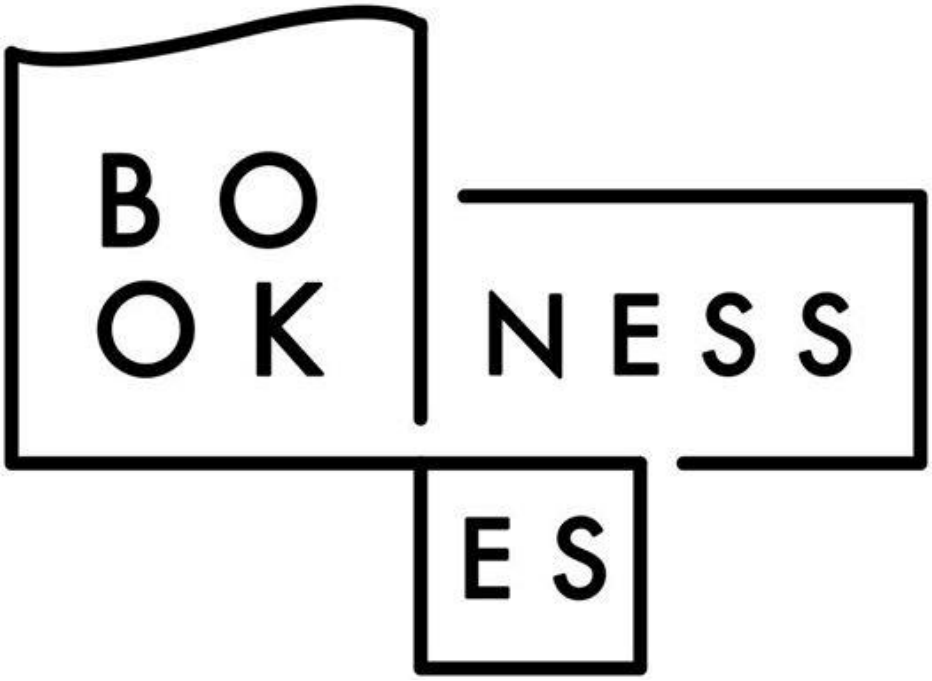

PROCEEDINGS

of

Booknesses:
Taking Stock of the Book Arts in South Africa

A Colloquium organised by the
Department of Visual Art
Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (FADA)
of the
University of Johannesburg (UJ)
South Africa

21-26 March 2017

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1. Keynote Speakers

Communities of Practice: Building an Internationally Connected Practice in and for the Book Arts

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Introduction

At the Centre for Fine Print Research at the University of the West of England in Bristol, UK, 'book arts' investigates contemporary artists' book practice nationally and internationally. The findings from these research are disseminated freely and are accessible to a wide audience through the 'bookarts' website, where artists' books projects, news, events, lectures, conferences, essays, published papers, symposia and exhibitions are archived online. We also have a section for research resources for students.

Our projects with artists' books are inspired by and built upon the needs of artists in the international field. This includes publishing the *Book Arts Newsletter* to disseminate up-to-date news, *The Blue Notebook* journal in which artists and writers can publish non-traditional essays, and the *Artist's Book Yearbook*, a biennial reference publication that surveys recent practice, critical writing and artists' independent publishing. Our projects exist to help artists who are unsure if their work 'fits' into the field of book arts, and to give a voice to book artists so they can test their ideas, and begin a discussion with their peers.

Curatorial

As artists, Tom Sowden (who is now Head of Design at Bath Spa University) and I also engage with curatorial practice to showcase contemporary artists' books to a wide public audience. Some projects have included *Sitting Room*, a travelling exhibition of a sitting room full of artists' books, touring 2006-2008 in Europe and Mexico, curated by Lucy May Schofield and Tom Sowden, Righton Press, Manchester, Metropolitan University, UK. All the books were dispersed for people

to pick up from tables and occasional furniture, to be able to sit and read. *Arcadia id Est* was a handling exhibition of 110 artists' books on nature/landscape that toured Australia, Europe and the USA from 2005-2008 (all the books and symposium talks are archived at: http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/news-archive/arcadia.htm).

RUKSSIAN Artists' Books from the UK and Russia was shown at the Tsaritsyno State Historical, Architectural, Art and Landscape Museum Reserve, Moscow and toured Russia and the UK from 2014 – 2015 (curators: Sarah Bodman, Mikhail Pogarsky, Vasily Vlasov, Viktor Lukin). The project aimed to demonstrate the unique and common features of the artist's book, presenting works by artists from the UK and Russia united by national artistic traditions. *Follow-ed (after Hokusai)* is a collaborative project edited and curated by Michalis Pichler and Tom Sowden, an ongoing exhibition of books produced by artists in tribute to Ed Ruscha, held in the curators' collections (see tomsowden.com and buypichler.com).

Publishing

The *Artist's Book Yearbook* focuses on international activity in the field of book arts. It was established in 1994 by the contributing editors: Tanya Peixoto, John Bently, Stephanie Brown and Stefan Szczelkun and continues to be published on a biennial basis. The Yearbook arose from their collective passion to offer book artists an opportunity to read critical writing on the subject, to gain an overview of artist's book production and most importantly to encourage greater discussion and awareness of book arts. As the publishing editor, Tanya Peixoto produced the Yearbook under her Magpie Press imprint until 1999 when she went on to set up bookartbookshop in London, a fantastic place to see and buy a huge selection of artists' books.

The *Artist's Book Yearbook* serves as a resource for artists, academics, students, collectors, librarians, dealers, publishers and researchers, and anyone interested in artists' books. Each issue of the publication includes essays and information on many aspects of the book arts, artists' listings, information on book arts galleries, archives and collections, book arts courses, events, journals, bibliographies and reference publications, studios and websites, with book arts contributors from around the world. We encourage artists to list up to 3 of their recent or upcoming books in any issue, creating a snapshot of contemporary artists' books which can be used as a guide for purchasing/curating by librarians, curators, gallerists and collectors.

Research projects

Artists' Books Creative Production and Marketing was initially an AHRC supported survey that ran from 2004-2005. Since then the project's findings have been updated twice, with the last version published in May 2010. It was inspired by the many artists who regularly contacted us to ask how they could price their editions and where could they sell them. As much of our time was being spent answering individual questions, we thought it would be a good idea to scope the field and establish some basic rules, advice and information for artists that we could publish as a guide to help them market their work. For book artists it is often difficult to assume the multiple roles of producer, publisher and distributor that are needed to create and sell their work. They are not often represented by galleries or dealers and have to do everything themselves, from working out prices, to marketing and interacting with potential purchasers at book fairs, and approaching collections. Our project discussed some of the practical issues arising from this.

When we began, we examined the types of questions we were often asked and tailored a series of questionnaires to send out to artists, librarians, collectors, educators, dealers and bookshops. These were used as a base to start our quantitative research, with more detailed questions posed via targeted interviews for the qualitative part of our study. We handed out the questionnaires at book fairs, and posted to our mailing list, asking artists to tell us about their own making and marketing problems. We also launched our 'artist's book surgeries' at book fairs, inviting anyone who wanted to come and ask for advice about making or selling their books. These surgeries have carried on since the project ended and are often run when visiting venues such as the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, USA; London Centre for Book Arts, and Counter Art Book Fair in Plymouth, UK. For the marketing guide we also interviewed a range of artists with 2 - 30+ years experience of making and marketing artists' books, zines, multiples and unique books to publish a series of 24 case studies exploring their experiences in Europe, Japan, Argentina, Australia and the USA. These form a resource for those wanting to find out more about producing and marketing artists' books. We asked them to share their working practice and experiences of book fairs, their interactions with purchasers for collections, and discuss any problems or offer advice, and we did the same ourselves. We also asked private and institutional collectors to tell us about the ways in which they would prefer to be contacted by artists selling their books and any issues they had from their own collecting. Whilst travelling to book fairs, we interviewed some established figures such as Max Schumann (Printed Matter) for some in-depth accounts of selling, purchasing and collecting artists' books, and published their responses.

The findings were published as a free download guide covering subjects including: How to price your work; how to prepare for artist's book fairs, and which ones to go to; understanding collection acquisition policies; how to approach institutional collections; what information to supply to collections for cataloguing your books; utilising the Internet; places to see, buy and sell artists' books. Our aim for the project was to give artists confidence in the making and selling of their work, and we hope that we have helped them in this through the publication of our guidebook (download a free, 87pp PDF, 3rd edition 2010 at:
http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/publications/index.html).

A Manifesto for the Book is also a free download 187pp reference publication, one of the results of a two-year, Arts and Humanities Research Council project (March 2008 - February 2010): *In an arena including digital and traditional artists' publishing formats - What will be the canon for the artist's book in the 21st Century?* The research project was a responsive exploration with a collaborative, international audience of artists, academics, presses, publishers, curators, dealers, collectors and students involved in the field, in order to propose an inclusive structure for the academic study, artistic practice and historical appreciation of the artist's book. You can read all of the published outcomes online including, interviews, essays, conference papers, 45 case studies and the *Manifesto for the Book* on the project's home page
(http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/projects/canon.html).

Conversational topics and a diagram were posted online; asking respondents to make their own version of Tom's deliberately annoying ABTREE, a family tree of book arts that could be rearranged, redrawn or redesigned visually. An online forum discussed questions with the public such as: "Do you have any proposals for what can and cannot be included in the description 'book'?" and, "Do we use the term Artists' Books or Artists' Publications?" We also targeted individual artists, professionals, curators, academics and collectors in Brazil, Europe, Australia, Asia, and the USA for interviews to discuss their definitions of artists' books and their current practice. For the project we also curated an exhibition 'New Wave' showcasing examples of contemporary artists' books, the ABTREE diagrams and a reference reading room, to demonstrate some of the possibilities for
contemporary book arts production. *New Wave* was a handling show of 133 artists' books proposing an inclusive structure for the book in the digital age.

Examples of artworks ranged from traditional craft print to experimental works, unique knitted books to iPod publications, free download e-books, hypertext works, phone-based works, POD books, letterpress, generative texts, reassemblings, DIY books and so on (these are also all archived online). Our findings were debated at a conference at our university in 2009, which introduced new publishing by artists and writers from Europe, the USA and Australia to delegates in order to explore and extend current understanding of artists' books. This included presentations from traditional printmaking to the book as performance (such as Sally Alatalo's performative books published through her Sara Ranchouse imprint), video and e-publications, live Wikipedia interventions with artist Emily Artinian, and the 'liberature' movement in Poland.

We also investigated how a contemporary book arts centre might work, and nominated the Minnesota Center for Book Arts (MCBA: www.mnbookarts.org) as an exemplar. This small seed contributed in turn to the model for the first artists' books centre in the UK, established by Simon Goode and Ira Yonemura as the London Centre for Book Arts (www.londonbookarts.org).

One of the key points of our research was to try and include all the book related activity that artists engage with - if the artist considered what they were producing to be a book, then we felt it should be included. Our project had no intention of solving any puzzles, or establishing any rules, in fact, it was just the opposite; we wanted to kick the international field into discussion and reflection on the books they make, how they describe them and what they might look like in the future. Our intention for the project's outcomes was that the manifesto would ask people to state their position and begin talking from there, which I think we managed to achieve. Some particular discussions were towards an agreement on a more inclusive terminology: Artists' books, artists' publications or book arts? After two years of debate, predominantly with artists (and, artists are after all the people who should be defining the terminologies with which their works are discussed and defined), respondents circled through our questions of defining artists' books and book arts, and almost landed on 'artists' publishing' (my favourite as it refers to the more democratic nature of the book) until it was dashed by one response on the public forum from the artist Sara Bowen in Australia. Bowen stated that she didn't want to use the term "artist's publication" to describe her practice for two reasons: it made her small, hand printed editions of artists' books sound trivial, and it in no way described her unique bookworks. And then came more voices confirming that they didn't "publish" one-off books.

“Artists’ books” is the term we are all probably most familiar and at ease with when describing the works that we make. But it also has the problem of being so brutally singular in definition, an artist + a book; it cut out all the other emerging platforms and associated works that could be embraced with “publishing”. The term “book arts” allows everything to be possible in practice. And then there are also the complications that come with the multiple permutations of translation into other languages, and how each of them these terms can be interpreted nationally. For example, for the project we spent an intense week in Poland, interviewing the writer and artist Radoslaw Nowakowski, Pawel and Jadwiga Tryzno, founders of the Book Art Museum in Lódz, Alicja Slowikowska founder of the Book Art Festival programmes in Warsaw, Tomasz Wilmanski founder of Galeria AT and artist Joanna Adamczewska in Poznan.

Apart from Alicja Slowikowska who concentrates on curating rather than making, not one of them would admit that they made artists’ books. We found this incredibly confusing as all the artworks they were showing us were artists’ books as far as we could determine. We kept insisting that these were artists’ books but Tomasz Wilmanski in particular was quite adamant that they were not, and seemed to become more offended each time that we suggested that they were. After much conversation the reason for this transpired; in Poland, Alicja Slowikowska curates a huge programme of artists’ books exhibitions, so much so that these are the main events at which the art gallery-going public form their opinions of the genre. The Book Art exhibitions include invited artists and open calls; there are no limitations on what can be included under the Book Art umbrella. Both established and younger artists are encouraged to participate and show objects, illustrations, fine press books, authors’ books, limited editions, children’s book, artists’ books and book installations. Many of the books are sculptural, one-off books, altered books and book objects, and rarely are the works the kind of books that could be described as artists’ publications. So, in Poland, the term ‘artist’s book’ instantly implies a sculptural object, which is the exact opposite of the performance-based, multiples and experimental publishing that Tomasz Wilmanski and Joanna Adamczewska were making and exhibiting. Although they appreciated the work that Slowikowska does in bringing books to the attention of the wider public they were not interested in being classified within that area of practice.

Wilmanski has been curating exhibitions of artists’ books in Poland since 1982. In 1990 he launched a series ‘Book and What Next’ showing artists' books, concrete, experimental and visual poetry by national and international artists including Ann Noël, Wladamar Kremser, Jaap Blonk, Stanislaw Drozdz, Kurt Johannessen, Henri Chopin, Babsi Daum, Emmett Williams and

Sef Peeters. These exhibitions have also included panel discussions and lectures by theorists including Dr Katarzyna Bazarnik and Zenon Fajfer – founders of the Liberature movement. For many years Galeria AT has also collected book works and visual sound poetry, building a wide collection of works related to this artform. *BOOK AND WHAT NEXT: 25 years* edited by Tomasz Wilmanski was published by Galeria AT in December 2016, with Polish and English texts to celebrate some of the last 25 years of the series. To complicate things further, Radoslaw Nowakowski described his works as author's books and Katarzyna Bazarnik and Zenon Fajfer of the Liberature movement only agreed to come and speak at our conference if we promised to clearly state on all promotional material that they definitely did not produce artists' books. Once they had attended though, they realised through conversations that they were part of the wider field of artists' books and connected with artists in the USA who invited them to visit for exhibitions and talks about their work.

For Nowakowski, who we interviewed over many hours in his home in the tiny hamlet of Dabrowa Dolna for our project, he described how over the last 40 years he has moved from smuggling paper into his native Poland, hidden inside his drum kit when allowed on tour in a band, up to the late 80s, to using the Internet and digital design to publish books that he writes, designs, illustrates and assembles himself. It was illegal to publish editions of books in Poland until the revolution and collapse of the state system in the late 1980s. It was only after 1990 that writers and artists were able to freely publish their books without fear of arrest. Nowakowski began his publishing using paper, a typewriter and sheets of carbon paper to make editions of up to 5 copies at once. He hand illustrated all of his books and bound them himself. He now has the luxury of a computer, access to the Internet, an inkjet printer and a local bindery to produce his books which are all based on his 'nondescriptions' of the world around him (http://liberatorium.com). For Nowakowski, as for Pawel and Jadwiga Tryzno, publishing was difficult and contact with other publishers was extremely limited due to poor telephone lines and the fear of arrest if caught printing illegal materials. The Tryznos have been squatting in the building that houses their museum for over 20 years now. Initially moving in after the building had been abandoned for many years in the 1990s, they began collecting working presses, metal and wood type and bookbinding equipment. Initially producing their own paper from textile production waste smuggled in from a local factory, printing and binding in house in their apartment, they have now established a significant collection of artists' books, a working studio and have published books with many national and international artists and writers. They are still under the threat of eviction today despite having won many awards for their books from the local

council and the American Printing History Association. The museum is housed over three floors, the top floor now a lenticular print studio producing 3D prints, run by their son Pawel (you can read our full interview with the Tryznos at: http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/news-archive/tryznos.htm or visit their website at: http://www.book.art.pl.

The Liberature movement was established in 1999 by Katarzyna Bazarnik and Zenon Fajfer in Poland, which demands absolute attention to considering and conveying a book in its entirety. As small press publishers, Liberature's books celebrate all aspects of the work, from concept to format, paper, type size, imagery, etc. Their recent publications include the first translation of Nobel Prize winner Herta Müller's poetry volume *Strażnik bierze swój grzebień / Der Wächter nimmt seinen Kamm* and a Polish translation of *Finnegans Wake*, following Joyce's original layout, typography and design very closely (http://www.liberatura.pl). Despite their previous protestations at not being connected with artists' books, Katarzyna Bazarnik kindly invited me to write an article for translation into Polish in 2016, in which I explored the similarities between their publications and artists' books 'Liberature, Literature and the Artist's Book: Context, Content and Material Meaning' for the journal *ER(R)GO.* (You can read this article in English at: https://tonnard.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/ergo-english-version.pdf).

Do It Yourself - AKA Build It and They Will Come! Or - If it doesn't exist, make it yourself…

Although South Africa may seem very remote in terms of connecting with the wider international community of book artists, there are ways to get things done or make them happen. As I hope some of the artists and projects discussed above have shown, people in geographically remote areas have made and distributed books, established studios and museums, and managed to talk to others in the field through sheer determination. What follows are some ideas to help get your books out into the wider world; use these as models to make it work for you. Artistsbooksonline.com is a collaborative group founded by Noëlle Griffiths in the UK, as she wanted to be able to show her work with others and meet other artists. It's for artists making small editions, to connect and share the costs of exhibiting at artist's book fairs nationally and internationally. AMBruno is a coalition of artists, established in 2008 with MA Fine Art graduates from Central Saint Martins (part of University of the Arts, London, UK); since then, participation has widened to include artists based throughout the UK and internationally (http://ambruno.co.uk). Each year they set a project theme for members to work towards (for

example RED), with the books then shown collectively at fairs and in exhibitions. Between them they have attended many fairs including the Printed Matter Art Book Fair in New York. Both of these groups have managed to do this by splitting the costs of stands, accommodation and travel to fund the people taking the books to an event. Sarah Nicholls created the *Brain Washing from Phone Towers* informational pamphlet series to share her practice. She funds printing of her beautiful letterpress and relief print editioned books (usually between 150-200 copies) through a cheap subscription package, which allows her to send copies free of charge to those she thinks would enjoy her work (www.sarahnicholls.com). Otto of Ottographic established his own open access screenprint studio in the UK and prints all of his books there. One of which Book Jacket (2014) is both a book and a wearable jacket (ornamental) offering advice to books on how to get into a library (http://ottographic.co.uk). In Australia Tim Mosely organises the 'Codex Event' series to collaborate with other artists on the production of one-off or small editions of books. He also established ABBE – the Artist's Book Brisbane Event in 2015 to engage with critical discourse on artists' books. The next ABBE event will take place this July at Queensland College of Art in Brisbane, in conjunction with an artist's book and multiples fair organised by Grahame Galleries (http://bit.ly/2og1wiR). In Norway, Kurt Johannessen uses the artist's book as an extension of his performance practice, producing self-published editions each year which he sells online and through bookshops and galleries. British artist John Bently produces all of his books by hand as an extension of his love of text and image, poetry and musical performance. The narratives are written and performed by himself alongside his band Bones & the Aft, with books sold to his followers via postal subscription or at gigs (www.liverandlights.co.uk).

Some examples of organisations and projects that have been established without funding include: In Denmark, Torben Soeborg has set up a free artist's book listing website at http://artists-books.eu, where you can show examples of your publications. In Australia, Robert Heather of the State Library of Victoria set up Artist Books 3.0 as a ning.com site which has recently migrated to Facebook (https://en-gb.facebook.com/artistbooks3.0/). He founded the group to help connect artists, curators, librarians, students, and researchers interested in artists' books, who live and work in the vast geographically distant areas of Australia, over the years it has grown with many international artists - over 3000 members (including South Africa) joining and sharing news, calls for participation and events. In the USA, Library of the Printed Web was founded in 2013 by artist Paul Soulellis to showcase physically printed artists' books produced with content gathered from the Internet – under the motto 'search, compile, publish'. Earlier this year it became part of the MoMA Library and a publication is forthcoming

(http://libraryoftheprintedweb.tumblr.com). Also in the USA, artist Emily Larned established Impractical Labor in Service of the Speculative Arts (ILSSA), as a membership organisation for those who make experimental or conceptual work with obsolete technology, including artists' books. ILSSA is both a union and research project that investigates publishing and practice that embraces old technology and the idea of taking time to create work. Members can join for 20 US$ a year, share their ideas on the discussion board and join in events remotely (http://impractical-labor.org). In the UK, Angie Butler created LENvention as an annual convention for letterpress artists involved in books. They meet for 2-3 days each year, inviting artists and printers to work collaboratively on a project to share knowledge and ideas for best practice (http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/events/lenvention.html). Poet and artist Nancy Campbell successfully used crowdfunding for a residency trip to Upernavik Museum in Greenland in order to spend time working on a book *How To Say 'I Love You' In Greenlandic: An Arctic Alphabet*, published by her Bird Editions imprint in 2011 with a larger edition later published by Miel Editions in 2014
(http://nancycampbell.co.uk/residencies/).

More recently she has utilised crowdfunding again to successfully fund a new anthology *The Polar Tombola: A Book of Banished Words* in March 2017. There are also small artist's book groups dotted around the world. Most of these have been established by artists working alone who wanted to connect with other practitioners for ideas and feedback. They usually meet once a month in cafés, libraries, pubs, etc. and it costs nothing to organise one yourself and invite others to come along.

Artists' publishing residencies

It is always worth looking at artists' websites to see where they have produced their books. Many artists have benefitted from residency publishing programmes where accommodation and studio access are exchanged for a share of the editioned books produced. Elisabeth Tonnard for example made *In this Dark Wood* on an artist's residency at Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, NY, USA in 2008 (http://elisabethtonnard.com). Women's Studio Workshop (WSW) in Rosendale USA offers 4-6 week residencies annually for artists to work in any of their studio disciplines and have a long-term commitment to artists' books production (all opportunities are in WSW's online calendar at www.wsworkshop.org). Artist Imi Maufe (www.imimaufe.com) has undertaken many funded and non-funded residencies with artists' books as the outcome,

including LK243 UnderSail, a VARC residency in Northumberland and at Grafikverkstan Godsmagasinet (Warehouse Workshop), Uttersberg, Sweden. Grafikverkstan Godsmagasinet welcomes artists to visit their studios in the remote village in Sweden; they are keen to connect with other book artists and letterpress printers to share ideas and practice (www.grafikverkstan.se).

Other opportunities

Events such as the MCBA Prize - the first honour to recognise book art from across the field and around the world – can be of great benefit in both prize money and opportunities from the award (http://mcbaprize.org). The Center for Artists' Publications in Bremen recently invited artists from all over the world to contribute to an exhibition about the international artist's book (http://www.zentrum-kuenstlerpublikationen.de). The London Centre for Book Arts has launched a new project called A6 BOOKS. The aim is to help promote and distribute books, zines and publications by emerging artists (http://www.londonbookarts.org). Founded by Simon Ryder, Liverpool Book Art is interested in collaborating with artists around the world. They have recently taken an exhibition of artists' books to Sarno, Italy and welcome new connections (https://liverpoolbookart.com).

Join us for World Book Night!

Since 2010 I have collaborated with artist/poet Nancy Campbell in organising an annual artist's book project for World book Night that is open to all. From an initial small beginning in tribute to the writer Patricia Highsmith, the project has evolved to include artists and writers from around the world through open calls to submit contributions on a particular book. We produce an artist's book and video each year in collaboration with musicians, with each contributor receiving a copy of the book for their involvement. To date we have made eight works in tribute to Margaret Atwood, Charles Bukowski, Raymond Carver, Douglas Coupland, Patricia Highsmith, Stephen King, and Donna Tartt. Our tribute this year was to all the investigators and writers who have been involved in the search for the Loch Ness Monster. An open call invited anyone to send in either a photograph of a 'sighting' of the monster, or to design a potential book cover, all of which were included in our publication made after our small expedition to Loch Ness: *BookIshNess - An in depth interrogation of the mystery of Loch Ness by the Loch Ness Investigation Bureau Rebooted 2017.* This year saw 46 artists from the UK, USA, Norway, Sweden, Germany and

Denmark sending in artworks and photographs. In 2018 we will be producing a collaborative book in celebration of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*, first published in 1818, making 2018 the 200th anniversary, and the focus of our project for World Book Night in April. A call for contributors will go out on our website and in the Book Arts Newsletter.

Some of our resources

Download the free PDF *Book Arts Newsletter* (BAN) for information on: National and International Exhibitions, Courses and Lectures, Artist Opportunities, Book Fairs and Events, New Artists' Publications, Reports and Reviews. Send in news about your new artists' books, events, workshops or exhibitions… (all deadlines are on the download page at: http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/newsletters.html). I also use Twitter to post last minute news and opportunities that come in too late for the BAN (see: @SarahBodman). Our journal *The Blue Notebook* (est. 2006) was specifically created for artists and writers to publish ideas around contemporary artists' books practice internationally, including 'difficult' texts that don't fir mainstream publications. We have published articles on artists' books in South Africa, Cuba, Hawai'i, the Ukraine, Cyprus, Australia, and many more countries. We welcome submissions of writing on artists' books for *The Blue Notebook*, so please feel free to get in touch with your ideas, you can find the guidelines on our website (http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/publications/blue-notebook.html).Come to BABE our biennial artist's book event at Arnolfini, Bristol, UK, the next event will be held in 2019. Tom and I established BABE in collaboration with Arnolfini in 2007 as we really wanted an artist's book fair to take place in our home city of Bristol. It has grown a lot, with 7000 visitors to each event. It runs every two years to give artists time to plan ahead and make new work. Each event has around 90 exhibitors featuring the work of artist's book makers and small presses from around the world.

I hope this has offered you some ideas on building an internationally connected practice in and for the book arts, and for your book art. The field of artists' books is a wide and open community to join in with, and one that is a great place to be part of. Please feel free to contact me with questions or ideas.

The Aegean Sea: The Compulsion to Make Artist Books

Robbin Ami Silverberg

Artist and founding director of Dobbin Mill, a hand-papermaking studio, and Dobbin Books
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Some years ago, I found a drawing I had made when I was a kid. Coloring on construction paper, I created my fantasy world: *The Book Bubble*. I really always loved books…but imagine: a book fountain? --A book tree, not to mention the *Enjoyment Room* & *Brown Study* both in the attic… Did I already know then that I wanted to spend my life living with books: designing, producing, and dreaming them? -- That my concept would be a built space, a place of retreat? I must say in some ways this image that I made was prescient, as you will see in one moment. -- Not to mention that I seem to have invented the computer: note the *Book a Screen*!

For the past 28 years, I have lived in Northern Brooklyn across the East River from Manhattan. Greenpoint / Williamsburg, which is not green, is a mixed industrial neighborhood that is being not so quietly infiltrated by hipsters.

Dobbin Mews is a 19th C horses' stables that András and I have converted to our home in what was the hayloft, along with a cluster of studios for both our own work and for a group of artists & artisans. Despite the urban façade, behind the gate of the Dobbin Mews compound is a green haven in a courtyard… We have two gardens filled with flowers, herbs, berries vegetables, and a range of plants for papermaking purposes…including my paper mulberry trees for Eastern papermaking.

My Studio is divided onto two levels: Upstairs is Dobbin Books, a work space for art-making, writing, bookbinding, printing, whatever it takes - for- the artist book production. Downstairs is the paper mill. Dobbin Mill is a fully equipped paper studio, with a divine 50-ton hydraulic press (the couching table becomes the bottom platen), forced air dryer system for drying papers, fiber storage, a Reina Hollander beater for fiber preparation in a separate beater room, along with a good deal of other equipment and tools.

Book studio, gardens, paper mill ….So you see, it is my *Book Bubble!*

Most of my artwork takes the form of solo artist books in very small edition sizes (typically 5, 10, or 15). I've been making artist books since the early 1980's – as I see them as potent vehicles for my ideas. The second area of my artwork is site-specific paper installations, which I consider to be artist books in space. The third focus is collaborative artist books, with artists from other countries and other disciplines: Since 1991, I have published circa forty collaborations. The two books shown in this slide: on the right is *Titok (secret)*, a 3-dimensional maze that maps secrets. Twenty-seven interactive cubes can be explored, while listening to a sound score, *Music for Boxes*. On the left is *Kakistocracy*, an artist book collaboration with Johannesburg artist, Kim Berman, produced just last month at Dobbin Mill and completed in this past week here in Johannesburg. It describes our 2 dysfunctional political systems that have produced the likes of Trump and Zuma.

Today, I'd like to explore what might seem to be a simple idea, the compulsion to MAKE artist books. To better understand this compulsion, I spent several months going through my bookshelves, re-visiting old favorites, renewing bonds with writers, thinkers and visionaries… a tasty array of artist books in my collection, but also the writings of the likes of Alberto Manguel, Guy Debord, George Perec, etc.

Here are some thoughts found on my bookshelves:

- Stephane Mallarmé described the book as a series of relations: "Hymn, harmony and joy, a pure cluster grouped together in some shining circumstances, tying together the relations among everything"[1]
- Dick Higgins wrote: "…a book, in its purest form, is a phenomenon of space and time and dimensionality that is unique unto itself. Every time we turn the page, the previous page passes into our past and we are confronted by a new world...The book is, then, the container of a provocation. We open it and are provoked to match our horizons with those implied by (what is within)…[2]
- Stephen Bury states more matter of factly that "The book is the residence of the idea"…. And, that it is 'What we expect a book to do: what a book is and what it is not."[3]

[1] Stéphane Mallarmé, Divagations, Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2007, P.215
[2] Dick Higgins, "A Book", New Wilderness Letter 11, 1982.
[3] Stephen Bury, *Artists' Books*, Bernard Quaritch Ltd, 2015

All these texts pleased me to read. At the same time, I felt no closer to why I make books / why I am obsessed with artist books.

What is an artists' books' haeccity? Its essence?

I can't help but take a detour here that might further explain why I pose this question: We all know what a document is. It is a thing (most often we think of it as a written or printed paper) that can be used to furnish evidence or information.
But, In 1951 French librarian, Suzanne Briet, made an unusual proposal: that an antelope running in the wild would not be a document, while an antelope in a zoo would certainly be one. Briet based this definition on the idea that the zoo specimen has been reduced by the act of caging it – to just that: a specimen. Just as documents are objects that are intended as evidence and processed and retained as such. If a book can be a document, it is evident that we humans entangle the genre and the thing – the media and the format…. This line of reasoning is part of a long tradition of entangling the material form of an expression with its linguistic (or creative) meanings - as Lisa Gitelman put it.[4]

Returning to the artist book, understanding its haeccity could clarify why we make them. Or, I shall take another tact and pose that the very act of making an artist book or being an actor in making them, can perhaps clarify its essence. From this perspective, an artist book is a tabula rasa, on which the artist could experiment, exploring a range of notions: of seriality, sequence, and narrative, the relationship between text & image;[5] about the fragmentation caused by image/text interaction; language as sound & image; the absence vs. presence of information; reading in real time vs. reading as performance; the page as arena; the subjective nature of reading; the density of the page; - to name a few concepts that are part of this exploration called *artist book*.

Today I will share with you my thoughts on just a few of its properties that draw me to this wonderful object. In doing so, I will highlight TEN books by other artists that have filled me with awe and astonishment. Several of them are artist books that have been my guides in the struggle to make better art, - to make artist books.

[4] Lisa Gitelman, Paper Knowledge, Duke University Press, 2014, P.2-3
[5] Stephen Bury, *Ibid,* P. 18

We are all here at *Booknesses* to consider the artist book – as makers, as collectors, as academics and students of this wonderful field – I must delve deeper, so please indulge me:

Materiality & Process

When I consider what aspect of books feels essential to me *as a maker*, their materiality and the haptic experience of reading certainly come to the fore. A book is obviously an object: the act of reading is more than our eyes following a black dot matrix on a white ground. It is also, of course, the physical act of page turning, handling and holding the book itself.

"…our intellectual and imaginative relationships with books have been mediated by their held-in-the-hand physicality," wrote Shirley Dent in The Guardian.[6]

Gyorgy Kepes, wrote in 1949: "A book has weight size, thickness and tactile qualities, qualities that are handled by the hand, as its optical form is handled by the eye… The book can be conceived in the same way as a handle of a tool or a utensil... and with perfect control.[7]

Finally, as Gary Frost pointed out: "The haptic concern also follows from the peculiar essence of the book as hand held art. Books are only read at arms' length... This is a legacy of writing as a picture of speech and its early use as a handheld prompt."[8]

Bruno Munari's I Pre-Libri, 1980

A wonderful primer of sorts that explores a vast array of sensory experiences in artist books is Bruno Munari's *I Pre-Libri* (which means Pre-Books, in Italian). Published in 1980, it consists of 12 booklets made of a range of materials: an assortment of papers & cardboard, wood, cloth, sponge, felt, plastic, wool, raffia, and string. Munari explored the ideas of what is a book, focusing on pre-literate children in particular, as his readers, for, he wanted children to learn "that reading involves more than just the eyes"[9] and to inspire a love of reading in pre-literate minds.

[6] Shirley Dent, The Guardian, *Cut for the Very First Time,* May 20, 2008
[7] Gyorgy Kepes, *Graphic Forms: The Arts as Related to the Book*, Harvard University Press, P.8
[8] Gary Frost, "Reading by Hand: "The Haptic Evaluation of Artists' Books" in *The Bonefolder*, Vol. 2, no. 1 (Fall 2005) P.3
[9] Denti, R., Children's Book Publishing in Italy" in *The Last Fifty Years in Bologna Fifty Years of Children's Books from Around the World*, 2013, P.299

Experiencing *I Pre-Libri* is a true joy for the adult. Seemingly simple and direct, each pamphlet introduces an idea or several ideas of what a book is and can do. It is brilliantly designed: each booklet functions as a chapter that builds on and references the ideas about book in the previous volumes - in other word, a sequence.

Munari's commentary is worth quoting: "We could design a series of objects to look like books but which would all be different according to the information they gave out, whether visual, tactile, audible, thermal, or material, but all the same size as the volumes in an encyclopedia and with as much information within."[10]

Look at the 1st booklet: it introduces the function of a book as an object that contains an idea – represented by a bright red string that runs through holes in the cardboard page but standing out in its rich color or importance (think what Keith Smith will later do with this very idea in his wondrous Book 91!). What brilliance – and simplicity -- declaring the existence of sequential ideas in a book through the physicality of red thread!

And the sequence of information: The red will show up again in book #2, the holes in book #5, #7, & #12, the thread binding in #9 &10. As we 'read' or progress through these 'chapters', we learn more: about the recto/verso of a double page spread, of the centerfold of a book, of vertical and horizontal reading, of rhythmic sequencing, etc.

"LIBRO", which means BOOK in Italian, is printed on the front and back covers – such that regardless how each booklet is held & handled it is upright when read from either direction. "LIBRO", is the only word found in Pre-Libri. Thus without linguistic language, every detail has been considered to maximize the reading, the experience of 'book'.

Munari was fully committed to pushing the boundaries of how we experience a book, whether it was to choosing non-traditional materials like tin pages or committing to a series he called *libri iIllegibili* or *unreadable books* "to see if it's possible to use the materials that make up a book (excluding the text as a visual language. … can you communicate visually and tactily only by means of the editorial production of a book/ Or can the book as object communicate something independently of the printed works…"[11]

[10] Bruno Munari, Da Cosa Nasce Cosa, (1981) in Giorgio Maffei, *Munari's Books*, Corraini Edizioni, P.150
[11] Bruno Munari, Da Cosa Nasce Cosa (1981) in *Bruno Munari Air Made Visible*, Lars Muller Publishers, P.120

Munari's long life spanned most of the 20th century. He started to work on books as objects in 1929 and lived & worked into the 1990's, publishing numerous artist books & children books in his life-time. He was a leading exponent of the Futurist group in Milan, illustrating *L'anguria Lyriac* (The Lyrical Watermelon) in 1934, the second of the two tin-plated books designed by Tulio d'Albisola. I will now look at the first of these tin books:

Filippo Marinetti, Parole in Liberta, 1932

Futurist Filippo Marinetti's Parole in Liberta is an astounding example of both non-traditional materials and multi-sensory information: It is a metal book, which employs a lithographic technique that was used for biscuit tins and store signage. Thus it entirely consists of tin sheets, a true book for the Machine Age.

Its content was the free-form visual poetry of the Futurists -- Marinetti liberated words by destroying syntax, eliminating adjectives & adverbs, abolishing punctuation, using verbs in the infinitive, and employing onomatopoeia.
Marinetti's texts were printed on separate pages, with d'Albisola's visual designs, highlighting a line or phrase on the verso – This layout meant that a simultaneous visual comparison was impossible.

The full title translated into English is *Words In Freedom: Olfactory, Tactile, and Thermal*. The concept of the tactile seems self-evident; I somehow could imagine the thermal due to the metal plates, but despite Marinetti's fabulous poem/performance included in the book, *Olfactory Portrait of a Woman*, I kept wondering about the 'olfactory' portion, since it seemed not a part of the reader's experience, until librarian Alvaro Lazo[12] explained to me a fascinating detail:
The book has a tubular spine, which holds metal wire spindles that attach to the 15 tin pages. That is structural information. But the tubular spine had another function: it was supposed to be filled with machine oil (hence the olfactory component)!

[12] Alvaro Gonzalez-Lazo is a print specialist of the Spencer Collection of Illustrated Books at the New York Public Library

Parole in Liberta was read as literature, experienced as visual art, and performed as drama.

"At the end of the neurological process known as reading, associations created connections between the meaning of a work and images that find responses in the sensory cortex, where by forming associations with sound, touch and smell more feelings can be aroused." [13]

Paul Heimbach, Monotone, 1990

Another multi-sensory experience comes from German book artist, Paul Heimbach. He focused much of his career on the nature of series based on strict rules as starting points. His stunning books after 1997 explored color and its conceptual potential, but Monotone (1990) is from an all together different focus: It consists of plain grey/black board covers, black half-linen binding, and all the pages are of acetate – all of them entirely blank.
One moves through the pages quickly – in a Zen trance, as one starts to notice the reflections on the surfaces, the softness of the material, the sheen, etc. – all the while, wondering what and why. Remember the pages are completely blank. And slowly VERY SLOWLY, the reader becomes aware of something new, something remarkable and unexpected in the vocabulary & language of books:

As the reader turns pages, one begins to hear a subtle high-pitched tone. And as one continues to turn the pages it seems to grow louder ever so slightly and even vary in pitch—getting louder and higher as we page through the book.
Now, ever more curious and connected we 'read' the book – turning pages and listening more & more attentively. Embedded in the back cover, we discover a solar battery: this ever-changing tone is created by this battery as light is transmitted progressively through the over decreasing density of the acetate pages.

The 'read' of "Monotone" is not visual: it is tactile and aural.
As Buzz Spector said: "The whole book can only be known if we add the knowledge of the hand, ear and nose to that of the eye."

[13] Paul Van Capelleveen, *Artists & Others*, Vantilt Publishers, 2016, P. 23

J. Meejin Yoon, Absence, 2004

Certain artist books successfully maximize this demand for the tactile experience:
Architect J. Meejin Yoon made *Absence* in 2004. It is a physical book, a chunky heavy cube of white with the title die-cut out of its cover (in a font that I dislike – in an otherwise wonderful book).

The first spread reveals a small hole in the card stock page, followed by a double page spread with a single hole piercing each side. Ones brain immediately presumes that 3 holes will appear on the next pages, only to find the same view as the previous one. This continues for several spreads. *Reading*, or more accurately said, *page-turning*, naturally speeds up as one looks for more. I notice the *sound* of reading: the lighter clap on one side and the thud on the other, as cardboard pages are turned.

About the point when many of us would give up and put the book away, there is a change: two square holes are die-cut from the page – framing the small round holes we already have seen too many times. CHANGE!

Our interest is peaked momentarily. And yet, the read gets harder and harder as page after page is repeatedly the two square holes, at a diagonal from each other but unvarying in the layout. Is this a minimalist work? Must I look at this white endless white and two square holes again & again? Yes, it obviously about 'absence' and yes, there are these holes and there is lots of heavy white but why?

Or is the content here more theoretical? About what Gary Frost referred to as the asymmetry of the symmetrical codex: "As the leaves change places with each other the right page becomes the left page as the clock of content goes forward. Two hands, each acting alone, hold the book and turn the page. This initially simple circumstance of symmetry/asymmetry of the body and book is opened to endless permutations of artists' books."[14]

Many a reader would quit. Or skip to the end.

[14] Gary Frost, *Ibid*, P.3

The penultimate page is strange: a pattern of cut-outs unfamiliar albeit different than the rest of the book. -- Curious and a bit of a relief. And then, I turn the final page: and read in memory of September 11, 2001 and I am slammed with the realization that this book is displaying that which is NOT there: the twin towers and the 110 pages I've just 'read' represent the 110 floors of the buildings that came down. The pile of tiny holes is the void of the antenna /And: the 2 piles of cut out squares are the voids of the two buildings.

And I am left with a chunk of white cardboard, the sadness of the absence, and a pit in my stomach, reminiscent of the same feeling I had when I stood on my rooftop and saw the towers come down.
But I must ask myself: would this work be as effective if it was not a book? -- If I viewed it as graffiti, or a painting, or a sculpture on a pedestal, and read its title on a label on the wall to its side? I think not. The process of looking through, searching for, not understanding, wondering about its simplicity, hearing the clap thud, repeatedly & the sounds only changing as they reverse to thud clap as the recto increases and verso receded.

And don't forget, we must also add in some guilt to this equation – guilt from the fact that we felt dismissive of this work when we were looking at it, bored of its nothingness, the guilt because each boring cardboard page in fact represents a floor that used to exist with people who use to exist !…

All that experience is possible only because we are touching the pages, listening to their sounds and processing the meaninglessness of life.

Suzanne Lacy, Rape, 1976

Another artist book where the physical act of reading lump in my throat is *Rape* by Suzanne Lacy. Produced in 1976, this small square-shaped book has a heavy white paper cover -- blank except the bright red waxy seal that holds the book shut – On it is printed its title "RAPE".

I can clearly remember the first time I saw this book, reaching to grasp it and wondering what was it about and suddenly sickened by the realization that the only way I could read it was to literally and physically rip the seal so I could enter. Metaphor could not have been clearer – as was the virginal choice of paper, so was the message of intactness & violation.

(I should say that I've never seen the inside of this book).
Gary Frost once said: "…books must be actively read as the hands prompt the mind."[15] This artist book – the hands tear the heart.

One compulsion that certainly drives me to make artist books is the desire to offer my readers this complex and dense experience we call reading – the experience of "these very volumes that hook us into the thoughts and ideas of another mind across time and place..." And, in reality, where the choreography of the read offers so much more!!!

Is there more to this compulsion to make artist books?

Book artist Maureen Cummins said: "I mourn the death of so many art forms that involve materials that are made entirely or at least in part by hand, such as darkroom photography or letterpress printing. In these art forms, you are working with materials that you touch - actual lead type or processing chemicals. It is a very elemental process, it is close to nature - in some cases we are actually making these materials. As an artist, to not have a connection to where your materials came from becomes very, very abstract and I think, unnatural. Human beings were meant to be connecting with nature, and making things. We're supposed to be using our hands."[16]

Another essential compulsion is then the haptic experience of the Maker:

As you might imagine, I love to work with my hands. My artwork reflects on my material sensibility as much as the content and issues that comprise its core.
Paper has been my preferred material for more than thirty years and I have explored its potential as a non-neutral substrate in my image making, object making and process. I am firmly committed to the idea that their materiality should reiterate & reinforce the content – as the desire to maximize both impact and dialogue has kept me committed to the papermaking process:

[15] Gary Frost, *ibid*.
[16] Maureen Cummins, "To Show them and to Share Them: Maureen Cummins, Archives and Book Arts, in *Reconstruction*, Vol. 16, No.1

Barbara Tetenbaum, Black Ice and Rain, 2002

As such I'd like to look at Barbara Tetenbaum's lovely 'fine press book' called *Black Ice & Rain*. *Black Ice & Rain* activates both the tactile and auditory experience in its exemplary usage of its material, paper. By choosing different sorts of papers, a soft Ingres paper was utilized for the letterpress text, and crisp hard blue translucent flax paper sheets interspersed between, where their particular sound – icy and sharp – creates a world that echoes the text.

These hard handmade paper sheets have creases and wrinkles, suggestive of the tire marks on ice, referencing the accident and death in the narrative prose. Uta Schneider points out: "Hands are what create sound as they move through the pages – reducing tones as they leaf from one page to the next… Playing the book as if it were an instrument."[17]

This is why I make paper and have done so for so long, not ONLY because I love the material, but more so because I want total control of every and all details that go in to making my artist books, which includes activating the substrate. I want to make the choice of fiber and its preparation because it determines its tensile strength and shrink, the paper's surface texture, form, and color: I also can determine its sound, its weight, its opacity or translucency, each page can have its own shape or watermark.

… It's an activated substrate and essential partner in the read.

Here in *Rondo* (2009, edition of 10), not only is the choreography of the read defined by typography and its manipulation, and by a complicated back & forth binding structure, but since the text is a sound poem, I chose to make the papers considering both their translucency (to enhance the layered & repeated wording) and their physical sound -- their rattle, which is heard as the pages are turned. (A DVD is also included in the book, with a video of a percussionist performing a musical piece, *Mrs. Wolf's Dream*, using my paper as his instrument).

Certainly, my personal focus on content and ideas, mixed with my commitment to hand craft, along with my obsession with materiality, while still loving to both write & make images… Making artist books is an obvious mash-up of all these tendencies.

[17] Uta Schneider, "Turning the Page" in *Half-Life: 25 Years of Books by Barbara Tetenbaum & Triangular Press*, P.18

I must point out that all materials and media can similarly activate the read, and I'd like to share my seventh choice of artist books, where it is the printing that evokes the density of meaning:
If I was to choose one artist book that was my favorite, or let's make this exercise vaguely feasible, one of a dozen artist books in the last 25 years, I would probably choose 10 Years in Uzbekistan: A Commemoration, by Ken Campbell published in 1994.

Ken Campbell, 10 Years in Uzbekistan: A Commemoration, 1994

This book is a collaboration between Campbell and the photographer, David King, who wrote in the introduction:
"In 1934 (Alexander) Rodchenko was commissioned by the State Publishing House OGIZ to design a commemorative album entitled 'Ten years of Uzbekistan' celebrating a decade of Soviet rule in that state. ... But in 1937, at the height of the Great Purges, Stalin ordered a major overhaul of the Uzbek leadership and many heads rolled. Many party bosses photographed in 'Ten years of Uzbekistan' had been liquidated. The names of those who had been arrested or had "disappeared" could no longer be mentioned, nor could their pictures be kept without the greatest risk of arrest. Petty informers were everywhere. The walls really did have ears. Rodchenko's response in brush and ink came close to creating a new art form. Using thick black Indian ink Rodchenko set about defacing his own work. The macabre results, both brutal and terrifying …serve as the inspiration for the making of this book."[18]

David King is more than modest here: In fact it was through his careful research and as part of his much larger project and book, *The Commissar Vanishes: Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia*, where King recorded the doctoring of pictures under Stalin's reign, and personally recovered the identities of each obliterated figure.

The artist book opens with dense layers of printed color, dark immutable tones, but otherwise seemingly blank. One notices the framing created around the edges, but little else other than the feeling that the printing of these inks is so layered and dense that one could easily peel it away. In turning the pages the touch and smell of ink dominate: one does not sense that there is paper beneath the imagery. When text appears or images, they are difficult to read.

[18] David King in the introduction to *Ten Years of Uzbekistan*, 1994

Oftentimes they are under layers or obliterated by dark shapes, meant to be the black bars and stickers used by censors.

The choice of subject matter is powerful without question but the materials and tools chosen here are essential to its intensity and meaning. As is the repeated use of images and plates, sometimes turned upside down and printed over each other. Campbell prints and overprints each page: wiping out faces, adding biographical notes, adding entries like: *Exact Fate Unknown*.

Ken Campbell states on his website: "Nine portraits, eight altered by Rodchenko and the ninth of Stalin as an endpaper to Rodchenko's book, were enlarged and layered over each other in a process of mutual silencing… I surrounded each of the marred faces with a printed frame that reflected both the page margins and, I hoped, the frame of a Russian ikon. This framing device is echoed in the preserving of photographs of the beloved and the dead."[19]

And in conclusion he points out that: "This work stands as witness to the victims of censorship, and to the shame of self-censorship as a strategy of survival".

I have no doubt that as Nietzsche said, "Our writing materials contribute their part to our thinking".[20] Interestingly he wrote on a typewriter, rather than by hand. What that means to me is that Nietzsche understood that the choices of material & of tools directly impact the content and meaning of a work.

Eileen Boxer's *Report US* is a compilation of the incidences of gun violence within a single month in the US. Some background: Since 1996 the United States Congress has refused to fund research into the effects of gun violence and there is no mandatory, national database relating gun incidents. Because of the lack of centralized information this project was compiled through various sources, primarily the Gun Violence Archive.[21]

Struck by the daily onslaught of events involving a gun, Boxer launched this activist art project in early 2013. Retrieving the massive raw data on gun violence accounts occurring daily in the US and editing the material into concise narratives took hundreds of (emotional) hours. And it

[19] Ken Campbell, http://www.brokenrules.co.uk/tenyears.html
[20] Maryanne Wolf, Proust & the Squid. P. 24
[21] Eileen Boxer, http://www.report-us.org

resulted in her uncovering what might be only a portion of what is really going on: In the month of January 2015 alone, there were 3,136 gun incidents, and that number excludes suicides.

Ultimately, it was the *need* to make an object that could capture this horrific reality – that became the *compulsion* to make an artist book. And this was no easy feat: Boxer is an extraordinary book designer but for coffee table type art books. The decision to make an artist book delivered her into uncharted waters – (full disclosure: I acted as a consultant for this project).

After two years of research, Boxer made a set of massive books, each hand bound in blood-soaked cloth (cow's blood). Each volume represents one week and chronicles the more than 1000 weekly incidents of violence involving a firearm, one incident per page. The heavy weight of the volumes, which are even further contrasted by the lightweight papers within, manifests their overwhelming content.

One aspect of the haptic experience dominates this book (and again, full disclosure: I contributed the handmade paper here). The endpapers are further coated in unfixed red pigment, the color of blood. When paging through the volumes, the reader leaves red fingerprints on the pages. *Metaphorically: there is blood is on all our hands.* Literally the physical experience of reading marks the book**.** And the red fingerprints that now mark its pages make the reader both a collaborator in the act of making of Report US, as it suggests we all are complicit in the terrible violence.

This book fulfills my compulsion as the 'maker' along with that of the 'reader' -- to use our hands.

As Richard Minsky aptly put it: "books are active objects that DO things, and not always what you expect."[22] Johanna Drucker wrote that "books are physical objects and our tactile experience of and with them is part of their multi-dimensional potential to effect meaning."[23]

[22] Richard Minsky, http://www.collegebookart.org/bookarttheory/3426333
[23] Johanna Drucker, "Beyond Velveeta", in The Bonefolder, Vol. 2, no. 1 (Fall 2005) P. 10

Louise Bourgeois & Arthur Miller, Homely Girl A Life, 1992

I turn now to an old favorite, *Homely Girl, A Life* by Louise Bourgeois & Arthur Miller. Peter Blum is the publisher of this interesting *livre artiste*: he had acquired an unpublished novella from Arthur Miller and arranged that Bourgeois would provide the imagery/illustration. She returned to him two versions, telling him to choose whichever he preferred and he brilliantly chose to include both of them! The slipcase is covered in a smooth middle grey toned paper. NO title or other information whatsoever is to be found. In the trade edition, the two volumes are covered in a soft book cloth: #2 in a light grey and #1 in a pale greenish grey.

Upon opening #1, we see a slightly toothy lighter grey end-sheet paper, again with no other information. The smoother off-white paper of the title page presents Arthur Miller's name in large letterpress at the top of the page and Louise Bourgeois at the bottom (in Monotype Emerson). The title is much smaller and printed in red ink: *A Homely Girl, A Life* (homely is a dated word for ugly).

We open to page 1 and see a black letterpress printed text block on the white paper, which continues through out the volume, interspersed with ten Bourgeois color reproductions of her etchings of flowers. The novella is about a woman who has always felt ugly and that is an essential part her self-image. She has a relationship with a blind musician and this is the story of how she explores and finds another language to describe herself. Without doubt it is a well-written novella; otherwise, it presents as a traditional fine press book. Nice, but that would not be relevant for this talk. On the other hand, there is the second volume:

We open this light grey cloth book, noticing its plainness and again, the non-descript grey end-sheet, thinking now that perhaps all these neutral greys, slightly varying textured papers, and general sense of anonymity is purposeful: after all the story is about a woman whose looks and self image have been brought to question. So it makes sense that the exterior of the slipcase and the books within would be visually plain and haptically varied.

A change appears on its title page. The artist's and writer's names are still printed in large font but now they are reversed: Louise is on top! And not in black but a lovely light grey ink, that makes the red ink of the title pop out. This change suggests that her contribution might have greater import here? We turn to the first page to find that the text block is also a mix of grey and

red printed words. That is surprising enough but what is even more so is that the same novella has been published together twice! What is going on? And why?

When we turn the pages, instead of ten images of flowers, we see photos of diseased eyes. Blum explained to me that Bourgeois took just the right eye from medical magazines and had him print it again in reverse, and then tip them into the binding; the 2 eyes so close together that they are avian in appearance and the book appears to be the face. The eyes get more and more difficult to look at as we progress through the same book, a far more Gothic interpretation of this story.

The grey/red text block is also intriguing. After several pages it is clear that the sentences with words referencing *sight, seeing, glimpsing, looking*, etc., are all in red. And since the reader is already familiar with the text, other sequences / other choreographies of the read are plausible: shall we read just the red portion? Or read only the red that is not covered by those eight pairs of staring eyes?

Johanna Drucker points out that "…it is rare to find a *livre d'artiste,* which interrogates the conceptual or material form of the book as part of its intention, thematic interests, or production activities…"[24] But by offering the text twice, and in 2 different visual and stylistic interpretations, Blum has orchestrated just that – a *livre artiste* that interrogates itself, utilizes all its parts to explore a deeper meaning that is posed by this wonderful novella!

Isn't that the idea of artists' books? "Books that understand their own operation, their iconicity, their materials and their content as an interwoven whole…"[25] That was said by Kathleen Walkup, & I couldn't agree with her more!

The Aegean Sea

In conclusion, I'd like to present my tenth choice of books to discuss, *The Aegean Sea*. This small soft-cover book was a gift to me from first generation Fluxus artist Geoff Hendricks. I've always loved this book for its unassuming manner and suggestive meaning and often showed it

[24] Johanna Drucker, The Century of Artists' Books, P. 2
[25] Kathleen Walkup, https://www.collegebookart.org/bookarttheory/3578044

to students in my *Art of the Book* courses at Pratt Institute, when we discuss the *Performance of the Read*.

It is a small unassuming book: it looks like a Penguin series, with a familiar layout on the cover. But it is printed in a lovely turquoise blue that color stands out, and instead of a small penguin icon in the middle there is a horn, possibly a hunting horn but with this title, it feels more like an Ancient Greek instrument, title is the *Aegean Sea* after all.

When I opened the book the first time and paged through I was surprised to find nothing within. But then I thought about it and noticed that I was feeling the breeze as I flipped the empty pages (while thinking about the blue and the Aegean Sea and imagining the place). What a wonderful Fluxus book, where the simple act of paging through created the content.

One detail I never quite understood is that the front cover (the one I just described) was on the right, so that the book read from right to left. When I examined it further, the left or back cover had printed on the bottom: M200 - 253" – 255 Tokyo 200. As such, I never was sure but I imagined that this Fluxus artist book was by a Japanese artist.

You see, I never knew the artist/author. And, I showed it to students and never really thought about it. But, when I decided to include it in this keynote, I wrote Geoff and asked him for the artist's name. He assumed it was Ian Hamilton Findley. Because of the right to left read and the Tokyo attribution, I figured I should check that out: I turned to Findley's website, but the book was not there.

As we all know, and I learnt this from my daughter when she was 6 years old: ALL LIBRARIANS ARE GODDESSES! At this point, I wrote to a couple of them whom I know and trust: Stephen Bury at the Frick Museum Library in New York City and Paul van Capelleveen at the National Library in The Hague, Holland. Stephen assured me, as did Paul, that it was not a Findlay. But Paul went further. He wrote that:
"NBCO or The NB Library in Tokyo is not listed in a world guide of libraries."
But he found it on a website in Japanese, as you can see:

未使用メモ帳『青春の詩』　木馬出版社　NBCO,TOKYO　新書判　１５０円
未使用メモ帳『The Aegean Sea』 The NB Library NBCO,TOKYO 新書判　１５０円
未使用メモ帳『自由と愛』　西納文庫　エヌビー社 文庫判　１５０円
販売中！！！！
型番「Ｍ２００－２５３」～２５５。そういう文具商品なのだろう、東急ハンズの値札（２００円）も貼ってある。「Aegean Ｓｅａ」とは発音がわからないが「エーゲ海」と辞書に。
f0035084_21424044.jpg[26]

The Google translation of the Japanese:
Unused **Notepad** "The Aegean Sea" The NB Library NBCO, TOKYO New book size 150 yen
Sale! It is! It is! It is!
Model number "M200 - 253" - 255.

Aegean Sea is a stationary item???

Humbling, but, thank you, Paul!

A side-note that I cannot resist now mentioning is the urban legend about the Tran-Siberian Highway: An inexplicable semicircle is said to exist that breaks the straight line of one of its segments. The explanation was that when Joseph Stalin used a ruler to mark where the highway should pass, the pencil jumped over his finger. The engineers that were under threat to make the segment exactly as commanded, did not dare deviate from his indicated drawing. If a book can be declared a document, and a road be built crooked because of a dictator's finger, then certainly in this time of fake news and upside-down leadership, of Zuma and of Trump…. I have to laugh (or I might cry).

I invented the computer when I was only eight years old; and now, I seem to have created a Fluxus artist book out of an empty note pad! A perfect ending for a keynote speech, don't you think?

[26] http://ouraiza.exblog.jp/12375174/

Even though Walter Benjamin said in 1929, that: “Everything indicates that the book in [its] traditional form is nearing its end”[27] I do agree with Gary Frost: “A book is the one art object known to everyone.”[28]

Thank you.

[27] Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, 1928, P. 42
[28] Gary Frost, *Ibid*

2. COLLOQUIUM PAPERS

Active Reading: Experiencing the Book as Action and Activity

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The book is not a static object. This thing that we have used to store information, preserve histories, and tell our stories, has been and will remain in constant flux. From clay tablets to papyrus scrolls, from accordion codices on bark cloth to sheets of paper between hard covers — and now to pixels on screens, once more called tablets that we scroll through, but this time made of metal and plastic instead of clay. As our cultures change, logically, so do the media we use to convey and store information. I am particularly thrilled at this point in time, that in this long history of the book's evolution, it seems to have finally turned a corner. It has been released from its rational and pragmatic constraints. It has been liberated from the utilitarian, the practical, and the literal role it has held for so long. For centuries artists, designers, and craftspeople have seen the potential of the physical book as art and idea — as conceptual space and material metaphor. However, envisioning the book as something new has been consistently weighted down by the workaday heft of phonebooks and encyclopedias. As authors, artists, writers, journalists, designers and documentarians we can now consider our media choices carefully as an extension of our content and an expression of our ideas. Readers and viewers might now expect to find the unexpected when they are presented with a book. They might now learn to define the book as something malleable, unpredictable — something to engage in with all the senses. It is this book, the book to come, that I am focused on.

In 1959 Maurice Blanchot wrote *Le Livre à Venir* (The Book to Come)[1] about Stéphane Mallarmé's re-envisioning of the book and the role of the author within and outside of this familiar object. Mallarmé in the late 1800's understood the potential of the book to be something more. Jumping

[1] Blanchot, Maurice. "The Book to Come." In *A Book of the Book: Some Works & Projections About the Book & Writing*. Translated by Sacha Rabinovitch. Bloominton: Indiana University Press, 1982. Originally published in French as *Le Livre à Venir*. Copyright 1959 by Editions Gallimard.

ahead, in 2010 Alan Loney wrote, *The Books to Come*[2], which continued to address our physical and spiritual connection to this object that has been so culturally pervasive. Loney continues to stress the latent potential of the book and its important connection to our very being. Never has the book been more poised to become more, to allow these new "books to come," to fully reach their potential as objects that meld the literary and visual arts in their own unique way.

These books to come may take all kinds of shapes and forms and deal with endless ideas and content. In particular, I have been focused on the physical, material book as action and activity — on expanding the idea of the book as a kind of performance tool, for embodied reading. We have played a subtle role with the physical book for many years now, perhaps largely without being acutely aware of it. Reading a physical book has helped us to embody information in a very real way through our subtle performance with it. When we see John Lavery's painting, *Miss Auras, The Red Book* (fig. 1), we can easily surmise in her expression, gesture and posture what the content of her book is about. She appears to be in the book completely. The American poet William Stafford said, "Closing the book, I find I have left my head inside.[3]" We are in the book and the book is in us. Similarly, in Lewis Hine's photograph, *Boy Studying* (*fig. 2*), boy and book are together in a calculated, strategic struggle. The two become one, and images like these begin to bring up the question, how profoundly has this physical relationship with the book affected us? Nicholas Carr noted in his book *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to our Brains*, "In one fascinating study, conducted at Washington University's Dynamic Cognition Lab and published in the journal Psychological Science in 2009, researchers used brain scans to examine what happens inside people's heads as they read fiction. They found that 'readers mentally simulate each new situation encountered in a narrative. Details about actions and sensation are captured from the text and integrated with personal knowledge from past experiences.' The brain regions that are activated often 'mirror those involved when people perform, imagine, or observe similar real-world activities.' Deep reading, says the study's lead researcher, Nicole Speer, 'is by no means a passive exercise.' The reader becomes the book."[4]

Largely without us knowing, the way we read and the way we have engaged with books over the years has shaped who we are today. As with most forms of art, we engage with them in the hopes of being inspired to new heights of thought and imagination. In Maryanne Wolf's *Proust & the*

[2] Loney, Alan. *The books to come*. Victoria, Texas: Cuneiform Press, 2010.
[3] Stafford, William. *Afternoon in the Stacks*, "The Way It Is: New & Selected Poems." St. Paul, Minnesota: Gray Wolf Press, *1999.*
[4] Carr, Nicholas, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*. New York/London, W.W. Norton & Co., 2010.

Squid: The Story and the Science of the Reading Brain, she says, "the generative nature of reading contains a paradox: the goal of reading is to go beyond the author's [own] ideas to thoughts that are increasingly autonomous, transformative, and ultimately independent of the written text…reading is not so much an end in itself as it is our best vehicle to a transformed mind, and, literally and figuratively, to a changed brain.[5]" Reading can, of course, be a generative process in any shape or form, but my question is, how can the book to come engage us in exciting new ways through material, structural, and artistic approaches? The book has been a hugely effective form that has helped us to embody knowledge in a unique way without us even being fully aware of it. So what if we now put all our efforts towards being aware of it? This has led me to a series of work and research that exaggerates our physical relationship to the book in an effort to explore a more active reading approach and how it might affect how we digest information and make it our own.

The first artist book project in this Active Reading Series is intended to be read while walking. My goal eventually is to have an active reading room with 3-4 artist book projects that engage the viewer physically in different ways. The first book in this series was a response to a long prose poem by Laura Wetherington titled, *No one wants to play the victim no one when there is a gun involved and blue*. It is a long accordion book structure that is installed on 1 meter modular shelving that can be installed in different configurations and read while walking. Alternately, the book can be displayed on a pedestal with a monitor playing a video of the author reading and walking with the book to illustrate the intended experience. The book is letterpress printed from handset metal type on butcher paper and includes several typographic trips and glitches. Walking with the poem sets a different pace for the reader and the reader's attention is focused quite differently than when we read comfortably sitting in a predictable environment: with an approach a few words, with each few steps a phrase, and then continuing to track the text, an experience unfolds that the reader digests perhaps more holistically by experiencing it in this particular physical manifestation. (A video of the author walking and reading this piece can be seen at http://ingebruggeman.com/Active-Reading-Series).

There are many examples from art history of works that realize the books potential for a heightened reading experience and that use the book as a performance tool for a more active reading experience. No doubt most of you are familiar with this magnificent book created by Mayakovsky and El Lissitzky in 1923. The title itself proclaims its use, it is *For the Voice* (*fig. 3*) -

[5] Wolf, Maryanne. *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain. New York, Harpers Collins Publishers, 2007.*

it is a call to action, to performance, and to revolution. This book is to be used as a tool, to be read aloud, and to have quick access to the different poems by way of the titled tabs. This also highlights the very social nature of the book as well, and our desire to come together around the creation, production, dissemination, and celebration of both the material inside the book, and around the very nature and process of its production. The book can be both a private and a public call to action. *The Prose of the Trans-Siberian and of Little Jehanne of France* (*fig. 4 & 5*) published in 1913 was meant as an active experience as well, and one that could be unfolded, unfurled, hung end to end with the rest of the edition to reach the height of the Eiffel Tower, or perhaps more realistically, the 200 centimeter long work was attached to the wall and read as a performed piece while ascending or descending a ladder. We find artist books throughout history that use the book form in powerful ways. In fact, *La Prose du Transsibérien* has inspired the second book in my Active Reading series, begun during a residency last summer at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts. This will also be a book that is meant to be read while ascending and descending a short ladder.

We also find examples where the craft of bookmaking within a particular cultural context is used for embodied, experiential reading. A good example of this are the Torah scrolls *(fig. 6)* found in many synagogues today. This book form not only persists, but there are scribes and craftspeople still making them for popular use. It is a book structure that calls on us to perform with it, for the precise intent of embodying its contents. These sacred book objects are still being made today with great care. Trained scribes called sofers or soferets (as there are now some women practicing this art) handwrite the Torah with quill pens on parchment following strict guidelines for their creation. The scroll is ceremoniously read from throughout the year, from beginning to end and then, at the end of the year it is rolled back to the beginning again. The parchment is not supposed to be touched, so there is a yad or pointer to help with the reading or chanting of the text. This example of book art illustrates in many ways, or makes obvious, how the physical book can be a much different experience than reading other media. An experience that helps the reader embody the knowledge inside the book through its structural and material choices, and again, also through the social practices that have surrounded this object for centuries.

Although these examples illustrate the fact that the book has been used as an active reading experience throughout history by artists and craftspeople alike, it still perplexing to me, that this field of work is not more commonly known as an accepted and recognized field of study and practice. However with the current evolution of the book, the tides do appear to be shifting.

If we return to the artist's book as a heightened, and active reading experience, we see contemporary artists who are influenced by these traditional book structures of the past such as this embroidered poem, in scroll form by artist, Kathy Kuehn, poet David Abel, and Timothy Moore who constructed the piece. It is titled *Threnos (fig. 7)* and it is an intentionally linear experience. It is meant as a slow contemplation and a memorial in honor of a specific person that plays out thoughtfully through a planned, material reading of the poem. The patience it takes to embroider a long poem like this allows the maker and the viewer a careful contemplation of a singular life. Even the language of the poem slows you down, it seems to back up over itself, repeating letters, words, and sounds so that you are made to have this person's life reverberate in your own body, giving the memory new life. (A video of the poet reading a slightly different structural version of this poem can be found online at https://vimeo.com/user37286808).

I would also like to mention the innovative work of Susan Viguers before returning to some of my own projects. She is a contemporary artist who is thinking about the performative nature of the book. Her piece *Falling Shutters (fig. 8 & 9)* is a powerful example of embodying the book's content by physically activating the book. This book is made from the shutter slats of a window of an old family home. It is a Jacob's ladder structure with a poem letterpress printed on paper that is laminated to both sides of the wooden slats. When she performs it, the slats clatter against one another bringing life to the poems. You can see her perform this book in a video found on her website. The poems physically startle us and reverberate in us as we interact with this book. The effectiveness of this old American Victorian toy in transporting us to the specific time and setting that inspired the poem is quite compelling. Viguers uses this structure with clear poetic intention. In works like these the book is being used to its full potential to give the reader an experience that resonates with both mind and body. I would also like to make the connection here to a particular historic example of a palm-leaf book (*fig. 10 & 11)* that is a Javanese narrative poem about the life of the Islamic Prophet Joseph, which was often performed during an all-night reading where the work is sung over the course of an entire night. Bernard Arps[6] has described attending an all-night recitation of one such manuscript in Banyuwangi in East Java in 1989, when a group of 15 men took turns to sing the story of the life of Joseph over the course of the night. It becomes evident how the book and the body have been intertwined deeply for such a long period of time. Again the book is performed as a way of coming to know its contents better.

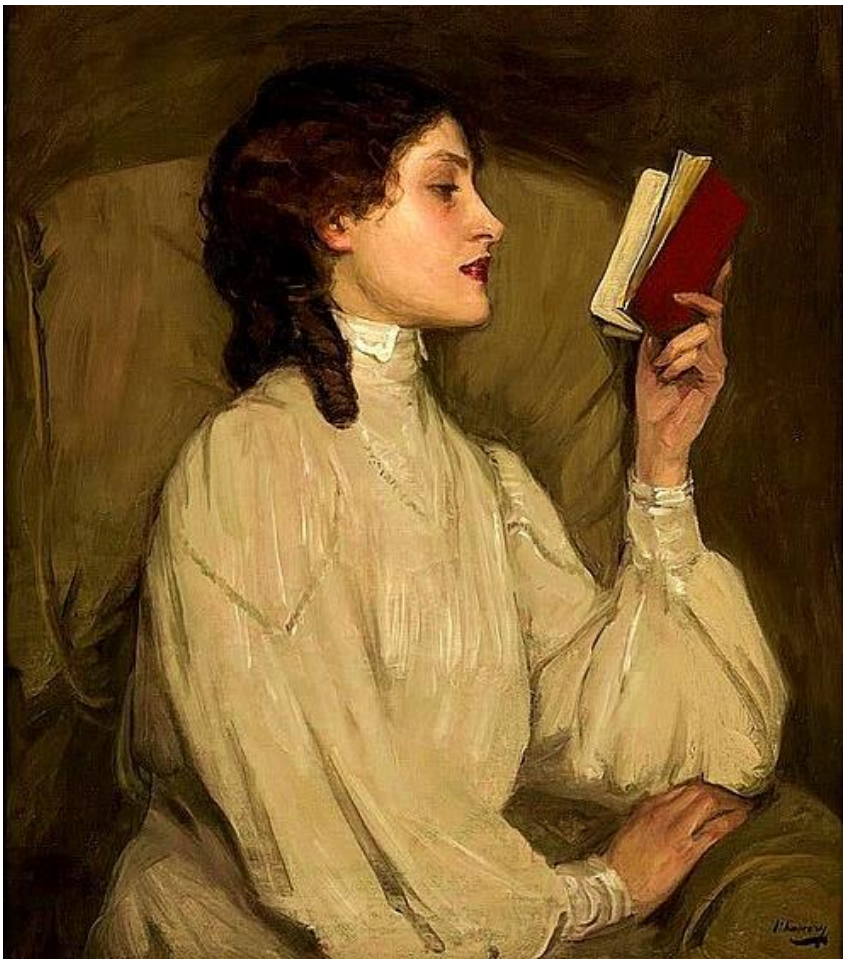
[6] Arps, Bernard, *Singing the life of Joseph: an all-night reading of the lontar Yusup in Banyuwangi, East Java,* "Indonesia Circle," 1990, 19 (53): 35-58.

My artwork and research overlaps with the work I'm involved with at the University of Nevada Reno where I direct the activities of the Black Rock Press. The Black Rock Press (BRP) is part of the Art Department and is both a classroom space with a book arts curriculum and a publishing entity. We organize a wide array of publishing and outreach projects that involve students, staff, faculty, and community members. Our mission is to explore and create the future of the book — to investigate the physical, material, structural, and tactile space of the book — through teaching, publication, and scholarship. Moving beyond traditional definitions in order to envision the book to come, we are committed to exploring the intersections of the physical book with the community that gathers around it. One of our recent publications is titled *Old Geiger Grade (fig. 12)*. It is the first in a series of interdisciplinary publications that we call the Parley Project, produced by the BRP Redfield Fellow under the guidance of the Press. The fellowship is a two-year opportunity for a book artist to come work for the BRP, to further their own work and research, and to gain experience in the field. As part of their fellowship they must take charge of the Parley Project, reaching out to another part of campus for inspiration, collaboration, and research. The other requirement is that the project must involve BRP students, staff, and faculty in its production. *Old Geiger Grade* was designed by Jamie Shafer while she was working as the BRP Redfield Fellow. She turned to the W.M. Keck Earth Science & Mineral Engineering Museum on campus, which was established in 1902. Reno, Nevada is next to the historic town of Virginia City, a prosperous mining town after 1856 when the Comstock Lode was discovered, the first major silver discovery in the US. *Old Geiger Grade* envisions the rough and bumpy travel by stagecoach across the terrain by those going to seek their fortunes. Lasercutting of paper forms the burnt, dry topography of the Nevada desert, the handset, letterpress printed narrative tells a story of the journey, and the stagecoach rules on the wrapper set the scene so that the reader has a visceral experience of the ride.

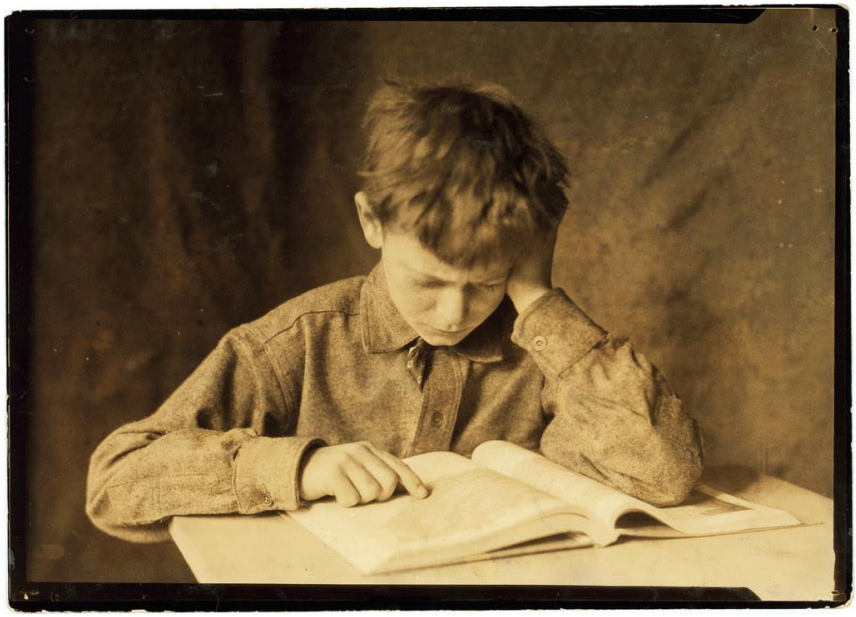
Our most recent publication, to be released this September, continues the investigation of active reading by focusing on the book as a performance tool. It is a poem titled *Selected Durations (fig. 13)*. It attempts to quantify time by compiling a collection of actions or activities that take place within very specific time frames. The poet, David Abel, is also a visual artist, bookstore owner, editor, and raga singer (among other things). He wrote this poem to be performed in precisely two minutes for a reading at St. Mark's church in the Bowery in New York City. The Black Rock Press was inspired by a version of this book that was made by Katherine Kuehn and David Abel over 30 years ago in only a handful of copies, and the Press decided to re-envision a new version of the book, highlighting its performative nature. It is letterpress printed from photopolymer plates on a synthetic paper called Yupo and the book is bound in a black rubber spine material housed

in a clamshell box and accompanied by essays by the author, the BRP, and the artist and writer Buzz Spector. The poem is all about humanity's urgent but perhaps futile attempt to quantify time, to understand it and control it. The turning of the pages punctuates time, and because the pages are transparent, we see the text to come appearing on the recto side of the book and the text that has been read fading into the pages on the verso side. The time-based nature of the book is made evident, and others are encouraged to perform a reading of this work aloud, pacing time and measuring the reading of the poem on their own. We even invite others to submit a video of their reading to us for posting online. My husband, Bill Morrison, and I have been working on video archives of these active reading experiences as part of my research, and it is becoming an important part of documenting our physical interaction with the book and the embodiment of its many and varied contents.

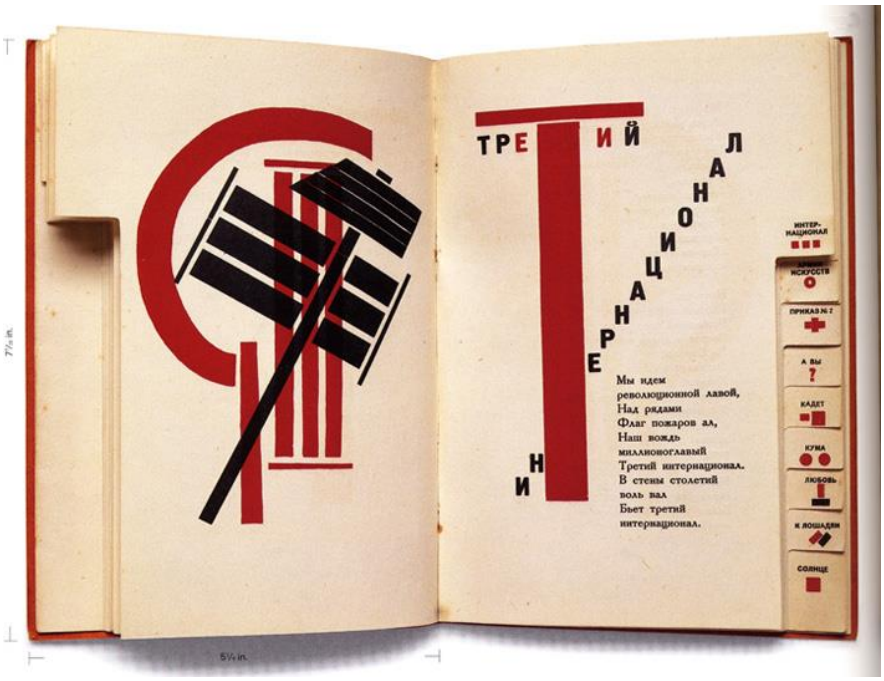
When I interact with a work of art, be it visual, or literary, or both, I want to be engaged as deeply as possible. I want the art I interact with to kick-start my brain into action, to consider things I've never considered, and make connections I might not have thought possible. I want to engage in art that engages me. Many forms of art can do this, but the inherent nature of the book has always held the power to be one of the most interesting and complex spaces to work within. I look forward to reading and engaging in the physical, material book to come.



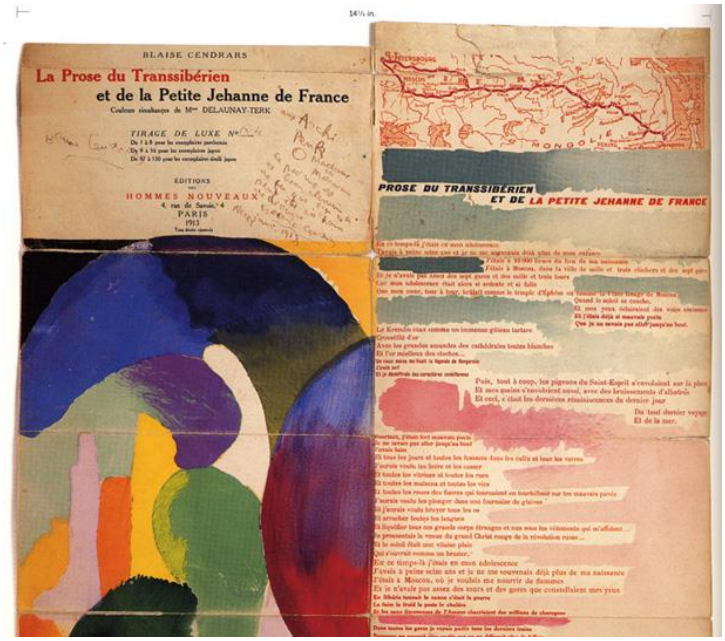
(fig. 1)Miss Auras, *The Red Book*, by Sir John Lavery, circa 1900

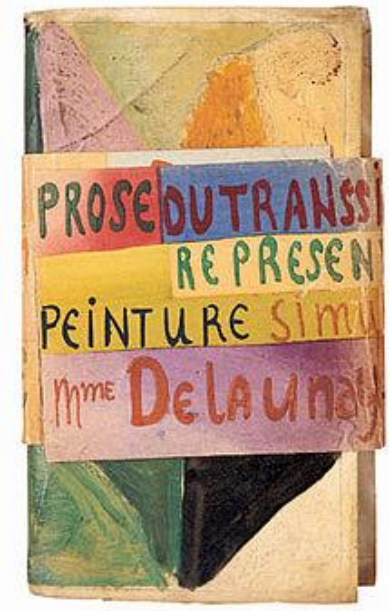


(fig. 2)Boy Studying, by Lewis Hine, circa 1924



(fig. 3) For the Voice, Vladimir Mayakovsky & El Lissitzky, 1923



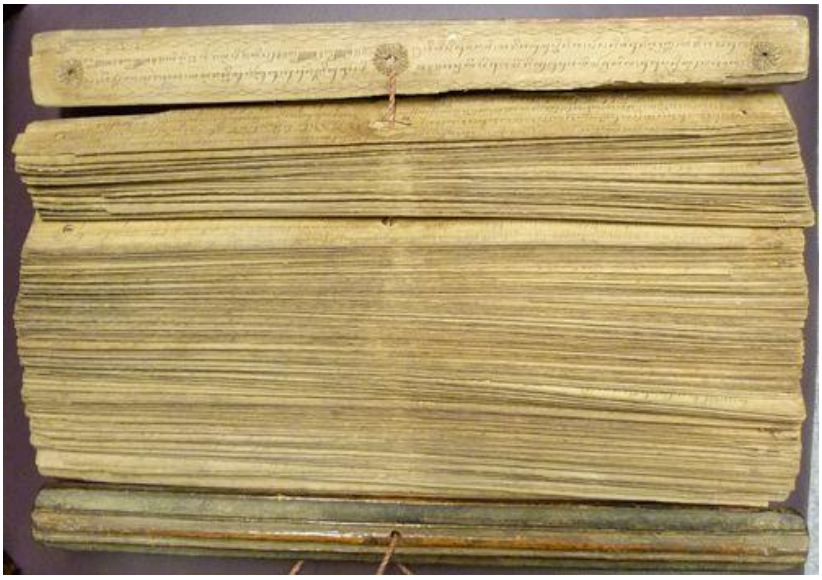


(fig. 4 & 5) La Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France, Blaise Cendrars & Sonia Delaunay-Terk, 1913

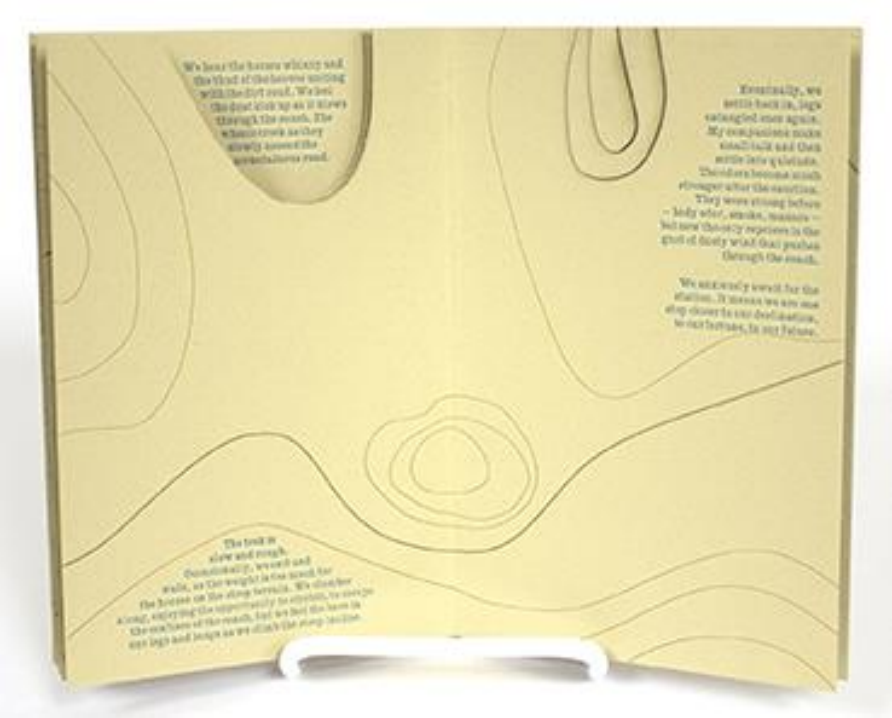
(fig. 6) Torah scroll used in Jewish religious services in the Vilnius ghetto during WWII, with yad/pointer, c.1660

(fig.7) Threnos, by Katherine Kuehn, David Abel, and Timothy Moore

(fig. 8 & 9) Falling Shutters, Susan Viguers, 2012



(fig. 10 & 11) Javanese palm leaf manuscript of the *Carita Yusup,* the Story of Joseph, probably 19th century, British Library



(fig. 12) Old Geiger Grade, by Jaime Shafer with the assistance of the Black Rock Press, UNR, 2016

(fig. 13) Selected Durations, Black Rock Press, UNR, 2017

The Book as Artistic Practice: Willem Boshoff and the Margins Between Book-Work and Performance

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The sense of interconnectedness between works by the individual artists[1] presented in this paper hinges on the equivocal nature of the notion of "practice" (or "praxis"). - Doubt about the correct form to use ("prac**tice**" or "pra**xis**") betrays the complexity of its historical philosophical interpretations: the wording of the concept has migrated through several languages and cultures.[2] Each use of the notion betrays the way the speaker divides the metaphysical from the political. In most definitions the notion of praxis is inscribed in a fluctuating triad[3] of notions building up a galaxy of vocabulary in its wake.[4] By the way the speaker uses the word "praxis" he shows his awareness of how this usage relates to the question whether invention is to be found in practice, in artistic creation or in process of thought. Within European cultures, usage of these notions has a long history, but this is not only a case of inter-European untranslatability, the vocabulary dividing practical intervention from, or likening it to thought processes or practical manual labour and/or the act of creation is to be found in all languages.[5] For the purposes of this paper, let us accept that "practice" here refers to an activity within the historical and socio-political frame of references of the contemporary art field, all the while it shows its awareness of the equivocal nature of the understanding of human agency. Within the aural presentation given by Willem Boshoff as part of the *Booknesses* colloquium we have been witness to such a demonstration: In the examples that Boshoff used to explain extracts from his anthology of opto-phonetic poetry, *Kykafikaans* (1976 - 80), he has used snippets of text form everyday life[6] and

[1] Willem Boshoff, Robert Filliou, Timm Ulrichs, Mieko Shiomi, Kemang Wa Lehulere, Bettina Malcomess, Dorothee Kreutzfeldt, Lerato Shadi.
[2] Barbara Cassin, 2004, p. 26, p. 988.
[3] At this point it is important to note that for the purposes of this paper the concept is not defined in a couple of binary opposites, but as a triad. The most frequently quoted triad is the Greek set: praxis - poiêis (or technê) - épistêmê (or theôria) - see Cassin, 2004, p. 988 - 991. About thinking the notion of "agency" as a dualistic concept (active/passive) see Barbara Cassin, 2004, p.26; See also Lars Blunck, 2014, on the problems involved in referring to praxis as an opposite of theory in contemporary art and the possibility to see theory as a form of praxis.
[4] Cassin, 2004, p.988 - 1002.
[5] For example Bleek, 1956, p. 24, 49, 107, 206, 225, 771 etc.; Desmond T. Cole, Lally Moncho-Warren, 2011, p. 731, 821, 933, 971, 1139 etc.
[6] *Kykafrikaans* (1976 - 80) see amongst others "R4 YH", p.13, "Telegram", p.18, "Telefun time", p.19, "Die Pappot Boerpot Blokkiesraaisel", p.27, "'n bol Strooi", p.38, "Nusreëls", p.92.

imitations of sounds not meant to be art.[7] Many of his performances include public participation, enacting the poems as part of a workshop.[8] The poems show awareness of the wealth of signification a word acquires during its haphazard trajectory through time and the historical dimension of language use.[9] The precise moment when a gesture from everyday life acquires "art" status cannot readily be pinned down.

Artists have repeatedly questioned their place within the lexicographical galaxy around human agency. One of their preoccupations is to understand when a specific activity may be perceived as "art" and what might distinguish this activity from other practices.[10] The artist's book finds itself at a pivotal position in this set of questions. When artists take to publishing, multiplying that which used to be perceived as a unique object, they work in the direction of the democratization of the artistic act.[11] The utopic[12] nature of this suggestion must not be forgotten, it becomes a driving force in the work of the artists.

As part of the introduction it seems necessary to specify use of yet another word in the title: margin. In this paper it is not referred to it in its passive or precarious understanding, translating the idea of an individual being pushed away from the centre, being relegated to the margins to the point of almost being pushed out. Rather, the word "margin" is used in a dynamic sense: the margins are considered for their spatial qualities, a potential passage, an essential openness, where porosities may occur, and where one positions oneself in the hope to preserve one's freedom from a clearly defined movement - is this space utopia (non-space)? - Maybe.

1. The margin as space or as structural element

Willem Boshoff has repeatedly referred to the fact that he considers most of his works to be books.[13] One tangible motivation for this comparison would be the physical solutions he adopts

[7] *Kykafrikaans* (1976 - 80) eg. "Gedruis", p.81.
[8] Boshoff has performed *Kykafrikaans* in a great number of workshops (see list of workshops in Katja Gentric, 2013, Volume 3, p.185.)
[9] *Kykafrikaans* (1976 - 80) eg. "Stadsplaas", p.45, "Ontplooing", p.77, "Verdwaalkaart", p.87.
[10] Barbara Formis, 2010.
[11] The two names linked to this question in the European tradition are Joseph Beuys and Robert Filliou, the latter of which we will have to occasion to hear about.
[12] Anne Mœglin-Delcroix, 2011, "Le livres est utopie", p. 105 - 147.
[13] Boshoff's Introduction to his thesis of 1984 states as much: "Die praktiese werk van hierdie navorsingsprojek soos vervat is in hierdie tesis put nie net uit die tematiese letterkunde nie, maar probeer in die besonder om boeke en ander soorte geskrifte the herontdek as vorm en spasie in verhouding met die letterkundige inhoud daarvan", p.1. See also David Paton, 2000, n.p.; Ivan Vladislavić, 2005, "Between the Lines", p.6; One interview with Willem

for those of this works imitating the structural elements of the book object. He refers to books as embodied entities: “boekligame”.[14] In this context it is important to insist on the multiplicity of the examples in order to point out the general and regular presence of these formal solutions in Boshoff’s œuvre.

Firstly there are those works that Boshoff structures in two parallel sections: on a formal level these works reference a book once it is opened, presenting two facing pages with their margins: *Kasboek* (1980-1981), *Writing in the Sand* (2000 and 2004), *Noli Turbare Circulos Meos* (2009), *The Book of Disquiet* (2010).[15] Boshoff has also experimented with a format that he refers to as books presenting “all pages at once”: *Skynbord* (1977 - 1981), *Bangboek* (1977 - 1981), *Gardens of Words* (1982 - 1997/1999/2006). These disassembled books do away with the binary two-page presentation, they show all the pages at once, but they maintain the notion of a set centrepiece presented in the shape of a rectangle with an open space, presumably a margin, to frame the individual sections. The spine of the closed book as it is to be found on a shelf can hold similar structural/conceptual potential: a spine seems to be almost nothing as long as the book is closed, nevertheless it conceptually refers to the potential opening up of this object, into an entire subjective universe of thought: *Kaartland* (1980-81) introduces this aspect. Lastly there are books opening up like a map, or a cityscape: *Kubus* (Prototype: 1976 to 1980; Multiples in 1982) and *Tafelboek* (1976-1979). Here the margin is dispensed with as the mechanism adopts a system of folds and hinges, accentuating and mediating the essentially mobile interrelatedness of individual sections.

The understanding of the margin as a dynamic space has come up in most interpretations of the written Text for *Kykafrikaans*. One notable such analysis is written by Ivan Vladislavić.[16] The latter uses the physical qualities of the book, or the material conditions for writing as a structural almost architectural element in his writing, all the more reason for him to focus on this element in his analysis of the structure of a page of *Kykafrikaans*:

Boshoff held in 2004, “I am against books” leads to suspect that this interpretation needs to be complexified, it confirms that Boshoff’s relationship with the book as medium is ambivalent.

[14] “Die kunswerke in hierdie navorsingsprojek is ontleen aan 'visuele letterkundige verskynsels' soos die titel daarvan aandui. Die term dui nie gewoonweg op 'letterkunde' nie maar eerder op die vergestalting van 'letterkunde' in boekliggame en op die skrywer en leser se besondere spasieverhouding met die werking van die boek”, Boshoff, 1984, p.2.

[15] Images of all works by Boshoff quoted in this paper can be found on Boshoff's website or in the catalogue Katja Gentric, 2013, Volume 3.

[16] Vladislavić, 2005.

> It is extraordinary what a complex set of interpretive manoeuvres a poem like 'Gejaag na wind' (Chasing after wind) compels me to make. First impressions count here. A dense band of matter is dissipating to the right. I consult the windvane of the title to confirm my intuitions, arising from the habit of reading from left to right. A wind is blowing the words away. Or the words are chasing the wind, which probably amounts to the same thing. The dispersed letters rattle away across the gutter and are scattered into the margins.[17]

Vladislavić ends the chapter on *Kykafrikaans* with a recollection of the parting moment during one visit at Willem Boshoff's home, once again describing the sensation of wind and falling leaves. This remark on the lived experience of the book is particularly suited to an analysis of the anthology of visual "opto-phonetic" poetry. *Kykafrikaans* makes use of snippets of "found language": overheard conversations, fragments of sounds from radio programmes, pages from newspapers or telephone directories, sound imitations, onomatopoeia etc. The poems enact a transformation process, where the outcome leaves no doubt in the onlooker's mind as to its status as an artistic medium.

2. From the open space of the margin to a gesture in everyday life and performance

One work that exemplifies this shift from ordinary everyday activity to an object to be considered within an artistic frame of reference is Boshoff's explanation and interpretation of the different stages of *Kantskrif* (1972-84). Simultaneously this description shows the interpretation of the margin as dynamic space. Working with a *King Georges Bible*, which has exceptionally broad margins, Boshoff makes use of this space around the text, where the reader can make notes, juxtaposed to the set quality of the printed text. The hand-written signs transcribe the lived experience of reading, or the mental labour of generating understanding, as these signs are made by an active mind jotting down thoughts that develop in the wake of the reading process. In the beginning (since 1972) this project was a daily routine, as a devotee practices a daily routine of bible reading and prayer, not considered an "artistic" activity. Boshoff officially transforms this object, the Bible with its handwritten notes in microscopic writing, into a conceptual work of art at the occasion of his theorization of his working practices for his "Nationale Diploma in Tegnologie" under the title *Die Ontwikkeling en Toepassing van Visuele*

[17] Vladislavić, 2005, p.28.

Letterkundige Verskynsels in die Samestelling van Kunswerke[18] - at this occasion he further transforms the object by repeatedly reducing the photocopied pages, until the writing becomes illegible, and reads as a continuous surface, or cryptic signs.

Boshoff follows the same but inverted process in other works, he explores daily tasks and the book-object as interlinked activities in two diaries: *Bangboek* (1977 - 1981) and the *370 Day Project* (1982 - 1983) where cryptic signs, visual units, stand for a physically executed tasks, their planning and their evaluation. In these two examples[19] the work as a whole encompasses the actions performed during the timespan represented by the project.

The progression perceived in this line of reasoning is that from practical action to production of physical book-object, to diary, to a sort of score to be acted out during a planned timespan, which means Boshoff shows a preoccupation with experience as it is lived, and the transcription of lived experience, in the form of a collection of data, the representation of data, to the performance of live knowledge, the performance of a pre-meditated task. It can be argued that the parallel development of the collection of information about plants,[20] represented by their names, the mnemonic activity of learning their names off by heart, the construction of *Gardens of Words*, the collection of divination techniques,[21] the writing of an encyclopaedia and finally the persona of the druid,[22] follow the same line of reasoning: The druid performances do not only present a mechanical repetition of data but place the accent on the importance of live memory. In fiction or in concept, the plants or words remembered would have been in danger of going extinct if they had not been kept alive by the memorial act. The persona of the druid thus is the lived form of an encyclopaedia, nonsensical, clairvoyant, abaxial, fictional, marginal knowledge contained in the "Dictionary" of what *What every druid should know*.[23]

[18] Willem Boshoff, 1984, p.68-69.
[19] In *Bangboek* this connection is not as direct as in the *370 Day Project*, but on closer observation, the cryptic signs, transcribing a personal journal of thoughts of opposition, do represent the intentions of action. The first work that might have been quoted in this context is *Kleinpen I* (1978- 1979). Observing a daily ritual Boshoff copies a book, *Prayer Life* by Andrew Murray. His description of the project as a work of art includes the remark that the artist also lived the day according to the recommendations of Andrew Murray (Boshoff, 1984, p.64).
[20] Which Boshoff mentions in connection to the *370 Day Project*, but which has started earlier, in his recollections of his working methods of works in 1974 (for example the graphic work, *Bos,* see Katja Gentric, 2013, Volume 2, p.630) and especially *Bloeiselplas* (1978) Boshoff, 1984, p.44-48.
[21] An early example is *Index of (B)reachings* (2000)
[22] The first intervention by Boshoff as a "living sculpture" in *Basel Arts Unlimited* (2009)
[23] The publication of this Dictionary in book form is intended.

While Boshoff's approach in the margins between book-work and performance has predecessors in South African art (Walter Battiss, Wopko Jensma[24] have been mentioned) these artistic practices close to actionism and an extended artist's book should be linked to several examples in art from the 1970's within Fluxus, Conceptualism or Viennese Actionism. At least from 1982[25] onwards Willem Boshoff is aware of these artistic movements. More precisely, Boshoff's approach brings to mind individual artists working in the fringes of these movements: for example Robert Filliou, Timm Ulrichs and Mieko Shiomi. The artist's book as a common denominator in artistic practices of the 1970's, which, paired with a definition of "l'esthetique de l'action" (aesthetics of action),[26] is a decisive step towards the aesthetics of contemporary art is analysed by Anne Mœglin-Delcroix.[27] When Mœglin-Delcroix identifies the Fluxus book as a utopian gesture she means the utopia of artistic practice becoming a democratic institution. Within the utopia of Fluxus, the mass-produced low budget book should economically be at the reach of "everyone". Mœglin-Delcroix identifies the artist's book as an essential element in the quest to bring art closer to everyday life, a certain ambiguity which positions the work of art somewhere between life and art and calls for radical transformation. She speaks of the book as a weapon in the quest for equal opportunities and the creation of a new society. This militant nature of the book does not reside only in the content of what is published but also in its potential to constitute "un espace d'art au-delà de l'espace traditionnellement occupé par l'art dans les institutions spécialisées".[28]

3. Fluxus: Utopia, teaching and learning, the materiality of words, the world as a stage

Teaching and learning as performing arts by Robert Filliou is the most speaking example of this democratic idea. The book is spiral bound. Each page is divided into three spaces. The first consists in a German translation of the text written by Filliou, done by Dieter Roth. Just under this first text we find an open lines for writing labelled "try it yourself" - the reader is given space to generate his own version of the line of thought developed here and to note his personal experience of it. The text of the bottom is the English version is Filliou's original text. The majority of the texts in this publication are transcriptions of interviews with Filliou's friends, as for example

[24] David Paton, 2000, n.p. Chapter 2.
[25] In 1982 Boshoff undertakes a journey to see the Venice Biennale et to see the *Documenta* in Kassel. He also travels to Vienna to meet Hermann Nitsch. See Katja Gentric, 2013, Volume 1 and 2, p.41, 54-5, 190-1, 196, 222-3,242, 255, 803.
[26] Anne Mœglin-Delcroix, 2011, p.105.
[27] Anne Mœglin-Delcroix, 2011, "Le livres est utopie", p. 105 - 147.
[28] Mœglin-Delcroix, 2011, p.139. "Constitute a space for art beyond space traditionally occupied by art in specialized institutions."

John Cage, Allan Kaprow, Benjamin Patterson, Dieter Roth, Dorothy Iannone, Joseph Beuys. In these pages Filliou, through his own writings or through the interviews he conducts with his friends, develops his ideas on teaching and learning as lived experience, of work, the poetical economy, history of art, and the general importance of techniques of opening one's mind. Anne Mœglin-Delcroix demonstrates how *Teaching and Learning* naturally grows out of earlier autobiographical book-work by Filliou,[29] and how the invitation to "try it yourself" is constant throughout his career. However experimental and collaborative the thought process, Filliou does follow quite a classical procedure: publishing a book and inviting the reader to become actively involved.

Another artist in the margins of Fluxus, Timm Ulrichs, follows the same pragmatic approach but the act of publishing is questioned with a mischievous side-glance: Ulrichs progresses by a series of linguistic quibbles, using language with an attitude of pedantic literalness within performance or installation work. This analytical rigour, or exaggerated pedantic precision - referring to one precise object (and not the other),[30] one precise philosophical signification and not the other - draws the attention to the physical act of reading and the link between the object and the action performed. One such installation consists in two identical versions of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. Ulrich's contribution limits itself to the act of pointing out: "Dieses Buch habe ich gelesen", "Dieses Buch habe ich nicht gelesen",[31] indicating the exact copy of the *Tractatus* he has read, and showing by this gesture of painstaking mental preciseness that he has drawn the consequences of the book's written contents within his artistic thinking. This pedantic, practical "joke" draws attention to the equivocal nature of the publishing process: by multiplying the versions of Wittgenstein's *Traktatus*, it becomes absurdly obvious that it can't be said that all his readers have read the same book. With this gesture Ulrichs in a sense claims all the copies of the *Trakatatus* ever published as part of his work. Ulrichs pursues this literalness one step further when the book as physical object, encompassing the philosophical thought that it represents, becomes a new material pun.[32] The installation consists in a square white table on a grey rectangular board. On the table is placed a copy of Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* the way a reader would place it in order to start reading, the object book disappears behind the readers intention of consuming the writing it contains, of grappling at it with his "pure reason". One of the legs of the table seems to be too short, the table would have toppled over, unless

[29] Robert Filliou, *Poème Collectif* (1968) and also *Je meurs trop* (1977) see Anne Mœglin-Delcroix, 2011, p. 110-113.
[30] Ansgar Schnurr, 2008, p.104: *Dieses Buch habe ich gelesen, dieses Buch habe ich nicht gelesen* (1970).
[31] "I have read this book", "I have not read this book".
[32] *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft, Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (1977/85), Ansgar Schnurr, 2008, p.115-117.

Ulrichs had placed a copy of *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* under the table leg. “Practical reason” reminds the reader (an individual gifted with human agency) of the usefulness of the physical object book to prevent the table from wobbling. Ulrichs has published a great number of artist's books, but he transgresses this urge to publish in his installations pointing to the double function of a book: the physical consequences of the object book and the philosophical thought contained in the writing.

For the third Fluxus example the action performed and the global geographical distance between these activities are the preconditions for the publication process. Mieko Shiomi, from her marginal vantage point in Japan, has initiated participative works she calls *Spacial Poems* (1965-1975), conceived as a set of instructions sent to friends all over the world.[33] Shiomi asks the participants to document the actions they have performed in response to her instructions, thus transforming for their purposes the entire terrestrial globe into the stage upon which art is played out. The outcomes are materialized in the form of sculptural objects, and finally in the form of an artist's book.[34] One particularly well-known *spacial poem* is the “Falling Event” calling for participants all over the world to cause an object to fall and to document the event.

Within all abovementioned examples the accent is on the action, the hands-on approach, the process either of constructing or deconstructing the book, assembling or disseminating and dispersing, the process of publication or the publication’s negation. This approach based on social critique elaborated in the 1970’s carries on and over into the most recent art practices and is informed by more and more complex geo-political questions directed to the future, a utopic no-man’s land.

4. The utopian nature of language: the book everywhere and nowhere

Shiomi's “Falling event” is frequently mentioned by one contemporary South African artist in particular: Kemang Wa Lehulere. Kemang Wa Lehulere's performance work is presented at a rhythm of “scenes” in a play. Particularly interesting in our present context is Wa Lehulere's use of the book object within a performance *Fragmented Texts* (2009). The book-object becomes part of the action: Wa Lehulere proceeds to grate the paper, leaving a trail of paper shavings in

[33] It does seem significant to point out that none of Shiomi’s friends seem to have travelled to any African country, however, as becomes clear from the little flags she inserts into maps and globes to indicate the exact geographical location where the actions were performed.
[34] Published in 1976 (see Anne Mœglin-Delcroix 2011, p.136-137).

his wake. He grates a geography book, biology books ... some English poetry, Afrikaans books, some Xhosa set workbooks as well.[35] The spectator witnesses the physical transformation, the alteration, the progressive disappearance of these books and the dissipation of the paper shavings. The action of grating has a wide variety of poetic significations in Wa Lehulere's work; it seems to carry a notion of passing time, of cryptic transcription, of fragmentation of sense, of subconscious fear linked to bodily violence and successive "wiping out" of proof thereof, of futility of the labour of writing, and sometimes, as in this performance it seems to be a reference to the interdiction of writing certain content. This performance was specifically composed for the *Dada South?*[36] exhibition. In a critical response to Tristan Tzara's text of nonsense poetry titled *Sotho Negroes*, Wa Lehulere accompanied the grating action by making seemingly abstract sounds with a megaphone referring to tradition of poetry amongst the Sotho men, with their sometimes-abstract poetry and songs. [37] While Wa Lehulere's gesture has the same literal-physical aspect as Ulrich's Language quibbles, he also firmly takes the questions into an interface spanning the globe and exploring marginality,[38] as does Shiomi. Wa Lehulere opens up a new debate, that of place and the inherent possibility or impossibility of understanding and knowing. Depending on physical location, inclusion and exclusion is operated by the words spoken during the performance, the performer here consciously speaks a language can't be placed, or, at least, the general art-going public is unable to place. Wa Lehulere opens up the question of the political and historical reasons for this "inability to know" and "inability to be located" which entails the fact that book culture is inconsequential in certain spheres. Books in these cases once again become physical objects made out of paper with little relevance to human agency.

Fragmented sense, layered archaeological sense, the montage of found pieces of evidence, the significance of specific spatial conditions, or meaningful space, translates into an extended dictionary of the city of Johannesburg, *Not No Place* (published 2013), written as a collaborative process by Dorothée Kreutzfeld and Bettina Malcomess. The initial research for this compilation was conducted though performative actions. In order to activate the collected archival text the artists would ask amongst others Marco Boni, a demolition man, to read a letter proposing a monument to the future on the grounds of the demolished Synagogue, Jeppestown,

[35] Interview with Kathryn Smith, 2011, p.53.
[36] South African National Gallery (December 12, 2009 - February 28, 2010)
[37] "It is taboo for these songs to be sung, recited outside the initiation site, and even more so for them to be written down. For the performance, Wa Lehulere recited and sang fragments of these songs in a Sotho dialect that is more than 300 years old that only 'men' who have been to initiation would know and understand", Unpublished PDF file transmitted by Lerato Bereng in May 2017.
[38] "Marginality", within the margins of this paper carries the meaning of potential for passage and essential dynamic agency.

Johannesburg. The demolition site transfers it's significance on to the action, because of the act of reading is performed by the self-same agent who was part of the demolition process.[39] Another such meaningful site is created in the form of the "Millennium Bar",[40] which is assembled from material salvaged from notable demolition sites of public buildings, hospitals, schools, churches etc. The performances held within an installation of the Millennium Bar would include readings of political texts, later to be included in the book with the title *Not No Place*.

Utopia is translated as "No Place". By negating "No place" Kreutzfeldt and Malcomess' book paradoxically gives a material quality to an utopian notion. By acting out, by putting into practice, these collected snippets about "No Place", Malcomess and Kreutzfeldt give a body to an utopian idea by creating the figure of a time-traveller visiting the same places at different times and also in the future. The double negation of "Not no Place" is echoed in the name "Anne Historical" that Malcomess adopts in later performances - the same "non lieu"[41] is transported into a notion of dystopia of time, the anachronism.

The paradoxical entanglement between site-specificity and the utopian nature of language plays into the work of Lerato Shadi. As a student, when asked to produce a three-dimensional drawing, Lerato Shadi answers with an installation with the title *Red Tape* in the University of Johannesburg's Doorenfontain Library entrance (2003). She uses books as building blocks; further complicating the installation by adding danger tape until it completely obstructs the entrance to the library, creating a maze her fellow students have to negotiate if they want to access the library. Lerato Shadi speaks of the frustration of the student during the process of registering at the university, the great amount of obstacles encountered, as though this institutions' role were that of preventing the student from learning instead from encouraging it.[42] This initial installation using the physical book as building block later gives way to performances of writing, based on lived experiences. In *Seipone* (2012) Shadi writes and effaces a diary according to a set time schedule on the gallery wall.[43] At the end of the action the gallery wall is empty, carrying only the traces of the activity of writing and rubbing out. A sister work to *Seipone* is *Makhubu* (2014-2015), a journal, completed with projections of a possible future, questioning the place of the role of her artistic practice in this future history. With these activity-based works

[39] Fould-out published by Malcomess and Kreutzfeldt in May 2009
[40] See website Bettina Malcomess
[41] "Non lieu" in French carries a notion of time, as well as place and a sense or signification.
[42] Lerato Shadi, e-mail to the author 27 April, 2016.
[43] Images can be found on the artist's website

Shadi points to details in history that have been effaced from the grand narrative, which Shadi perceives to be a violent gesture. But she also creates a space for utopia, of a time when this artistic action might be in its place.

The book as artistic practice

The poetics of gesture in these ways of working with books and book-works, evolve between reading, writing, effacing, disintegrating, collaging, or any gesture in everyday life. Robert Filliou went as far as founding the "Republic for poetical economics".[44] The book is acted out, it is enacted, it is done in practice. Anne Mœglin-Delcroix has proposed the artist's book and the Utopia of Fluxus thought as an essential element in the process of reducing the distance between art and a gesture in everyday life in a creative society, to bring about this indiscernibility between art and life which has become a common mark of art at the beginning of the XXIst century. The artist's book through its dynamic qualities described here is a precise, practical and realistic way of activating the margins and bringing about radical change.

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Books in Space: Absorption and Distance in Artist's Book Installations

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Reading is a private act, but it's an act which we frequently perform in public space. In buses and subways, parks and libraries, we often find ourselves reading alone, together. In this paper I discuss this experience as it is explored in artist's book installations. These are artworks which bring books into the public space of the gallery, and bring the gallery space into the book. They are works which are both books *and* installations – not simply installations that incorporate books, but artworks in which the book itself expands to fill the space of the gallery. They merge private experience and public space. I'll argue that these works create a tension between experiences of absorption and immersion, on the one hand, and distance and longing on the other. And I'll suggest that many of these installations are texts which are deliberately unreadable, and which conjure up an ideal reader, one which is not identical to the actual viewer.

To start with an example from my own practice, *Proposal for a new city, the same as the old one* is a work that was exhibited at the Michaelis Gallery in 2010.[1] It comprises two elements: a newspaper, printed in an edition of a few hundred; and a sculptural installation of wooden scaffolding, arranged to form trestle tables and lamps. Copies of the newspaper are scattered over the scaffolding, and viewers are invited to wander through the space and read the papers. Inside, they find a series of images drawn in a scratchy pen-and-ink line, in panels arrayed across the page, like a comic book. The images depict an abandoned city. There are no figures, only decaying urban spaces. As the viewer pages through the paper, the narrative structure of the comic itself begins to degrade, the panels coming apart and tumbling down the page. It's not really a story, but it does create an atmosphere of emptiness and decay. Some buildings recall parts of Cape Town, and indeed the work was made to reflect on the strangely empty quality of that city.

The work is about loneliness, and about the connections between loneliness and a sense of the sublime. It seems particularly appropriate to make a *book* about loneliness. Books are a lonely

[1] This work was produced during a GIPCA fellowship at the University of Cape Town in 2009. Images of the installation are available at http://jonahsack.tumblr.com/proposal

medium, to be consumed by one person at a time. Of course books can be used as perfomative tools, and performance is inherently social and connecting. But as a matter of actual practice, books are isolating. You can look at a painting with someone else, you can watch a movie with someone else, but there's no way to comfortably read a book with someone else. You have the feeling of someone looking over your shoulder, or of waiting for them to finish reading before you can turn the page. And it's true that you can read aloud to someone – but even this is an intimate experience. You're sharing an intimate space when you read together.

It could be countered that there's a long history of public books, including bibles, the large Ethiopian gospels that are meant to be seen by many people at a time, as well as the scrolls of the Torah. But even these books are typically carried around the church or synagogue in a ceremonial procession so that everyone can see them, and then are actually read aloud by just one person at a time. Everyone else might follow along in their own books, so that there is a sense of a number of separate spheres of concentration and absorption, more or less imperfectly aligned with one another.

Newspapers, such as the newspapers in *Proposal for a new city*, are a good example of this. They're *made* for public space – they're a kind of public book – but everyone reads their own paper. Everyone might be reading the same paper, the same title, as in this artwork, but they're all secluded with their own copy. The paper is large enough that it can form a small wall around them. So reading together, in public, is a very strange experience, both intimate and distant. Especially when you're reading the same thing, separately together, in distinct zones of absorption.

I suggest that this state of *public* absorption is the subject matter of many artist's book installations. They create spaces in which we can reflect on our multiple modes of experience – the multiple ways in which we engage with the world. In particular, they prompt us to reflect on the ways in which absorption is in tension with other modes of experience.

Absorption is a state of engagement in inner space, in fictional space. It's not about intense engagement in something real. Absorption is the kind of experience one has with a text, or with a painting, or even with a play, but not with nature, and not with watching people on the street. That's a different kind of attention. There's an obliviousness that is essential to absorption. It's

not so much that it pulls you *in*, it's that it pulls you *away*.[2] It pulls the reader away from their particular position in time as much as away from their particular place. This runs completely counter to the philosophy of relational aesthetics, which is about creating spaces which connect people. A book is a space which disconnects you from your context.

This is not to deny that books occupy space in the real world – looking through a book is always a physical act. Even more so with newspapers, of course, which are often large and unwieldy, and require an ungainly, flapping action of turning and folding just to navigate them. They're like maps, which also have – or had, back in the day when maps were things on paper – an awkward, impractical physicality. Newspapers may be even worse, because they're composed of separate sheets which are not bound together, and which can start to slip out and come apart in the reading of them. There's a comedy to reading a newspaper, just as there's something faintly ridiculous about someone consulting a map. Getting lost in a piece of paper, trying not to get lost in the world.

So books are objects in the world, and looking at them is potentially public, but nevertheless, when we read we bring the book into our personal space, we draw it to us, or we use the newspaper to create a zone of privacy. And artist's books installations such as *Proposal for a new city* create a number of parallel private zones, a space for reading together and reading separately.

In *Proposal for a new city* these individual acts of reading are happening within a larger environment – the wooden scaffolding, which supports the paper but also functions as a three-dimensional version of the images in the paper. The scaffolding is made from lengths of narrow pine par, so that it is completely linear. It looks like a drawing in space, halfway between an image on the page and a real object. The wood is painted black to correspond more closely to the ink lines on paper. These structures bridge the gap between the world that is contained within the book and the world outside it. Stepping into the installation, the viewer is already immersed in the world contained in the paper.

[2] See Ostas 2010, page 25, for a formulation of this idea which connects Michael Fried's account of absorption to Immanuel Kant's account of disinterest. Ostas concludes that these two terms are both names for the same state of attention.

The scaffolding also corresponds to the text that is encoded in the newspaper. A series of black lines on the translucent cover of the paper, when they are held up to the light, align to reveal the words, “Your beautiful city will also die.” The angled lines of the scaffolding echo this typography. Once the secret message has been discovered there could be a temptation to “read” the shapes of the scaffolding as another element of the code.

This sense of the structures forming a message, and their existence as a physical version of the images in the paper, enacts a common fantasy of the world as a text. It’s a wish of perfect legibility, perfect correspondence between word and world. As Hajime Nakatani puts it, it is “[t]he world conceived *as* writing”, as if we can write the world into being. Conversely, almost the flip side of that wish, there’s also “the idea of a nature that writes itself”, in Nakatani’s words again (Nakatani 2009:26). Jeremy Cronin says something similar when he longs, in the words of his poem, “To learn how to speak / with the voices of this land” (Cronin 1987:64). It’s a fantasy that the earth has a language, and that we can understand it, we can bring our human language closer to that language, if we listen carefully enough. If we *attend* to it.

So when the space around the book resembles what’s inside it, there’s a satisfying click of alignment of inner and outer. At the same time, the story that is being told in *Proposal for a new city* is of a world falling apart, and the hidden message is a prophecy of doom. It’s suggesting that if we could read the world properly, if the world was legible to us, we might not like what we read in it.

As much as the sculptural element bridges a gap between book and reality, there is also something distancing in its artificiality. It’s not, clearly, part of the real world. It’s like a stage set. And that set-like quality encourages the viewer to create an internal image of a reader who fits into that world. We conjure an imagined reader who can make sense of this space, and who can read these texts.

In Michael Fried’s terms, the installation is both absorptive and theatrical – it has elements that encourage the viewer to forget themselves, lose themselves in the act of reading, and elements that distance the viewer and make them conscious of themselves as viewers and readers. I suggest that this combination of absorptive and theatrical modes is characteristic of artist’s book installations. In many works of this kind there is a push-pull of drawing the *reader* in and pushing

the *viewer* back. We're asked to perform these two roles simultaneously, or to alternate between them.

Absorption on its own, when it's not subject to that push-pull, has the effect of allowing us to forget that we are viewers. Looking at images of people reading, sleeping, lost in reverie, we can watch without being watched. Fried argues that these images aim to "deny the presence before them of the beholder or, to put this more affirmatively, to establish the ontological fiction that the beholder does not exist. Only if this was accomplished could the *actual* beholder be stopped and held before the canvas […]." (Fried 2007:500-501)

The importance of this, for Fried, is that these images are part of a long series of reflections, in the history of painting, on the nature of painting itself. They're investigating the problematic relationship between painting and beholder – problematic because it is artificial. It's only by allowing the viewer to forget their own presence that the painting can elide the strangeness of that relationship.

But there's something even more complicated going on with absorption in these book installations. Because of the way that they combine absorptive modes with theatrical modes, they don't induce that self-forgetting. They don't ask us to forget ourselves, or to forget the strangeness of the act of beholding. Quite the opposite: they play with a tension between absorption and self-consciousness, intimacy and distance, precisely in order to make us reflect on what it means to be a viewer, and what it means to be a reader.

Something similar is going on in some of Willem Boshoff's book installations, with their play between what is revealed and what is hidden. There's a similar sense that we can imagine some ideal reader who could make sense of those works, and the gap between that ideal and our real selves produces a sense of distance, and a kind of longing. Certainly the idea of making the world legible, of finding connections between words and things, is central to Boshoff's work. As Ivan Vladislavic writes, many of Boshoff's works reveal "a wish to restore the primal connection between the sounds and shapes of words and things in the material world" (Vladislavic 2004:98). But as Vladislavic also notes, there is often a frustrating – or intriguing – obscurity in Boshoff's work: "If the woodworks are concerned with how knowledge is *packaged* in the form of the book, *Kykafrikaans* is concerned exhaustively, and occasionally exhaustingly, with how it is *unpacked*

in the act of reading. And with how reading sometimes yields nothing at all and must give way to looking" (Vladislavic 2004:28).

Blind Alphabet (1990-ongoing) is a particular rich example of this tension between reading and looking, and between private experience and public space. The work is an object dictionary – a set of sculptures whose forms are based on English words having to do with shape, form and texture. The sculptures embody the meanings of the words they illustrate. "Illustrate" is actually the wrong word here – the sculptures don't refer to words, or words to them, they are both words and things, simultaneously.

At the same time, as viewers our access to those meanings is blocked – the objects are displayed in steel mesh boxes. Only blind visitors can handle the objects, and can read the braille text explaining the details of their meaning. So there's a barrier put up to a sighted visitor's understanding, or at least a mediation. Even a blind visitor is likely to become exhausted by the sheer number of objects, and by the technical language of the text, as Boshoff acknowledges. So it's a book that is designed ultimately to defeat almost any reader. We only get partial glimpses of that world of harmony between words and things.

As Vladislavic notes, when Boshoff's works frustrate our reading, we fall back on viewing. Then we are pulled in again – because it is writing and we can't help trying to read writing – and find ourselves pushed away again. The work leaves us in a limbo of partial understanding. In David Paton's description of *Kykafrikaans*, Boshoff's works are "rich sites for the iconicity of doubt" (Paton n.d.:13). This seem to be the real meaning of *Blind Alphabet*. It's not so much about the specific definitions of some set of obscure English words. Rather, it's about how we come to know the world – about the movement between obscurity and comprehension, and about making us *feel* that movement, rather than having the sensation of smoothly, effortlessly assimilating knowledge from a book.

And that movement of thought, and that sense of a barrier to understanding, is made literal, in this case, because of Boshoff's choice to make the book an installation, a work that occupies space. Looking at the work, experiencing the work, is thus a bodily, spatial, three-dimensional act, even for sighted people, and even more so for blind people. It is thinking made physical. There's the array of boxes, arranged in a grid to suggest infinite extension from a viewer's initial, static encounter with the work; and there's the depth of each box itself, which we must move

between, and into which – even if only in our imaginations – we can plunge our hands and our minds.

On the one hand, each of these boxes is its own private book-space, its own separate zone of concentration. In another way, though, the way that the boxes are arranged as an array is as if the individual pages of a book have been separated out – like a machine that has been diagrammed so that we can see its workings. And it's not just the objects that are part of this diagram, it's us ourselves, as viewers and readers. When we step into the installation we become part of it, we take on the role of the reader in this quite self-conscious model of what it means to read and to understand. Just as a diagram is idealized – in both senses of being made perfect and being made conceptual – the reader is an ideal reader – a perfect but fictional reader. Stepping into the installation you can pretend to be that reader for a few minutes, but you quickly become aware of the gap between you and the "real" reader. So in looking at this work that gap between the ideal reader and our real position as viewers is at the front of our minds.

Most of the descriptions of this work, including Boshoff's own, emphasise the kind of connections between people that it can foster, because sighted visitors have to rely on blind readers to understand the work. But an equally plausible response is that the experience of the work is dominated by a kind of longing. It is dominated by an awareness of the distance between viewer and the object, and the distance between viewer and the reader for whom the work seems to have been made.

Similarly, Xu Bing's *Book from the Sky* (1987-1991) is a book that invites us to try to read and then prevents us from understanding. The work is a series of scrolls, hangings and books, printed with what appear to be traditional Chinese texts. But none of the characters are real Chinese words – Xu Bing invented them. So there's literally no-one who could read this document (though people who can read Chinese script will find resonances and connotations in these characters which others won't).[3] There's a tension between a utopian ideal of perfect immersion, perfect absorption in reading, and a reality of imperfect attention, and distraction, and deliberate obfuscation.

[3] A point made by Nakatani, 2009. Nakatani argues that the dominant view of Bing's book as an "unreadable" document overlooks the existence of these connotations.

Of course, any book written in a foreign or made-up tongue could give us that same pang of distance. But these artworks are also spaces. They're not neatly contained between covers – they surround us and make space for us – real, physical space, so that our bodies become an element of the work. They invite immersion, so that sense of distance and disconnection becomes that much more acute.

There's a related form, or sub-form, of the artist's book installation as I've been discussing it, which is the artist's library. Galleries have often been transformed into libraries and reading spaces of one kind or another, either as an adjunct to an exhibition, or as an exhibition in their own right. Though these installations use existing books, rather than exploding the form of the book itself as in the previous examples, they raise some of the same tensions between private reading and public viewing.

For example, the Independent Publishing Project (IPP) (2011-2012), which was co-curated by me and Francis Burger, was a temporary library and workshop, installed in gallery spaces. [4] It displayed a collection of books from over a hundred years of South African independent publishing, including artist's magazines, zines, poetry journals, etc.[5] Visitors could come in and read the material, or use the photocopiers and other equipment to make their own books and publications. As curators and participants, Francis and I observed that many people visited the exhibition and paged through the books, but very few actually used the space to spend extended periods of time with any one book. People engaged with the material, but without making a further commitment to sit with it, or to get lost in it.

Ilya Kabakov describes a similar response to his installation, *The Artist's Library* (1998). This work is a collection of books and catalogues about Kabakov's work, arranged in a library-like space, with chairs and tables for people to sit and read.

Kabakov says about this work,

[4] The IPP was installed at Blank Project in Cape Town in 2011 and at the Goethe Institut in Johannesburg in 2012. A partial record of the project can be found at http://independentpublishingproject.blogspot.co.za/
[5] I co-curated this project with Francis Burger. It was installed at Blank Project in Cape Town in 2011 and at the Goethe Institut in Johannesburg in 2012. A partial record of the project can be found at http://independentpublishingproject.blogspot.co.za/

> First of all, this is not a collection of all the works of an artist, but rather *the image of a library*, that is, the image of a book, a book product or something that is very close to it, something that can be read. This is an invitation to read and the 'visual' here rests only in the appearance and quantity – I have in mind the drawings on the walls – that can perhaps be understood and explained through the text, the word. Hence, *the image of 'reading,' of understanding through reading*, should fill this installation with meaning. It must be said immediately – and this hope for the reading of the albums and other such materials in today's circumstances is insanely utopian – no one has the time today to read all of these things. This utopia is in the spirit of the 19th Century: to skip out of the real time of life and immerse oneself into another world. This desire for this kind of utopia is naive and resembles visiting any reading room for 2-3 minutes 'with the goal of an excursion.'
>
> (Stoos 2004:146 – my emphasis)

There's a tension here because this installation is both a library and – merely – the image of a library. It's not a *model* of a library – it's a real library, and there's the real possibility that viewers can be held in this space, can be immersed in it. But that's just not very *likely*. There's an ideal reaction to this work, in which the viewer becomes lost within it, and there's also a more common reaction, in which the viewer merely recognises that an invitation has been extended to become lost in the work. They experience only "the *image* of 'reading'", and of "understanding through reading".

And clearly both responses on the part of a viewer are "legitimate" responses to the project. They're certainly both envisioned in Kabakov's work. So you might say that Kabakov's work is about immersion in reading but also about the impossibility of immersion; about becoming lost in a world suffused with meaning, and the impossibility of "skipping out of the real time of life".

So, to conclude, these book installations perform a particular kind of dance of inclusion and exclusion. They make a space for the reader, while holding the viewer at a distance. They ask the viewer to *attend*, and to be aware of their own state of attention. They create a limbo of comprehension and obscurity, the effect of which is to make viewers reflect on the act of viewing, to make readers reflect on the act of reading, and how these two acts connect them to the world.

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Opening the Book: Performance in Practice

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A performative paper - in 5 acts

Prologue: a very stupid omission

When David Paton sent me an email last week, asking me to check if there were any changes in both my abstract and title, I proceeded to check what I had sent him a few weeks before, only to find that there were indeed some necessary changes….
I then deleted a few extraneous sentences, corrected some grammar, checked my spelling and pressed SEND.

A week later, when preparing this very paper, it became clear to me, that in fact, the title should have changed – ever so slightly….
It should read

Opening the Book: Performance in Practice and Process

Process being the operative word – the word I stupidly went and omitted.

Process and Practice interchange – bisect, and dissect at every point. In unpacking and tracking my process, as an interdisciplinary artist, I am able to reveal how at the very core of my practice, a ‘performative process’ is in practice.

Introduction

I am going to be unpacking the performative process that has embodied my artist book *Pool Of Tears*, the film, *Pool Of Tears*, the Postcard Activation, *War-Pigeon* and *War- Pigeon Posting* - a raw, unobstructed performance captured on video.

War- Pigeon Posting, is the performance' that will be opening the exhibition later this evening.

Act 1: Daily survivors

It started in early July 2016, I wanted to get back into the practice of making a daily mark …

Day 1
15072016
Unique watercolour, on hand torn archival etching paper
20 x 27 cm
I named it 'Survivor'

Two days later, 17072016
I named it 'Survivor'

The following day –18072016
I named it 'Survivor'

And so it went on – day after day another chair another Survivor and by August the 11th 2016, I had 27 Chair Portraits – each an empty sitter – The Presence of Absence.
I showed the series at my shop front studio, Front View 3, as an installation – A Shroud.

Each empty sitter, covered and veiled, under layers of tissue papers, held down by the weight of irons.

My playing space – now a burial ground – a memorial.

Act 2: 27 Empty vessels waiting for their narrative fill.

At this point in the process, I became aware that, the work was moving towards a new form – the artist's book….

Holocaust Survivor testimonies occupied cold winter nights, but it was the testimony of Abraham Bomba, a Barber who worked at the extermination camp, Treblinka in Poland, that began to inhabit and take up residence in my heart and mind.

Act 3: The incident

By now, I had made another 42 unique watercolour paintings.
The 'incident' that took place happened at my studio after 7pm.
The studio now resembling a 'hospital theatre', had 68 pages of watercolour stains occupying every conceivable surface.
I had placed the paintings following the order of 'chaotic instinct', each layed out and spread open – ready for the surgeon's scalpel.

I then proceeded to write out, with red pencil, onto torn strips of skin like archival tissue papers, the oral testimony of the Barber, Abraham Bomba.

I tore up the paragraph
I tore up the sentences
I tore up the words

Then, in socked feet, I moved about my space, delivering fragmented histories to their present partners.
And as I placed the tenuous tissue testimonial texts, in and alongside there new custodians, I witness how the visceral dance of alchemy, brought together the unsuspecting counterparts in a cohesive and coherent merging – a fluid and unobstructed performance – an interplay between text and image
My Part – my role, both Player and Audience – Maker and Viewer.

The ‘incident’ had taken place – *Pool of Tears* had presented itself to me, and an artist’s book came into being.
Series of the Now placed together *Pool of Tears*

Act 4: The balancing act

It was an invitation to show *Pool of Tears* at DKP, that set in motion, the thinking around ‘Opening up of the Book’ and its consequences thereof….
Since how does one show a singular work, bound, closed by book-ends, to many?
How does an audience view and experience a work, if its form limits its viewership, to one person at a time.

So I placed myself into the equation – this time with cotton glove on my left hand and mobile phone precariously balancing in my right hand, with the objective to video the book, page by page. By immersing myself in the physical act of pulling and revealing, examining and showing, I was able to explore new performative practices, always filming in short spurts, to prevent amputation of fingers and possibly hand.

A physical recording of the ‘historical’ and now ‘present’ narratives – under a microscopic view of the camera lens – gave rise to further introspection of new performative practice – I noticed how the testimonial texts become the lead players – the new delivers of the narrative.
My role – both director and player, viewer and maker.

Narrative films

95 short film clips, went under the editing scalpel and the film, *Pool of Tears*, was ready for the interdisciplinary show, *Pool of Tears: Opening the Book* which opened at DKP, Johannesburg, on 22 November 2016

Veiled pinned up book pages

The notion of ‘showing the un shown’, was the core performative gesture that provoked and propelled the interactive discourse with the viewer. It becomes the personal choice of the viewer to actively engage with the work – or not.

Once you ‘See’ – you can not ‘Un See’

Kecia lifting up tissue to view a unique watercolour work
The installation comprised of the original unique watercolours.

The now bound, artist’s book, *Pool of Tears*, alongside its unpacked form – an installation of ‘veiled pages’. And a collection of mixed media works:

Believe, Make Them Believe, Passport : I am a Jew and Palette: Watercolour Swabs’

FILM INSTALLATION

Centre Stage held the Film Installation. Here viewers could take up their ‘present positions’ on some of the ‘absent sitters’, physically embodying the work, into their own personal forms.

6 DIFFERENT AUDIENCES WATCHING THE FILM

The intrinsic performative nature of the comprehensive installation, afforded roles to both myself and it’s viewers in the alchemy of the performative experience.

6 x AUDIENCE INTERACTING WITH THE WORKS

As theatre director, in the case of this installation, I was asking the viewer to UNVEIL, UNSHROUD, to lift up the tissue gauze and it is this physical gesture’ that enables the viewer to evocatively capture the composite experience of the work – making them, the audience, the leading performative players in this essential Act 4.

Act 5: The act of posting

Act 5 - the closing Act
After a week’s showing at DKP, the question of viewership re appeared …

So what if I was to send out this artist’s book as ‘Performance in Flight?’

This was the thought that propelled *War-Pigeon*, the performative postcard activation into the global atmosphere.

WAR-PIGEON

Pool of Tears, now printed in the form of 35, A5 postcards – the back of the cards resembling a postcard sent out from Krakau in February 1942.

3 envelopes and cards in preparation on studio table

The postal preparation process of preparing the cards for ‘take off’, through the traditional Postal Services, turned the studio space into an active chamber of various Postal activities.

Stamping,

Sticking,

Sorting,

Addressing,

Packaging and

Placing, [pigeon stamp] This became a daily studio performance , that lead up to the pinnacle ‘Act of Posting’

140 postcards were to be sent off to 4 recipients across the globe.
Each recipient to receive a series of 35 cards, in stamped brown envelopes.

3 Robbin Silverberg’s postcards

The War-Pigeon to carry text and image across the seas, a performance in flight, delivering The Barber’s testimony to its now new custodian.

Over 22 working days, I posted off, in groups of 3, 12 postcards a day.

WAR- PIGEON POSTING

To document this ‘Peformative Act’, I asked who ever I could find on the day, to mark and record, using my mobile phone, my journey from behind the Parkview Post Office – to my end point – the large Red Repository of No Return.

COLOUR CLOSE UP ME LOOKING INTO RED POST BOX

[EPILOGUE: THE PIGEONS HAVE STARTED TO LAND]

98 short films later and serious time on the surgical theatre table, *War-Pigeon Posting*: The tenuous but determined hold onto dignity and the consequences thereof, found its way into the world.

POST SCRIPT

You can imagine what music it was to my ears and eyes, when my London recipient, Tamar Garb, sent me a mail telling me ‘The Pigeons had started to land’. But more astounding was receiving the full collection of 35 cards, the now re assembled *Pool of Tears*, having travelled thousands of miles, to be returned in hand, from my NY custodian, Robbin Ami Silverberg.
It is her pigeon pack that you can view in my present installation upstairs at FADA.
Thank you Robbin.

It seems that the curtains will remain up when my Practice is in Process.

FILM WAR-PIGEON STAMPING

THE END

Thank You

An Encyclopedia of Everything

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There is a reason for making byte size books of the vade mecum sort. It's the result of too many ideas in constant disarray, endlessly knocking and needing to be given form. Form? Thoughts persuading the incorporeal dimension to open up and allow ideas to manifest themselves in the pages of a book. Encyclopedias have been around for about 2000 years – still in existence is *Naturalis Historia,* written about AD77 by Pliny the elder.

Diderot in his seminal work Encyclopédie (1755) stated that "indeed, the purpose of an encyclopedia is to collect knowledge disseminated around the globe; to set forth its general system to the men with whom we live, and transmit it to those who will come after us, so that the work of preceding centuries will not become useless to the centuries to come".

Encyclopedias are tomes of articles and subjects on any and every topic of accumulated, verifiable knowledge. They differ to dictionaries in that a linguistic, alphabetical listing of words is limiting. This form of classification may leave the meaning-seeker lacking in contextualized understanding and association. But this encyclopedia is different.

Here, when a volume discusses printing, one can run fingers down the impressions left by the printing press, and touch the unevenness of ink. Or, a book on artists' stamps has samples of these intimate artworks, gathered from around the world. Therefore, the curious thing with this particular collection is *the way* information is presented, the *change* information has undergone in the hands of an artist. It presents in real time, an original artifact; how artists and writers interpret and intimately engage with facts – a demonstration of how artists think and decode subject matter in their own unique ways. And, this installation continually proves to be an area ripe for artistic collaboration - a body of work made possible through world wide collective adventure. Diderot (1755) further wrote: "When one considers the immense material for an *encyclopedia*, the only thing one perceives distinctly is that it cannot be the work of a single man. How could a single man, in the short span of his life, manage to comprehend and develop the

universal system of nature and art"? And such is the methodology of *An Encyclopedia of Everything.*

The initial goal of the project, begun late February 2013 was to collect and swop about 500 books. It's about 'everything' because, lets face it – is there any topic, which has not been covered by a book artist? The small volumes are A6 (postcard size) when closed (A5 when opened) and in most instances boast hard/strong covers. Most of the books are unique and in a few instances are limited printed editions, as well as copies of hand altered but editioned books.

***An Encyclopedia of Everything* came about in the following way:**

As many book artists know, we're in the business of working alone. We plan and plot, draw and write, print and paint. We sew and bind, construct and invent. I mean – who gets artists' books better than Book Artists? Add to the mix the process of collaborating – the heady, resounding echoes of a choir instead of a piping solo = many artists creating meaning through text and image in one corpus. This is *An Encyclopedia of Everything*. As a very active Mail artist, correspondence with international artists has already involved organizing collaborations, as well as exchanging and collecting artists' books for The New Alexandrian Library. The books I have received vary in size and shape, and although each is unique in their own way, exhibiting them has proven difficult. The solution was to standardize collecting. Internet networks such as IUOMA (International Union of Mail Artists – Ruud Janssen – Netherlands) and Artists Books 3.0 ning (Robert Heather - Australia) have proven invaluable in making contact with artists prepared to exchange work. As with most interactive activities, one forms closer relationships with artists with whom one has an aesthetic affinity and of course, those prepared to trade.

There is renewed interest in the notebooks and drawn or written thoughts and jottings of remarkable men and women. Simple things, like shopping lists, and personal observations, writing down pertinent quotes and 'things to do', have helped those interested to pierce together the daily grind of lives lived so long ago. Imagine owning/knowing Aristotle's shopping list - well, I'm curious. These small books have become a way to condense knowledge into the distilled drop of artistic vision. It embodies its Latin meaning, "carry with me". Easy to bind and fill (although I have been sent some really intricate books), they're perfect Idea Vehicles.

An Encyclopedia of Everything currently stands at 538 documented books with as many as 15 needing to be included on the online website: http://an-encyclopedia-of-everything.blogspot.com

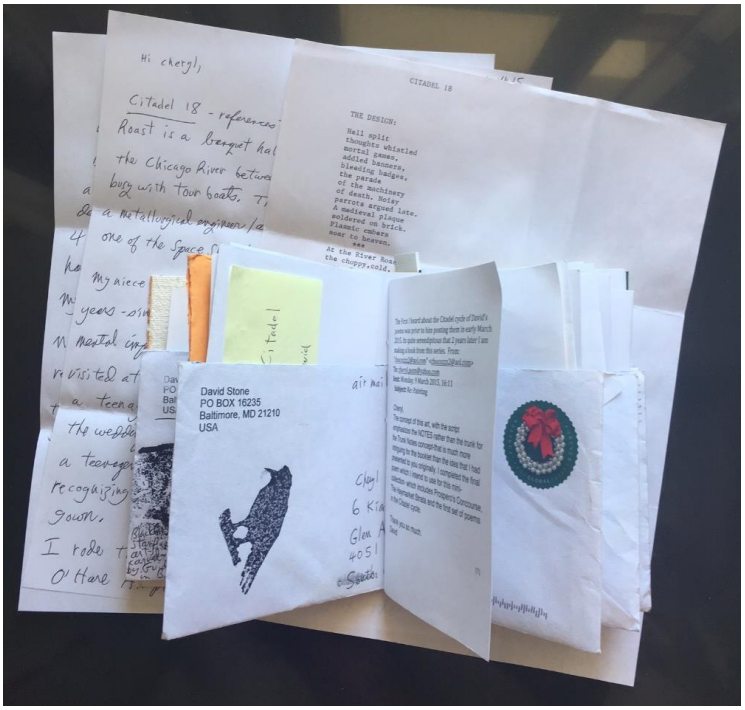
This collection would not have been possible without collaboration from artists I know, those I have come to know and artists I know nothing of - except that they are willing to share their work. This collection is set alight by a collaborative generosity of spirit not often evidenced in the art arena. Within the last few years another sort of artistic partnership has come about as a direct result of the encyclopedic idea. We all know ideas evolve. They're like rabbits - excellent at endless multiplication. This is the concept of collaborative text - '*cooperative text'* as I call it. There is an unexpected synergy formed when one swops words with a stranger. The words are unedited and - if I may quote Yeats - "Images used to rise up before me, as I am sure they have arisen before nearly everyone who cares for poetry, of wild-eyed men who spoke harmoniously to murmuring wires, while audiences in many coloured robes listened, hushed and excited" (Bornstein and Mills Harper (ed)).

That's the feeling I get from this type of collaboration where words cross the divide, sparking in "rhythmical animation, in idiom, in images, in words full of far off suggestion" (ibid): a form of communication, which expresses immediate response to the written words of another. I have collaborated with artists/writers/photographers from Japan, Marie Wintzer (Japan), David Stone, David-Baptiste Chirot, RCBz, Allan Beally and John and Mehrl Bennett, (USA), Petru Viljoen (South Africa), Wolfgang Gunther (Editor of KIOSKO) and TICTAC (Germany) and many others, all of whom add a unique flavor to collaboration.

Another form of collaboration has been writing/poetry collaborations where poets/artists collude in altering each others work, finishing/starting books and writing poetry or prose together. These works can be read on http://collaborativecanto.blogspot.com

Another example of poetic collaboration happens with David Stone (an American poet and author of the *Blackbird* publication). Exchanging words is as powerful as surrendering thoughts - words are formidable tools of communication, and *how* we select and interact with our words between each other can be a microcosm of our inner selves. The text for the book is taken from email correspondence we exchanged during the writing of this series with the 'pages' of the book made from envelopes in which David's poetry arrived. The action of unfolding each work from its nest is akin to trying to extract meaning from David's words. One of the most exciting aspects is that

Citadel 18 is where David began to send me hand written notes on his thinking as each poem nudged his consciousness. I have always been more interested in the artists' intention than my own view of any particular work and this unlocked many aspects of his work for me. I wonder if David remembers sending me the note on his niece Sharon's wedding. So many of our human experiences are shared, but our viewpoint is unique and this is echoed within the formal qualities of *An Encyclopedia of Everything.*



David Stone/Cheryl Penn. 2017. *Citadel.* Unique book made from envelopes with handwritten notes and a collection of poetry from the *Citadel* series.

Other collaborations include the exchange of books, such as is evidenced on http://artistbooks.ning.com (Robert Heather - Australia). Collaborations were organized around a particular theme and given a number - for example *3.0 # 18 (Beginnings and Endings).* The ning platform has become an expensive exercise and on apparent closure of the site, I transferred the collaborations to http://collaborative-artists-books.blogspot.co.za. I am currently organizing our 19th collaboration in which about 8 artists will participate. Artists make a book based on the title in an edition of as many participants involved and these are exchanged. A format is agreed on as well as the hand made elements of which the book must comprise.

Jac Balmer (UK). 2016. *3.0 # 18 (Beginnings and Endings).*

Collaborations also included other artists contributing to the content of a book, for example *Artists Postcards*. In a work such as this, I asked TICATAC (Germany) for a set of her postcards as artifacts for a book. Without hesitation, a full set were sent with the next mail, signed, stamped and numbered. The use of such artifacts in book production is in keeping with my attempt in this body of work to give the reader access to medium/information reality. No longer is the book about *images* of paintings/*images* of postcards/*images* of drawings - the reader interacts with the genuine item. I have also made a book using her artist's stamps - beautifully printed, immaculate 'Cinderella stamps'.

TICTAC/Cheryl Penn. 2014. *Artists Postcards.* (Unique book made from Artists Postcards received from TICTAC (Germany).

Due to the convenient size of the vade mecum, it has allowed the spawning and writing of quite a few series under a particular theme, for example *The Bhubezi Mythology (The Women Who Hold up the World".* This series, currently about 15 books tells the story of women and their assistants who are historical facts, but gives the true version of their lives, often at odds with

history. The reality is they hold together the Bridges Between, keeping the world as we know it from the clutches of the Moor. Pandora, Mona Lisa, Hatshepsut, Pehernefer, the Lammassu, Leonardo da Vinci, and Alexander the Great are part of this mythology; see http://bhubezi.blogspot.com. These women have their own writing system (of an asemic sort), their own way of keeping time and secret keys to keep things in order, for example Hatshepsut's Obelisk and the Gate of all Nations. Collaborations have helped push this mystery through the world.

Cheryl Penn. 2017. *3.0 # 18 (Beginnings and Endings) (Perhernefer)*

An Encyclopedia of Everything also contains science, languages, philosophy, the study of nature, personal narratives and autobiographies. It holds biographies, most art disciplines, politics, poetry and photography. The works covers astrology, religion and inter-personal debate with date of completion being (if Armageddon has not struck) the day a full handwritten copy of the Bible is included.

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Artistic Texts

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Introduction

The focus of this paper is artistic practices that cite books as their source/inspiration, but would not traditionally be included in a list of artist's books or book arts. The primary reason being their 'bookishness' is often overshadowed by their aesthetic qualities that do not conform to the traditional materiality associated with the artist's book. These works would not have been generated without the originary textual referent. The artists that will be referred to in this paper are Pierre Fouché, Benjamin Stanwix and myself, Fabian Saptouw.

The element that links all three works is the rematerialisation of text, often in ways that renders the originary content inaccessible. The artwork draws the reader's attention to the visual possibilities of text[1], without reverting to a sequence of characters that can be 'read' or a narrative that can be understood in the traditional sense. All three artists present a cautious engagement with the nature of language and the reader's assumptions about its presumed ease of access. In Fouché's work the text is encoded into the stitches of a textile, in Stanwix's a biblical text becomes progressively illegible and in my own production the transcription and erasure of the text shifts the materiality of Derrida's publication.

The Artist's Book

*Thoughts become liquid, words are like things. Texts get broken down into sentences, or even words or letters, floating in a sea of repetition. (*Philippi, 1999*:161)*

The artist's book is a complex concept with a lengthy historical tradition and a wide range of contemporary manifestations. Chappell Duncan lists various book-related manifestations that are linked to the concept of the artist book: the altered book, the anti-book, the artist's publication,

[1] These artists are not working in a vacuum and are working within the context of other South African artists that have strong ties to the notion of the artist's book. Relevant artists are individuals like Colin Richards, Willem Boshoff and Wim Botha who have worked with the link between text, image and objecthood for decades.

bookwork, book objects, the artist's book and the fine press artist's book (2003). Each term has a list of elements that validate its classification and these elements often include and exclude specific objects produced under the umbrella term of the 'Artist's book'. This attempt to draw clearer lines between the various cultural products viewed, discussed and collected as artist's books featured in the *2007 Action/Interaction: Book/Arts Conference* and Joanna Drucker's *The century of artists' books*. What is clear at this stage is that there are multiple definitions and opinions of what constitutes an artist's book, but also that the term allows for some ambiguity and experimentation.

The specific grouping of artist's books relevant to this paper's focus area is altered books; which are usually visually or structurally reminiscent of traditional bindings. Sometimes an actual book is altered or alluded to through a material or symbolic reference. Two highlights of this tradition are *A Humument: A treated Victorian novel* (1970)[2]*,* created by Tom Phillips and Marcel Broodthaers *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard (A throw of the dice will never abolish chance)* (1969). The first is an altered book created by reworking the W H Mallock's 1892 novel *A Human Document*. The latter is a republication of the poet Stéphane Mallarmé's text *Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hazard* (1914), with all textual content replaced by black stripes. While these examples may seem dated, they have set the tone for decades of reimagined texts within the framework of the artist's book[3]. Both artist's books interact in a very direct manner with the original content of the primary source. Phillips adds layers of colour, tone, line and shape to create a new narrative from the existing text. Broodthaers creates a book that responds to the visual quality of Mallarmé's typographically complex text. Each work responds to the specific characteristics of the primary reference and are in dialogue with that source. This element is what Paton, citing Bakhtim, refers to as artist's books broad dialogism that operates across time and space (Paton, 2012). This allows a double discourse in a novel between author and character, and in the context of this paper the author and an artist.

In 'Towards a theoretical underpinning of the book arts' Paton presents a critical framework that accounts for the intellectual value of artist's books. Paton argues that the "self-consciousness", "discursive perceptivity" and the "self-reflexivity" of the utterance should be gauged in relation to

[2] During November 2010 a digital version, A Humument App for the iPad, was released by Phillips
[3] The artist's book also has a specific place within the context of collections, as there are connoisseurs and book collectors alike that keenly collect the wide range of items produced as artist's books.

the theoretical underpinning of the notion of the book (2012:2). This text by Paton provides an excellent entry point into the discussion of an expanded definition of the artist's book.

This is especially valuable because the artworks briefly mentioned earlier in the text, admittedly do not present their 'Booknesses' when encountered in an exhibition space. These texts materialize as eraser shavings, cotton lace or progressively illegible text. My argument is that the book, acts as a source material, and that the artwork should be regarded as a re-materialisation of that text. This is because the artworks would lack their current conceptual base were it not for the textual reference. To gain a better understanding of this is it important to engage each artwork in more detail, but first it is important to clarify the type of relationship I am presenting as the author/artist coupling.

At this stage it is useful to refer to Desa Philippi's discussion of the links between words & images by referencing Bohumil Hrabal's novel *Prilis hlucna samota (Too loud a solitude).* Hant'a, the main character, has a fascinating relationship with the cultural artifacts that surrounds him. In the novel his primary function is compacting waste paper and censored books, he regards his true calling as being an artist and a custodian of the past. His bales of waste paper conceals items we would regard as culturally valuable. When he creates a bale, he secretly inserts an open text, a fragment of a poem or frames the bale with a critically acclaimed historical painting. He claims with some sense of triumphant failure:

"Besides, I'm the only one on earth who knows that deep in the heart of each bale there's a wide open *Faust* or *Don Carlos* . . . I am the only one on earth who knows which bale has Goethe, which Schiller, which Hölderlin, which Nietzsche. In a sense, I am both artist and audience, but the daily pressure does me in, tires me out . . . (Hrabal in Philippi, 1999:*160)*

Each bale processed through the hydraulic press is unique in some capacity. When considering his own retirement, he thinks fondly of having his own hydraulic press and continuing his life's work. (Philippi, 1999) Given his 35 years of service it is understandable that he has developed an intimate relationship to these texts, images and secrets hidden in many of the bales of waste paper.

Conceptually this links with the idea that the artist's that is inside that process has a particular relationship to the text and that is materialized through these works. The reader might not access

to the physical text, but what we have is the artist's reading of the text. Joanna Drucker links this kind of slippage between the "telling and the told" to the "literal presentation of information on the plane of discourse and the production of a story through a process of enunciation" (Drucker, 2008: 2). In viewing these works we witness the artist's translation of the primary source as a fragment of the originary textual referent.

The interventions by Fouche, Stanwix and myself are enunciations that run parallel to the source material. When we engage these artworks, we do so by virtue of a self-reflexive process of crafting that speaks back to the source material. The reference echoes in the viewers thought patterns when we read through, or cannot read through the artworks. When we engage these artworks there is thus a dual narrative that is activated during our interaction. It is crucial to note that if the artist had selected another text the content of that narrative would have been different but the mechanism of interaction would remain similar.

Artistic Texts

His Foam White Arms (2012-15) [Fig.1] by Pierre Fouché is a 6,4m cotton braid lace scroll. According to Fouché there is a "queered fragment of Crosbie Garstin's epic poem 'The Ballad of the Royal Ann' [is] encoded in the design of the pattern. The text fragment relates a sailor's seduction by the sea as personified by an alluring young man" (Fouché, 2015:Online). In both the original and Fouché's version of the tale, the seduction leads to death by drowning.

Fouché's choice to take the text, and encode it through an extremely complex process into a series of stitches to create a lace scroll is an evocative strategy to render text in formats that are familiar but dissonant with our preconceived notions of narrative. The choice to render the text into a lace pattern speaks to Fouché's competency with the craft, but also a long-standing tradition of that craft. It is an extremely time consuming process that requires precision and focus in order to create the correct pattern sequences.

The work also refers to the context of the original text by basing the pattern for the continuous edging on the shape and configuration of the frill shark's teeth. In addition the work also links back to the history of the written word by taking the form of a scroll. There is thus a dual process at play in linking the artwork to dated methods of making meaning and making material.

Another work that features the act of transcription, although without the complexities of encoding is my project, *On Writing and Difference - Jacques Derrida* (2015-16) [Fig. 2]. This is a transcription of the textual content of Jacques Derrida's text *On Writing and Difference* using HB pencils, Steadler Mars Plastic erasers and A4 examination pads. Pages were transcribed and erased in sequence and the residue was carefully collected for presentation in the gallery space. The erased text is reworked with an eraser and combined with the contents of the rest of the pages to create thicker tendrils of eraser shavings. The eraser shavings are presented as either a pile or as irregular block consisting of the arranged eraser shavings in varying widths on a flat surface.

The transcription process duplicates the textual component of the source material, but the erasure of the text counters that process. The strips of moulded eraser shavings contain the carefully transcribed text, but it simultaneously renders the text inaccessible.
Given the labour intense nature of transcribing the text, its subsequent erasure has been critiqued as a futile gesture. To my mind this is similar to the compacting of the waste paper in Hrabal's novel, it's primarily about the intimacy of the individualized experience of the text through the process of writing.

The focus of the production process is the duplication of a pre-existing item or idea that is rearticulated through a time and labour intense process. The intensity of my process doesn't quite match Fouché's 470 hours or labour, but the joy of process is indeed shared. In addition the dedication to crafting artworks in this manner, engages the way time is perceived and experienced by the artist/viewer. The compression and expansion of time through this interaction is crucial to engaging the work. The final work to be discussed deals with the transformation of one specific section of text, although it reads mostly as a compression, or a more accurately a distortion.

White. But First, The Weather (2016) [Fig. 3] is the result of the consecutive google translations of the Babel story in 103 languages. The first page features a few paragraphs of text, but after the progressive translations of the text the project ends with only a handful of words. The work was presented in the gallery space as a wall based installation of 105 Inkjet prints. The first and last panels are printed in English: the remaining 103 prints each feature a different language. The project utilizes all 103 languages supported by Google translate and includes Arabic,

Chinese, Indonesian, Nepali, Russian, Tajik, Xhosa, Zulu and many more. Each print lists the language at the top and the translation in the text below. The final print reads:

English:
White
But first the weather

There is a fascinating link between the artwork as a communicative gesture and the Biblical narrative that revolves around language, power and communication. The shift from a single language to multiple languages in the famed biblical narrative is echoed by the method Stanwix has utilized to render the work. The 103 languages also divide the viewers according to their proficiency in each language, and some readers remain reliant on the flawed translation technology to gain access to the text.

While the text does not fully articulate the entirety of the biblical tome it was sourced from, it does materialize the selected text in a unique way. It is an embodiment of the narrative, and it communicates the most essential part of the narrative by visually manifesting the text in a way that echoes the content of the text. This clearly links to Drucker's discussion of the slippages that occurs between the telling and the told.

Stanwix states:

> "Any process of translation reveals the inevitable failure of attempts to accurately reconstruct a foreign text or idea, but also the potential productivity of this failure – the mistranslation. This tension is replicated in the work of creating images, where there is often a great distance between the image intended, the image made, and the image apprehended by the viewer." (2016:2)

Thus there are many things that are lost in translation and not just in this text. There are many slippages between the various languages, but also between the text and the textile and the codex and the eraser shavings.

Conclusion

The paper has explored the value of engaging artistic practices through the framework of the artist's book. This provides the opportunity to critically engage the discourse surrounding the nature of the book and to create a platform for engaging artworks operating in this expanded definition of artist's books.

This is an invaluable tool for engaging artworks that function at the periphery of the field, and draws on an already established theoretical frameworks to further that discussion. The text has argued for the re-examination of the boundaries between art and artist's books, by thinking critically how we present each for discussion.

Each artwork has a very specific relationship with the original source material, in this paper that relationship is not framed as a copy/original, but rather a dialogue with the original text. This dialogue is what these specific artists have utilized to engage the existing books in order to create new artist's books.

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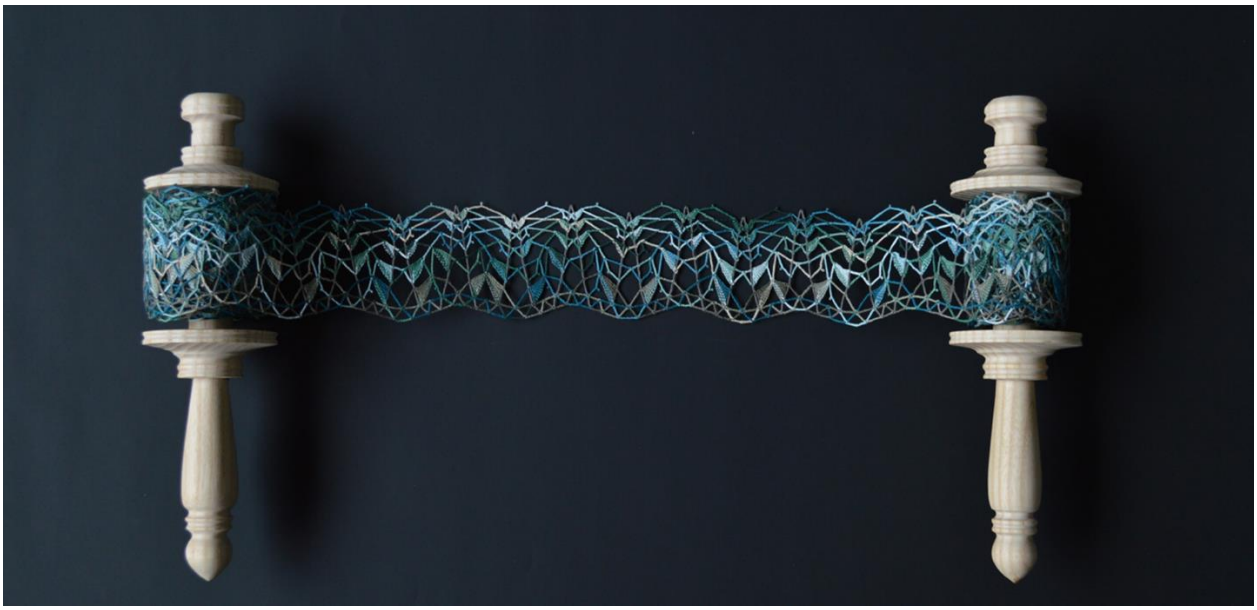

Fig. 1. Pierre Fouché, 2012-15. *His Foam White Arms*. Cotton, 57 x 640 cm

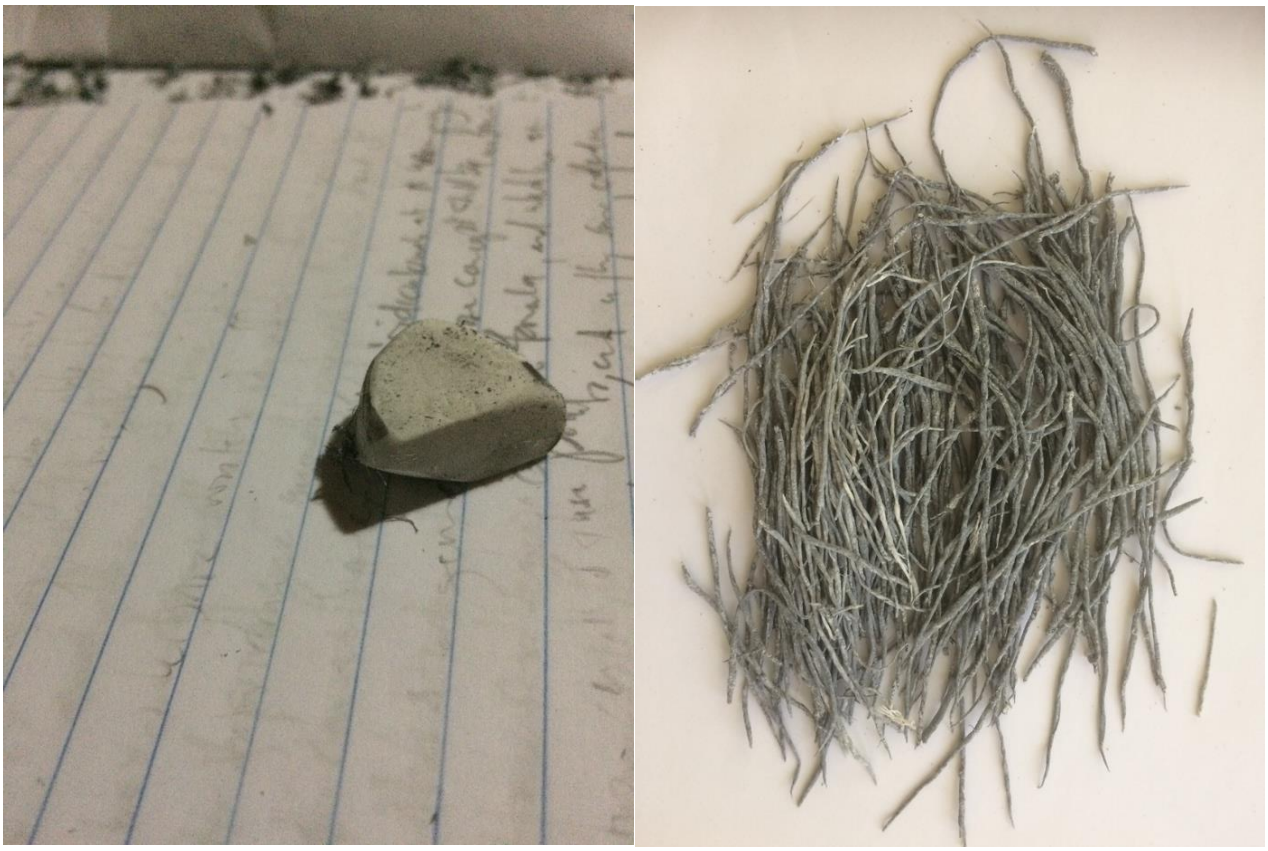

Fig 2. Fabian Saptouw, (2015-current). *On Writing and Difference*. Pencil, Eraser shavings, examination pad. Dimensions Variable.

Fig.3. Benjamin Stanwix, 2016. *White. But First, The Weather*. Consecutive google translations of the Babel story 103 languages, 105 pages. Inkjet print. Dimensions variable.

Dialogic Imagination in the Shaping of Three Bookworks

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In this paper, I will demonstrate how artists' books take shape through a process of `dialogic imagination', to quote Mikhail Bakhtin. With reference to three of my own books, I explore the dialogue between the content of these books and the formal devices and materials that I employed in making the books. The books I use are *Fourteen Stations of the Cross* (2007), *Fragile Histories* | *Fugitive Lives* (2012) and *Between the Folds: Drifting Among Shadows* (2016).

In my work I draw considerably on historical research, the challenge being to transform and distil this into a visual form. For the past decade, I have been interested in exploring the artist's book as an alternative form for bringing together and visualising sometimes seemingly random though intertwined relations and information. The interplay between text and image, design and typography, paper and ink, and folding and binding methods, gives rise to various polyvocal, intertextual dialogic exchanges. These exchanges explore the ambiguous territory between text, image and object. With reference to the Czech media philosopher Vilém Flusser's ideas regarding circular and linear time,[1] I argue how the convergence of these notions of time, where text, image and object can coexist as a dialogic whole, challenges the linearity of conventional books.

According to Flusser, the purpose of images is to mediate the world in order to comprehend it. He argues that images are magical in the way they distort space and time. A picture, he says, does not have a beginning or an end, but presents a wholeness; `a synchronic totality animated

[1] Czech-born media theorist and philosopher Vilém Flusser was born in 1920 in Prague and educated at German and Czech schools and the Univerzita Karlova in Prague. He escaped the Nazi occupation in 1939 by going to London, and lost his entire family in German concentration camps at Buchenwald and Theresienstadt. From London he emigrated to Brazil where he took up citizenship. He lived for many years in São Paulo, where he lectured in Philosophy of Science at the Escola Politécnica of the University of São Paulo and was Professor of Philosophy of Communication at the Escola Dramática and the Escola Superior de Cinema. Later he emigrated to France. Flusser's philosophy remains practically unknown beyond small circles in German studies, media theory, and digital art. His works are primarily written in Portuguese and German, with limited publications in French and English. His early work was influenced by Martin Heidegger and the existentialist and phenomenological theories of his time. Phenomenology played a major role in the transition to the later phase of his work in which he turned his attention to the philosophy of communication and of artistic production. Flusser has been compared to Walter Benjamin, Marshall McLuhan, Roland Barthes, Pierre Bourdieu and Susan Sontag (Ströhl 2002: ix, xxv, xxxc).

by the observer'.[2] Moreover, this is a world where everything is repeated as the eye returns to and passes over the same areas again and again. He calls this reality `cyclical reality' or circular time, which is timeless in contrast to the sequential nature of the linear reality of texts, which are structurally different from images. This ability to visualise our world through images, maintains Flusser, belongs to the world of enchantment and magic.[3]

By contrast, Flusser argues that the development of writing involved the unrolling of pictograms into alphanumerical rows or lines.[4] Writing therefore arranges scenes from a flat two-dimensional surface into a sequential order of characters and lines, thus converting these scenes into a linear narrative form.[5] Flusser contends that texts belong to linear time, or what he refers to as historical time; they can only be comprehended as they unfold themselves through time.[6] Books as artefacts therefore also belong to linear time as they are sequential and unfold themselves through time. Artists' books, or bookworks, occupy a middling position between images and texts – they are neither pictures or images, nor texts, and behave both as images and texts, or what W.J.T. Mitchell refers to as *imagetexts*.[7] I will now attempt to demonstrate this by means of my three bookworks.

Fourteen Stations of the Cross is informed by the first 14 mission stations established in southern Africa between 1799 and 1813. The work comprises three volumes structured according to the verses of the *Stabbat Mater*, a Latin hymn associated with the devotional Stations. Volume 1 includes background information arranged according to the first four verses of the hymn. Volume 2 is divided into 14 `chapters', each introduced by a parallel verse from the hymn, while Volume 3 closes with its last 2 verses. This is the only really concrete correspondence between this bookwork and the devotional Stations. The work comprises duotone photographs and text that have been digitally-printed on cotton paper. Three folding devices have been used, namely regular section folds, gatefolds and accordion folds.

Each chapter of Volume 2 refers to a mission station (see Fig. 1), opening with a spread providing brief details of the place names of the given station, as well as the names of the missionaries

[2] Flusser 2000: 9.
[3] Flusser 2000: 83.
[4] Flusser 2002: 38.
[5] Flusser 2002: 38.
[6] Yeh 2013: 166.
[7] Mitchell 1994: 89.

involved in establishing it. Running across the following three spreads is a 9-cm-wide reversed photograph of a strip of ground documented at the site of each station (see Fig. 2).
The first spreads of each station open to 100-cm-wide gatefold pages (see Fig. 3) in the form of reversed aerial photographs of the sites which bleed off the edges. Superimposed over each aerial image is a labyrinth over which the routes followed by the missionaries have been mapped out in red. Each second gatefold spread (see Fig. 4) opens to a photograph of a bowl containing water, with a reflection of a church window associated with the given site. Stretching across the middle of these spreads runs a single line of red type constituting the text of the book, which includes the names and dates of people baptised at each station. Volume 3, by contrast, comprises a 9-metre-long accordion-fold photograph (see Fig. 5) of a strip of relatively barren ground that progressively leads into water.

Unlike Volume 1, Volumes 2 and 3 invite interactive responses from the reader. In structuring the second volume I needed to find a formal device that would encourage the reader to pause and contemplate; something corresponding to the devotional Stations. With the gatefold one needs to carefully unfold, examine and refold the pages before moving on to the following gatefold spread. This action begins working against the grain of conventional books in that one cannot simply flip through the book. In addition, I do not provide information regarding the significance of the images and texts, leaving this to a process of imaginative discovery. This provokes the reader to page forward and backward to examine and make sense of the work.

The lines of red text do not narrate anything directly, but flow through the volume like a river of names of people who passed through the colonial system and who have mostly been forgotten. On closer inspection one reads the names of baptismal initiates and their families, and from these one can begin picking out particular historic and social details, such as those with slave, Khoi, Korana, Oorlam, European or Tswana names.

Considering Flusser's argument regarding images and texts, this bookwork behaves like a regular book in that the volumes comprise spines, case bindings and pages that unfold in a linear fashion through historic time from the beginning to the end. One may, however, choose to read it in the opposite direction. This is a significant characteristic of artists' books in that they mostly involve some or other form of interaction and may be read in bidirectional or even multidirectional modes, which disrupt the conventions of linear reading.

With Volume 3 the reader can choose to turn the pages on a journey leading down to water; or unfold and pull out parts of the book in sections; or unfold the entire book into a single 9-metre-long strip. The relationship between dark and light, and life, water and cleansing in the context of the initial journey of Christianity into the interior of southern Africa may be understood as an ambivalent and complex narrative of colonisation and redemption, and reconciliation and healing.

The idea of a river of names was extended to my following book. My desire to create an entire book consisting only of the names of people who passed through the colonial landscape was realised when a genealogist and historian friend, Dr Hans Heese, gave me the working text for his book on eighteenth-century crime and punishment at the Cape published in 1994.[8] *Fragile Histories | Fugitive Lives* refers to 1,220 court trials that took place at the Cape of Good Hope between 1692 and 1802, and pays particular attention to the details of the individuals who were tried and sentenced and the atrocious sentences and punishments that were meted out to them.

The work comprises two accordion-fold volumes (see Fig. 6) bound together into a single set of covers. Volume 1 contains background information, particularly regarding the composition of the population at the Cape during the eighteenth century and specifically the forms of punishment that were meted out to transgressors of the law. Volume 2, by contrast, takes the form of a 25-running-metre accordion-fold book comprising an 8.5 cm strip of text that runs through the middle of the entire volume from beginning to end (see Fig. 7). This volume is sub-divided into 8 type blocks, each running across 8 pages, and which are interspersed with graphic medical images of vital organs (see Fig. 8). As such, the lines of type wrap across almost 3 metres. The entire text block may also be folded out into a single 25-cm-long strip, which I have often exhibited on a set of narrow tables.

The text of the book comprises actual material from the afore-mentioned trials, such as their dates, and the names, ages and origins of the offenders in dark grey type, and summaries of both their crimes and sentences set in red type. In the case of slaves, the names of their owners are included, while with people of Khoi origin, the owner of the farm where they lived is mentioned. With cases involving European settlers, their occupation, places of origin or residence are included. Similar to *Fourteen Stations of the Cross*, I envisaged the type block as

[8] Heese, H. 1994. *Reg en Onreg: Kaapse Regspraak in die Agtiende Eeu*. Cape Town: University of the Western Cape.

a river of names of people who passed through the colonial system, and who were tried, punished, and subsequently forgotten about. The interaction between the grey and red typography may be associated with streams of blood flowing between islands of dark grey type that provide the names and details of these people, while their sentences and punishments are printed in red type. As such, the text reads simultaneously as text and image, or what Mitchell refers to as *imagetext*.

This book is accompanied by four photomontage triptychs, which I also view as books (see Fig. 9). The central panels each comprise a life-size photograph of a figure with a rosette folded from tracing paper placed over the torso, which maps and inscribes pain and suffering over the body. These rosettes, as well as those in the flanking panels, are inscribed with the same information as in the book and radiate outwards from vital organs, referencing the iconic image of the sacred heart. The impermanent and tenuous nature of tracing paper, held together with pins, serves as a reminder of our own fragility.

Returning to Flusser's argument, although this book also behaves as a linear book, like *Fourteen Stations of the Cross* it simultaneously transgresses the linearity of the conventional codex. In order to comprehend the text one must continuously page forwards and backwards, and then forwards again to scan along the wrapping lines of text. Between the text blocks are graphic images of vital organs that act as pauses, providing interior glimpses of bodies in pain. As a reminder of our traumatic past, folded into these bodies, organs and texts, are the traces of our complex and fragile hybrid ancestral interconnections.

The third book, *Between the Folds: Drifting Among Shadows*, also makes use of an accordion-fold system, though in quite a different way. This two-volume book was digitally printed and bound with open spines. It is informed by several shadows regarding my familial past that I had unearthed over a number of years, such as events and histories that had been kept silent. The project unfolded itself in the form of an interplay between loss of memory, silence, self-imposed silence, concealment, and the loss of knowledge regarding past histories, events, entanglements and catastrophes. In 2014, I conducted 7 psychogeographic walks between the former places where my great-grandfather lived in Dresden and Leipzig before emigrating to South Africa in 1861. The book is largely informed by my experiences and readings of these cities that are clouded by a number of shadows.

The volumes comprise accordion-fold pages of cotton paper running from the beginning to the end of each volume, acting as the chassis into which sections of tracing paper are sewn (see Fig. 10). These transparent sections deal with the dark side of these cities, consisting of blackened images printed on the right-hand pages so that they bleed off the outer edges. One can barely make out images referencing WW2 atrocities imbedded in the dark, smoky film of tracing paper. The accordion-fold pages visually map out my walks through these cities, which are seen through the lenses of street life, tattooing and graffiti, and the horror and former beauty of these centres. Each walk comprised 7 or 8 stations set roughly 240 metres apart, where I stopped, noted the time it took from the start of the walk, and took a square photograph with my iPhone of something banal that drew my attention.

The book has been bound so that left-hand fore-edges of the accordion-fold pages are stitched together to form the spine, and the pages associated with the walks wrap around the right-hand fore-edges back to the spine, creating hidden pages between folds. Each stage of a walk begins on a right-hand page that comprises a duotone photograph placed to the right side of the page, and the name of the place or intersection on the left-hand side. When turning over the page, on the reverse side I punched out 6mm holes through the paper that map out the whole walk, with red dots indicating the places where I had stopped.

With the third level, I needed to find a device to address the notions I pointed out earlier regarding loss of memory, silence, concealment and the loss of knowledge. Here I collected a range of collage-like images and fragments of text and laid them out on the pages hidden between the folds, and cropped these so that they fall off the edges of the pages (see Fig. 11). These consist of old colour images of buildings from these cities, as well as images of graffiti, street art, body art, tattooing, *Stolpersteine*, and text fragments of traditional and contemporary German poetry, *lieder* and songs. The songtexts embrace language variants, such as *sächsisch*, *Yiddish, Kanak Sprak* and *Ghettosprache*, as well as *Kletzner,* rock, punk and hip-hop.

The book invites the reader to engage with it by paging back and forth and to peer between and underneath the pages to discover images and fragments of texts hidden between the folds. This is facilitated by the introduction of what Keith Smith calls `supported accordion binding' (see Fig. 12). This compound hinging allows `both supported and unsupported accordion bindings to open easily and for the pages to turn freely and create more space to examine the reverse sides of the spreads'. As these pages unfold, traces of one image are read through others by way of

transparencies or punched holes. In order to comprehend the book, one is encouraged to physically interact with it by paging forwards and backwards and by separating the pages to peer between them. As such, the volumes work against the grain of linear reading by disrupting its sequential flow.

In these three artists' books I have explored an intertextual interplay and dialogue between a variety of formal devices, such as images and texts; photography, illustration and collage; typography and design; folding and binding devices; and different types of paper. Texts and images are never fully present, and contain traces of others, such as found or quoted images and texts. As polyvocal expressions, here I must include the voice of Heléne van Aswegen who executed the binding of the books.

The convergence and coexistence of texts and images in these books establish a dialogue between various `utterances', to cite Bakhtin, be they between image and text; between phenomenon and concept; between form, content and context; between figure, paper, fold and binding; and between reader and author. This mixing of images and texts within the boundaries of a single work is a deliberate artistic device, argues Bakhtin, that allows for the `double-voiced and double-accented', and the `double-languaged'.[9] As such, a single work can maintain a number of dialogues or voices in a single `utterance', be they styles, belief systems, or social languages.

In Flusser's terms, these pages vacillate between the linear time of history and the circular time of magic. Being neither texts nor images, bookworks occupy a liminal space betwixt and between *image and text*; between magical space and conceptual space. In this indeterminate space where boundaries evaporate, bookworks transcend the margins that separate one space from another. In dialogical terms, artists' books draw on the ambivalent space between image and text and re-establish `a magical form of being', to cite Flusser;[10] a way of understanding our world where images and texts coexist as *imagetext*.

[9] Bakhtin 1981: 359-360.
[10] Flusser 2002: 67.

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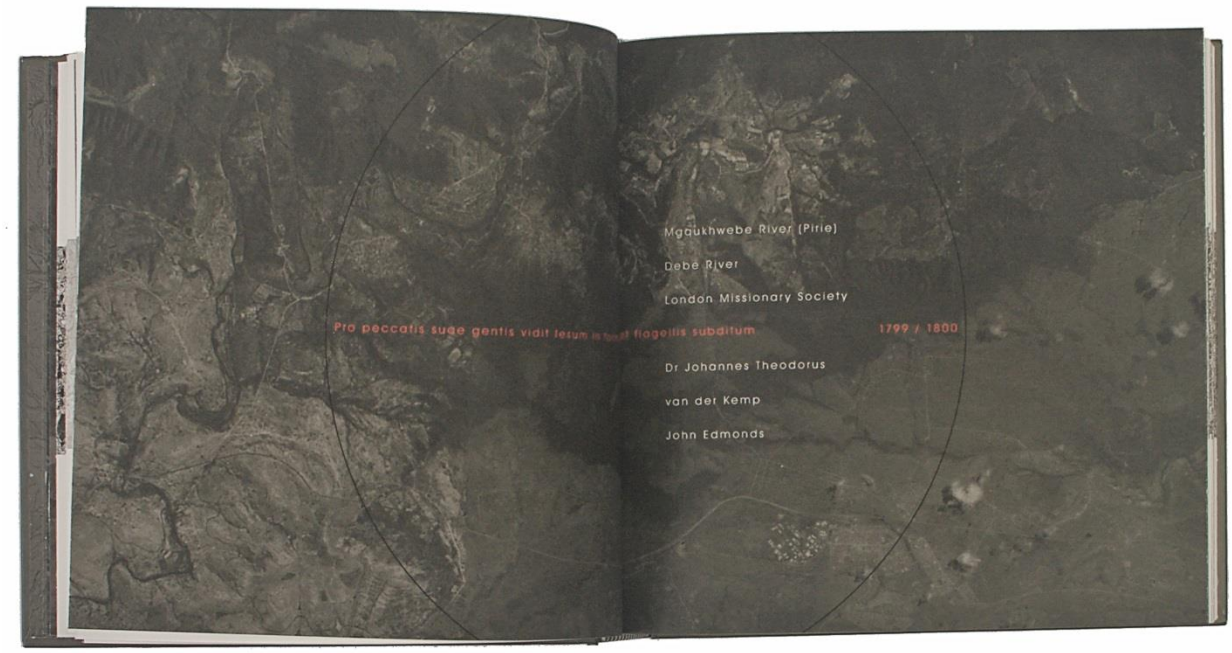

Fig. 1. *Fourteen Stations*, Book Two, chapter 3, Title page

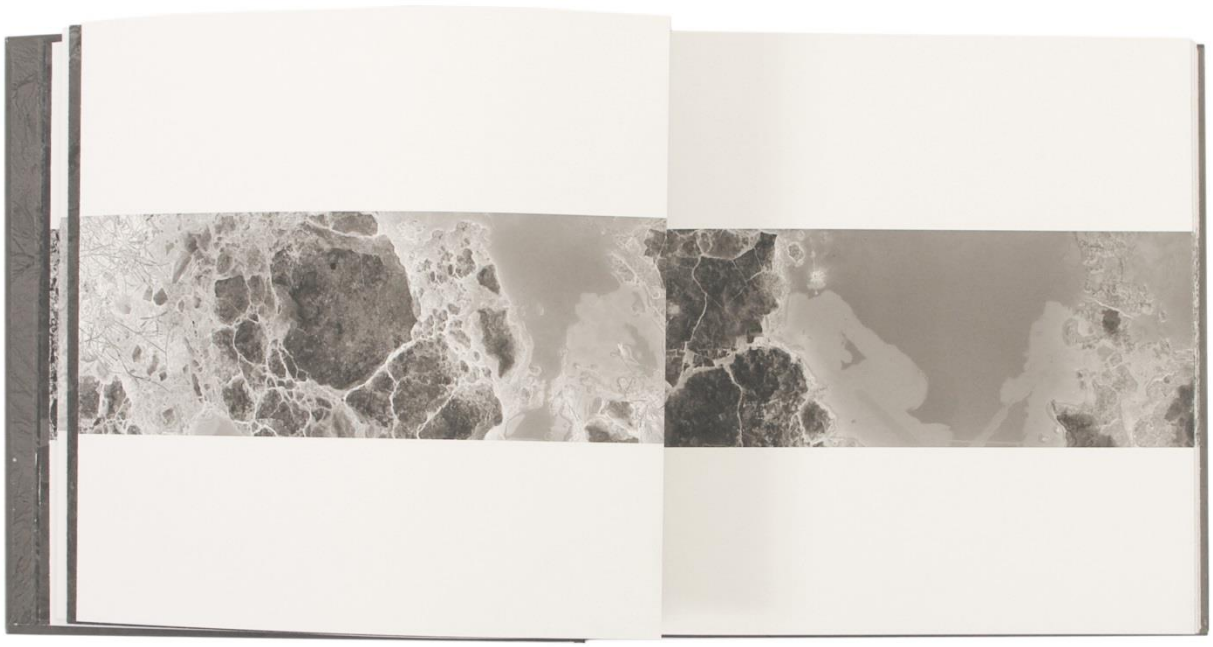

Fig. 2. *Fourteen Stations*, Book Two, chapter 2, pp. 3-4

Fig. 3. *Fourteen Stations*, Book Two, chapter 14, pp. 5-8

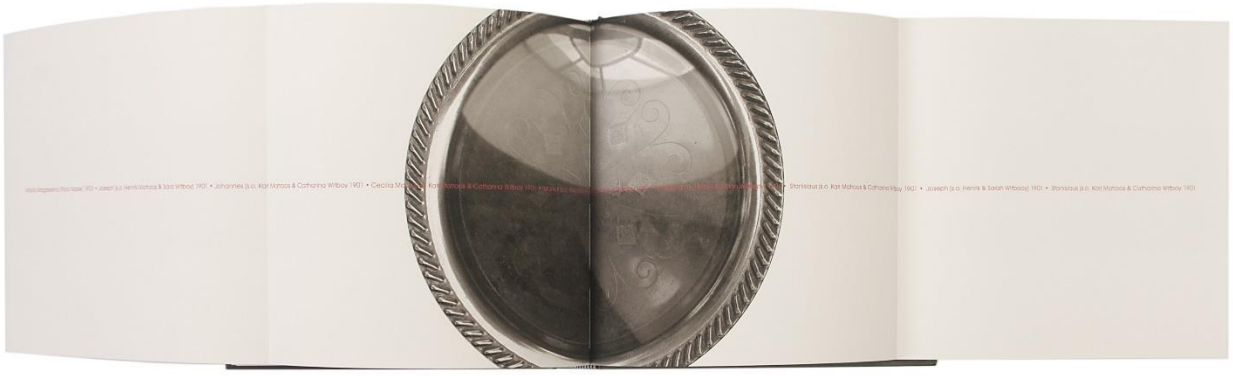

Fig. 4. *Fourteen Stations*, Book Two, chapter 13, pp. 13-16

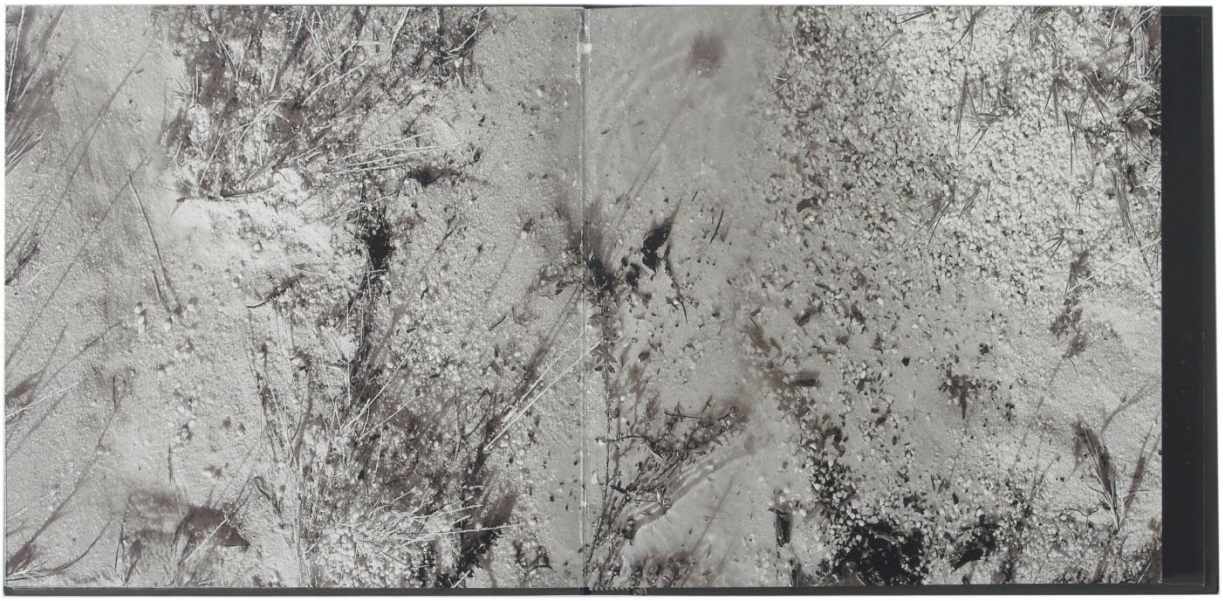

Fig. 5. *Fourteen Stations*, Book Three, detail

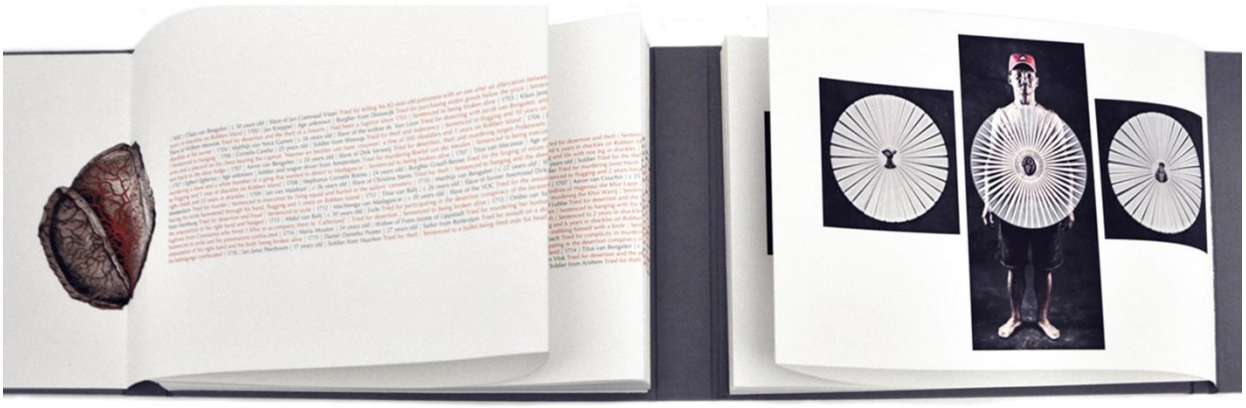

Fig. 6. *Fragile Histories*, volumes 1 and 2

Fig. 7. *Fragile Histories*, volume 1, detail

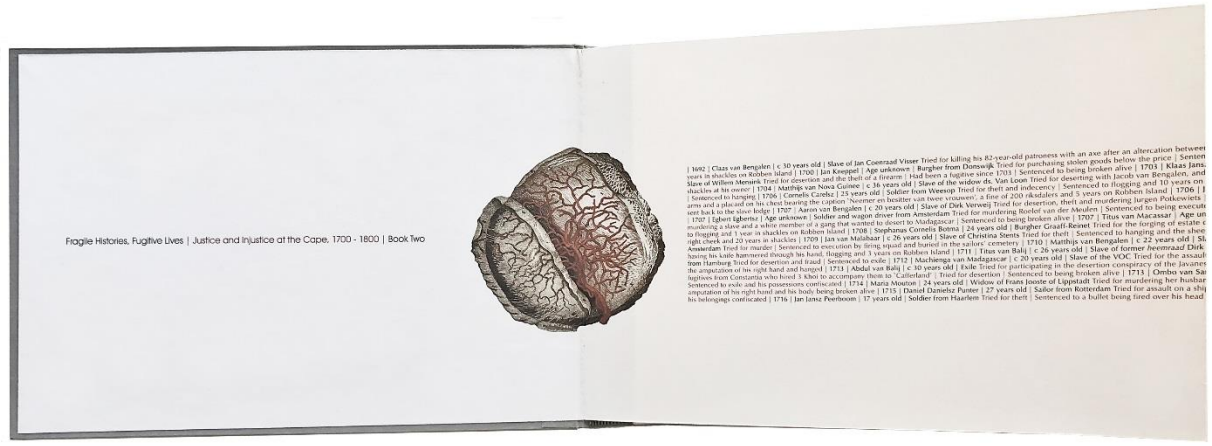

Fig. 8. *Fragile Histories*, volume 1, detail

Fig. 9. Exhibition installation, *Fragile Histories*, Lizamore & Associates, Johannesburg

Fig. 10. *Between the Folds*, volume 1, detail

Fig. 11. *Between the Folds*, volume 1, detail

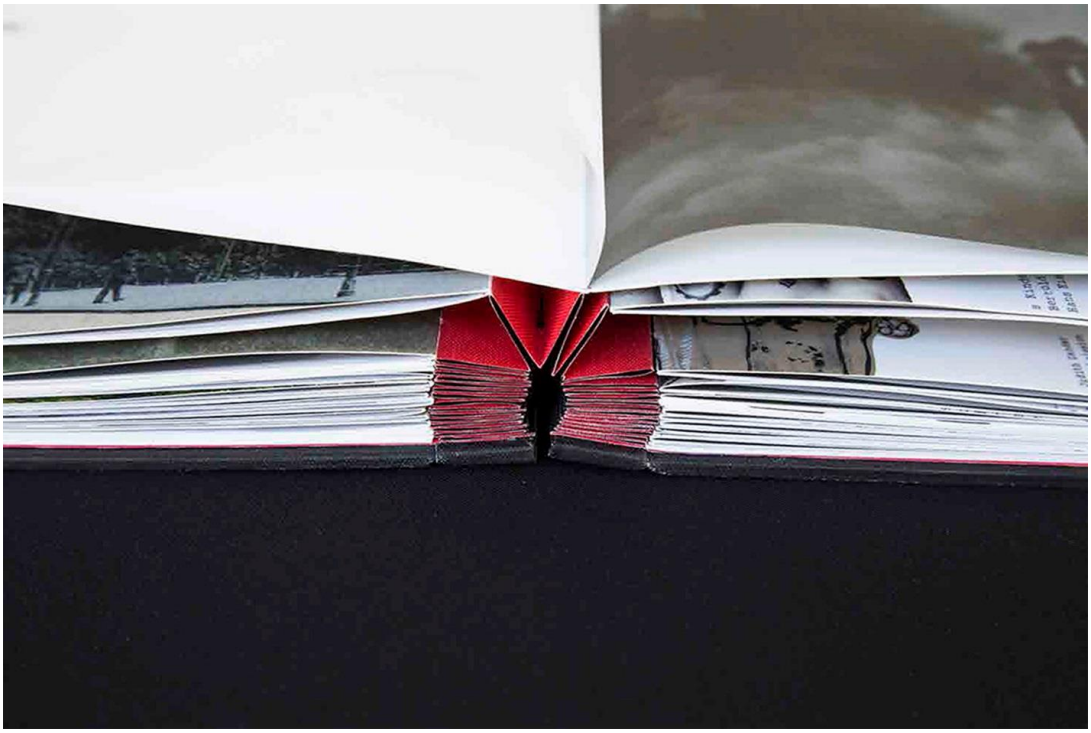

Fig. 12. *Between the Folds*, volume 1, detail

Exploring the Manifestations of Synaesthesia in the Artist's Books Reading Colour and Throwing Stones: Paradoxical Freedoms

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For as long as I can remember I have been playing this 'game' with my family…I would ask what colour is the letter O, I think its white says my mom, my brother and I agree. My Dad looks a bit confused, but chooses a random colour, we think he's a bit strange. Then I say what about the letter R? My mom and I would agree on a forest green, while my brother would say for him it's definitely maroon. My Dad wouldn't know.

In 2008, in my third year of studying Fine Art at the University of Pretoria, I pitched an idea to my lecturer, involving colour theory. My lecturer asked me a very important question that day: "Why the fascination with colour?" So I told that for me letters, numbers and days of the week all have a certain specific colour associated with them. I'd read in a newspaper that there was a name for this but couldn't remember it. The lecturer said, find out what it is and we'll work from there.

That afternoon I came across the term synaesthesia, specifically grapheme synaesthesia. A 'condition' in which one sense automatically and instantaneously triggers another. A year later I used my grapheme synaesthesia as the theme of my artwork and dissertation in my final year of study. The result was *Reading Colour*.

I started by creating my personal alphabet of colour in Photoshop. Then using my coloured alphabet I translated Salman Rushdie's Haroun and the Sea of Stories letter by letter, into coloured blocks. Each page from my copy of 'Haroun' was individually scanned into the computer. Doing this created an interesting effect, firstly it allowed the paper to look old and discoloured, similar to old parchment. Secondly the writing on the other side of the page would shine through slightly, leaving a mirrored 'stamp' of the original text. It's printed on Gesso paper which has a lovely texture, I wanted the texture of the paper to match the aged look of the pages.

The decision to use Rushdie's 'Haroun' was significant. Not only was it my first proper English book I ever read, but its layering of meanings as well as the use of imagery and descriptions using colour also came into play; "Rashid had often told Haroun about the beauty of the road from the Town of G to the Valley of K… a vista of the Valley of K with its golden fields and silver mountains and with the Dull Lake at its heart". (Rushdie 1990:34) Debatably the most important theme in 'Haroun and the Sea of Stories' is the theme of freedom of speech. This theme contributes to my work in that my work hopes to broaden the idea of freedom of expression and the basics of communication.

I interlinked some of the pages from the novel with protest songs from different times and places addressing various different issues. In doing so I present the viewer with the key. Each protest song contains a word which is found in the book. This word is then masked with colour, however the letters still shine through. By finding the correct colour pattern in the coloured book/text, the viewer is able to unlock those colour letters. I use 12 protest songs. Twelve is significant because there are 12 chapters in the book. This means that there are 12 different words to find. Only five letters of the alphabet are missing, but by using all the others that the viewer is given, one can translate the entire text/book back into words.

The book sits on a pulpit, with the pulpit directed towards the A2 pages and their accompanying protest songs, as if they are the audience. The room is dark, there is a spotlight on the book and spotlights on each of the pages on the wall. The idea being that someone is about to do a reading from the book, except they can't since the letters are masked by little coloured blocks. This places the 'would be speaker' in the position of having his/her freedom of speech or expression taken away. Thus allowing the speaker to feel, what I am trying to portray conceptually through the artwork. The only way for the speaker to read the book, is to first engage with the pages and the protest songs, in order to find the key and unlock the meaning of the work.

The response to *Reading Colour*, has been astounding. The work not only won me the coveted ABSA l'Atelier Art Award in 2010, but is included in the permanent collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art as well as Jack Ginsberg's collection and will be part of the Ginsberg exhibition on Saturday.

In order to better explain what synaesthesia is and how it works, I will make use of the Bouba and Kiki test.

The slide depicts the shapes used in the ‘bouba kiki’ experiment. This experiment asks people when presented with these shapes, “In Martian language, one of these two figures is a “bouba” and the other a “kiki”, try to guess which is which, 95% of people pick the left as kiki and the right as bouba, even though they have never seen these stimuli before.” This shows that the human mind is capable of forming seemingly arbitrary connections similar to the links used in metaphors. Synaesthesia it appears works along the same principles. Due to my grapheme synaesthesia I not only associate the word kiki with the sharp shape and bouba with the round shape, but for me bouba is a sky blue colour whilst kiki is a bright orangey yellow.

The terms phenomenology and embodiment as defined by French phenomenological philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), focus on the influences of the ‘outside’ or visible world on our senses and, in turn, influence our perception of the world. David Smith (2013) quoting Merleau-Ponty explains that; “In short, consciousness is embodied (in the world), and equally, body is infused with consciousness (with cognition of the world).”

The way in which people perceive the world is instantaneous: when someone or something touches the skin of an individual, they feel it immediately. Reflexes such as breathing or blinking are often performed without conscious thought with all of these actions occurring constantly; this is the lived, embodied experience. Synaesthetes are able to move beyond this by automatically linking one or more of the senses, creating ‘cross-wiring’ in the brain.

This image indicates a test done on synaesthetes to establish whether a synaesthete experiences a pop-out sensation when confronted with black and white numbers. A certain type of synaesthete would see the numbers in colour and is therefore able to clearly see the triangle of two’s because it is a different colour than the five’s. This test is used to determine whether synaesthesia is cognitive based or sensory based. The results prove that synaesthetes actually see in colour and that it is not a memory. The best metaphor to describe this is to explain that when a person is shown a picture of fire the person immediately thinks of a fire as hot, but cannot feel the heat. A synaesthete however is different as, still using the metaphor of fire; the synaesthete would be able to feel the heat.

Synaesthetic engagement with the world is constant, doesn't change over time, and is embodied. An A for me is always, red, it never changes, it doesn't depend on pronunciation and it doesn't matter how it's written. An A is simply, in my mind, categorised as red.

Where synaesthesia differs from the phenomenological and embodied experiences of non-synaesthetes, is that non-synaesthetes do not experience the same connections between the senses. For example, to non-synaesthetes, an A is just an A. Synaesthesia becomes even more complicated if one considers that each synaesthete not only has their own type of synaesthesia, such as grapheme or colour-hearing, but that each synaesthete has their own personal associations within each type of synaesthesia. My A is red, but that doesn't mean that all grapheme synaesthetes experience an A as red. Some might categorise the A as mauve or white.

Synaesthetes, by describing their associations and creating artworks of their specific synaesthesia, are arguably trying to make the invisible visible. According to Jonathan Cole in Richard Cytowic's *Synaesthesia: A Union of the Senses* (2002:xii), an explanation from synaesthetes is crucial, stating: "In such a condition, which is internal, symptomatic, and without external sign, the narratives of individuals are hugely important." Artists who have previously worked with the 'idea' of synaesthesia include Wassily Kandinsky, Mark Rothko, Edvard Munch and Piet Mondrian to name a few.

Melissa McCracken employs her coloured-hearing synaesthesia to translate music, mostly rock and pop songs, into oil or acrylic paintings on canvas. As an access point to the world of the synaesthetic artist, McCracken's literal translation of her embodied synaesthetic experience forms an ideal entry point for those unfamiliar with the process of artmaking for the synaesthetic artist.

Adrienne D. Chaplin (2005) argues that "[a]rt is not merely a symptom of human need, but a symbolic articulation of our embodied experience and understanding of the world." If we take what Chaplin claims to be true, then it is only natural that the synaesthetic experience induces the need to create art, in order to explain the synaesthete's perception of the world.

McCracken (2016) explains that she started to paint the music she *sees* because she wished to better be able to explain her experiences of synaesthesia to the world. She feels that through

painting the shapes and colours of the music she heard, she could illustrate what she sees/feels rather than trying to explain it in words.

Ian McDonald (1997:ix) writes: “An outstanding feature of synaesthesia is its pervasiveness in the mental life of those who have it. Equally characteristic is the synaesthete’s lack of curiosity about such a familiar integral part of experience until some event draws attention to its exceptional nature.” For McCracken, this realisation came when she was 15 years old.

She explains (McCracken 2016): “... until I was 15, I thought everyone constantly saw colors. Colors in books, colors in math formulas, colors at concerts. But when I finally asked my brother which color the letter C was (canary yellow, by the way) I realized my mind wasn’t quite as normal as I had thought.” This is a typical experience of the synaesthete’s life. Synaesthetes like McCracken and I always believed that what we experience and perceive is the same as everyone else’s experience.

When McCracken listens to music she sees coloured landscapes forming in her mind and whilst listening to the music, she paints what she perceives to be real. She (2016) explains that when she was younger her brother would play her songs in his room. Whilst listening to these songs, she would see colours and shapes forming around her, to such an extent that looking back at those memories, she can’t see her brother, but only the coloured symphonies. When she realised that what she experiences when listening to music isn’t normal she started to paint her favourite songs in the form of landscape equivalents, in order for others to better understand what she experiences.

An example of one of McCracken’s synaesthetic landscape paintings is *Imagine*, painted while listening to John Lennon’s song by the same name. For a viewer to engage meaningfully with McCracken’s *Imagine* they must place themselves in the mind of a synaesthetic artist. The work either makes sense to the viewer or it doesn’t.

In order for McCracken to create her artworks, she must first listen to the music of the song. The notes, the instruments and melody trigger the forms and colours she perceives. McCracken explains (McCracken 2016) that when she imagines her mind as a blank space, she imagines it as “a sort of navy blue,” which forms the base colour on her canvas. On top of this colour she will then start to layer the rest of the song.

For McCracken, the most beautiful and crucial part of *Imagine* is the piano chords, which she represents by layering different colours in a dripping effect on the right hand side of the painting. The melody of the piano flows from the right hand side of the painting in layers of textured colours, seemingly moving further and further away, into a different imagined world. She explains that for her, the song with its melody and words has an "ethereal and heavenly quality about it", which is where the billowy white top layers of paint come into play. The textured, layered colours then return to the foreground, becoming larger and darker and smoother. In the bottom left corner of the painting, the navy blue of McCracken's 'blank mind' remains visible.

My coloured-letter associations to the lyrics of *Imagine* are very similar to McCracken's coloured response to the music of the song. This explains why this particular artwork evoked a feeling of rightness in me. As an avid Lennon/Beatles listener, I would have felt a sense of wrongness and discomfort, if the artwork of *Imagine* had not correlated with my ideas/ideals of how the song ought to be portrayed.

My latest artist's book entitled, Throwing Stones: Paradoxical Freedoms deals with different types of freedoms. How my freedom and your freedom aren't necessarily the same. The book comprises 13 pages and is A5 in size. The first page is a quote from Salman Rushdie's Imaginary Homelands, which perfectly sums up the concept of the work.
It states that:

Redescribing a world is the necessary first step towards changing it. And particularly at times when the State takes reality into its own hands, and sets about distorting it, altering the past to fit its present needs, then the making of the alternative realities of art, including the novel of memory, becomes politicized. 'The struggle of man against power,' Milan Kundera has written, 'is the struggle of memory against forgetting.' And the novel is one way of denying the official, politicians' version of truth. (1991:14)

The rest of the book juxtaposes 'heroes' and 'villains' of history and the speeches they made. An example of this is Winston Churchill and Adolf Hitler. For Churchill I chose his speech 'We will never surrender' made in 1940 for Hitler I chose his 'my patience is now at an end' speech made in 1938.

Both speeches deal with freedom and in both I have taken a quote from the speech and highlighted it by masking it with my synaesthetic alphabet. At the back of each speech, is a collage made from photos of current as well as historic events that relate to the quote and the speechmaker. On each of these collages is written a lyric from a song. For Churchill it's Hey Bulldog, by the Beatles. For Hitler its Lazy Sunday Afternoon, by the Small Faces, specifically the lyric, "Wouldn't it be nice to get on with me neighbours?"

Churchill's collage features images of Brexit and the original poster of The Great Escape, whilst the lyric reads, "you don't know what it's like to listen to your fears." When you 'read' this image and lyric in conjunction with the quote, which is about standing together and never surrendering, the message of the artwork comes to the fore. And the irony and paradox of freedoms come into play.

In Richard Cytowic's The Man Who Tasted Shapes, he gives this is definition of a paradox: something thing apparently inconsistent with itself or with reason, though in fact true. Cytowic explains that, he "loved these odd facts, particularly those that contradicted long-held dogmas based on no higher authority than common sense, or what 'everybody knows.'" He took as his motto "that of the Royal Society, Nullius in Verba, best translated as 'take nobody's word for it; see for yourself.'"

Throwing Stones is not only a play on the saying that people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. It is also a reference to the rock band The Rolling Stones. After all rock and roll is symbolic of freedom. As Patti Smith says, "I've embraced rock 'n' roll because it encompasses all the things I'm interested in: poetry, revolution, sexuality, political activism – all of these things can be found in rock 'n' roll. Rock 'n' Roll belongs to the people." Patti Smith (2011)

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Between the Covers

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There is something rather distinctive about the conjunction of the careers of Jack Ginsburg and William Kentridge, two residents of the *Second Greatest City After Paris*. One is a prodigious collector of artist's books and the other a prodigious producer of them.

Ginsburg has pursued his interest in books of exquisite artistry with a diligence that is almost a kind of professional deformation: he is after all, a career accountant, one accustomed to assessing books, with red and the black pen, judging the debit and credit ratios of the economic world. By way of complementing this idea, I would point out that *balancing of the books* provides a substantial intellectual and formal substance to Kentridge's work.

I am going to turn for help in exploring this material, to a line from Hamlet. It may seem an oblique reference, but it provides a way into a complex nexus of ideas. Hamlet, for all its engagement with real politic, questions of statecraft, legitimacy and power, has come down through the tradition as a work about the Family Romance: the complex formation of the self in relation to its primary others.

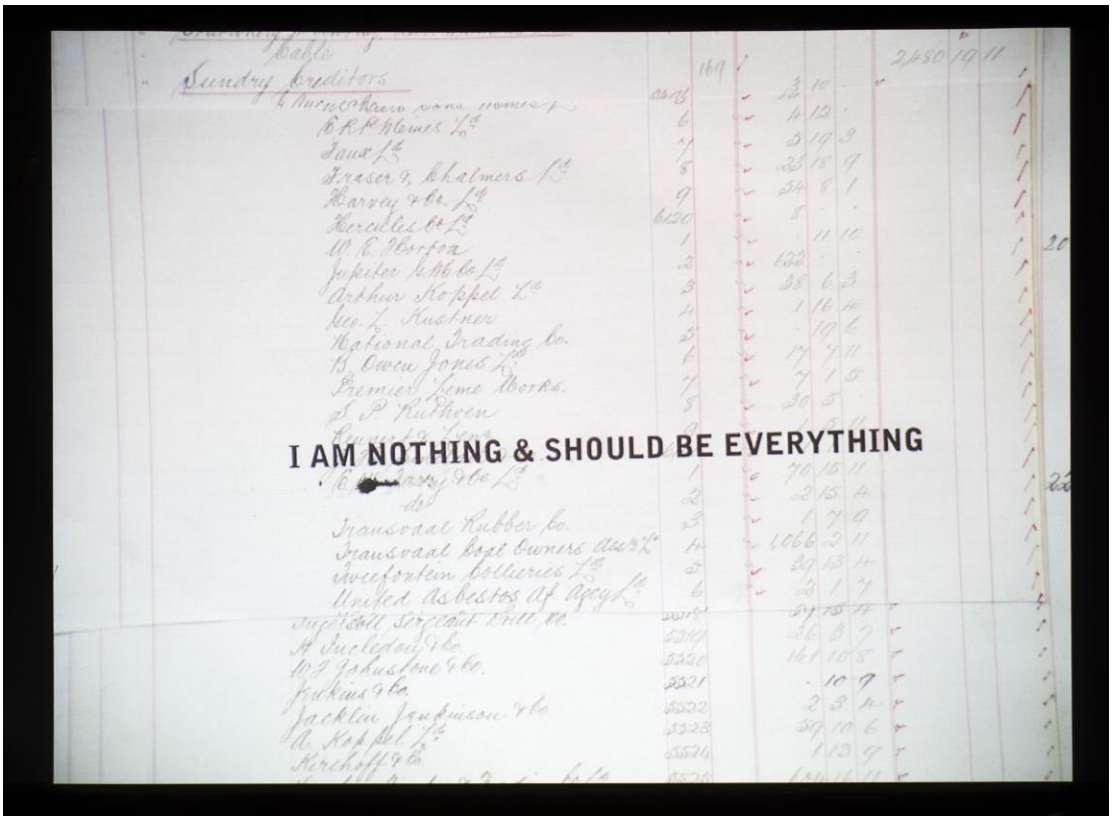
Prince Hamlet, looking at Claudius, his uncle, who has taken King Hamlet's place in Queen Gertrude's bed, comments sardonically, as he tries to assay his uncle's guilt:

"How his audit stands who knows save heaven." (act III sc iii)

I would be hard pressed to identify the 'first' of the auditing experiments in Kentridge's work. One will always be able to locate a 'prior' instance because the exploration of the debit and credit ratios of the human soul in his work arises from a strong psychological formation.

This perhaps originates in some significant part from his life inside the juridical household of his parents Sydney and Felicia Kentridge[1]. By way of illustration, let me tell an anecdote. William spoke recently of a characteristic encounter with his father: on William informing Kentridge *pere* that he had been invited to give the Norton lectures at Harvard several years ago, Sydney Kentridge observed, yes, that was a very nice honour, but had then asked William if he had anything to say. William uses the story to indicate his perpetual awareness that he had spent his life in the dock, having to 'give an account of himself.'

Here, an image from "Other Faces" uses that sheet of the Ledger in making an assessment of the self. The utterance comes from an upbraiding self, judgmental of the self though of course we understand that such a voice is recursive, and arises from the matrix that is a self-other bundle.



Let me return to the notional book, as we now think of it. It is what would formally be designated a 'codex' – composed of a double page spread, constructed of sheets of paper, vellum, papyrus or similar material. It is apparently Roman in origin, and its massive rise in popularity and

[1] Sir Sydney Kentridge QC was during his professional lifetime, a formidable human rights lawyer; Felicia was a significant lawyer and established the legal aid clinic in Johnnesburg.

familiarity is associated with the spread of Christianity. There has been some suggestion, from Protestant interpreters, that the codex is intimately bound up with the conception of a personal god, who speaks to individual needs through the book. At any moment of spiritual or psychological crisis, a believer might ask to 'hear god's voice' and the answer would arise as a motivational text or injunction, through a random parsing of pages. Open the book, anywhere by chance, and there is the message, as it were, direct from god. The codex facilitates such modes of reading, while the scroll always reveals a more deliberated selection, as the hand has to scroll across text in order to arrive at its place.

'These are matters of interpretive speculation'.

Of course artists embrace the norms and constraints of conventional form and push them to the limits. Inge Bruggeman, in her paper, introduced us to an almost impossibly horizontal book, the rather extraordinary "No-one wants to play the victim no one when there is a gun involved and blue" by Laura Wetherington. In the exhibition associated with this conference, Kentridge's "Portage" exhibited in the UJ Gallery as a part of Ginsburg's collection, similarly is an accordion book of substantial length, with figures across its length suggesting an infinite skein of human figures on the move, transporting their possessions, their livelihoods on their heads. We are journeymen, all of us.

These examples hint, merely, at some of the variations in form. Jack Ginsburg in his public comments, mentioned a recent pair of artist's books: a meditation on *Gulliver* that was based on a pair of volumes, an enormous one that was required to balance on the bookshelf alongside a diminutive volume: the pair suggestive of Swift's fantastical islands of Lilliput and Brobdignag.

Such instances notwithstanding, I am, in this paper, considering the idioms in Kentridge's recent book making which have taken much of their meaning from the form of the double page spread associated with the accounting ledger.

When I initially considered the substance of this talk, my title *Between the Covers* was led in ways by the erotics of Kentridge's printmaking; here I was prompted by a rather marvelous short poem of his in the book *Nose,* published by David Krut. And here William takes his place alongside his sister, who read us her charmed piece about the culture of the kitchen. William's poem is about the ethos of the printing press:

“Preparing the Bed”:
The hard ground
The clean sheet.

The dry point
The spit bite
The foul bite
The hand wipe

The stained blanket
The fingerprint in the margin.

(from William Kentridge *The Nose)*

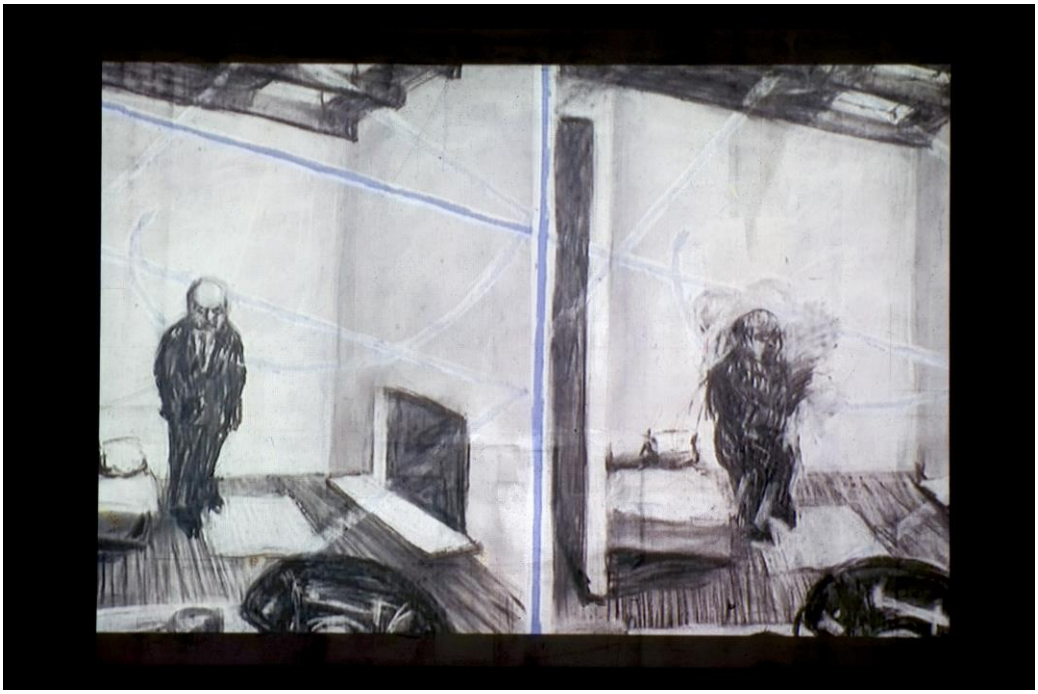
I had originally imagined engaging with these textures of the book artist as sensualist, and have in fact written about these thoughts in my study of *The Nose.* As I began to consider the substantial body of work, another set of questions, allied to this, pressed themselves upon me. I am in part going to engage with the complex of the Family Romance, the stuff of *Hamlet,* that work that opened my considerations about Jack Ginsberg, and the audit of the self.

The formal properties of the codex book provide a way into my exploration. The book form opens into what is usually a horizontal, even when the book shape is itself portrait. This is an effect of the doubling up of the open pages.

Kentridge has over the past decade frequently made something of a virtue of this necessity, often willfully imposing on even his single images, the double page format, resulting in a doubling, a balancing act, a split frame.

This kind of experimental calibration began in a procedural way some twenty years ago, most explicitly in the film “Stereoscope.” These split frames imply that any self is fundamentally multiple, relational. The two frames can be read as temporally distinct – two different moments: or two slightly modulated points of view. In either case, I think we understand that a key idea is that we none of us, is quite self identical.

I have used the term “Self” above, even while aware that such a formulation is multiple in its meanings – and here is the language game. Any idea of the Self is only a postulate; another self may be waiting to emerge; or in fact be living its independent life, biding its timewhile preparing to impose itself and take over one’s life.



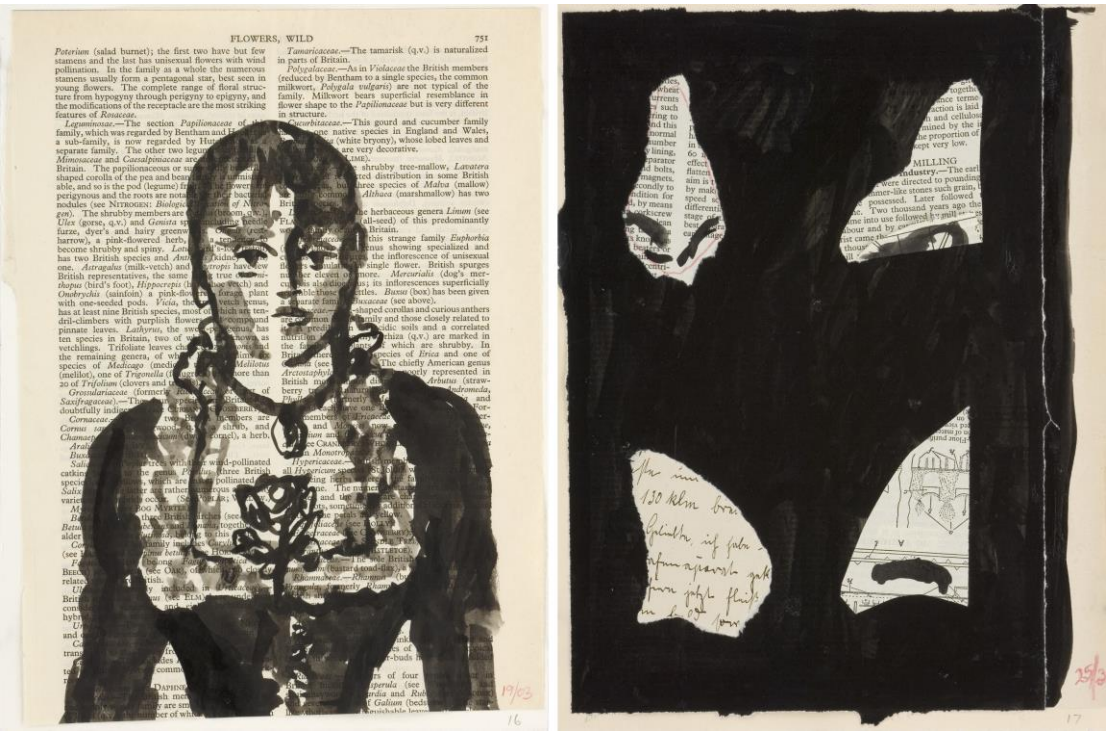
Kentridge evolved a large-format viewing device through which to investigate large scale stereoscopic constructions.

And here he is with his double rhinoceros, originally conceived to be viewed through that stereoscopic platform. The images here are reconceived as a meditation on the book form: a stereoscopic vision of a vast ‘double elephant folio’ such as was associated with the great works of natural history, such as Audobon’s *Birds of America*.

The device of the double as a split self is evident in many of the works that arise from Kentridge's process while he was making his production of the opera, *The Nose*, and this formal trick is integral to Kentridge's conception. (*The Nose* is a work by composer Shostakovich, based on a short story by Nikolai Gogol:

A State official wakes to find that his Nose – the upstart! – has left his face, and gone off to live an independent life without him. Worse yet, the Nose is now wearing his medals, and seducing his girlfriends. Gogol rather marvelously notes that while such things are not unheard of, they don't happen often nowadays! He obviously hadn't lived in the twenty-first century.)

The images for the production of *The Nose* give rise to several artist's books; one of which is ***Everyone Their Own Projector*** (classified in Jack Ginsburg's taxonomy amongst the "Luxury and Limited Editions"). The recto and verso pages are at times in a directly dialogical or contrapuntal relation; at times the relationship seems random. In his public talk with Ginsburg, Kentridge mentioned 'controlled randomness"



Above is one of these curious pairings of images that seem to be based on random associations, but which prompt the reader/viewer to active interpretation. Kentridge has learned to trust the process of juxtapositions almost wholly, as the apparently unmotivated associations between images generate complex meanings: here begins his ongoing considerations about the processes of ‘seeing in’, an activity that characterizes the viewing process for him.

The conjunctions arise from a place not explicitly named his unconscious, but certainly somewhere in that region of mental activity. Though Kentridge does not subscribe, as it were, to any narrow Freudian orthodoxies, his work is densely allusive to the ways in which persons can both know and not know at the same time, and he has invoked “Traumarbeit” – Dream work - explicitly in his work. Here he places himself within the Dadaist tradition: invoking chance as authority in such works as “Dancing with Dada” – a piece made in collaboration with the South African dancer happily named Dada Masilo. Kentridge is, as he reminds us in another title, “Learning from the Absurd”.

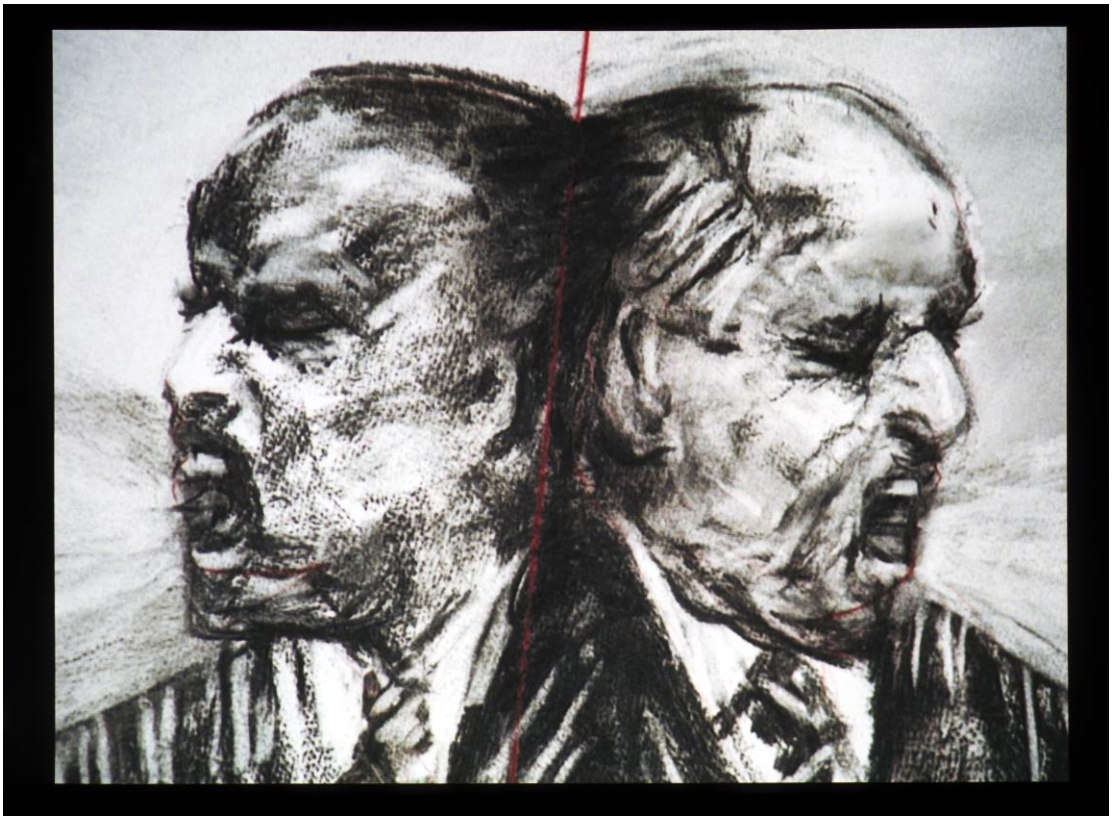
The book form in some ways implies that the single sheet or page is not ‘complete’ in itself, but captive, in a way, to a meaning that will be generated across and between images. This is the structural form of Kentridge’s films, and he is constantly remodeling an image into its sequel

through supplement and erasure. His flip books demonstrate something of his sense of the continuity between these art forms, with a running man stitched across text, twirling in a dervish's dance against time and stillness. Kentridge's career is made up of several experiments in such serial forms, in which the single frame is constantly transmogrifying into an image close by it, in terms of visual information. The book gives an illusory stillness to such haste, but we know from our habits o reading, that each set of pages is driving us on to view the next. The book fills us with appetites.

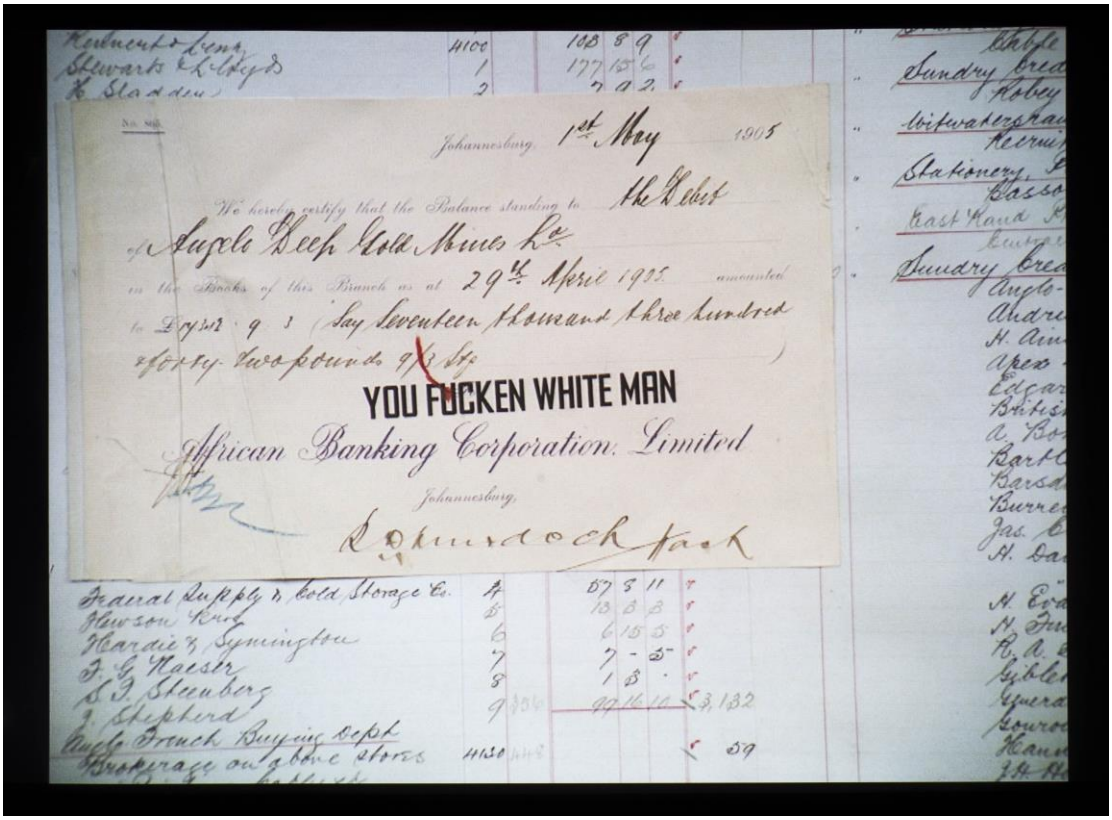
The final image of the "Everyone Their Own Projector" book is rather enigmatic. One way to think of it is to consider that it is a single last page page, a solo verso that turns its back to the inside of the back cover: it is not the double page spread of the rest of the book. Here then is the image that is the last figure in the book:

It is as if two pages have been superimposed on one another, giving rise to a conglomerate figure that is both Kovylov, the bureaucrat and his upstart nose.

The Kentridge horizontal pairings seem in some ways to be about the self and its other – at times a rivalrous doppleganger stares across the spine of the book at the other with whom one is mortally entangled.



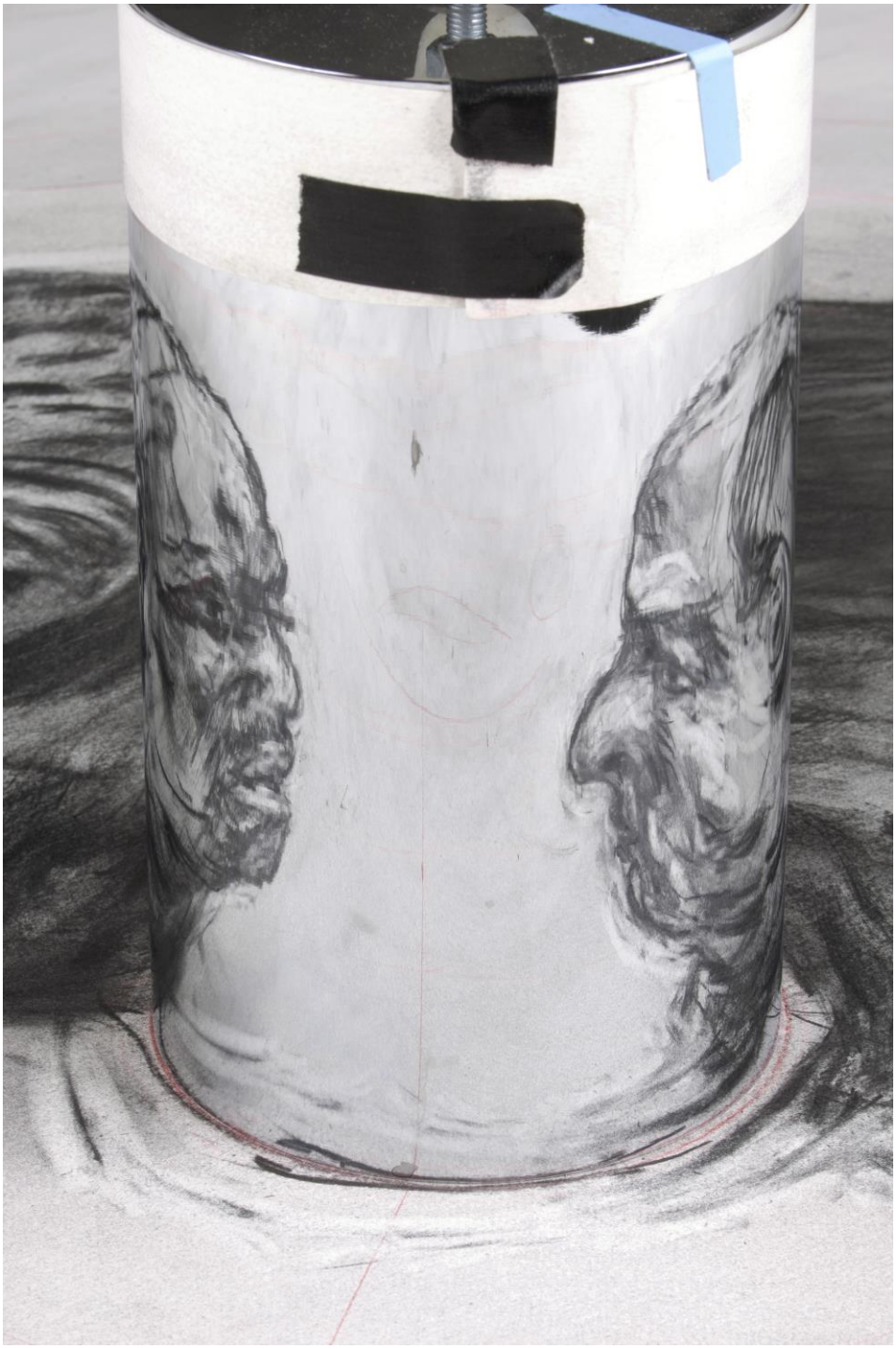
The image gives way to text that articulates the psychic terrain of the colonial conflict, in its racialized vehemence.



Strikingly, the paper upon which Kentridge has worked the image is from a mining accounts book, with a cheque drawn out of the account of the African Banking Corporation.

This framing makes explicit the exemplary image of indebtedness; and the econometrics of wage labour under racial settler capitalism are shown to have resulted in catastrophic erosion of persons and property.

Here is an image in a closely related visual language: It is a doubling that had arisen in the Film, “What Will Come” – a film about the Italian bombardment of Abyssinia, it is a poignant image of two men, gazing at one another.



The actual drawings are just slurries of marks, charcoal scratchings. When shown on the cylinder, they are suddenly thrown into a kind of coherence, as if such raced identities are a matter of perspective only, habits of viewing. As the image is held up to the polished tube, the scratches resolve themselves into ethnic types: the Jew and the African.

There are any number of things to say about what Kentridge other arts have learned from the doubled format of the book.

Here is a sphinx from Kentridge's big exhibition at the Louvre:

This is a view of the Museum space: it is an image of the exhibition, and it is pleasing because of what it suggests about the place of the book in Kentridge's larger creative and intellectual life.

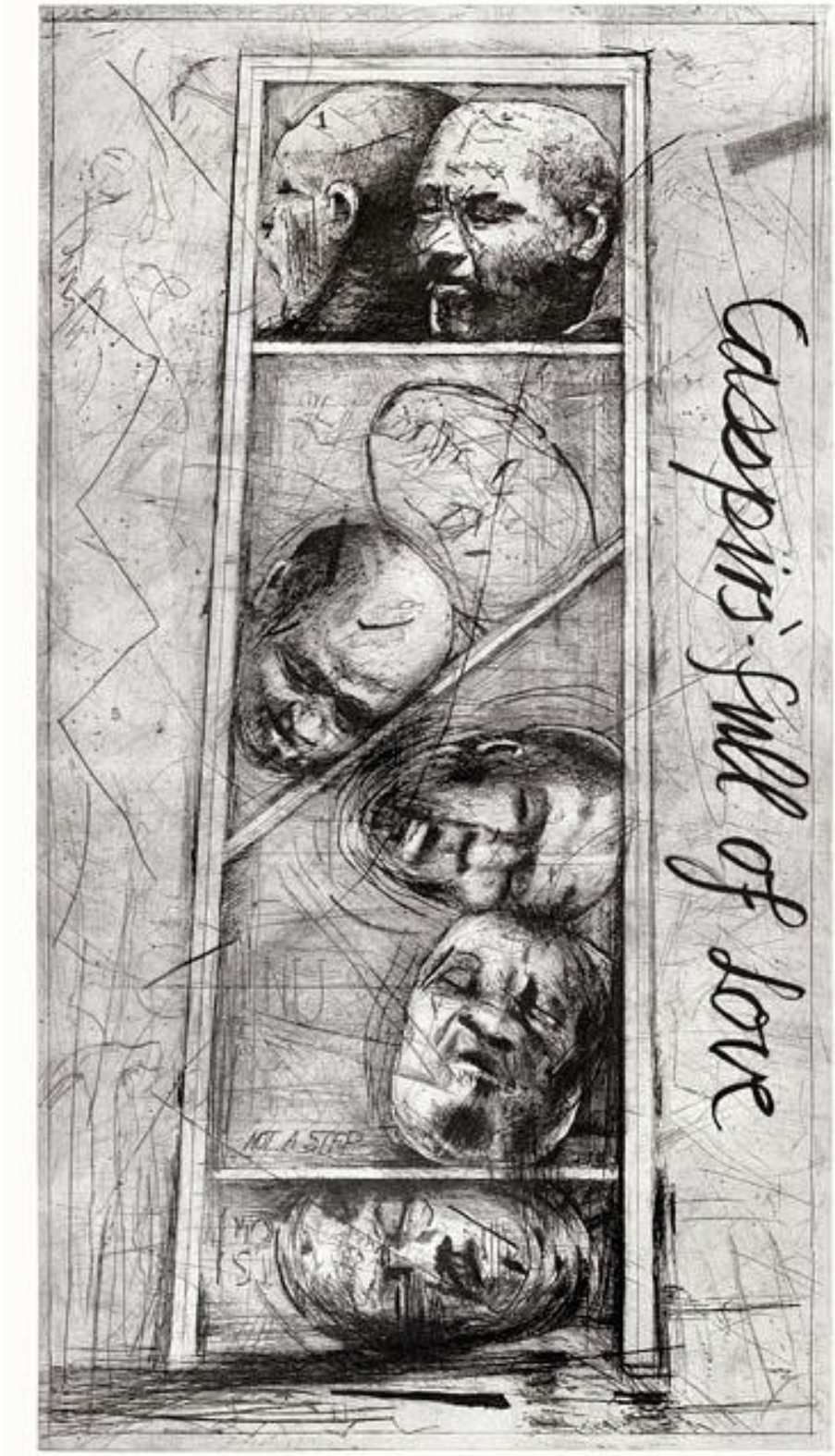
We see here a range of arts, and it is worth noting that the books are positioned in the middle of the space. This is an artist who thinks about the book at the centre of his enquiry. However, the book is here one among a series of languages. An image that I would like to mention in particular, is the drawing of the Sphinx on the far wall. The sphinx is not so much a book image, here, as it is rendered as bookends – with the two halves of the drawing separated from one another, used to 'frame' the works positioned inside its head and its tail. That allusion of mine to the bookends might remind us that the sphinx itself is associated with the idea of beginnings and ends. The riddle that is posed to Oedipus by the sphinx is 'who first goes on 4 legs, then 2 legs, then 3 legs?' and the answer is "Man."

So here again we return to Oedipus; who for Freud provides the exemplary figure of the psychic triangle of mother/father/son. Freud can be forgiven some of the prejudices of his own time, because he is trying to image how one reads the unconscious. The interpretations should perhaps be distinguished from the method. And so, them we are back with Hamlet, a figure locked into a family romance that defines him.

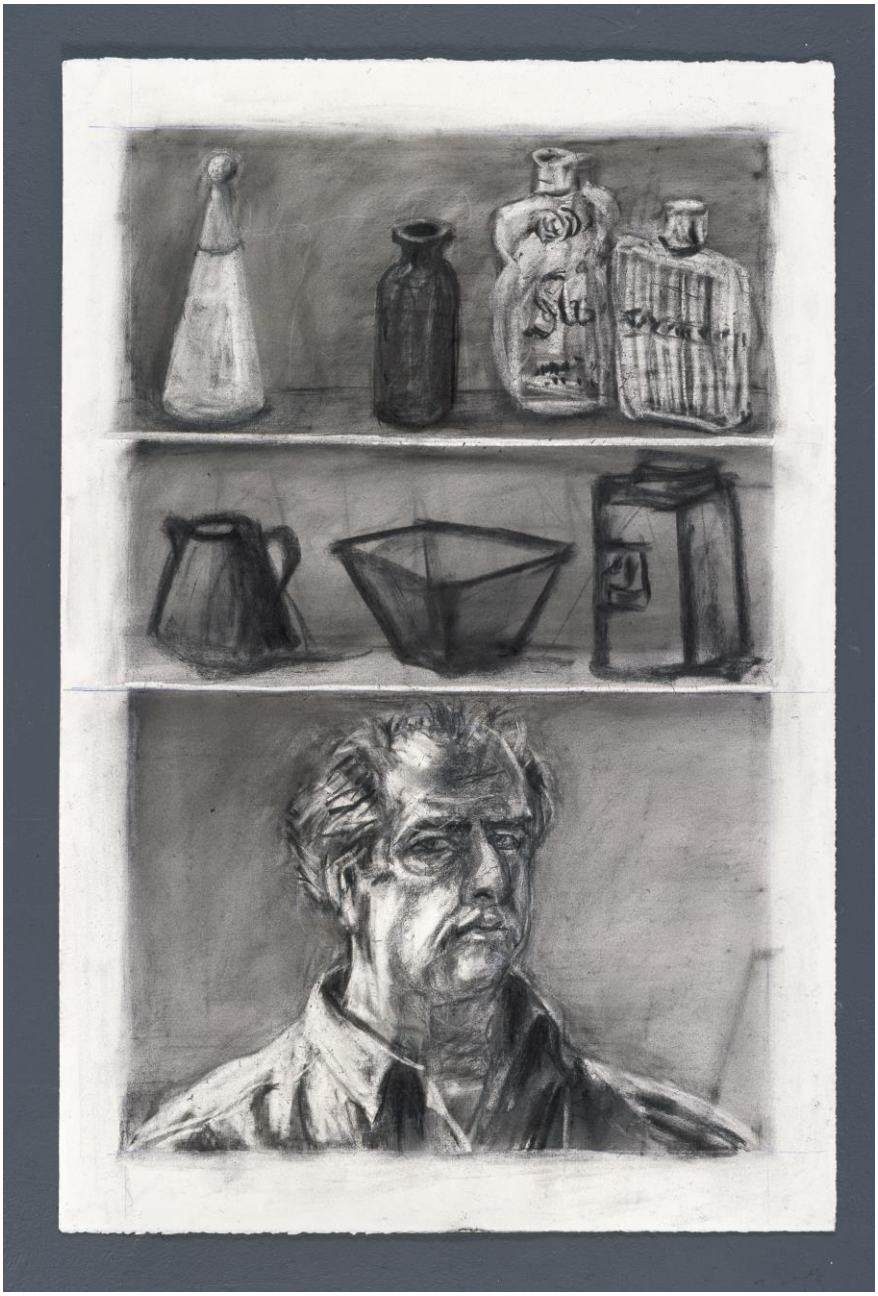
Let me turn, briefly, from the horizontal form of the book, with its exemplary motif of the two combative men bellowing at one another.

Kentridge has explored the meanings around the vertical form, most notably in the film *Mine,* which explored both the literal and the metaphoric terrain underground. Soho Eckstein, mining magnet, is a troubled figure incapable of depth, even though his empire is constructed via the drill into the gold seams of the earth.

The early etching *Casspirs Full of Love* had explored verticality to great effect.

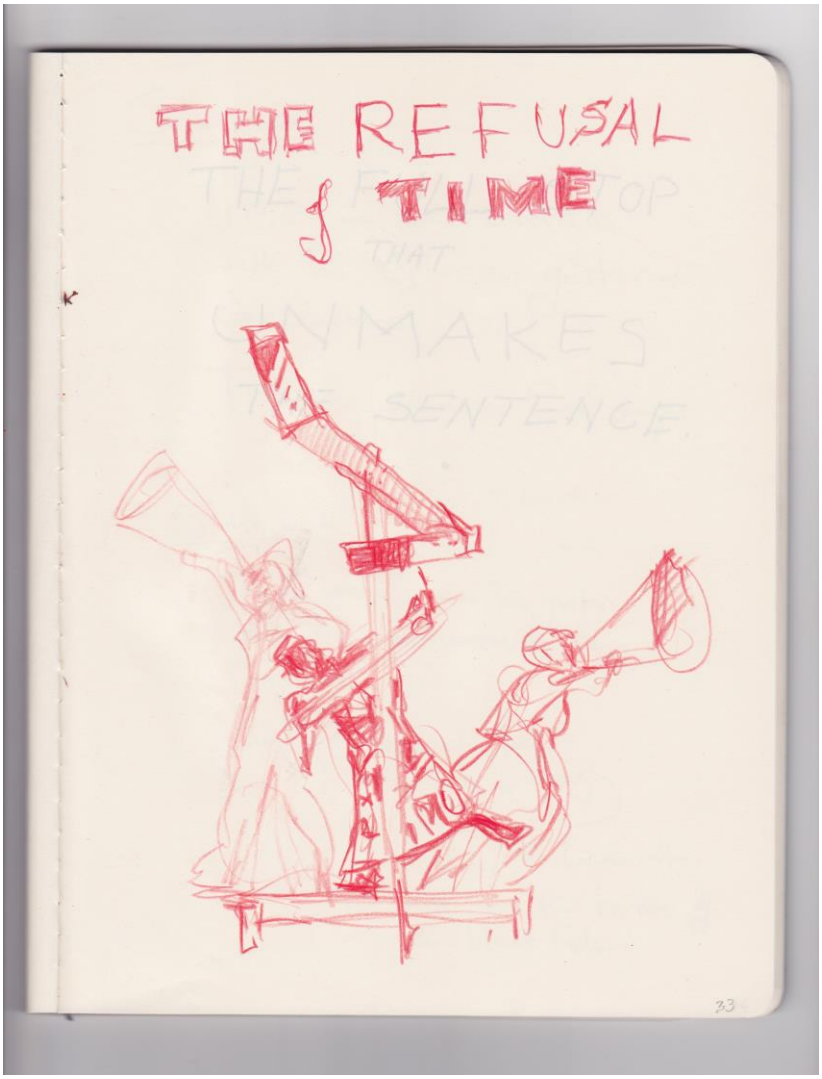

1
Cappin' full of love

Another film that explores verticality is *Medicine Chest* in which multiple lives are distributed across upper and lower planes, with existence played out on the shelves of a small cabinet. These are selves in parallel, rather than in series. The tensions between images are not temporal – a ‘before and after; but an ‘above’ and a ‘below.



In terms of book design, this is in some ways the profile of the policeman’s notebook.

For the sake of the interest of the unusual, here are some images from an artist's book of a particular kind – Kentridge's notebooks that gave rise to the staging of *Refusal of Time*.



In the photographs of these images, the pages look at first glance as if they might be verticals, because of the subject matter; but if you consider the shape of the image, you will note that the one edge of the page has rounded corners, the other not; this sets up an asymmetry that indicates that the images are from a verso and recto set of pages of a conventional notebook, even though the images themselves are experiments in planar verticality.

There are several other very compelling vertical frames that entail a relation, not of rivalrous males, but of mother and child. The images show us a very haunting motif of a young boy inside the arc of his mother's enfolding arm;

And a similar verticality is used to figure the child in push-chair in front of a nanny, or in modern parlance, a child minder:

These scenes surrender to a complex psychological meditation, with the maternal figure as an ancient sphinx (and we think again of the Louvre exhibition) who is now herself held by the boy turned man.

These are images about the complexity of generational bonds, of Oedipus, Hamlet and the riddle of the sphinx.

The book form, has in its horizontal plain, been generative of great creative fruitfulness for Kentridge; and I am aware here of the associative clustering in that phrase, of generation and fruit, even while I am suggesting that the horizontal is frequently associated with overtones of rivalry and self-critique. The vertical frame too, somehow, becomes the structure of displacement that is itself at the same time the shape of nurture.

I am reminded that Chronos devours his own children; the parent/child dyad is a complex figure of regard and contest.

The Conceptual Artist's Book
Its Artistic Characteristics and Global Network – From South Africa to Europe and Vice Versa

Anne Thurmann-Jajes

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The following remarks will revolve around the conceptual artist's book and its characteristics. By way of illustration, I'll cite works by the South African artist William Kentridge and the German artist Peggy Buth. In part two of my talk, I'll relate these aspects to the academic teaching and research activities pursued by the Centre for Artists' Publications. Students of the University of Bremen are involved in a research project on the international artist's book, being carried out according to the principle of 'inquiry-based learning'. The project will culminate in, among other things, an exhibition and a publication.

Let me begin with a few words about the Centre for Artists' Publications. The Centre for Artists' Publications was founded in 1999 as a joint venture by the University of Bremen and the Weserburg / Museum of Modern Art to serve as an archive, research institute and museum. It boasts a distinctive and internationally unique profile with regard to its holdings, its exhibitions, its research pursuits and its numerous publications. As a national information infrastructure institution and the only special archive of its kind in Germany, it operates primarily on a national and international level.

Home to more than sixty different archives, estates, funds and collections comprising over 300,000 published artworks by more than 4,000 artists from all over the world, the centre represents one of the largest and most prominent collections of international artists' publications in Europe. These exceptionally diverse holdings encompass records, records with artistic character, and artists' publications. The art holdings alone comprise more than seventeen different art forms – among them artists' books, artists' newspapers, artists' magazines, prints, radio art, postcards, multiples and artists' films.

The intermeshing and synergy of collection, research, exhibition and mediation are what account for the special significance of this centre. The archival and collection holdings form the material

basis for the exhibitions and research projects, while also offering a unique research infrastructure to scholars from all over the world.

1. Artists' books and it's characteristics

It is only since the 1950s and '60s that we can refer to the conceptual artist's book as an art form in its own right. In this context "Artists' books are related to forms of conventional books, either through their design, format, materiality, or function. The artist's book as a whole manifests and visualizes a conceptual context, which is based upon the artistic intention of the respective artist, evincing this as an autonomous work of art. The artist's book develops—as a published, printed, and multiplied stand-alone artwork—through a process of artistic conceptualization that could not be brought to expression in this way using any other artistic form. The artist's book is not the carrier of the artistic message but rather the medium."[1]

To define the artist's book more specifically as a contemporary art form, I would like to say a few words about each of its various distinguishing features: multiplication, publication, dissemination and circulation, democratization, information and communication, networking, and performativity. To illustrate these aspects, I'll cite artists' books by William Kentridge and Peggy Buth as examples. Owing to limitations, I won't go into the individual artists' books in detail.

- Multiplication

The editions of these artworks range between just a few and several thousand copies. The low price per copy achieved through multiplication is entirely deliberate: anyone who's interested is to be able to afford an artwork. This was one of the new concepts of artistic activity emerging in the 1950s as manifestations of a vision of society in which art was non-hierarchical and democratic. William Kentridge's artist's book *Everyone Their Own Projector* (Valence, 2008) was published in an edition of 1,500, *Stop Here* (Dijon, 2016) in an edition of 275, and *Curs Practic de Gramatica Catalana* (Barcelona, 1999) and *Cyclopedia of Drawing* (Valence, 2004) in editions of 1,000 each. The last-named sold for 29 Euros 90 or 410 South African Rand.

[1] Anne Thurmann-Jajes, *Manual for Artists' Publications (MAP): Cataloging Rules, Definitions, and Descriptions,* 1st ed. (Bremen, Ljubljana, Chatou: Research Centre for Artists' Publications at the Weserburg / Museum of Modern Art; Mednarodni grafični likovni center (MGLC); CNEAI = Centre national de l'édition et l'art imprimé, 2010), p. 51.

- Publication

Publication in this context means two things: on the one hand, the process of making an artwork available to the public, and on the other hand the published artistic medium itself. The aim of publication is to address and reach as large a public as possible. It was by way of the artist's book that the historical category of the mass medium was introduced to art – not only making the mass medium an art medium, but also bringing about the 'mediatization' of art. As a published artwork, the artist's book thus meets the requirements of the media society of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The postulate of the artistic original is juxtaposed with the published artwork, and, figuratively speaking, the hierarchically oriented society with the pluralistic one. The publication of artworks and artistic contributions is an integral part of William Kentridge's artistic concept. From this point of view his oeuvre comprises four types of artist's books: artistic contributions in exhibition catalogues, the artist's book as an artistic project, artists' writings and the flip book. What is more, he takes the mediatization process to a further extreme by filming his artist's books.

- Dissemination and circulation

Artists' books cannot be conceived of independently of their technical mediality, their economy, exchange or circulation. For the most part, the organization of the production, distribution and sale of published artworks is carried out independently by the artist – in the 1960s, autonomy was declared an artistic goal. With artists' books, artists conquer the public space. They start up publishing companies and open sales establishments for their artworks, and these establishments become venues of individual artistic publicness. In the past, the publicness they initiate was also understood as a counter-publicness. William Kentridge further enhances the dissemination and availability of his artist's books by publishing films of them, and filmic contributions with excerpts from them, on YouTube. The film of *2nd Hand Reading* is the most prominent example.

- Democratization

The artist's book is a medium inherently premised on publicness, a broad base in society, and democratization – in both its constitutive structure and its constitutive content, but also in terms of its accessibility to all. Amongst others artists' books respond to societal problems, function as a form of cultural memory of our life in society and the media, and mirror that life in its diversity and complexity. This is evident in the intention behind the large editions and wide dissemination of William Kentridge's artist's books, as well as in their subjects: apartheid and the struggle for

independence, political suppression and human violence. In his artist's books, Kentridge addresses these themes in subtle manner: he executes his drawings and texts (as images) on the pages of an existing book. They thus enter into a connection with that book, which he has chosen deliberately to underpin his story. The artist's book *2nd Hand Reading* (Johannesburg, 2014), for example, is based on *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* of 1936. Within this context, democratization refers to all "activities whose goal it is to replace structures of authoritarian rule with forms of governmental control 'from below', co-determination by the members of society, cooperation, and – wherever possible – free self-determination."[2] The historian Fritz Vilmar sees the term democratization as referring not only to the goal – that is, democracy – but also (and this is an aspect relevant for the context of artists' publications) to the process of changing society's subsystems. Democratization "is both a determination of social action and the determination of the goal of such action".[3]

- Information and communication

At the same time, artists' books are also manifestations of information and communication. What is meant by information here is, on the one hand, an act of communication in the sense of informing oneself, being informed, or sharing information with others, and on the other hand the result of that act: the knowledge thus transmitted. Focuses of the artists and of their works are art as a form of information about artistic work and how society conceives of it, and communication on the basis of the exchange of works among artists. In her artist's books *Desire in Representation – Travelling through the Musée Royale* and *Oh my Kalulu* (Maastricht, 2008), Peggy Buth addresses the manner in which Belgian colonial history is depicted, and the history of the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale in Brussels, which has been undergoing a process of spatial and conceptual reorganization since 2004. At the Berlin Africa conference of 1884/85, Congo was declared the private property of the Belgian king Leopold II, not to be placed under government rule until 1908. In connection with the country's systematic exploitation for its ivory and rubber, some ten million fell victim to slavery, forced labour, captivity and murder. The artist's book shows how the museum, which opened in 1910, presented this history from the perspective of a racist power constellation. The museum's presentation forms changed after the struggle for independence led to the end of colonial rule in 1960.

[2] Fritz Vilmar, *Strategien der Demokratisierung*, vol. I (Darmstadt, Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1973), p. 21.
[3] Ibid, p. 102.

- Networking

In the case of both William Kentridge and Peggy Buth, artists' books represent networks characterized by complexly interrelated production, distribution and communication activities. Collaborations temporally limited to the artistic product – here the artist's book – transcend self-contained systems and, in the sense of the actor-network theory (ANT), represent units engaging in relationships of one kind or another (B. Latour). Actors, actants, agencies or – to express it in yet another way – action initiatives (E. Schüttelpelz) are made up of human and non-human (that is, technical) components. Within that context, social, technical and natural factors are virtually to be treated as dependent variables. The non-linear, web-like relationship logic is based on cultural techniques organized by artists themselves. Exhibitions, action coalitions, archives, artists' publishing activities, artists' groups and circles of friends lead to cooperative work structures. The networking leads to the dissemination of the publications – whether through sale, barter, or other paths – and thus after J. Derrida to the dissemination of information and of meanings.

- Performativity

The artist's book differs from the conventional book not only with regard to its design, conception and artistic intention, but also in terms of its performativity. Ulises Carrión sees the artist's book as representing a series of spaces. "Each of these spaces is perceived in a certain moment." Every page is different, and "every page is an individualized element of a structure". "In the new art, every book requires a different form of reading."[4] On this level of general performativity, the reader/viewer becomes a player, transforms into an agent, or, more specifically, into the entity that ultimately creates or consummates the work by the act of paging. In order to read or view the book, he must page through it and thus open up the book's space. By this means, it spreads out in space and time, and a performative act is accomplished as intended by the artist. In the case of William Kentridge, such performativity is especially evident in the artist's books *Accounts and Drawings* (Calcutta, 2015), *Stop Here* (Dijon, 2016), and *Triumph and Laments* (Cologne, 2016).

[4] Ulises Carrión, The new art of making books, in Guy Schraenen, *Ulises Carrión: "We have won! Haven't we won?"*(Amsterdam: Museum Fodor, 1992), pp. 51.

2. Teaching in the context of research on the artist's book

Artists' books of the kind conceived of by William Kentridge and Peggy Buth are the subject of a current research project on the international situation and position of the artist's book. The aim of the project is to investigate the strategies, concepts, themes, dissemination and networking of artists' books today worldwide. We'd like to find answers to the following questions: What artists are presently producing artists' books? How have artists' books been disseminated worldwide in the past years? Do artists' books from certain regions or countries have special characteristics not encountered elsewhere? How does the artist's book of the present differ from those of the 1960s to the 2000s? What new networks have been established over the past years? How are artists' books distributed? The research will concentrate primarily on the countries of Africa and Asia and integrate them into an internationally networked research project.

In connection with this project, I am presently offering a two-semester seminar at the University of Bremen's Institute of Art Science and Art Education. In keeping with the principles of "inquiry-based learning", the seminar students are being involved in the work and research of the Centre for Artists' Publications. "Inquiry-based learning is distinguished from other forms of learning in that the learners shape, experience and reflect on the process of a research project directed towards gaining insights that are also of interest to third parties. They are involved in this process in its essential phases, from the development of the questions and hypotheses to the choice and implementation of the research methods to the review and presentation of the results, independently or in active cooperation with an overarching project."[5]

In our case, the students have the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the complexities of the research project on the artist's book, and to participate in discussing and shaping both the art-theoretical and the societal context. They gradually become part of a community of researchers in which, like apprentices in a workshop, they learn the research craft by practising it. The academic teaching process actively integrates the centre's archival holdings and collection, and within that context, aspects of collection and museum management are linked to fundamental scholarly research and so-called curatorial studies. The seminar is structured

[5] Ludwig Huber, Warum Forschendes Lernen nötig und möglich ist, in Ludwig Huber, Julia Hellmer, and Friederike Schneider (Ed.), *Forschendes Lernen im Studium: Aktuelle Konzepte und Erfahrungen*, (Bielefeld: UVW Univ.-Verl. Webler, 2009, (Motivierendes Lehren und Lernen in Hochschulen, 10), pp. 9–35, 11.

according to the following phases of inquiry-based learning, as developed by the educationalist Ludwig Huber:

- Introduction
- deciding on the question or questions the research is to address
- gathering information
- acquiring knowledge of methods
- developing a research design
- carrying out a research-based activity
- arriving at results
- presenting the results
- reflecting on the process

The initial seminar meetings were devoted to communicating the necessary preliminary knowledge, introducing and discussing a large number of artists' books – including examples by William Kentridge, Gerhard Richter, Richard Tuttle, and Peggy Buth – and reading and discussing theoretical texts. The students then sought and formulated their own questions and means of access to the subject. In several work groups, they discussed and developed means of addressing the issues they had chosen in discussion with one another and on their own, while also coordinating their exchange and information acquisition by way of internet platforms. At the same time, they determined what methods would be most suitable for addressing their project questions. By way of example, I'd now like to conclude by telling you briefly about two work groups:

1) One group of seven students planned a joint artists' book that was to be created as a dialogical process. To that end, they had a little computer programme written for themselves and drew up an agenda. For the book's realization, they agreed on the following procedure:
    - The artists' book would have seven chapters. The title is *Routine*.
    - Each of the participants would formulate instructions for action for one chapter and create the first page.
    - The individual pages of each chapter would be created by different persons and relate to one another.
    - Each participant would have exactly one page in each chapter, relating in each case to the work of one of the other participants.

2) Another work group has devised a method of determining what artists are presently producing artists' books in what countries: they decided to publish a call for artists' books, accompanied by a questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire is to gather information systematically about artists' books and the artists' attitudes and opinions. The students also defined a number of key parameters for the call for artists' books and the subsequent exhibition:
    - The deadline for the submission of an artist's book is mid-April 2017.
    - The artist's book submitted is to have been produced within the last five years.
    - In addition, the artists are to fill out the questionnaire and submit it with their book.
    - By submitting an artist's book for the exhibition, the artist declares his or her consent to the publication of illustrations as well as to the entry of his or her artist's book into the collection of the Centre for Artists' Publications, where all of the artists' books submitted will form a sub-collection and be accessible for research purposes.
    - In return, the artists will receive a catalogue.
    - The completed questionnaires are also to be placed on exhibit and illustrated in the catalogue.
    - The exhibition, entitled *Artists' Books for Everything*, will take place from the 3rd of June to the 6th of August 2017.
    - In the manner of Dieter Roth's *Review for Everythin*g, all submissions will be accepted.

". . . inquiry-based learning aims . . . for the acquisition of insights that are of interest to third parties. In its complete form, it therefore encompasses, as its conclusion, some form of publication of the results for a public outside the confines of the learning group."[6] That means since Mid-February, when the first semester ended, the students have sent out the call for artists' books to disseminators all over the world. We would be very happy to be able to include artists' books by African artists in the exhibition and in our research.

The *Call for Artists' Books* is released on the website of the Centre for Artists' Books *www.zentrum-kuenstlerpublikationen.de*.

[6] Ludwig Huber, Die weitere Entwicklung de Forschenden Lernens. Interessante Versuche - dringliche Aufgaben, in Ludwig Huber, Margot Kröger, and Heidi Schelhowe (Ed.), *Forschendes Lernen als Profilmerkmal einer Universität: Beispiele aus der Universität Bremen,* (Bielefeld: UVW Webler, 2013, (Motivierendes Lehren und Lernen in Hochschulen, 16), pp. 21–36, 24.

Simultaneous Journeys: Thematics in the Curating of Booknesses: Artists' Books from the Jack Ginsberg Collection

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2017 marks the 21st anniversary of the exhibition *Artists' Books from the Jack Ginsberg Collection* held at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in 1996; so it seemed timeous to hold another exhibition. In order to start, I consulted Jack's rare copy of Blaise Cendrars and Sonia Delaunay's *Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France [Prose of the Trans-Siberian and of Little Jehanne of France]* (1913), considered to be the first example of simultaneity in book form. Typically, the work consists of four glued pages making a 2m long sheet of paper and folded in half lengthwise. It is accordion-folded 10 times to replicate a railway map, fitting its subject. Ginsberg's copy is rare in that it consists of four flat, unbound and unfolded sheets. Delaunay's pochoir watercolours on the left guide the reader towards and through Cendrars's text on the right and sweeps up and down the folded pages allowing one to take in the work as a whole. *Prose* appeared on the cover of Riva Castleman's 1994 exhibition catalogue *A Century of Artists Books* at MoMA and proposed two curatorial strategies. The first: to go into her catalogue to see how many of Castleman's choices could be found in Johannesburg: We found fifteen items from her Modernist selection to which we added another 4 which, in our opinion, she could have included; we found 26 items from her postmodern selection, to which we added 3. The second curatorial strategy was to unpack *Prose's* visual-discursive threads to establish curatorial themes for the contemporary artists' books to be exhibited. These themes are:

- Visual-verbal Dynamics | Colour
- Journeys | Maps & Structures | Landscapes & Places
- Fantasy & the Fantastic
- War, Death, Fear & Apocalyptic Imagery
- Sex, Love & the Body

Modernist & postmodernist contexts

We surrounded *Prose* with fine examples of early Modernist books such as Cendrars's 1919 collaboration with Fernand Léger, *La Fin du Monde* [*The End of the World, Filmed by the Angel N.-D]*. Here*,* Léger includes fragments of Cendrars's text as boldly coloured and stencilled block letters, inspired by his interest in street signs and silent movie titles. Initially seen as a film, the dynamic compositions simulate the moving image reflecting a dark sensibility born out of Cendrars's experiences as a soldier during WW1.

Prose and *La Fin du Monde* highlight the relationship between image and typography and the visual tropes of early Modernism and are accompanied by Mayakovsky's and El Lissitzky's *For the Voice* (1923); Iliazd's *Lidantiu Faram [Lidantiu as a Beacon]* (1923); George Grosz's *Ecce Homo* (1923), Alexander Calder's *Fables of Aesop* (1931); Max Ernst's *Un Semaine de Bonte [A Week of Kindness]* (1934) and *Lysistrata by Aristophanes* (1934) illustrated by Picasso. To this selection we have added two significant publications: *Die Nibelungen von Franz Keim* (1920 [1909]) in which Carl Otto Czeschka's illustrations for Keim's texts are described as "an elegant, jewel-like survival of the Vienna Secession ... the highest achievements of book illustration". The second is Fortunato Depero's *Depero Futurista 1913-1927* (1927). Known popularly as the *bolt* or *bolted book*; the colophon page states: "This book should be considered a manifesto of the Machine Age".

From Castleman's postmodern selection we include 10 framed prints from Walasse Ting's "visual manifesto of the sixties", *1¢ Life* (1964). Three works which take different paths in folding imagery through the texts they accompany are firstly: Jasper Johns and Samuel Beckett's *Foirades/Fizzles* (1976) for which Beckett provided an English and French version of the text and Johns contributes 33 etchings and one lithographic illustration of the five prose fragments. Secondly, Barbara Kruger's and Stephen King's *My Pretty Pony* (1988), which concerns the enigmatic perceptions of time and, like Johns's illustrations, conjoin with King's text. Thirdly, is Francesco Clemente's illuminations of the 48 text folios of Alberto Savinio's 1917-18 autobiographical saga *The Departure of the Argonaut* (1986). The images change in each chapter, reflecting the mood and geography of the text and respond to Savinio's diary of his tedious journey from northern to southern Italy aboard a troop-filled passenger train during the First World War.

Visual / verbal dynamics

Johanna Drucker states: “That Delaunay and Cendrars could conceive of such a work in 1913 is remarkable … No private reading experience had ever assumed such dimensions”. Delaunay’s, lightly painted colours, support the passages of Cendrars’s coloured letterpress text. Cendrars’s poem seemingly describes his experience as a young boy on the Trans-Siberian express, which runs from St. Petersburg to the Sea of Japan during the Russio-Japanese War of 1904/5. His companion on the trip is Jeanne, a French prostitute, and while the landscape rushes by him on the train, he thinks back in fragmented recollection to his childhood in Paris and imagines trips to tropical paradises. Katherine Shingler argues that Cendrars’s and Delaunay’s setting of poem and painting … contains an implicit challenge to the reader to direct their attention to both, simultaneously, or look for connections between the two. Simultaneity means a dialogue between two modes of expression, and a fundamental premise for that dialogue is difference and we should not expect to see a complete collapse of the boundaries between the visual and the verbal. “What is not always remarked upon, states Marjorie Perloff … is that poem and painting exhibit a very different tonality. ...The colors … express the joie de vivre of fluid motion. But ... the poem’s tone and mood are strikingly different from its visual representation”.

Eric Robertson states that the narrator betrays his uncertainties “regarding his function as a poet in an era which has rendered traditional poetic values obsolete”. Cendrars’s feelings of inadequacy are repeatedly expressed in the poem and he refers to himself on four occasions as “*a bad poet*”. This self-reflexivity, indexes the concerns of its makers. Shingler asserts that Cendrars’s text makes sense only as “a finished whole” thus the exhibition explores analogies between images and texts as a thematic thread with many books provoking a dialogical tussle between writing and image-making.

For Perloff (1994), Johanna Drucker’s *The Word Made Flesh* (1996) “doesn’t boast ... a single pictorial equivalent to the text. Rather, it is the alphabet itself that is made flesh, the letter being seen in all of its visual potential”. John Cage seems to have understood, half a century ago, that “no word, musical note, painted surface or theoretical statement could ever escape ‘contamination’ from the media landscape in which we live”. Cage’s panoptical view of the world in his *Diary: How to Improve the World (You Will Only Make Matters Worse)* (1967) is described by Joe Biel and Richard Kraft as follows:

> *Diary* is one of his most prescient and personal works. ... The variances on the page become almost musical as language takes on a physical and aural presence … [using] chance operations to render the entire text in various combinations of the red and blue … as well as ... apply a single set of eighteen fonts to the entire work.

If Delaunay's painting takes us on a temporal/spatial journey, how we get from one place to another is through the movement of the eye. But a viewer cannot merely accept the marks as colourful filling, a way of getting from top to bottom as the poem must. Instead, these marks are the material matter which facilitates a visual poetic equivalent of the wild shifts in place and time that Cendrars's poem expects the reader to negotiate.

Colour

In *Prose du Transsibérien*, the four coloured inks in a number of different typefaces is a "rough correspondence" between verbal imagery and the colour of the print. Cendrars often "flouts the reader's expectation for these correspondences by refusing to take up cues in the poem". The evocation of *Colours that numb you like a gong* (l.260) is not brightly coloured, and the colours we would expect to see accompanying the line *If I were a painter, I'd pour on a lot of red, a lot of yellow on the end of this trip* (l.361) is printed in green with no red or yellow visible in Delaunay's surrounding colour. Shingler argues that Cendrars's desire to capture the colours of visual experience expresses "his wish that he could render the subjective, properties of colour in all their immediacy and his regret that coloured words are not sufficient to do this"

Specific artists' books have been selected in response to the theme of colour in their subject matter or content. The sensory, optical and alchemical experience of colour is explored in Barbara Hodgson's and Claudia Cohen's *After Image: Playing with Colour in all its Dimensions* (2009). Part of a series of four books, Hodgson and Cohen follow colour from Isaac Newton's through Goethe's and Chevreul's inquiries, to the present-day. The artists reproduce existing colour wheels and create new ways of seeing colour.

Franticham's *Paris Metro Affiches* (2012) is a unique book of torn posters from the Paris Metro. *Affiches* expresses bursts of colour in which fragmentary texts and images evoke not only the Metro and the fleeting imagery glimpsed from a train window at speed, but also Cendrars's image: *And all of Europe glimpsed in gusts of wind from a full steam express* (l.106). The

importance of the poster to the idea of modernity and *simultanéisme* is found in Cendrars's direct reference to it in the image: *The posters, red, green, multicoloured like my brief little yellow life*.

Journey, travel and movement

Delaunay described the painting, as a "representation of the journey in a style of pure forms" from the domes of Moscow at the start of the poem to the red tower at the poem's end. "In between", states Shingler (2012:20), "the poem and painting seem to go their separate ways, with Delaunay's abstract forms intended to evoke the poet's journey in a more suggestive way". In a letter written to the Delaunays, Cendrars relates the concept of contrast in *Prose* to travel and to the relationship of self and other, in which "the young poet-narrator sets out on a journey of discovery, not just of new, unknown people and spaces, but of himself, and his identity as a poet", what Shingler refers to as "the metaphoric journey of Cendrars's travelling self". I have also 'journeyed eastward' in my curation selecting books from or about, Russia, China, Japan, Australia and various islands within the Pacific. A noteworthy example is provided by Veronika Schäpers who worked in a paper shop in Tokyo. Of her award-winning *Squid Book* (*26°57,3'N, 142°16,8'E*) (2007) she states:

> At this location in the northwestern pacific the Japanese marine biologist Tsunemi Kubodera took the first pictures of a living giant squid in its natural environment. …

Judith Klau likens negotiating its reading to undertaking an uncertain journey: "The bottoms of the pages have a deep inky blackness. ...The colors are aqueous, greens and greys ... I was traveling blind, but the artist led me in the right direction … into the sea".

Echoing Cendrars's journey is second-generation Chinese-American Paul Wong's *The Eclipse of the Moon* (1998) which embodies a synthesis of both his eastern and western experiences and Mikhail Karasik's *Board of Honour* (2004). Melanie Emerson states that, during the Soviet era, "artists could only produce work within established unions; thus much of their output was in the form of official portraits such as those decorating boards of honour". Here, Karasik presents his version of these boards in three sections: government officials; his family; and a dedication to Karasik's favourite artists and writers, including, Marc Chagall, Daniil Kharms, El Lissitzky, Kazimir Malevich and Boris Pasternak.

There are a number of South African journeys on exhibition. One is William Kentridge's *Portage*, (2000). Like *Prose*, *Portage* is an accordion-fold book, glued to pages from a c1906 edition of *Le Petit Larousse Illustré* – which was, itself, printed and published in Paris at the end of the Russo-Japanese War. Familiarity with South Africa's history of migrant labour, forced removals and dispossession of peoples from ancestral lands in the colonial and pre-democratic eras help situate this collection of anonymous exiles who move towards a future that can only be imagined. *The Ultimate Safari* (2001), based on a short story by Nadine Gordimer, is about a young girl who flees Mozambique with her family and walks through the Kruger National Park to a supposedly better life in South Africa. Lithographs are drawn by Dorah Ngomane, Aletah Masuku and Alsetah Manthosi, who have all made the dangerous trek on foot to South Africa. Gordimer explains that the story was germinated during a visits to a refugee camp in the late 1980s with a BBC team interviewing refugees from Mozambique. Soon after, she read an advertisement in the *London Observer*, selling an African adventure as the "ultimate safari". Gordimer thought "what I've just seen is the ultimate safari".

Maps and mapping

As *Prose* includes a map of its route the exhibition includes artists' books which map territories and spaces. An example of the latter is Olafur Eliasson's *Your House* (2006) which consists of a laser-cut negative impression of Eliasson's house in Copenhagen on a scale of 85:1. Each of the corresponding 454 hand-bound leaves (or 908 pages) is individually cut and corresponds to 2.2cm of the actual house". Working one's way through the book-as-map simulates one's passage through the actual house.

Robbin Ami Silverberg's *Subterranean Geography* (2011) maps a territory in ways which ordinary maps cannot. As part of what the artist calls "psycho-geography", *Subterranean Geography* uses a cut-away subway map to explore particular emotions associated with specific spaces travelled in New York City. Silverberg explains:

> the book is divided into two parts, each with a text about movement: the first is an ambulatory mapping of my walk to the "L" subway station; the second is a subway trip loaded with emotions and memory. The layered filigree paper of subway lines/bus routes/roadways creates the seemingly fragile pages which contrast with the directness of the text and remind the viewer of the complexity of both described space and of feelings.

For Silverberg's any logical cutting of data on one side, compounds and confuses the data on the other side. The map which introduces *Prose* purports to index the route the actual train would have taken, the reader experiences this as the atemporal, abstract and metaphoric, with huge jumps in time and space. In understanding this, the works in this exhibition remind one that a map is no more than a suggestion, a set of potential routes of journeys once taken or not taken.

Place and space

Cendrars abruptly translocates his reader to New York: thus many books on the exhibition have New York as their locus. Donald Glaister's *Brooklyn Bridge: A Love Story* (2002) is one. It includes five abstract "portraits" of the bridge, painted on sanded aluminium pages. Jean Feigenbaum (n.d.) describes the work as a "hybrid" object in which Glaister writes the poem, paints the bridge's "portraits" and constructs the book's assemblages which resonate with the turning of each thin aluminium page, like "the wind makes flashing through the bridge's vast suspension cables ... [i]n materials that are not what one would expect for a book – but completely in keeping with the subject.

War, death, fear and apocalyptic imagery

Cendrars's lines: *A cannon sounded in Siberia, it was war – Hunger, cold, plague, cholera – And the muddy waters of the Amur River carried away a million corpses* (l.43-45) appear early in *Prose*. Having barely established a coherent sense of place and time Cendrars (who, in September 1915, lost his right arm during the attacks in Champagne and was discharged from the French Foreign Legion) presents the immediacy and the horrors of the Russo-Japanese War of as if a train is hurtling towards the reader:

> *I saw – I saw the silent trains, the black trains return from the Far East passing like phantoms – And my eye, like a lantern, still follows those trains* (l.370-385).

Travel to the east brings Kazuko Watanabe's *The Diary of a Sparrow* (1999) into direct conversation with *Prose's* sombre content. Chapter four of *The Diary* is devoted to the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 into which Cendrars's train hurtles. The book is hinged and folded so that it can be read as both conventionally and as a fold-out book-sculpture. Watanabe has painstakingly translated her grandfather's journals in which a people, "living within a small stretch

of land, have their gentle lives tossed by the upheavals of war and the encroachment of the modern world". The concept of being "tossed" by both war and modernity recalls Cendrars's apocalyptic image: *The train somersaults and falls back on its wheels – It falls back on its wheels – The train always falls back on its wheels* (l.160-162).

Joan Iversen Goswell critiques the political foibles of both the Bush administrations in the United States. Christopher Calderhead states:

> The subject of her work is often no holds-barred political commentary. Crusading, righteously angry, the work leaves none of us neutral. … Goswell's approach is one of biting satire; her collaged compositions recall John Heartfield who lampooned the rise of National Socialism with charged fury.

Brian Borchardt's, Caren Heft's and Jeff Morin's *Crossing the Tigris I, II, III* (2011) is an equally defiant, emotionally charged document. Morin describes the work as: "A narrative in three books recounting soldiers' stories from the Iraq War … The collaborators each found stories in the media that recount horrific situations that are inconceivable to those who work regularly with current or former soldiers who happen to be students or artists".

Conclusion

With the exception of a fleeting reference to *Tombouctou* (l.150) *La Prose du Transsibérien* reduces Africa to a peripheral territory in its dramatic panoptical sweep of the globe. Seeing Cendrars's and Delaunay's work to Johannesburg might begin to remedy such a peripheral view and perhaps place South Africa at the centre of the book arts world, at least for the duration of this exhibition.

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Rolling with the Times

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I started the Center 20 years ago to help foster and build the artist book community. Four years ago, we moved into our new building and as was said in *Field of Dreams*, “If you build it, they will come.” That has certainly been true for us. Having a beautiful light-filled art-full building makes people sit up and take notice – and come in.

As a printer, it always fills me with joy to come into work and see all these Vandercook presses lined up in a row. These presses are used often and hard. I even gave my Vandercook 4 to the Center, so it is now a more productive member of Vandercook society.

We are lucky in the San Francisco Bay Area to have an extraordinary community that has benefited from the rich mix of designers, writers, artist and technologists. The community supports several major book arts-related institutions in addition to the San Francisco Center for the Book, including the Letterform Archive, the Bookbinders Museum, the CODEX Book Fair, the Book Club of California, and the Sacramento Book Collectors Club, as well as two book-related dinner clubs with monthly lectures, and the usual suspects of libraries, museums and galleries.

The Center is dedicated to increasing public access to experiencing and making books. Like our sister organizations in Minnesota and New York, and numerous smaller community based book art centers across the US, it is imperative that we reach and engage our public.

We do this partly through exhibitions. The first exhibition in our new space was a “retelling” of *Al Mutanabi Street Starts Here*, a project originated by local San Francisco poet Beau Beausoleil, co-organized by Sarah Bodman. Al Mutanabi Street is the cultural and intellectual hub in Baghdad where booksellers, calligraphers, bookmakers and intellectuals gather. This project assembled artists’ responses to the car bombing on Al Mutanabi Street on March 5, 2007. The project, which started as a call-to-action for letterpress printers to respond to this tragic incident,

continues to bring in artists from around the world. It also highlights the importance of recognizing our roles as artists to respond. This show is another form of active community engagement. To find out more, check out Sarah Bodman's website: http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/projects/al-mutanabbi-street.html

On a lighter note, the Center hosts an annual “Punctuation Party”, where you can photograph yourself with your favorite punctuation, participate in our Punctuation Costume Parade, and sip “comma-politans” all evening long. And what about that interrobang?! Right?!

Other community engagement projects include: Squid printing (using ink from recently deceased squid, from the California Academy of Sciences), Poets Pulling Prints, the Pro-Am Bard-a-thon, and Print Marathons, to name a few. We have even been seen dancing on the presses to music composed for letterpress and guitar by Fred Frith.

But I am here today to talk about steamrollers and books and why I am so passionate about this combination of construction equipment and bookmaking. We were not the first folks to dream up steamroller printing; I know of at least three examples dating several decades back. I do, however, think we may be the only people actually printing books with steamrollers. Of course, not all of our prints get turned into books, but some do, and that is what I want to share with you today. Welcome to RoadWorks.

This is my older son, Caslon (yes, I did name him after a typeface), in 2004, sitting atop our first ever steamroller, which we rented from Hertz. It was a modest 2 tons, and we quickly outgrew the machine. Two years later, we upgraded to the 3-ton version, and two years after that, we moved up to a 5-ton steamroller. Then we met up with a Willits-based organization called Roots of Motive Power. Willits is a small town about 150 miles north of San Francisco. The Roots folks are steam nerds the way we are all book nerds. They build and restore steam-powered machines used in California’s north coast logging industry from the 1850s on--steam engines, steam cranes and, of course, steamrollers. This is a portrait of their 1923 Buffalo Springfield steamroller. And, yes, this is where the band took its name, having seen one of these on the street after band practice. Our 5-ton pavement roller from Hertz made fine prints, but in 2013, with our new 7-ton Buffalo Springfield, the print quality went through the roof, to say nothing of our fun factor. This steamroller comes complete with a set of characters that look like they just came out of central

casting. And this last year--as if it couldn't get better--the Roots of Motive Power brought down two new steamrollers, another 7-ton Buffalo Springfield and a 12-ton Kelly steamroller.

I know many of you are familiar with the relief printing process, but just to review: We select four to six artists and give each one a 3 x 3 foot piece of unmounted Battleship Gray linoleum to carve in the weeks before RoadWorks. The morning of the big event, each linoleum plate is inked up and inspected for dust or other impurities, which can show up since we are printing outside and on the street.

To avoid smearing ink on clean fresh prints, we divide our volunteers into two groups: Clean Hands and Inky Hands. Clean Hands handle the paper. Inky Hands ink the plates and place them on our makeshift printing bed. The printing bed is made of 3/4" MDF particleboard and is placed in the street on a 1/8" thick rubber liner. The hand torn paper (we use Rives BFK 300gsm) is placed over the inked plate and then covered by a number of protective blankets. Then, we power up the steamroller. The steamroller takes over 4 hours to heat up and needs to be inspected by the fire marshal before we can start.

[Video]

In this video you see the protective layers coming off – first the carpet, then the blanket, then the felt. These help keep the plate and paper in place while the steamroller moves over them.

We also provide entertainment during the daylong festival, including printing and binding demonstrations, and usually something a little out of the ordinary. One year we featured the Printed Ladies of San Francisco giving out kisses and tattoos. (The name Printed Ladies is a play on words, as San Francisco's colorfully painted Victorian homes are known as Painted Ladies.) We have also had the Burning Man Burning Band and a toy steamroller parade. In addition before the event, we offer linoleum for sale in 1 x 1 foot squares to anyone who would like to make their own mini steamroller print. These Little Linos are a huge success. Participants can carve their linoleum block at their convenience, bring it to the event and then have the opportunity to have the block inked up and printed along side the big featured Roadworks prints. And so, what about books? In 2004, the first year of RoadWorks, artist Michael Bartalos conceived of his print as a book. The three panels each fold in half and then can be cut apart and re-attached to create a lovely accordion book titled *29 Degrees.* If you "read" the three panels

from left to right, you will see they are illustrating a journey around Earth at 29 degrees latitude. The journey begins in Mexico (symbolized by cattle), then continues through Morocco (symbolized by the horn), India (symbolized by the elephant), China (symbolized by the dragon), Japan (symbolized by the bird), and finally back to Mexico (this time symbolized by the tree). Michael's artwork was then used as a template for our first-ever artist-in-residence book, which we screen printed in two colors. And then the book was reinterpreted again as a Small Plates trade edition.

The following year, in 2005, artists John DeMerritt and Nora Pauwels created a steamroller print called *De Rekening* – which means *The Bill* in Dutch – it was inspired by anonymous entries in 19th Century ledgers and account books. The print was almost completely black with a number of sets of white tally marks in three columns, separated by think red ruled lines. This print became the basis for the Center's second artist-in-residence book also titled *De Rekening*. The book expands on the original tallies, and includes automatic or psychographic writing and other handwork throughout, including stamping.

Charles Hobson and Kay Bradner's piece *R.O.W.* started as a steamroller print, and then was cut in half and accordion folded into an edition. They laid out the linoleum together with an eye toward how it might fold into book pages. Kay did the carving with Dremel tools; Charles did the book design. They were interested in creating the coloring to reflect a sunny day on San Francisco Bay.

Luz Ruiz Marina's steamroller prints are full of organic and strangely wonderful shapes reminiscent of the California psychedelic posters of the 70s. The original prints are black and white but Luz re-works them with rich jewel-like colors. She then cuts up the prints to create fanciful tunnel books or folded carousel books.

The "book" I am most excited about in our steamroller publishing future, will be a collection of Rik Olson's prints, an ongoing story of the history of the steamroller. With luck we will be making these prints into a truly giant book, so let me give you a preview:

Ole (2004). The idea for Rik's first steamroller image came from an old photograph of his grandfather, Erik "Ole" Olson, standing in front of a steamroller in 1920, back when Ole worked for the City of Oakland's Street Department. At the time, steam was the energy of choice. In

homage to his grandfather, Rik depicted Ole driving the steamroller, smoking his signature cigar, wearing his customary hat. To signify the SFCB, Ole is driving on a highway of books of all shapes and sizes.

When Steamrollers Fly (2005). For his second print, Rik decided to create an aero-steamroller, and continued to use his family members to power the steamroller. The flying steamroller puts his father, David Olson, in the pilot seat. In the lower corner of this print, Rik shows his grandfather driving away in the original steamroller, over the bridge of books. And of course, the idea of flying steamrollers is a play on the phrase "when pigs fly"--meaning an unlikely event.

Steamroller Under The Sea (2006). This print was created for the tenth anniversary of the San Francisco Center for the Book, when all participating Roadworks artists were asked to incorporate the number 10 into their artwork. Never one to miss a good party, Rik put himself behind the wheel of the steamroller for this special occasion. Rik has always been fascinated by ancient civilizations, so he decided to pop a snorkel on the steamroller and send it down to discover the depths of Atlantis. In the details, you can see groups of ten: ten fish, ten kelp balls, ten bubbles, and a nod to the SFCB's 10th anniversary exhibition, *X Libris.* Rik claims there are twenty-one groups of ten to look for. See if you can find spot them all!

Steamroller in Space - Pluto Project (2007). As the fourth print in his steamroller series, Olson included his nieces and nephew in this celestial adventure to Pluto. The year 2007 is when Pluto was demoted from planet to dwarf planet and so the story behind the image is that the Olson family representatives are on a mission to gather asteroids to pile onto the surface of Pluto, to increase its mass. If they can create enough mass, maybe Pluto can become a planet again. On the surface of the planet, Rik has worked in both the Roman god Pluto and the eponymous Disney character.

Journey to… Oops… Ah Hell (2008). Another year and another family member gets to drive the steamroller. Rik's niece Lisa is behind the wheel, bravely burrowing the machine (outfitted with drills and shovels, should they get stuck) far underground. On this journey to the center of the earth, the steamroller accidentally discovers the Chamber of Hell. Rik has created a realm in the fantastical styling of Dutch artists Hieronymus Bosch and M.C. Escher, and has included references to the circles of Hell described in *Dante's Inferno.* The longer you look, the more

images and visual tricks you will find -- a true testament to Rik's vast knowledge of the world of art.

Heaven or Bust (2009). If the steamroller went to Hell, it is only natural that it should go to Heaven next. Rik loaded up his deceased relatives: his grandfather, father, brother and a nephew and set them in the heavens above. The large hand of the Supreme Being has a needle coming towards the balloons holding the steamroller up. There is also an express elevator for the overly-godly.

All out of relatives, Rik announced to the Center that he would not be joining us for our seventh year--but, fortunately for us, the steamroller somehow ended up going through the time machine, which lead to...

Steaming Through Time (2010). The year of 2010 was the year for time travel. Rik brings H.G. Wells' time machine from the 1962 movie into the world of the steamroller and lets it break through the barrier of time. If you look closely, you can see that Rik has woven in bits from history, progressing from the big bang to trilobites, dinosaurs and wooly mammoths, to the span of men - Neanderthals, Vikings and even Sumerian Kings. If you look closely enough, you can see Stonehenge in the stars!

1510 (2011). A steamroller that could time travel opened Rik's mind to the possibility that the steamroller could actually go anywhere, future or past. For this print, Rik takes the steamroller back in time to land inside an Albrecht Durer print from the year 1510. Rik cuts in many classic Durer motifs: angels in the clouds, minute details of birds and an occasional rabbit. He also includes twenty-one "15s" for the fifteenth anniversary of the San Francisco Center for the Book. On the left, you can see a young Albrecht Durer carving his famous initials "AD" into the building.

Hard Landing in Pisa - 1250 AD-ish (2012). The time-traveling steamroller continues its journey into the past. Due to a slight miscalculation, the Roller makes a hard landing before dawn, too close to the then-upright tower of the Pisa Duomo complex. With a slight "tink," the very ornate tower is now known as the *Leaning* Tower of Pisa and thus is created an entirely new industry for the city of Pisa... *tourism.* Be sure to look for Dante, references for Leonardo Da Vinci, Leonardo of Pisa (Fibonacci), the flag of Pisa and Marvin the Martian.

10000 BC (2013). Next, we have cavemen (and women) adorning their cave with hand marks reminiscent of the Cueva de las Manos in Argentina, as well as all manner of mysterious animal images and, of course, a steamroller painted on the cave walls. You will notice the steam plume of an actual steamroller in the distance, heading away from the cave entrance. Boy, steamrollers were around much earlier than I had thought!

Greek Surprise (2014). No travel through time would be complete without a visit to Troy. I turns out the Trojan Horse was actually powered by the steamroller. Notice the sea creatures (possibly Kraken, foreshadowing next year's print) adorning the pillars next to the main entrance gate. Athena, the goddess of war, sits above the gate, and her uncle Poseidon looks over, as the trap door underneath the Trojan Horse is closing. Be sure to check out those shields.

1492 (2015). As a giant Kraken tries to devour the Santa Maria, the Little Steamroller Who Could is there to save the day and allow Christopher Columbus safe passage to the New World. The fish-filled ocean also features another sea monster in the upper left corner. Columbus's flags are present on board, but the sails show a modified flag image with a cross pointing to all directions.

And, finally, the *Malarkey Falcon* (2016). The Millennium Falcon from Star Wars makes its steamroller debut complete with TIE fighters and creature-shaped asteroids. And with this leap, we have gone into even more fanciful and fantastic fabrication, so from this point, the steamroller can turn up anywhere. Maybe even on the streets of Johannesburg! Let's bring on the steamrollers!

The Artist's Book at The Artists' Press

Mark Attwood

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I first became interested in making books while working as an apprentice printer for my father, Bruce Attwood at The Broederstroom Press in the 80's. We printed books on Walter Battiss, John Muafangejo, Claude Gibney Finch Davies and others. The idea of printing something beautiful and hiding it in a binding to be discovered by someone at some un-known point in the future just appealed to me and somehow stuck.

In 1989 while studying lithography at Tamarind Institute in New Mexico I worked after hours on a collaborative book with friends. We invited anyone who wanted to, to make a linocut that we printed by hand and bound into books and called it "Another day in Paradise". Contributors included established artists, office staff and students. Everyone who did a linocut got a completed book and we printed an edition of 50, there were none available for sale.

My interest in artists' books is graphic – if it is visually appealing to me, I am usually keen to print it. When I started *The Artists' Press* in 1991; I found myself neighbours with Joachim Schonfeldt in *The Bag Factory*. We talked about artists' books and together with Wayne Barker and Robert Weinek of *FIG* or *Famous International Gallery* (although it was almost totally unknown) we published *GIF 1* in 1992. *GIF* is FIG spelt backwards and means poison in Afrikaans. We invited anyone interested to produce an edition of 101 prints, which were tipped onto pages that I had printed on an offset press. We launched the book in FIG galleries' run down Jeppe street space, and sold them for R50 per book.

Guy du Toit was at the launch and enthusiastically offered to make the covers if we did a *GIF 2*, and so *GIF2* was born. It was launched in 1994 At *The Market Gallery*, and the price had increased to R425, mostly to cover Guy's bronze casting costs for the two goats hooves that enclosed the cover. We had tried to make a hinged cover, but the weight of the bronzes was too much and we settled on a wooden slipcase supporting the bronzes into which the softbound book could be inserted.

Work published by *The Artists' Press* consists mostly of hand-printed lithographs, which collectors are willing to pay for, and this keeps us going, but artists' books are much more difficult to sell. For some reason people will look at a single print and say "well that is a fair price" but if you add type, book design, binding, a slip case and perhaps a dozen more images they will have to seriously reconsider.

Belinda Blignaut was working on a series of works about body piercings when we collaborated on *Anti-body*. It was printed on light-sensitive lith film, and we laid scalpels, needles and sutures onto the film before exposing it to UV light. Once developed and fixed, the transparent film pages allow the viewer to look through one or a few pages simultaneously. Belinda made the covers from metal and carefully sutured the cuts made into it.

Flip Hattingh collaborated with us on a rather iconoclastic publication called *Joanne of Ark* (spelled with a K). The pages were all hand-printed lithography, and it was stab-bound with brass sheet metal covers made by The New York Plumbing Company, which was not in New York, but around the corner from us in Newtown. People are sometimes a bit shocked by Flip's imagery and I am always amused when an innocent buyer asks if it is okay to return the book to me.

I stumbled upon Nadine Gordimer's short story *The Ultimate Safari* at the time that my partner, Tamar Mason was working with a project researching the living and working conditions of Mozambican refugees in Mpumalanga. Nadine's story is about a family who flee the war in Mozambique to get to South Africa by walking through the Kruger Park, braving wild animals, hunger and thirst to get to a better life. A number of the people that Tamar was working with had come to South Africa in this manner. Nadine gave us permission to print her story, and we collaborated with Aletah Masuku, Alsetah Manthosi and Dorah Ngomane who were Mozambican refugees and who are un-tutored artists. They drew poignant lithographs of their lives during the war and their perilous journey to South Africa. It is an incredibly moving story, and while collaborating with Tamar, the artists said it was like Nadine was there with them in the game reserve, she described it so well. We wanted the book to feel like a luxury piece of safari luggage, to contrast the reality of the contents. Peter Carstens accomplished this beautifully with his linen and hand-marbled paper binding and khaki slipcase.

These books have been challenging to do: The artistic, technical and practical aspects all have to fit together and we also need to try and make them financially viable; which may actually be

the hardest part of all. Most of our books have been self-funded. It gives us the freedom to make the books we want to, but is does make it slow! On average we publish a book every three to four years. There have also been books that we have wanted to do, but have given up on because the cost has just been too high.

The *Qauqaua* book was published in collaboration with *The Kuru Art Project* in Botswana. It is a traditional Nharo folktale told by the artist Coexae Qgam, also known as Dada. It is the first book ever printed in the Nharo language and was our first letterpress project. There are hand-printed lithographs by nine different artists accompanying the text. Translation of the text was done by Hessel and Cobi Visser, Dutch missionaries living in Botswana who have made it their life's work to translate the Bible into Nharo. Paul Emmanuel did the text layout and the binding in rough Kalahari goatskin was beautifully (although sometimes grumpily) done by Peter Carstens. He wanted to use soft and consistent leather from commercial tanneries, not the hard skins tanned by hand in the desert using Elands Boontjie.

Qauqaua is perhaps the book that we are most proud of and has been acquired by important libraries and collections around the world, and in 2002 The Smithsonian Libraries included it in an exhibition titled *Voyages* where they listed it as one of the ten highlights from their collection along with books by Albrect Durer, Pliny the Elder and Charles Darwin.

All our books are hand printed, and are therefore small editions – usually twenty or thirty, occasionally one hundred and in the case of *GIF* Books 101. They are all signed by the artist and when applicable the writer and we try wherever possible to have the artist integrally involved in the concept and to drive the project as much as possible.

Other publishers have published a few of the books that we have printed. *The Human Race* by Robert Hodgins was published by the *Goodman Gallery*. William Kentridge's "Leparello" and "Breathe" were published by himself and Robin Silverberg's *Just 30 Words* by herself. These books have all pushed us to do things that would not have happened with *The Artists' Press* published books.

Sometimes there is a rapport that develops between the books and the prints we are working on. While printing Robert Hodgins' *The Human Race* Sam Nhlengethwa was working on a series of prints that were tributes to fellow artists, and there was one print titled *Tribute to Robert*

Hodgins. These prints are all interiors, with works by the tributed artists hanging on the walls. Sam was going to draw his version of a Hodgins work, when he spotted the letterpress plates for Robert's book. He took 2 of the plates, inked them up and pressed them onto his litho plate. The ink sort of smeared as he pressed it down, creating a print on the wall that I think looked even more Hodgins-like than the image in the book. When Robert saw the first proof of Sam's print he was delighted, but insisted that he sign both prints on the whole edition, so each person who bought an Nhlengethwa print got 2 signed Hodgins print without knowing it.

The *GIF* book concept has remained consistent since the first one in 1992. Each artist who gives us an edition of 101 signed and numbered prints will be included in the book, although we do reserve the right to not accept work. In 2015 we completed *GIF 3*, with prints submitted by twenty-eight artists and with mediums ranging from rubber stamps to dry point etchings, monoprints, lithographs and octopus prints, printed from real octopi! Every artist who makes a print receives a book that includes a work by all the other contributing artists and the rest of the books are sold to cover the cost of production, binding and shipping. *GIF 3* sold out at the launch (thanks mostly to an incredibly talk by David Paton at the opening that made everyone present think that they just had to have one!).

We have decided to start work on *GIF 4*, so if anyone here would like to go to the trouble of producing 101 prints for possible inclusion in exchange for one book, please get in touch with me.

BOOKENDS: the fine art book as witness - explored via two books from The Caversham Press

Mandy Conidaris and Malcolm Christian

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This paper is intended as an underpinning for the artist's book *Songs from the earth*, a project comprising a series of poems written by Mxolisi Nyezwa with prints by Vusi Zwane and Simphiwe Cebekhulu, existing as a portfolio of three separate books. This beautiful book-object, crafted by Malcolm Christian of The Caversham Press, is exhibited here at the FADA Gallery for the duration of the Booknesses Colloquium. All the information in this paper has been drawn from conversations I have held with Malcolm over the many years of our friendship and professional association. A motivation in giving this paper is my conviction that the work done at The Caversham Press over the past 32 years should begin to be revealed in more detail to the artworld, locally and globally.

The Caversham Press is a fine art printmaking studio established in 1985 by Malcolm, and is situated in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands.

From the beginning, artmaking at Caversham has been fluid, has changed with the times and has focused on the process. The metaphor of bookends is particularly apt to describe the happenings at Caversham: two shifting support structures moved back and forth by Malcolm's hands, always protecting the creative activity within. Between the bookends, the journey of Caversham has not been one of a straight road with a fixed destination, but rather of a wander through a labyrinth. This is symbolised in tangible form at Caversham where, beside the small river flowing at the bottom of the property, is a stone labyrinth path, slowly constructed over the years during Malcolm's contemplative time, walking either alone or with visiting creative collaborators.

A shelf of books is invariably the collection of an individual, and as Jeanette Winterson maintains: 'books ... are a personality indicator'. As we would do when presented with any bookshelf new to us, we will now dive between the bookends and start to pick up threads, and since on the most interesting bookshelves the books are randomly situated, this will be a relatively non-chronological exploration.

One thread that has run through the creative history of Caversham has been the ongoing creation of single sheet prints underpinned by narrative. This has manifested in different ways, but the series have often been housed in portfolios or as boxed sets. They served different purposes, such as commemorative, story-telling, or honouring a different creative discipline.

The first project undertaken by Malcolm on opening the Press was the printing of the Johannesburg Centenary Portfolio, a boxed set of prints by five Johannesburg-based artists to commemorate both the city's centenary and mark 75 years since the founding of the Johannesburg Art Gallery. The artists were Guiseppe Cattaneo, Robert Hodgins, Ezrom Legae, Karel Nel and Malcolm Payne.

Some of the iconic print projects of recent South African art history were created at Caversham, including the three collaborative print portfolios by Deborah Bell, Robert Hodgins and William Kentridge: *Little Morals*, and *Hogarth in Johannesburg*, both contemporary versions of morality narrative; and much later they produced *Ubu Centenaire* to celebrate the centenary of Alfred Jarry's play, *Ubu Roi*.

This led in 1997 to the production of Robert's wicked little concertina-style book of image and verse called *Ubu: Limericks and Clerihews*, written and illustrated by Robert, and printed by Malcolm, who also designed and bound the book structure.

As early as 1988, Andrew Verster made *Homage to Seferis*, a print portfolio based on the poetry of the modern Greek poet George Seferis. This was done in collaboration with Dian Joubert, long-time Professor and Head of Department of Sociology, Stellenbosch University, who translated the poetry from Greek into Afrikaans, and then into English. And in 2005, Garth Erasmus created a portfolio of 9 screenprints, *Arc of Testimony*, where he acknowledged the equal weight of art and music in his own creative work, using the symbol of the Khoisan musical bow as part of his central image.

Throughout its evolution as a creative space, Caversham has been about the strength of the narrative thread, and an aspect of narrative has underpinned many of its significant projects. Printmaking at Caversham has often been about creating theme-based projects with images and stories, such as *Spirit of our Stories: Images of African Narrative*. This suite of 54 prints by 22 artists created over 18 months was exhibited at the 1995 Grahamstown Festival, just post-democracy. The diverse selection of artists from many backgrounds ranged from self-taught to established professionals, and the project dovetailed perfectly with the positive post-democracy ethos of that time. This sparked the early idea of narrative as metaphor, when Malcolm conceived the project as a way of redressing the historically-perceived imbalance between the two ways of story-telling – or speaking of human experience – the literary and the oral. He saw this project as a way of giving both equal weight by submerging their origins in the printed image.

Eventually in the early 2000s, Malcolm began to establish The Caversham Centre for Artists and Writers. This step was guided by his love of books and bookmaking, prints and printmaking, and his fascination with the integration of word and image. The Centre for Artists and Writers also evolved in part from a series of international residencies hosted at The Caversham Press. With the lifting of cultural boycotts to South Africa in the 1990s, many international artists wished to visit the country and interact in a meaningful way with local artists via their respective artmaking practices.

Caversham's first sponsored international residency, known as *The Hourglass Project* was aimed at women artists, and took place in 1999. The brief in the Call for Artists was *Icons for the Millenium: a women's vision*, and the artists were required to work with the themes of the passage of time and methods for the gathering and preservation of social and personal memories to take forward into the new century. 15 women artists were selected, and each produced a large-scale print in the medium of their choice. Some of the international artists were printmakers with new ideas and skills, so for Malcolm this proved to be an intense time, not only of technical challenge, but also for significant professional enrichment.

For *The Hourglass Project*, the artists arrived at the Press in groups of four, staying for three weeks, over a total period of eight weeks. There was a crossover of two departing and two arriving artists every three weeks, which led to a request from the participants to create a way of recognising that each artist would only experience a fragment of the group. The initial intention

was to create a book of self-portraits, and then the artists motivated to draw each other so that ultimately, the book represented a portrait of the heartfelt bonds that had been established during the residency.

Dialogue between artist and printmaker that usually spilled over into the sharing of ideologies, thoughts and experiences had always been a feature of the creative life at Caversham, and this residency reinforced the importance of mutually respectful cultural dialogue among diverse groups.

However, influenced by the Hourglass artists' insistence on creating a book of portraits, another thread was picked up on the Caversham bookshelf, that of the notion of *bearing witness to experience*. For these artists, the multi-cultural artmaking experience had been profound, and to return home just with their own printed work seemed unsatisfactory. A way to acknowledge the aspect of *witness to experience* was resolved through honouring the timeline of the duration of the residency via the time taken to print and handmake the book.

Many more *witness* books were made during the residencies held between 2000 and 2009. Over the years of the existence of the Caversham Centre for Artists and Writers, bookmaking became an integral part of the residency programs. These were often assisted by Gabisile Nkosi, who was the Caversham Programme Manager and facilitated the Centre's outreach projects. Unfortunately, Gabi was tragically murdered in an act of domestic violence in 2008. As opportunities for international residencies began to close down, so smaller focused local residencies developed at Caversham. For three years, Vusi Zwane became the Caversham artist-in-residence, and he in turn trained Simphiwe Cebekhulu as a printmaker/artist.

The last international Centre for Artists and Writers residency was **Inspiration**, hosted in 2009. This residency included two writers and two visual artists, one of each from South Africa and Atlanta Georgia USA. The residency was hosted a year after the loss of Gabi. Poet Mxolisi Nyezwa was moved by what he knew of the significance of her community work, and on learning learnt of her death, he wrote a series of 18 poems influenced by her story. The series was titled *Songs from the earth*, and became the foundation for the book. Malcolm says:

> When he left Caversham, Mxolisi handed me a manuscript of eighteen poems and asked me to 'do something with them'. I made a number of unsuccessful attempts to create a

> single book comprised of Mxolisi's poems and images created by the young artists with whom we worked, but in each instance an essential thread connecting content, context and artist was missing. Only in 2014 when exploring the possibility of separate volumes of text and image was cohesiveness found.

The book-object, *Songs from the Earth,* represents a fourfold collaboration. The portfolio comprises the poems written by Mxolisi Nyezwa in 2009; the screenprint images created by by Vusi Zwane and Simphiwe Cebekhulu in 2014; and the book, conceived, designed and handmade by Malcolm in an edition of 75, starting in 2014 and continuing at present (March 2017). Malcolm says:

> The result of this interaction is an artist's book - 18 poems in dialogue with visual images, created not as illustrations but as visual responses to the sentiment and rhythm of the poetry. This limited-edition portfolio comprises three simple handmade books; two accordion folds and a Pamphlet stitched anthology of poems. The books, designed text, and hand-printed images - are created to be held, read, and looked at.

Songs from the Earth reinforces the notion that many artists' books bear witness to creative collaboration between the artists, the master printer, and often a separate bookmaker. At this point I'd like to share a comment made by Mildred Thompson, one of the original *Hourglass Project* artists, while in conversation with Malcolm during her residency. Around the notion of collaboration, she said that "collaboration is not about the artist/technician relationship, but rather about individuals of equivalent strengths sharing the responsibility for the creation of an artefact" – in other words, collaboration is a process of shared responsibility.

Finally, we must ask 'why book'? and why has Malcolm become a maker of artists' books?

A little of Malcolm's creative background: prior to becoming a printmaker, Malcolm started university with a year of architecture, then shifted to fine arts. As a student and young artist, he worked mainly in sculpture, and so has a natural affinity for working in 3-D. After his printmaking training, he developed an interest in creating 3-D containers to house prints.

Once he opened The Caversham Press, since it was geographically away from the main centres, artists who arrived there were taken out of their own lives. Consequently, Caversham providing the space for creative interaction, along with the integration of their life experiences and

associations into tangible artwork. Importantly, this practice needs to happen over time. Again, the significance of process. Malcolm calls this time for artists at Caversham as “a pause – a stopping, and stepping out of life.” Again, this time of stopping and assimilation demands witness; and via image-making combined with bookmaking, a small physical space is created to hold that happening as a form of honouring the experience.

Within the context of a printmaking studio, and with the residency emphasis on interaction, it became natural to create editioned small-scale books as opposed to the *one-off 'artists' book*. Each participant would carry their copy of the book on their journey home, as a monk carries a travelling icon. Here, the rationale for creating multiples tied in with need for equal sharing.

With this in mind, the choice of book structure became paramount. Since bookmaking is often a long and laborious process, it was necessary to choose the simplest designs so that an editioned book in print could be created within the timeframe of the residency programme. Of great importance to Malcolm, and linked to his thinking around creating in collaboration as a way of balancing equal weights, he speaks of what the idea of *book* means to artists from multicultural backgrounds:

> for many, a book in which they have creatively participated affirms the individual; and they are given a sense of acknowledged presence when they hold it out to others and say "this is my book" – a book that talks about them as an individual.

For Malcolm, the purpose is not to learn the craft of bookmaking, but rather to find simple structures to create codices that contain the authority inherent within the format of book. The creation of the book helps the artist understand how to predetermine sequence, so that he or she an artist can apply for the reading their own narrative.

Mainly due to the increasing lack of local and global sponsorship for art projects in South Africa, Malcolm has recently closed the formal organisational structure of Centre for Artists and Writers, and the Press is working with fewer artists due to the physically demanding nature of professional printmaking. But Caversham continues, a magical space, and as pages turn in a book, so a new narrative begins there.

Bookmaking has allowed Malcolm to begin to become an artist again – to take time to explore a lifetime of learning, experiences and thinking in a medium that he responds to instinctively – to create objects that bear witness to his own life.

Malcolm's hands will remain as bookends - still moving outwards to provide space for new, but more low-key, printmaking and bookmaking projects - gently protecting the creative continuum of Caversham.

To Deliberate: The Process of Making Artist's Books

Heléne van Aswegen

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I would like to share my experiences as a maker of contemporary artist's books in South Africa over the last six years. During this time I have collaborated with numerous South African artists to realise their book and paper construction based artworks. The emphasis of this paper is on the practicalities of producing professional standard archival artist's books.

Bookbinding can be a highly specialised and laborious process. Not all artists have the time to learn the skill and produce artists' books themselves. A further obstacle in many cases is that traditional binders in the industry would not want to take on artist's projects, as it asks too much of these binders if they are commissioned to go too far beyond their familiar standards of book production. This phenomenon is especially common in the field of book arts, which often attempts to push the boundaries and our conception of how a book can function.

As artist and bookbinder, I help in resolving artist's ideas and content in the book form. My role lies in facilitating the process of crystallising their concepts, finding a suitable realistic form for the content, sourcing the appropriate materials (usually of archival standards unless specified otherwise), and then finally producing the work by hand. The books are therefore produced in very limited editions, ranging from one to maximum fifteen copies per project.

I would like to share and discuss various aspects that aid my understanding and appreciation of making artists' books. For the sake of clarity I will separate my practice under the following three main categories:

- the studio (as an extension of the body);
- teaching (as a medium for comprehension and sharing); and
- making (as an accomplishment of applied skills and collaboration).

The studio

My current studio is situated in the attic of the Visual Arts Department at Stellenbosch University. The studio's functioning is twofold, primarily for the teaching of under- and postgraduate students, and secondly as a professional workshop studio for book arts production.

In my mind these two modes of studio use are essential for the development of book arts in South Africa. Since there are only a few experienced book artists to turn to locally, we have to discover new possibilities by means of practice. By allowing students the time and space to make artist's books, they can bring novel ideas and questions to the fore. By collaborating with established artists I can also show students the quality of work that can be achieved by highly technical manual processes.

The studio was conceived by the former Head of Department, Prof. Keith Dietrich and I. The equipment was inherited from Stellenbosch University's JS Gericke Library, where the bookbinding and restoration department was closing down. The old restoration workshop was subsequently repurposed according to a more contemporary vision of a how a library can and should function. We managed to move all the key specialist bookbinding equipment to a newly formed bookbinding workshop in the Visual Arts Department.

At that time Prof. Dietrich and I had limited knowledge of hand bookbinding. As an artist, Dietrich's expertise lay in conceptualising, design, layout and printing. I learned the basic craft of case binding from the late master bookbinder Mr. Arthur Wadman, who used to work at the JS Gericke library, while also making artist's books for Prof. Dietrich. After his passing and with the inheritance of the equipment he used, it was a slow process to independently discover new possibilities and techniques with each new tool.

Teaching

The cliché often goes that if you truly wish to understand a technique on a deeper level you should teach it to others, and I resonate with this sentiment from personal experience. Every time I have mastered a new skill I would in turn be able to share it with curious students and eventually, if permitted, incorporate it into workshops to teach to fine arts and design students at a tertiary educational institutions. Through the process of teaching, students would often enquire

about alternative possibilities and techniques which could in turn lead me on new quests to explore, learn and share.

It is also interesting to note that, as an art practitioner attempting to sustain the waning practice of hand binding, it became very apparent how other skill-sets could be incorporated into a coherent bookbinding practice. In my career lateral thinking and the application of skill sets from other fields has played the role of what a traditional master bookbinder would have taught his or her apprentice. I find this multidisciplinary approach very encouraging and liberating as learning one skill means that you have the potential of mastering another without having complete any formal tuition. For example, seeing what tools jewelers use to create objects with mathematical precision has answered many technical questions I have had to solve in my capacity as a bookbinder. The cross-pollinating nature of artist's book making is wide-ranging, the only requirement being the experimental willingness to connect the dots between seemingly disparate disciplines.

Making

Through the process of learning to use certain specialist tools and equipment I have come to appreciate the notion of a good tool being a vital factor for a craftsman to produce something significant. We can for instance fold paper by using only our bare hands to bend the paper and then, by applying a bit more pressure to encourage the bent paper to fold, we can finally sharpen the fold's edge by using our nails. However, by using a bonefolder you can sharply fold paper more accurately, faster and cleaner. It is therefore not unreasonable to suggest that tools can become useful extensions of our bodies.

In a similar vein the larger studio space itself also becomes an extension of the practitioner's body and its movement. Ergonomic design, strategic layout of tables and placement of equipment in relation to one another are essential, not only to assist in productivity, but also to ensure the long-term wellbeing of the artisan at work in such a space. The height of a table contributes greatly to the quality of the work as well as the productivity of the binder. Low tables are used for specific tasks such as trimming a paper-block by hand. This enables the maker to have a better perspective of the work and to exert greater pressure onto the object whilst cutting, as the body is afforded more leverage over a lower surface. For general work such as folding, sewing, and glueing, it is best to work at tables that are at hip-height to prevent the artisan from

incurring lower back pain from bending over to get closer to the work. It is these subtle basic structural components that impact one's long-term attitude towards the practice in general, and it is addressed by streamlining production processes.

From start to finish the process of making artists' books is both physical and cognitive. It is a constant cycle of deliberation (thinking all possibilities through, considering and discussing their conceptual underpinnings), decision-making (choosing the right materials, receiving the go ahead from the artist or deciding on the technical route of production), execution (which requires a meditative state of concentration and making), and assessment (standing back to see if the step is executed well, determining if the right decision has been made, and seeing if our ideas have translated well into the physical form).

My main objective as a maker of book works is to pursue projects that are conceptually intriguing, technically challenging and, simply put, will potentially result in beautiful objects. The first step towards collaboration is to employ empathy. Here I use this ability as a tool to try and understand the artist’s practice from their perspective. This includes appreciating their visual language and grasping key interests and concepts, which is mainly achieved through various modes of communication. Among others this entails talking, sharing liked and disliked images, searching the Internet, body language, drawing, demonstrating with pieces of paper, and in some cases exploring shops and libraries to find examples or materials that communicate aspects of the proposed project.

Once both parties have clarity on what the project entails, the artist usually needs to go back home (as most artist I work with are not from my locality) and the next phase of remote communication is set in motion. Ongoing correspondence is essential as, at this stage, the project is still in flux as finer details are yet to emerge to be questioned and deliberated upon. These nuanced discussions help to manifest a sophisticated end-product and is greatly aided by modern digital technologies. Communication continues by any means necessary, from the age old tradition of sending samples and mock-ups by post or courier to modern channels such as Skype, WhatsApp or emailing images and pdf documents of the designs back and forth.

Principles of production

Once everything is approved and confirmed with my collaborator I can commence with the actual production. Over the years I have identified a few core principles for the sometimes tedious process of unique book production. These principles are trust, consideration, diligence, patience, research, experimentation, perfectionism and 'letting go'.

Trust:
The practical part of the process first calls for trust between both parties and believing that the said project can be achieved and that the drawings and designs will eventually materialise and translate into a suitable form. In addition to the trust between the collaborators, the process also necessitates trust in myself and my abilities. In other words, believing that I will be able to meet the said goals and complete each task successfully. Self-doubt almost always manifests into a form of failure at some point in the process.

Consideration:
Before the production phase of the project commences I try to anticipate all the materials and tools that I require in addition to all the tasks and actions I will need to complete. This is typically achieved by means of extensive list making, with some of these lists reading as a shopping list of materials and ingredients requires for the process. During the initial layout and printing I also compile a list of all the pages that need to be printed, while another list contains the exact step-by-step procedures I have to take throughout the process.

Diligence:
Bookbinding consist of many small steps, with many of these steps being very simple yet repetitive and time consuming. Diligence is therefore required to push through the medial tasks ahead. Lists are once again a useful ally as a to-do list being checked with every completed task tends to allay impatience and anxiety.

Patience:
Patience is required specifically with oneself to allow for making mistakes without getting angry or giving up, and thus taking the required time to execute tasks properly. I also find (and try to remind my students) that if you are tired, angry or frustrated, you should try to avoid proceeding

with a technical task. Attempting to solve precise technical challenges with a negative frame of mind, is a sure fire recipe for making mistakes.

Research:

Research is an imperative throughout the whole process of making artists' books. I try to look at as many solutions as possible to resolve a particular task or to find alternative options. Consulting a wide variety of old and recently published bookbinding manuals, combing the Internet for advice and watching Youtube videos can assist with various quandaries. It is also very helpful to ask knowledgable people's opinions, or at least discuss the possibilities for particular problems to solve with your peers.

Experimentation:

In the spirit of art making, no single book on bookbinding will contain the solution to *all* possible problems and challenges encountered in the making of an artist's book. Experimentation and making scale mock-ups are crucial for making new breakthroughs. Allowing yourself the time for a safe range of radical tinkering and playing with new ideas and forms is an invaluable principle for the book artist.

Perfectionism:

Perfectionism is a trait that can be both productive and detrimental in the making of an artist's book. It is essential in my mind to produce the highest quality bookwork possible, but there is a point when a too perfectly made book becomes soulless. In other words if the final book is too similar to industrially produced books, it tends to lack character as a result of its overly familiar form.

'Letting go':

Being too close to a project can sometimes cause the binder to lose perspective. There is a fine line where the craftsmanship should be compromised or altered for artistic expression and I would suggest it is a boundary that is constantly shifting. Keeping this in mind, it is often helpful to consult with the artist or friends to gain some impartial perspective on your work. External voices can be very insightful, as more often than not they tend to notice potential problematic details, which might be invisible to the deeply embedded maker. A further aspect of 'letting-go' is allowing yourself enough downtime for relaxation when doing a lot of binding work. The

intricacies of the craft takes a toll on concentration and energy levels, and proper breaks and sleep is important, especially when there is a heavy work toll.

Conclusion

As an artist's book maker the role I take within the bookmaking industry is in stark contrast to a typical commercial bindery. Although there are some overlaps in equipment and skills, many principles are turned on their heads when the practice is done by hand and, more importantly, done as an art practice. It is interesting to note that many art practices are derived from industrial processes that have been obsolesced by new and improved technologies. Etching, for example, made the repeated reproduction of the same image possible in the 1500's, which was replaced by lithographic processes (amongst other technologies) from the late 1700's to present day. Today etching lives on as a revered technique employed by artists to make editioned artworks on paper. Bookbinding, specifically the making of books by hand, has similarly been replaced by mechanised technologies with ever-increasing productivity, and more recently automated digital technology has revolutionised the way we consume information. Nevertheless, the tradition of making books by hand is increasingly being employed by artists as an artistic medium. This point is made apparent by the hundreds of artist's books displayed during the 2017 Booknesses Colloquium in Johannesburg.

Book making has taken on a new meaning or, to put it differently, has become a hybridized multi-disciplinary medium for artists to express a sequential based artwork. In the hands of artists, the book form has transcended from a mere container of information into a complex medium where the content determines the form and the form or structure of the book sympathizes with its content.

As a facilitator of the process of manual bookbinding, I can by no means claim that I have 'figured out' or solved the process of good book arts practice. Every project presents new challenges and it is a continuous process of learning and sharing. The most revealing thing I have learned so far is that the smallest details in the process can have exponential implications in the long run and that your attitude, a hunger to learn and the right space are the basic ingredients to the process of making artist's books for a living.

Artist's Books as Research: A discussion of approaches to and methodologies for Creative Practice Based Research

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Abstract

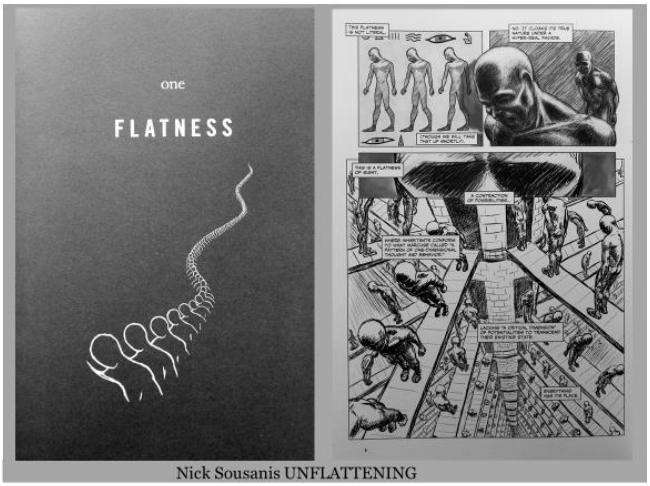
This paper focuses mainly on unpacking selected approaches to and methodologies for Artistic Research. An underlying claim is that the artist's book lends itself particularly well to Creative Practice Based Research. To this end I interweave two threads into my argument. One focus is on theoretical arguments for and explanations of Artistic Research. And the other provides visual stimulus taken from an artist's book. The two threads may not always relate to each other in a logical and linear way, but I am hoping that the reader will use their imagination and make their own links.

Introduction and Aims

This paper interrogates the notion that creative outputs such as artist's books can perform a dual function. By referring to Nick Sousannis' graphic novel *Unflattening* (2015) as well as ideas from my own research and selected authors on practice based research, I aim to:

- Examine how creative research differs from traditional forms of research
- Present arguments for the acceptance of artistic works, including artist's books, as research outputs
- Present selected methods and frameworks for conducting creative research

Unflattening



Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 1 & 6

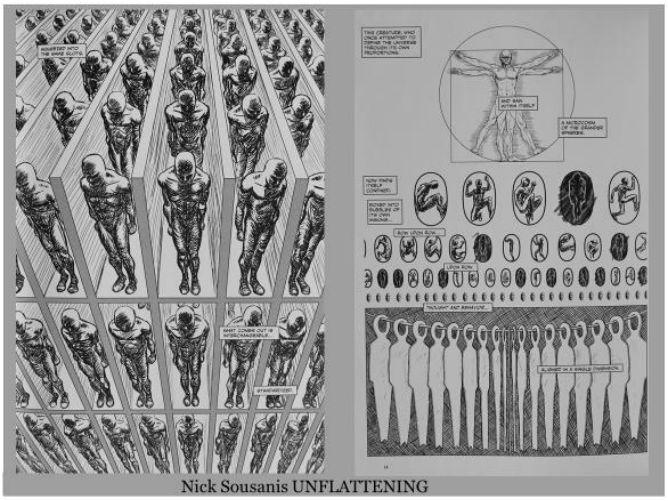
There are numerous examples of artists and researchers who have conducted research about artist's books. Less common is the practice of conducting research through the medium of the artist's book. I have chosen to focus on one particular example, as I believe it provides valuable insights into the nature of creative research.

Nick Sousanis was awarded a PhD from Columbia State University USA for his graphic novel *Unflattening*. He was not required to submit an accompanying thesis. The graphic novel IS his thesis. *Unflattening* is a reaction against narrow and rigid thinking that Sousanis calls "flatness". He draws inspiration from the novella "flatland" by Edwin Abbot. Sousanis makes the point that the visual medium is a powerful tool for cognition and communication and when it is combined with verbal communication it becomes even more powerful. "Unflattening" emphasizes the role of imagination in breaking down rigid thought barriers and established or limiting ways of seeing, thinking and being in the world (Sousanis, 2012).

Flatness

Anyone familiar with *Unflattening* will have noticed that it differs from most graphic novels. Rather than narrating a fictitious story it presents a series of philosophical arguments concerning perception, thinking, knowledge, awareness, to name a few. The book contains an extensive bibliography and detailed notes on the images, which give it a distinctly scholarly feeling. There is no denying the extent and rigour of the research that went into the making of *Unflattening*.

In this case Sousanis' argument is: '*Thought conditioning' by society leads to flatness*.



Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 13 & 14

SOME OF MY GURUS

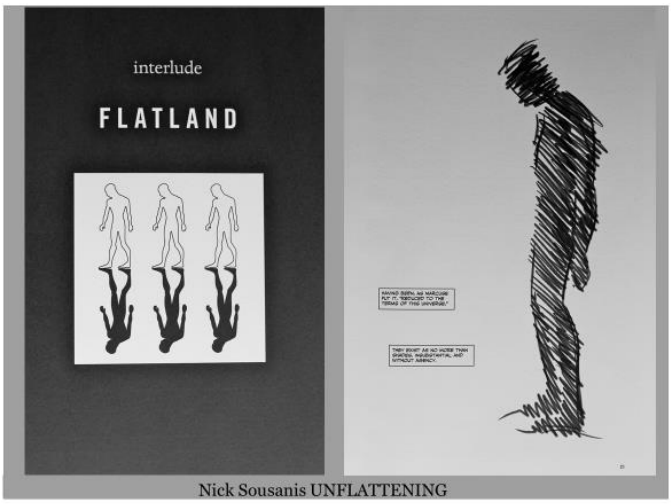
These are some of the scholars and artist/researchers that have influenced my own thinking. I like to think that they have broadened it rather than restricted it.

- Estelle Barrett & Barbara Bolt (Eds), *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry.*
- Henk Borgdorff, *The Conflict of the Faculties.*
- James Elkins (Ed), *Artists with PhDs.*
- Donald Schön*, The Reflective Practitioner.*
- Hazel Smith & Roger T Dean (Eds), *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts.*
- Graeme Sullivan, *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in Visual Arts.*
- Linda Candy and Ernest Edmonds (Eds), *Interacting: Art, Research and the Creative Practitioner.*

(See bibliography for full details)

FLATLAND

The illustration shows one of the inhabitants of Flatland.



Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 19 &21

Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 24 & 25

As researchers are we sometimes "*trapped within the borders of our own vision"?*

A creative practitioner attempting to understand and adapt to the requirements of traditional academic research can easily feel trapped within the borders of academia.

Terminologies

The literature abounds with a confusing variety of terms for practice based creative or artistic research.

Graeme Sullivan's *Art Practice as Research* (Sullivan 2010) and Henk Borgdorff's term 'Artistic Research' (2012) both emphasize that creative practice itself is a form of research. When combined with reflective and reflexive methodologies creative practice can reveal insights and provide understandings that are beyond the reach of 'traditional' scientific research.

Borgdorff makes the distinction between research on, for, and in the arts. The latter category is what Borgdorff (2012) describes as the 'most controversial of the three ideal types'. He describes 'Artistic Research' as *'immanent and performative*', stressing that it involves a strongly reflective and reflexive approach in the sense of Schön's *'reflection in action'* (Borgdorff 2012).

My argument is that the Artist's Book is an art form that lends itself to this form of research.

RESEARCH and ART PRACTICE

RESEARCH	ART
Rigorous, scholarly, theoretical enquiry after new knowledge, resulting in original theories	Intuitive, creative, practical enquiry into the unknown resulting in original artifacts
Objective, reliable, repeatable, measurable	Subjective, credible, unique, immeasurable
Findings presented in a primarily text-based thesis	Outcomes presented primarily visually as creative artifacts or performances

Creative practice IS different from Academic Research in some fundamental ways. However this does not mean it has no place in academia. Evaluation criteria required for assessing creative outputs will differ from those applied to traditional research. My claim is that Creative Practice is no less rigorous, scholarly and valuable than Academic Practice.

Borgdorff poses the following question:

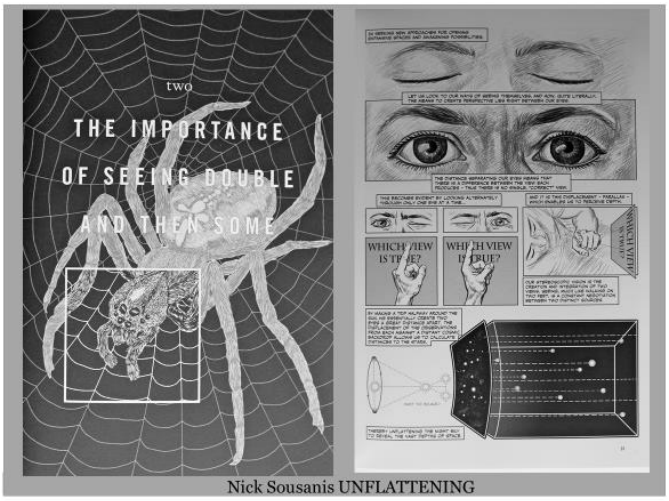
> One of the issues figuring prominently in the debate about research in the arts is: When does art practice count as research? (and its possible corollary: Doesn't all art practice count as research to some extent?). Can criteria perhaps be formulated that can help to differentiate art practice- in-itself from art practice-as-research? And a concomitant question is: How does artistic research differ from what is called academic or scientific research? (2012: 33).

In Smith and Dean's book *Practice Led Research, Research Led Practice* Haseman and Mafe outline six significant differences. I will mention the first one, which to my mind is most significant: they call it "*Resolving the 'problem' of the research problem*". Their point is that for most traditional research degrees one is expected to state the research question very early on, often at proposal stage. Creative researchers do not work in this "*neat and predictable*" way. Problems emerge over time according to the needs and evolving purposes of the practitioner. In some cases "*the practice-led researcher may find problem definition is unstable for as long as practice*

is ongoing and it is only when the practice is done, and possibly in the final phases of candidature, that the final research problem will be decided."

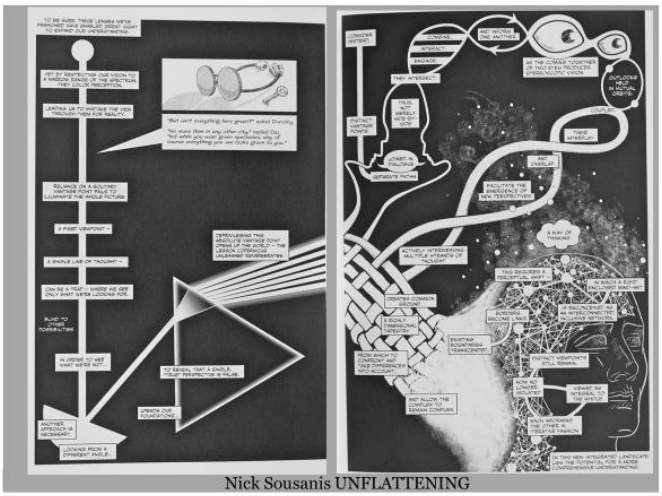
Author of "Flow" and other books on creativity, Csickzentmihalyi, talks about the 'problem finding' nature of the creative process. Creatives tend not to set out to solve a particular problem. The problem emerges through the creative process. Picasso's famous statement "Je ne cherche pas je trouve" speaks to this.

SEEING DOUBLE



Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 29 & 31

Our stereoscopic vision gives us an advantage over flatlanders who only see one dimensionally.



Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 36 & 37

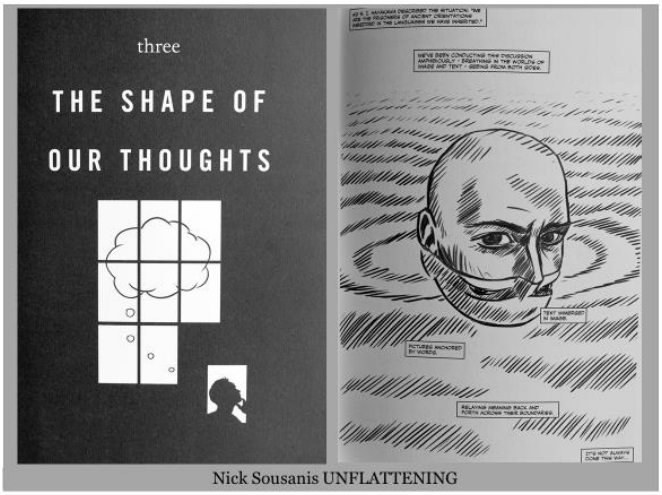
Rather than looking through a single lens it is important to see the world from different vantage points. By combining creative practice with research practice artistic researchers are viewing the world from different vantage points, or through more than one lens.

ART AS RESEARCH

Artistic research (according to Borgdorff's definition) corresponds to and differs from traditional notions of research.

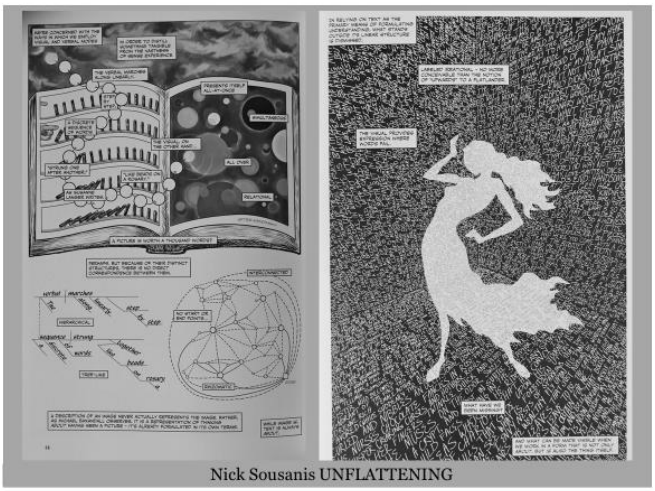
RESEARCH	ART as RESEARCH
Original theories, rigorous, scholarly, theoretical enquiry after new knowledge	Art practice qualifies as research if its purpose is to expand our knowledge and understanding by conducting an original investigation in and through art objects and creative processes (Borgdorff 2012: 53).
Objective, reliable, repeatable, measurable	Researchers employ experimental and hermeneutic methods that reveal and articulate the tacit knowledge that is situated and embodied in specific artworks and artistic processes (Borgdorff 2012: 53) .
Findings presented in a primarily text-based thesis	Research processes and outcomes are documented and disseminated in an appropriate manner to the research community and the wider public (Borgdorff 2012: 53) .

THE SHAPE OF OUR THOUGHTS



Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 49 & 53

How do we think? In words or in pictures? Sousannis explores the combination of text and image. According to Sullivan, artists think in a medium. Thus an artist who makes books can be said to think in the medium of the artist's book. During the process of making the book, research "problems" which require bookish solutions will emerge.



Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 58 & 59

What are the limitations of "*relying on text as our primary means of formulating understanding*"? This is where Practice Based Research can contribute.

Art as Research: Kathleen Vaughan

For another perspective on art as research, let us look at artist/researcher Kathleen Vaughan's description of what she understands by the term 'research' (In Smith and Dean, pp167 -170).

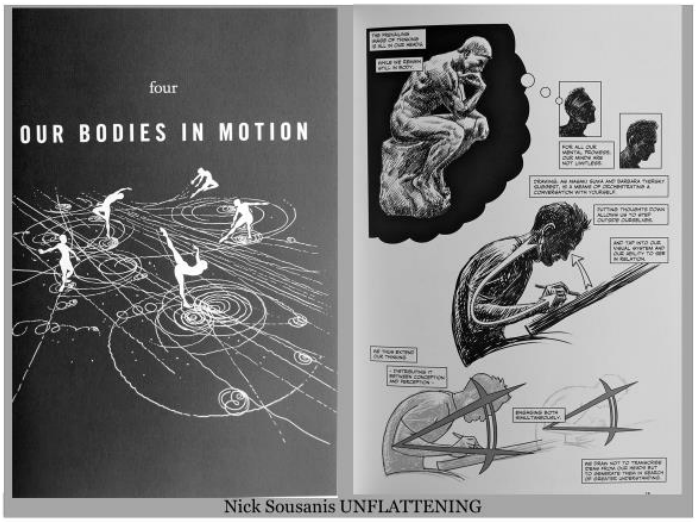
Art as Research: Kathleen Vaughan (In Smith and Dean, pp167 -170)

Art Research as:	**Explanation**
re - search	Looking again *at* and *for* fundamental elements
a process of planning and preparation	Fact-finding, information gathering, as well as technical and conceptual investigations.
reflection and interpretation (hermeneutics)	Reviewing, interpreting, and articulating experiences and emotions. Moving from *tacit* to *explicit* understanding.
art-embedded research	**The knowledge and understanding that is embedded and embodied *in* the artwork.**
a transformative process	Both the researcher and the researched are changed. Something new is evoked.

Her main interest in the relationship between art and research is the philosophical and methodological link. She uses the term *art-embedded research* to describe the knowledge and understanding that is embedded and embodied within the work of art. She notes that the degree and nature of art embedded research will depend largely on the intentions of the artist. She sees "*the role of art as research and research as art less as creating new knowledge and more as calling forth, pulling together and arranging the multiplicities of knowledges embedded within*" (170).

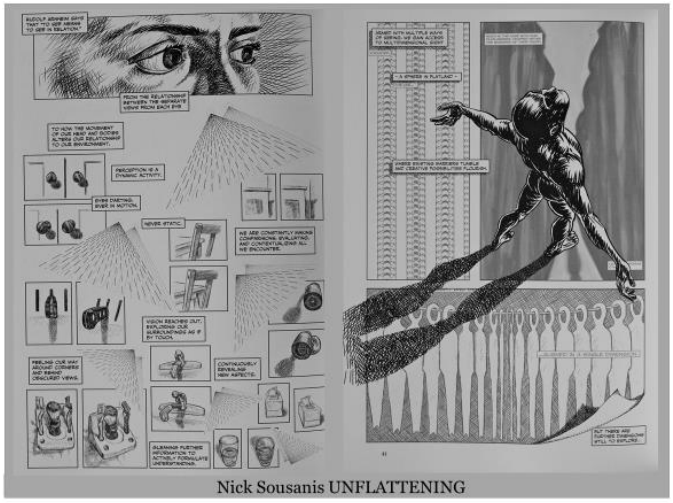
OUR BODIES IN MOTION

Thinking does not occur only in our brains. Our bodies can also play a role, as anyone who draws (or 'makes' in any medium) will tell you.



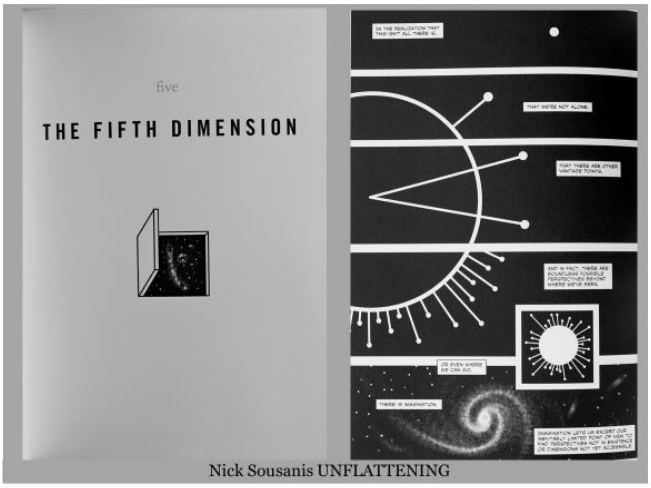
Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 69 & 79

Perception is a dynamic activity involving the different viewpoints of our two eyes. Thus we are able to see in more than one dimension. Practice based research relies on multi-dimensional perception.



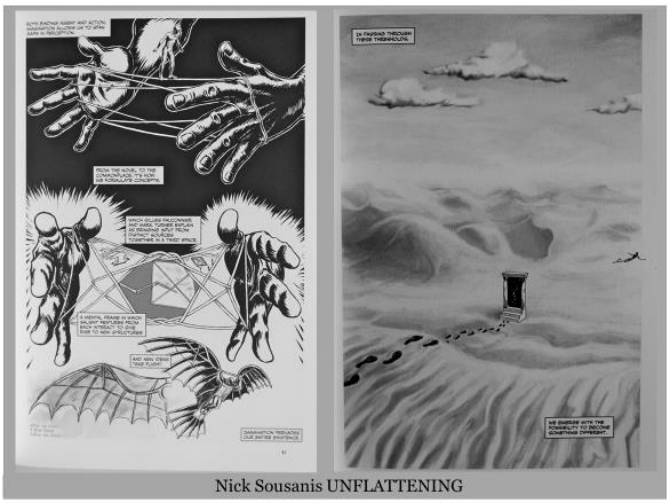
Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 72 & 82

THE 5TH DIMENSION



Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 85 & 88

The 5th dimension or *imagination* plays a role in finding new perspectives. Practice based research recognizes the importance of imagination.



Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 91 & 97

Research aims to find and fill gaps in our knowledge. "*Imagination allows us to span gaps in perception*" (Sousanis). The use of imagination can have a transformative effect.

Foucault's Author functions

You might say: Imagination is so *subjective*, surely research is meant to be *objective*?

A common criticism against accepting artistic work as a form of research is its subjectivity – How can the authors of creative works analyse and discuss their own creations with the rigour and "objectivity" required of academic/scientific research?

Estelle Barrett, in Foucault's *What is an Author': Towards a Critical Discourse of Practice as Research* (In Barrett and Bolt 2009:135-146) provides some useful comments on the position of the author in artistic research. She makes reference to the ideas of Michel Foucault in his essay '*What is an Author?* "In the creative arts, the outcomes that emerge from an alternative logic of practice are not always easy to articulate and it can be difficult to discuss the work objectively given the intrinsically emotional and subjective dimensions of the artistic process" (Barrett 2009:135).

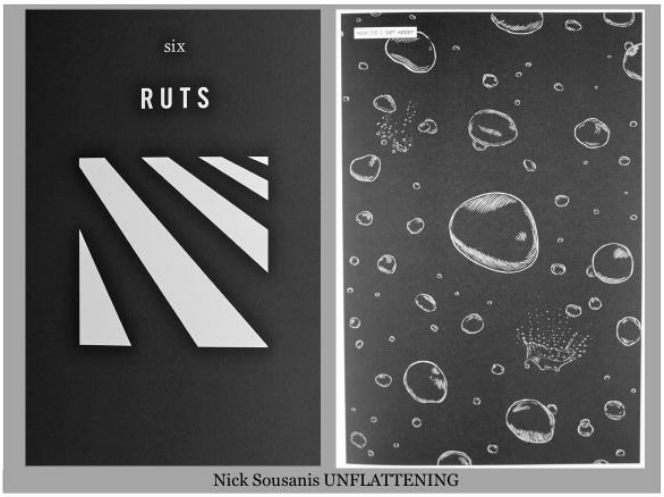
Barrett suggests that artist researchers shift their focus from the *product* to the *process*.
Foucault's notion of author function is presented as *"a useful tool for practitioners who choose to take on the dual role of artist/researcher"* (137).

Barrett claims that the application of Foucault's *Author Functions* "provide a set of objective criteria for grounding practice within the university research context and the general field of research and for articulating possible applications of the outcomes of studio enquiry" (139).

DEALING WITH SUBJECTIVITY
Author Function in Studio Enquiry (Barrett, 2009: 139)

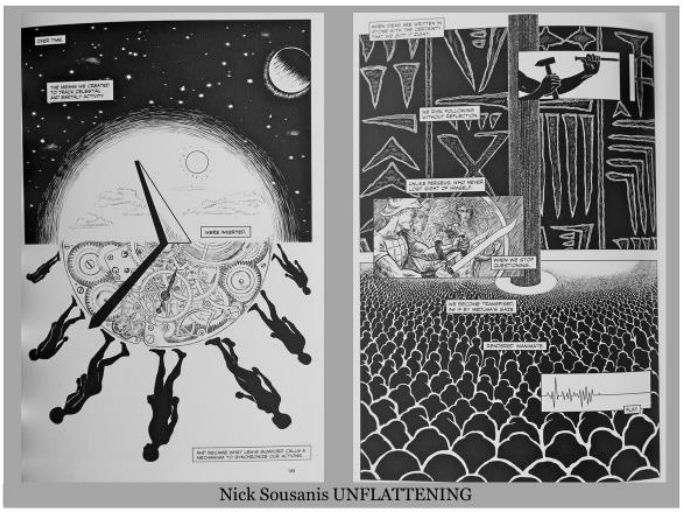
Foucault's Author Functions	Application in Practice as Research
Groups together and defines a certain number of texts/works according to their homogeneity and filiation (Foucault 1991: 107).	The researcher identifies and assesses methodological, conceptual and other links in works produced in the current and previous projects.
Differentiates and contrast works from works of others in order to authenticate and show reciprocal explication (Foucault 1991: 107).	The researcher traces the genesis of ideas in his/her own work as well as the works/ideas of others; compares them and maps the way they inter-relate; examines how earlier work has influenced developments of current work; identifies gap/contribution to knowledge/discourse made in the works.
Establishes relationships among texts in terms of concomitant utilization (Foucault 1991: 107).	The researcher assesses the work in terms of the way it has extended knowledge and how his/her own work as well as related work has been, or may be used and applied by others.

RUTS



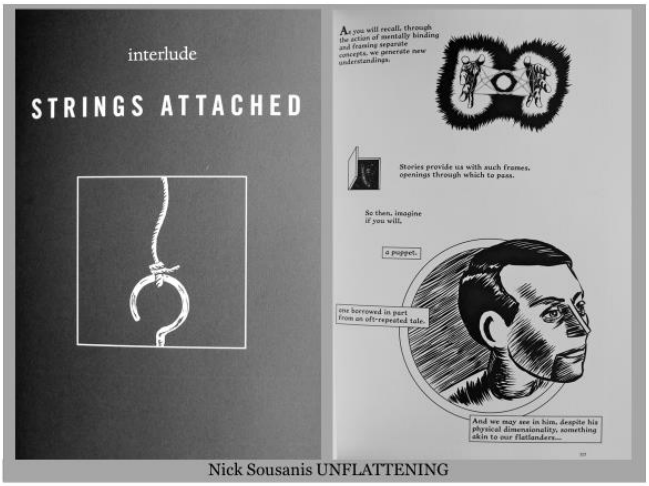
Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 99 & 101

There is a tendency for ideas to become “written in stone” which prevents us from questioning. There are times when being subjected to the requirements of academic research committees feels restricting and “rut-like”. Our discoveries and established theories can have a limiting or controlling effect on the way we think. If we do not question we become “flat”.



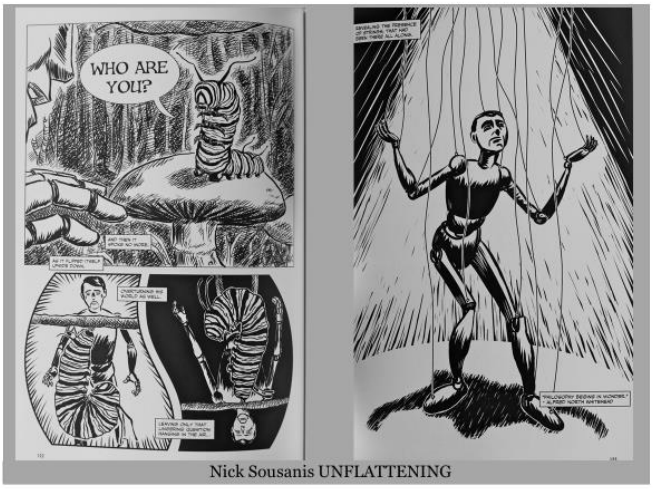
Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 109 & 110

STRINGS ATTACHED



Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 115 & 117

In discussing our condition as unquestioning beings, Sousanis uses the analogy of the puppet…



Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 122 & 123

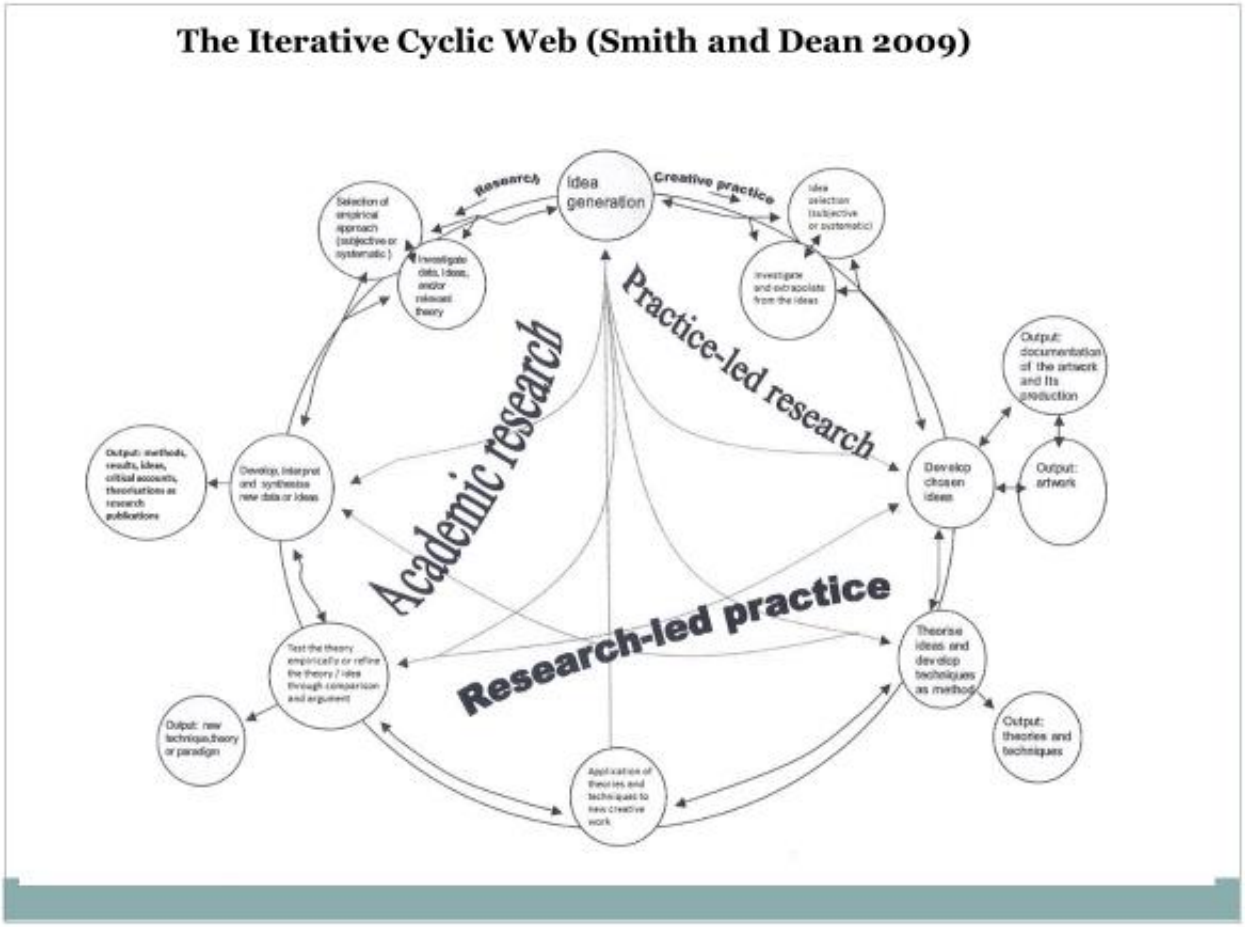
...who is unaware of the fact that he is controlled by strings until he is asked a deeply philosophical question by a caterpillar. Self-awareness results in questioning.

Methodological Frameworks for Creative Practice as Research

What methodologies can we use to structure this questioning? Sullivan suggests that for creative practice as research a new, but informed attitude towards research methodology is required. Researchers in the arts should not slavishly follow established methodologies, neither should

they reject them outright. What is required is a familiarity with established procedures in the arts so that they can be adapted to new purposes (Sullivan, 2010).

The Iterative Cyclic Web (Smith and Dean 2009)

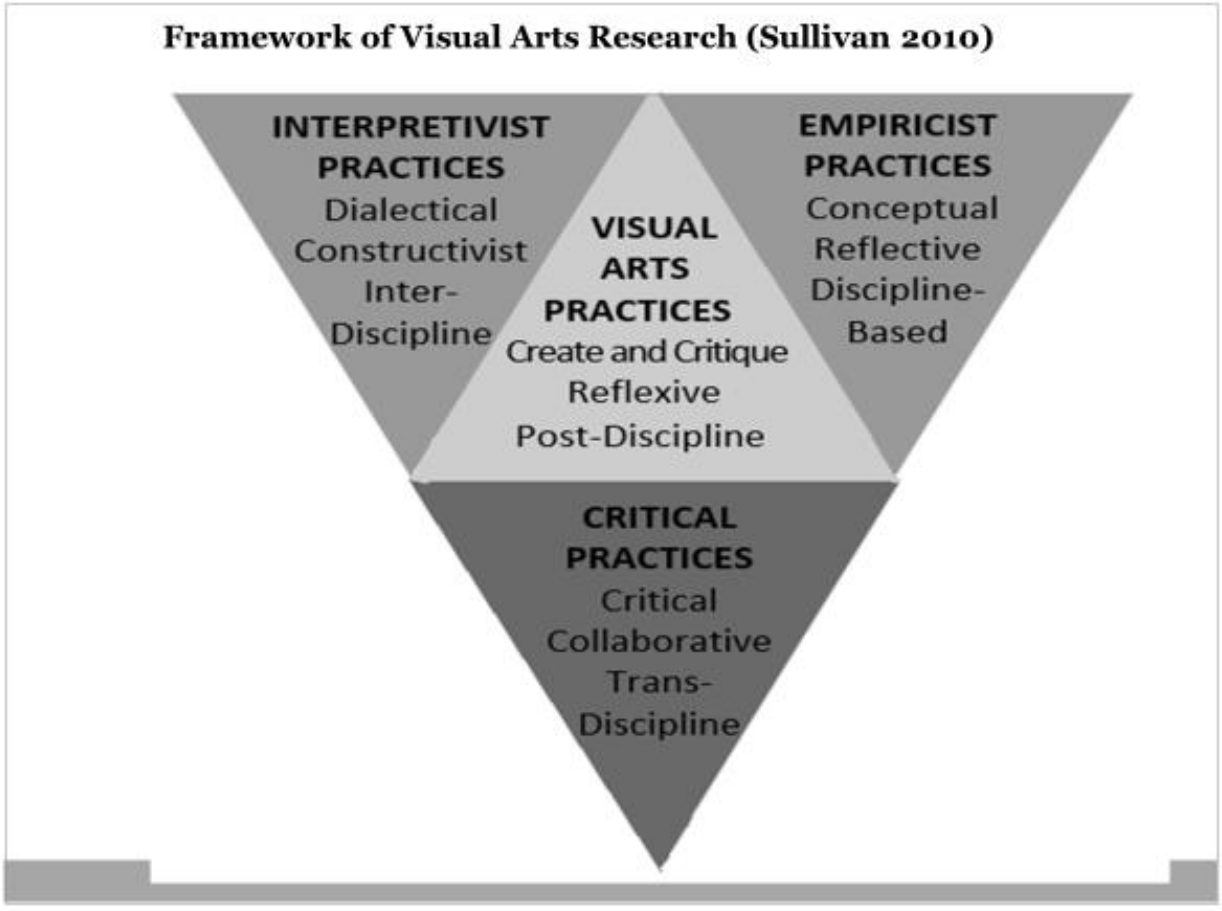


The model proposed by Smith and Dean (2009) is an 'Iterative Cyclic Web' that combines a cycle with sub-cycles and a web structure. Fundamental to their model is the concept of iteration, which is understood as the repetition of a process several times with some variation. Iteration leads to alternative results as choices are made regarding what aspects to focus on during the creative process. Their model allows for both practice-led research and research-led practice, as it is possible to move in either a clockwise or anti-clockwise direction. The web makes it possible to pass across the cycle transversely. Smith and Dean's model incorporates the trajectories of

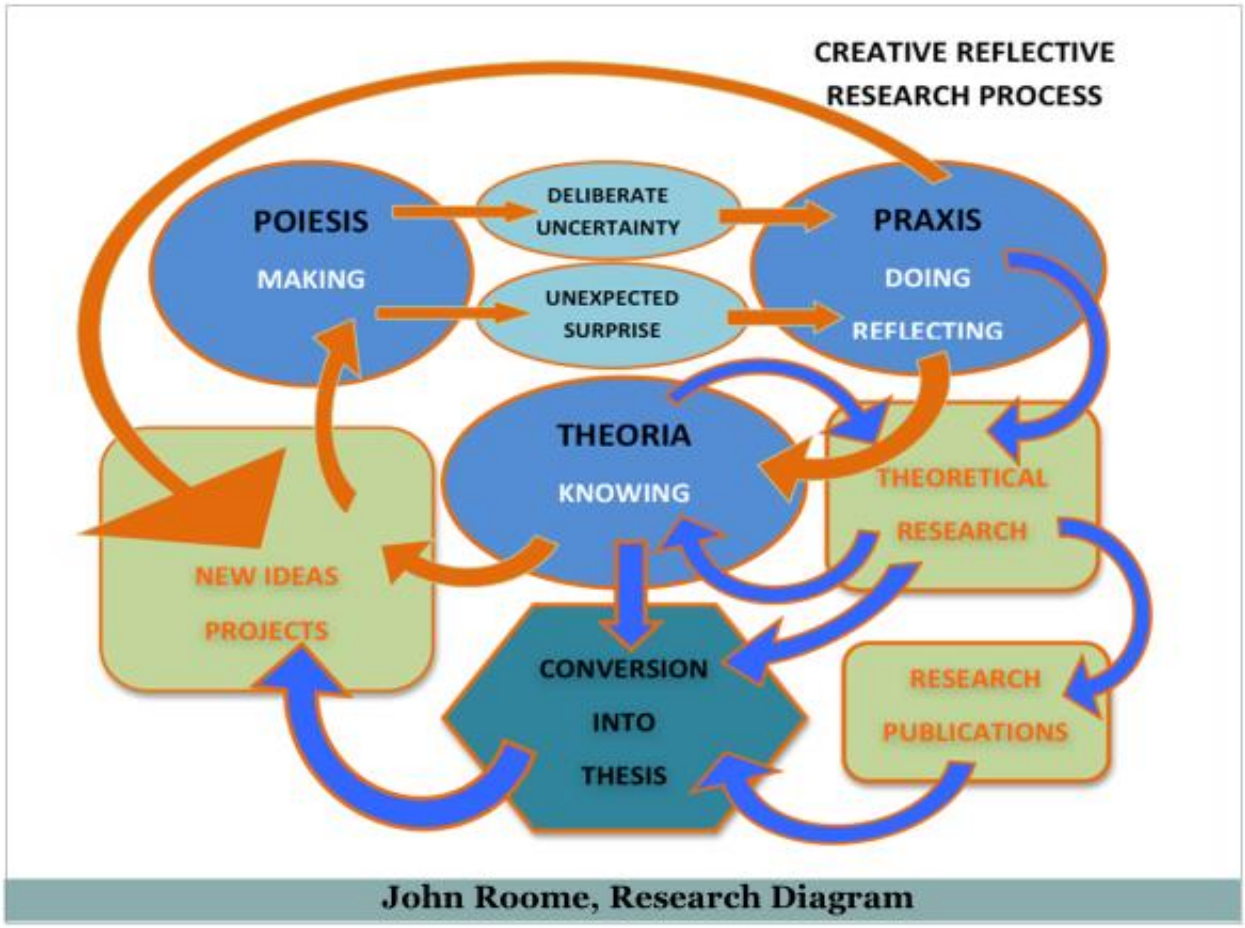
traditional academic research as well as creative practice as research and allows for an integration of both.

SULLIVAN'S FRAMEWORK

For Sullivan 'visual arts knowing' is a result of the artist moving between different sites of cognition that include the artist, the artwork, the viewer and the setting. He refers to this phenomenon as 'transcognition'. The practices of visual arts which encompass the creative, critical, reflexive and post-disciplinary nature of studio-based work are at the core of Sullivan's framework and the researcher is able to engage in and move between the fields of empirical, interpretivist and critical research from this position. Sullivan states the objective while constructing the framework was to ensure that it is flexible enough to accommodate the *'interdependency of interests, issues and approaches' of visual arts research'* (Sullivan 2010).

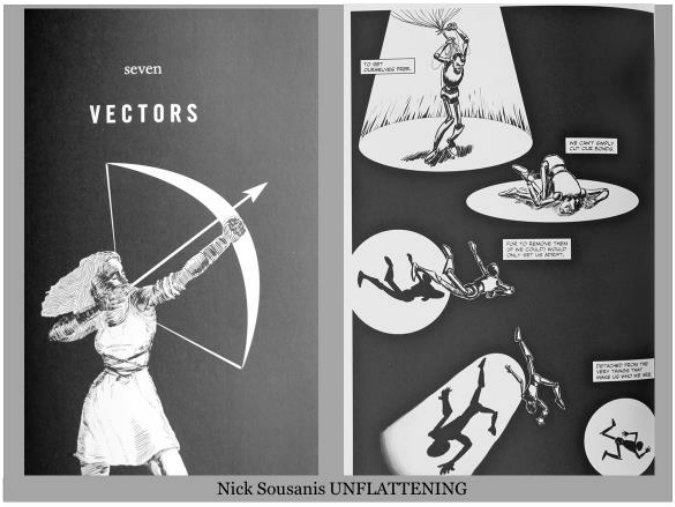


MY FRAMEWORK



My doctoral research focused on the process of using basic computer software to make drawings and animations. I also looked at how this impacted on my creative process in general and more specifically on the production of works in non-digital media. A large chunk of my thesis dealt with an investigation into practice based methodologies and frameworks which led to the development of my own framework. I used the Aristotelian concept of the three types of knowledge as the basis of my own research framework. Thus, my aim was to interrogate the relationship between MAKING (Poiesis), REFLEXIVE DOING (Praxis), and KNOWING (Theoria) in an artistic research context. Rather than making any aesthetic or value judgments about my artworks, I sought to understand and explain my creative process.

VECTORS



Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 125 & 134

Reflection can enable us to break free from our puppet existence. But freedom has its price. By recognizing and understanding the role of our strings they can become “forces to harness”. This allows us to change and develop. Which, after all, is what research is all about, not so?

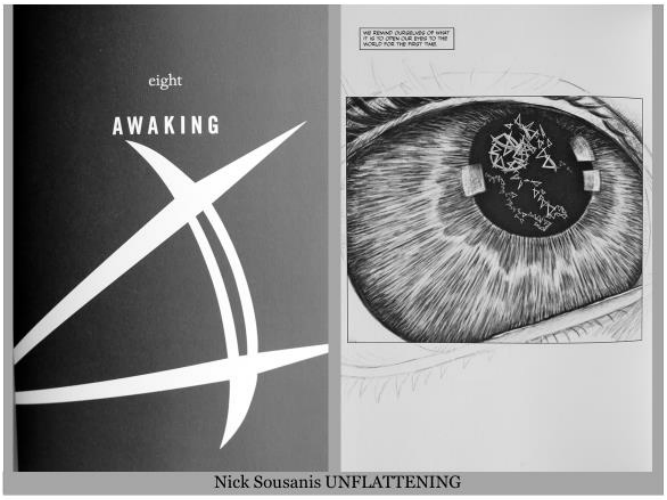
Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 135 & 138

ARTISTIC RESEARCH

If you adopt…

A ppropriate and rigorous
R esearch methods to reveal and articulate
T acit and embedded knowledge through
I nnovative, experimental practices combined with
S cholarly and critical approaches
T hen you are
I nvolved in
C reative **RESEARCH**

AWAKING



Nick Sousanis UNFLATTENING

Sousanis N. 2015 *Unflattening,* pp 141 & 152

I hope that with the help of Nick Sousanis' graphic novel, I have opened your eyes a little to the questions and possibilities associated with Artistic Research.

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Visualising the voices of Redan: A process of knowledge triangulation

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Abstract

This paper presents a project completed as part of a practical Masters in Graphic Design with particular focus on the role of knowledge triangulation in the process of making. This practice-led research project is an exploration of the narrative of identity of the Redan rock engraving site through an experimental application of forensic anthropology to this disappearing landscape. The outcome of the process of exploration and experimentation is captured in a five part artist's book. Through this artist's book, this project aims to allow audiences a glimpse into its aesthetic narrative by capturing the identity of this landscape as it is and may never be seen again.

The creative production process through which this identity is captured entails a complex conversation between three bodies of knowledge, namely thematic focus, visual language and content. Narrative identity directs the study as the thematic focus of the project. Forensic anthropology is appropriated as a processual guide and visual language in the design process. The history of the Redan rock engraving site fulfils the role of content and populates the exploratory process. As content, this site also brings with it the principles of rock art research. This triangulation of knowledge requires an ongoing interaction between the three anchor points. While these three components have significant parallels that make the conceptual direction of this project possible, there are also contrasting aspects that cannot be avoided. This triangulation represents the navigation of the challenges and options that emerge through the creative process.

Visualising the voices of Redan: a process of knowledge triangulation

This paper explores the role of knowledge triangulation in the creative development of the project *Visualising the voices of Redan*, which forms part of a practical Master's Degree in Graphic

Design at the North-West University. The creative body of work is an artist's book consisting of five free-standing book objects. Each book object consists of etchings as loose folios that slot into a Plexiglas box cover. The etchings are printed from Perspex plates that have been laser engraved with a double page spread layout design. The engraving of the printing plates was outsourced to Ms Adri Benade from the NWU Engineering Faculty's fabrications unit. A requirement of the NWU Master's Degree (Graphic Design) for which this is to be submitted in April 2017, is the engagement in practice-led research.

Practice-led research represents an intersection between the contexts of creative practice and traditional research. It advocates the meaningful interaction between theory and artistic production in the interest of responding to a theme, which fulfills the role of the research question (Biggs & Büchler 2008:9). However, the creative production artefact, as the outcome of this interaction, is not an answer but, rather, a single interpretation of the subject matter that is engaged with. In the development of this single interpretation, the practitioner-researcher goes through an iterative cycle of creative production, critical reflection and reframing. This cycle produces myriad theoretical and artistic possibilities from which the practitioner-researcher chooses the better solution for the particular situation. The decision-making process, or chain of reasoning, is guided by the aim or communication goal of the practice-led research project. These decisions are present in the artefact itself, enabling it to embody knowledge and generate insights when placed within the intended interpretative context (Biggs, 2004:3,4; Borgdorff, 2011:44,56). Sullivan (2009:49) equates this practice-led research process to an exploratory journey.

Knowledge triangulation enabled the navigation of the creative production landscape on this particular journey. In navigational terms, triangulation helps one identify a location in relation to three landmarks or anchor points. The reflective process of this project makes use of a similar system wherein creative decisions were positioned in relation to bodies of knowledge and motivated by the project aim. This system is founded on the conceptual foundation of this project. This practice-led research project is an experimental application of forensic anthropology and narrative identity to the Redan rock engraving site. The message or communication goal underlying this application is that landscapes ought to be afforded the same consideration and treatment as human beings.[1] It is an exploration of a hypothetical reality.

[1] This biocentric notion is neither new nor unique - the Bolivian Law of Mother Earth was passed in 2010 and assigns planet Earth a set of enforceable rights (Vidal, 2011).

The knowledge triangulation in this project identifies the creative production landscape. The three anchor points are constituted by narrative identity, forensic anthropology and the Redan rock engraving site with its attached context of rock art research. A decision on creative practice could then be contextualized based on its relation to each of these three points in accounting for differences in the stances presented by bodies of knowledge. The project aim determined which body of knowledge would receive preference where significant differences were evident. In order to understand the discussion on the specific instances where decisions of this nature were made, a brief background to the subject matter is necessary.

The Redan rock engraving site serves as subject matter for this project and is a little known national monument and provincial heritage site located in Meyerton, which is an industrial district of Vereeniging. It consists of a stone circle and an isolated sandstone outcrop whose most distinctive feature – two hundred and seventy-three rock engravings – is currently in the process of disappearing, along with its story. Due to a lack of resources and it being located on private land, the provincial heritage resources authority under which the Redan site falls has been unable to maintain and protect it (Prins 2005:vi, 66, 91, 187; Prins 2014). Ironically, many of the factors contributing to the deterioration of this cultural document relate to it being a heritage site of the rock art tradition. There are no plans in the near future to amend the situation and so the future of the Redan site's physical existence and its story is bleak (Maya 2014).

As such, the aim of this project is to document its narrative identity as represented by its aesthetic, interactions and story. In a very simplified nutshell, narrative identity is a dualist interactionist theory of identity that views the story that one tells of one's life to be the individual's identity. These stories or narratives are built on autobiographical memory, which is as adaptive as narrative itself. It is a class of identity exclusive to human beings, which the Redan site is obviously not (Ricoeur 1991; Klepper 2013:15, 18, 23). However, in accordance with the hypothetical reality that is presented by this project, the Redan site was approached as if it is in fact a sentient being.

The means by which this narrative identity is documented is through the appropriation of the workflow, methods and visual language of forensic anthropology – a field whose practice is also reserved for application to human beings. Briefly, it is the practice of applying physical anthropology and archaeology to human skeletal remains of medico-legal significance with the objective of personal identification. Forensic anthropologists follow a five-phase workflow: case

introduction, scene processing, biological profile determination, trauma analysis and identification and, finally, case reporting (Walsh-Haney 2002; White & Folkens 2005:9, 11, 49). These five phases provided a broad plan of action and the focuses of the five book objects.

In returning to the analogy of practice-led research as an exploratory journey, this project has now has a departure point, destination, and means of transport. The point of departure is the theme under investigation – narrative identity. The destination is the communication goal of legal equality for landscapes as manifested in a body of creative work, more specifically the artist's book. Lastly, the means by which one arrives at the destination from the thematic departure point is creative practice in the interest of preserving the Redan site's narrative identity through forensic anthropology according to its specific workflow. In this manner, the artist's book becomes an adapted case report.

In summary, this section provided a brief explanation of the concept driving the chain of reasoning in the project *Visualising the voices of Redan.* It also explained the system of knowledge triangulation relevant to its creative development. The next section provides a brief overview of the creative practice of the project and elaborates on the knowledge triangulation evident in specific examples.

The triangulated journey behind *Visualising the voices of Redan*

This exploratory journey began with a case introduction – phase one of a forensic anthropologist's workflow and book one of five. The hypothetical task assigned, in accordance with forensic anthropology practice, is the identification of the set of remains. For the purposes of this project, it was narrative identity that was of particular interest. I was introduced to the Redan site by Dr Ian Marley, my study leader, and it fulfilled the role of victim in this Master's project.

Five double page spreads were designed for the first book of this project with the interest of addressing the aspects of the first phase of a forensic anthropologist's workflow. Book one was also the experimentation phase inevitable in the early stages of any creative production project. It entails the establishment of a workable visual strategy. The decision to integrate the rock engravings with the typography was informed by an aesthetic hunch. The interaction of theory and creative practice is a two-way conversation in practice-led research. Therefore, the research-

based response led to Saki Mafundikwa's (2005) book *Afrikan Alphabets: The Story of Writing in Afrika*. He emphasizes the glyph-based orientation of early Afrikan writing systems which supports the notion that this rock outcrop is a cultural text written in a language that we have yet been able to decipher – a glyph-based typeface of sorts. The combination of the DinC font and stippled image produced a display typeface that was hand illustrated and reflected both the industrial and African qualities of the Redan landscape.

Folio four of this first book is *Chain of Custody* (2017). As its title suggests, it describes the chain of custody related to the Redan site as human remains. In forensic anthropology, the application and documentation of this system is very formal. This is not the case for the Redan rock engraving site which may be considered a contributing factor to the decline in the condition of the site. There were definitely individuals that could be identified as taking custody of the site in an informal way due to a significant degree of interest and actively trying to preserve it. However, only one has ever officially taken custody of the Redan site and that is the Vaal Teknorama Museum, in the capacity of a heritage resources authority and tourism centre (Prins 2005:75). Each custodian received a custody card detailing when he or she took over the role and where imagery linked to their contributions could be found, it was included on the reverse of these cards. The three cards that bear these images are those of T.N. Leslie, B. Deyzel and the Vaal Teknorama Museum. Leslie was the site's discoverer and his diary entry regarding the discovery of the site decorates the reverse of his custody card. Deyzel took charge of supervising visits to the sites and the reverse of that custody card bears an image of the site whilst under her care (Prins 2007:44-46). The Vaal Teknorama Museum is the regional museum of the Sedibeng District under which the Redan site falls and one of its engravings is incorporated into the institution's signboard. However, weathering has worn away at the sticker material, almost mimicking the story of the site it protects. A photograph of the signboard is thus the reverse of the relevant custody card.

Phase two of the forensic anthropologist's workflow is the processing of the scene and is fieldwork based. This is the focus of the second book object. The location of a crime scene is an obvious part of processing it. The GPS co-ordinates of the site were used as the main feature of the first double page spread in this book. However, practice and theory run parallel in this Master's degree and it was noted the articles and published material on the site was consistently vague regarding its location. The reasoning behind this would probably have been common knowledge to a rock art researcher. However, as practitioner-researcher, I am not a rock art

researcher and the search for an explanation revealed that the public knowledge regarding a rock art site's location is determined by the situation that the site finds itself in. Consequently, the address or specific location of rock art sites should not be made known unless there are protective measures in place such as walkways, supervision by someone trained for that purpose, access control, and public education surrounding comportment at these sites (ICOMOS 2010:7; Ndlovu 2014:236-239). There is currently no control over public access to the Redan site. Therefore, in response to this information, the GPS co-ordinates were shortened and made less legible in order to align it with rock art research ethics, as I understood it. The co-ordinates were initially also going to be blind embossed, to represent its presence that is unseen and largely unknown. However, the embossing plate didn't function as planned and so it was printed in the end.

Book three focuses on the determination of the biological profile, which includes four aspects: sex, ancestry, age at death and stature. Contemporary forensic anthropology practice has seen the second aspect of the biological profile – ancestry – being excluded due to race being a sensitive social issue (Simmons & Haglund 2005:161; Sauer 1992:107-111). Although, ancestry and race are not the same concept, just as sex and gender are not synonymous. The decision was made to include this biological aspect despite common practice indicating the contrary. The reasoning behind this is that art is a manifestation of a culture and the removal of art from its cultural and geographic context is to remove it from the interpretive context in which it functions. For this site, specifically, its African origins has had a significant influence on its aesthetic, the interactions its had and its "life experiences," all of which are important for the construction of a narrative identity.

The fourth book object deals with trauma analysis and identification. This phase of a forensic anthropologist's workflow entails the analysis of the remains in search of individuating factors, such as a healed fracture that can be linked with medical records, or a genetic bone deformity or prolonged illness or malnutrition, which affects the density of the bones (Walsh-Haney, 2002; Stanojevich 2012:2). In the case of the Redan rock engraving site, the rock engravings were considered distinctive marks that could contribute to identification. This is depicted in the first double page spread of this book.

Through the analysis of the remains for the purpose of finding the label attached to them and describing the manner by which the victim died, the life story or narratives attached to the bones

often emerges. This phase essentially deals with the intangible content that lies between the body and the name. And this close association of the physical body with the experiences that an individual has had is what forensic anthropology relies on for positive identification. This close relationship of the tangible and intangible is also reflected in narrative identity wherein the physical and psychological dimensions are considered ontologically different yet inextricably linked in such a way as to enable one to have an influence on the other.

Another notion that narrative identity embraces is discordance. It draws conflicting perspectives of an individual's being and experiences into a coherent, albeit not seamless, whole (Ricoeur 1991:73, 77, 78). The Redan rock engraving site has been the subject of a small handful of perspectives regarding its *raison d'etre*, which is invariably linked to its authorship. These perspectives range from degenerate art and herder's doodles to shamanistic practices by the San and initiation rites for young girls by the Khoekhoen (Jeffreys 1953:15; Prins 2014; Smith & Ouzman 2004:502; Maya 2014). The last two are the most relevant in contemporary rock art research and considering that neither has been confirmed nor refuted, the decision was made to include both perspectives as two separate double page spreads.

The final phase of the forensic anthropologist's workflow is the reporting on the case. It is also the arrival at this project's destination. The fifth book object summarises the narrative told through the previous four. In forensic anthropological terms it is a summary of the case and the conclusion of a search for an identity. The positive identification of a victim is based on the comparison of records from one's past to one's present as a set of remains. The documentation done of the Redan site in 1967 by Willcox & Pager was conceptually positioned as previous records of this victim's life and are present as blind embossed images on the cover page and single folio of this book. The particular engraving that is the focus of the double page spread was chosen in response to personal experience. On my visits to the Redan rock engraving site, this engraving was always the first to catch my eye. That is not to say it is the first one that I passed but its clarity and scale enabled it to serve as a face of sorts. After all, it is natural to identify a person on the basis of visual sameness and one's face is the first visual interface one engages with.

Summary and conclusion

In summary, forensic anthropology, narrative identity and the Redan rock art site as a part of rock art research field, served as the anchor points in attempting to experimentally construct the

personal identity of a non-human subject using bodies of knowledge exclusive to human beings. The interdisciplinary nature of this study also meant that I, as practitioner-researcher, was required to respond to situations that I was not automatically equipped to respond to in fulfilling the roles of pseudo-forensic anthropologist and pseudo-rock art researcher. This meant that interaction with others with the prerequisite background was sometimes necessary, including individuals that had done research on the site and who were engaged in rock art research or preservation. This was not a situation unique to the theoretical resource gathering related to this project. I had to enter into a collaborative relationship into order to find a working strategy for the production of the printing plates. All of which was daunting in the beginning but very rewarding in the end.

In conclusion, the interdisciplinary nature of this project's interaction between theory and practice played a significant role in the creative development of this project. The system of knowledge triangulation provided a means by which to ensure that artistic practice remained aimed towards a coherent whole while still allowing for exploration. The knowledge triangulation of this study not only enriched the visual language of the exploratory journey but also made it relevant to a broader audience by measuring creative responses against the principles and practices of the various theoretical bodies that served as anchor points.

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Tinboektoe toe app: Remediating an artist's book into an application

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Artists' books as a zone of activity and interface of different traditions relate to several discourses and are also increasingly relevant in the debate about the analogue and the digital (Ploegman and Spronck 2015). Artists' books physical presence and materiality is integral to its reading which invites a haptic reading and appraisal of the book. Yet, artists' books are largely inaccessible to reader-participants. During exhibitions, readers are often prevented from handling the books; and artists' books that are part of collections, remain accessible to distinguished individuals only. The unique, concrete and multifaceted nature of artists' books makes it difficult to convert them into alternative formats. However, more recent developments of the haptic screen and computer tablets and the associated development of applications (apps) offer new possibilities for the remediation and distribution of artists' books.

In his article on the virtualisation of the artists' book, Samuel Teixeira (2015) discerns three modes of virtual remediation of artists' books, namely 1) the rendering of a collection of artists' books in digital archives; 2) remediation as speculative design; and 3) the design of digital artists' books (the so-called "digitally born" artists' books). I would like to add 4) hybrid works, in which concrete and virtual elements are combined. These modes can be explained by means of examples from the *Transgressions and Boundaries* project, a transdisciplinary exploration of artists' books (2009-2011) (Greyling, Marley & Combrink 2011):

1. The artists' books in the project have been documented and archived in various ways, including a website (www.bookboek.co.za), digital catalogue and video of the artworks.

2. The digital catalogue of the project also includes examples of speculative digital representation; some of these speculative representations were made by the artists themselves, while others were made by the curatorial team, for example Roela Hattingh's work, *As die gode by ons kom eet.*
3. An example of a project with a digital origin is Jaco Spies's internet-based interactive drawing, *[translation].*
4. David Paton's *Speaking in Tongues: Speaking Digitally / Digitally Speaking* is an example of a hybrid work.

Teixeira (2015:38-39) notes that "[a]rtists' books as metabooks use their own materiality as rhetorical devices – their materiality defines their identity simultaneously as works of art and channels of communication." For this reason, artists' books *resist*, or even prevent inter-semiotic translations (Teixeira 2015:38). My (Franci) own book from the *Transgressions and Boundaries* project, *Tinboektoe toe*, is an example of an artist's book that resists remediation on several levels, but which at the same time also contrastingly invites remediation. *Tinboektoe toe* consists of several concrete objects. Reading the work requires participating action by the reader. The origin of the work, however, also involved the participation of several people. Since only one copy of the work exists, it is inaccessible for all practical purposes. The work is documented in various ways, though, and parts of the work (poems) have been published. Yet, I always experienced a need to share *Tinboektoe toe* with more readers. But how?

The possibilities offered by new technology (such as the haptic screen, computer tablets, applications and distribution channels), together with the need to investigate the creative possibilities of the new media, led to a team effort to convert *Tinboektoe toe* from a concrete artist's book installation to an application – in other words, to experiment with speculative digital representation. Before paying attention to the remediation, it is necessary first to provide some background on the origin and nature of *Tinboektoe toe*.

The Origin and Nature of *Tinboektoe Toe*

The physical and sensory experience is an inherent part of the reading and interpretation of artists' books, but in the case of *Tinboektoe toe* it also involved the "making" or creation of the work. In the interactive creation of the book as well as its exhibition, three formats may be

distinguished, which each also presupposes a particular relationship with the reader/participant and invites participation.

Correspondence: *Tinboektoe toe* is the story of the Middle Girly who goes on a journey in her wonder craft.

Jare terug het die meisiekind	*Years ago this girl*
na baie droom en baie dink	*after much dreaming and thinking*
uit blik en sink en stukkies draad	*from tin and zinc and bits of wire*
vir haar 'n wondertuig gemaak.	*made herself a magic travel cart.*
'n Tuig wat van die noorderbrug	*A cart that would travel from the north bridge*
op die westewind kan reis	*on the west wind*
van die oosste van die oosterlig	*all the way to the eastern lights*
na die punt van die suiderkruis.	*and the tip of the southern cross.*

On her journey she amongst others collects stories and sends postcards to her friends. These stories, from several narrative traditions, were written in verse form on the limited space of the postcards. The postcards were posted and stamped. The set of thirty postcards were posted to actual recipients between the ages of 5 and 75 over the course of eight weeks (the duration of Middle Girly's journey). In turn, the recipients wrote back to the fantasy character. "Open spots" in the overall narrative and on each individual postcard gave the reader/recipient the opportunity to participate creatively. Through participation, the correspondent could become part of the story world, and of the artist's book. The more than 200 postcards that were received, illustrate how the correspondents responded to various aspects of the work, and participated creatively – amongst others visually, with regard to the contents, and through linguistic play (Greyling 2013).

Artist's Book: The book consists of a three-layer metal container, containing Middle Girly's postcards (which also went through the postal system), the stamps and inking pad. To read the book, the reader has to open the tin, view the postcards, read and interpret them; and view the stamps and use them.

The complete collection (artist's book installation) consists of Middle Girly's three-layer tin and postcards, as well as the collection of tins with postcards from friends. In the gallery, these two parts are displayed a little apart so that the visitor also has to go on a small journey to view

the display. Just as is the case when a case full of old letters is discovered, every reader makes up his or her own story.

The work (in different formats/levels) virtually offers *a performative space* for the production of reading, imagination, creativity, creation and interaction.

Conceptualisation of the *Tinboektoe Toe* App

It is probably clear that a work such as this, with a variety of formats, activities and interaction, cannot be reproduced – it would simply be impractical and unaffordable. However, it would be possible to publish parts of it – such as the postcards – in book format. The tactility of the medium (the postcards) would be lost, however, unless it is designed to contain concrete postcards (like Nick Bantock's Griffen and Sabine series). Such a publication would obviously be very expensive. Teixeira (2015:39) points out that autographic artefacts that are characterised by the materiality thereof, cannot be reproduced in two-dimensional surfaces. The multi-modal, interactive and participatory nature of *Tinboektoe toe*, however, shows many similarities with the technical processes and immersive experiences that are associated with digital media. It could therefore be possible to remediate these aspects of the work. A digital conversion like this, however, would be at the expense of the concrete, tangible materiality of the work. A project like this would also require a team effort.

The challenge was to explore the possibilities of interdisciplinary cooperation, new media and programming, and to find people who were willing to play along and explore. After all, artists constantly experiment with the creative possibilities of new technology, and artists' books are a zone of activity and an interface of different traditions (Drucker 2004:1). The assumption of practice-based research, then, is that the process constitutes an integral part of the research.

The first discussions on the possible remediation took place at the end of 2013. Already in the exploratory talks between Wessie van der Westhuizen (a graphic designer and lecturer in multimedia), Wildrich Fourie (a programmer at CTexT) and myself (writer/artist of the artist's book), it became clear that our different backgrounds, skills and interests were mutually complementary, and that it offered exciting new possibilities. From these discussions and cooperation, the question underpinning the practice-based research project was formulated,

namely: *How may 'Tinboektoe toe', as an artist's book, be remediated into an application, whilst maintaining the integrity of the original work?*

Three and a half years, many discussions and planning, and nights of programming later, we have now just launched the Beta version of the application – also thanks to the help of Louis Fourie (three-dimensional design) and Gustaf Tempelhoff (visual finishing).

Principles Underpinning Remediation

In the conversations between Franci, Wessie and Wildrich, the following aspects were considered fundamental to the remediation:

- **Materiality:** Concrete tactile nature of the work – including the tin, stamps, postcards (handmade, found objects, recycled materials, texture, three-dimensionality, etc.).
- **Participation:** Interactive and creative participation of the reader-participant.
- **Cultural:** Postcards and postal system; the concept and personal nature of correspondence.
- **Aesthetics:** "Look and feel", which links with the original artist's book.
- Other aspects and possibilities that were considered, included the *creation of a database* where participants' postcards could be available for research purposes, and participants could access other people's postcards, share postcards and collect other tins with postcards (similar to those in the display). These function also implied that ethical research principles and conditions of use had to be kept in mind throughout the process.

Although the element of playing and computer games often came up in conversations, and although some of these conventions were used, the starting point for the team was that the application should be unique and have a distinctive character. The integrity of the artist's book was thus the primary consideration, and not the conventions of the game genre.

The remediation would therefore involve the transposition of the *performative space* (Drucker) (for the production of reading, imagination, creativity, creation and participation) to the computer screen and the digital environment.

The remediation of artists' books to digital formats, and especially to the digital screen, poses particular challenges. This remediation implies that the technology and technical processes of

digital media are being used; and that the technological aspects of design, production, distribution and use contribute to the shape, character and potential of what is being created. The concrete multimodal artist's book therefore had to be "translated" to an environment where the material is not tin, wire paper and postal systems, but an environment which operates through the infrastructures and networks of digital devices, engines, software and databases – to an environment where *interface design* and *programming* make the functions accessible and possible.

In the practice-based research space, the knowledge, skills, choices and decisions of each collaborator had an influence on the final product. However, we had a shared vision: that of establishing a unique application that would respect the integrity of the original work. The process can be described as dynamic and exploratory. Obstacles that were encountered, choices that were made, and new possibilities that were investigated, steered the development of the application. Due to various circumstances, the execution of the project also took much longer than we originally planned – this highlights the complexity of speculative digital representation.

The Process of Remediation, Challenges and Problem Solving

Storyboard

A storyboard formed the basis of our discussions and planning. The rationale was that correspondence should be an integral part of the application. The reader/user should therefore participate creatively. To this end, Franci compiled a storyboard in which five parts of the narrative and interactive participation could be distinguished, namely: 1) Cover 2) Start, 3) Entry, 4) Read and write, and 5) Play. This storyboard, which steered the discussions, the programming and the interface design, was also adapted during the process.

Interface design

During the design of the interface, Wildrich focused on concrete tactile artworks, creative interaction, correspondence and the storing and sharing of creative works (user-generated content).

After the initial design, Wildrich investigated ways to find a suitable framework for the application. The framework determines the programming language as well as the functionalities that will be available to carry out the idea. To contribute to the tactile experience, the possibility of creating the application in a three-dimensional (3D) environment was investigated. Several frameworks are available for the development of 3D games for tablets, but the quality and functionality of these frameworks did not meet the requirements of the application – especially not with regard to the number of images that have to be saved. To overcome this problem, it was decided to do the three-layer tin – especially the opening and closing thereof – in 3D and to merge it with the two-dimensional (2D) world of the postcards. Adobe Flash was chosen as the appropriate framework as it is graphically stronger than other frameworks. Adobe Flash also makes it possible to build the application for Android, iOS and as a web page, which can make it available to more users. The 3D design and generation was initially done by Wessie, and Louis Fourie later applied these principles and did the final 3D generation, texturing and animation.

To recreate the tactile nature of the artist's book, the user interface design must fit in with all the other artworks that form part of the book. The phasing between 3D and 2D must blend together and must make the users feel that he/she is looking and working inside the tin. Icons are only barely visible and were designed to blend in with the surrounding texture of rusted tin. The user interface should also flow and feel *naturally*, and the user should be led almost naturally by the correspondence process. To this end, repetitive actions were automated so that the user's input focuses on the inventive creation of postcards.

The participating activities – Programming

In addition to interface design problems, there were many programming problems that had to be overcome. To become part of Middle Girly's world, the user has to register. This requires the user to select a stamp (own images on the computer), and to enter a name and address (an avatar is thus created). This registration information becomes part of the user's own postcards.

In the correspondence process the user must write back to Middle Girly before the next set of postcards can be obtained. This creative interaction is accomplished by three different creative environments, namely collage, painting and writing. The front of the postcard is designed and painted through the use of the collage and paint environments. Then a message for Middle Girly is written on the back. Each of the three different creative environments can be applications on

their own. To reduce this scope, open source programmes and codes were considered. Several parts of the environment come from the *Flash and Math* website.

The postcard is stamped by clicking on the stamp on the outside of the tin, whereupon it is automatically “posted”. Unlike normal application games with a fast pace, correspondence takes is a slow process. For this reason, the programming was done in such a way that a new postcard is received from Middle Girly only after the user had sent an own postcard, and only after 24 hours had passed. The game can therefore not be completed in one day. This slow tempo forces the participant in the *Tinboektoe toe* app to maintain a relaxed pace and to exercise patience. Although the slow tempo might frustrate some users, it could possibly contribute toward a sense of expectation and help the reader-participant to feel part of the story world (immersive experience).

The storing and sharing of the creative work (the user’s postcards) form another level of interaction. This interaction is made possible by the design and implementation of the *database*. An initial problem was to save all the creations of the user without using too much space or memory. The solution for this was to take a digital picture of the artwork when it is finished and to save it. Thus, the multimodal postcard consisting of different dynamic parts, is converted into a static image that requires less space and memory for storing and sending.

Distribution

We originally planned to design the application for Android devices, but Wildrich programmed it so that it can also be played on a PC. The application is available on the *Byderhand* website – our website for research on digital literature (http://byderhand.net/tinboektoe.html). The current version of the application does not yet contain all levels of interaction that we initially planned. These aspects can be explored in the future.

With the launch of the application now, we first want to see how users experience the *Tinboektoe toe* app and how they play along with it. The site has room for feedback.

Conclusion

Through the conversion of the artist's book to a digital format, a new artwork comes into existence, which must necessarily deviate from the concrete work. In the process, however, it acquires unique features that are not present in the original. Both are works in their own right.

With the introduction of the *Tinboektoe toe* app, the team believes that – through the process of remediation (encountering and solving problems) – the app has become a unique work with the same purpose as the original artist's book, namely to encourage creative interaction. The creative interaction of the artist's book and its application may, however, also be applicable to the remediation process as such: All the collaborators played along, made plans and created – from tin and zinc and pieces of wire, from bits and bytes …

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Bookness as Activity

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Introduction

In this paper, I discuss a range of contemporary theories that have proven useful in the design and contemplation of interactive products, systems and services. The topic of interaction design may seem strange for a colloquium aimed primarily at the book arts, however, I believe that central to the creation of artist books is the consideration of the interaction between the reader/user and the artist/author/maker's concept- through the medium of the book.

It is my belief that peoples' interaction with artists' books is fundamentally different to that with traditional books. The function of traditional books is to encapsulate and present their content in such a way as to enhance the content with the expectation that the physicality of the medium will recede. Artist books, in contrast foreground the tangible, functional attributes of the book as the central narrative device of book. So while containing content, the functional engagement with the artist book is in essence the primary media of the artist book.

This brief description of artist books is not intended to fully account for the rich and complex world of the artistic form. Rather the intension is to highlight the position that as a medium, artist books share many similarities with the design of other interactive products most notably that they are primarily considered in terms of how they will be used and, that they are media that at time reveal and at other times recede their functional attributes.

Brief introduction to Interaction Design

Interaction Design (IXD) is the design of technologically mediated human activity. IXD is foremost concerned with the relationship of people and technology in the performance of activities in particular contexts (Benyon 2014:104). While IXD is mostly associated with contemporary digital technologies, IXD can also be understood as a broader approach to contemplating, critiquing and designing products, service and systems for human use (Benyon 2014:105), digital or other. 'Use' is understood in this context as a form of embodied engagement, while technology is anything artificial that extends the capabilities of the human body and mind. 'Use' is closely associated with the concept of experience, which is understood here as the both the culmination

of our lived experiences (Wright & McCarthy 2010), and, as being in the 'now'- 'the stream of feelings and thoughts we have, while being conscious' (Hassenzahl: 2010:1)

While IXD is a relatively new field it has inherited a rich theoretical background from its parental disciplines most notably Human-Computer Interaction (HCI), Design and the Humanities. Thus the theoretical positions presented in this paper are a subjective selection from a much wider range of choices, presented in an introductory manner in the hope that those involved in with artist's books might find some relevancy.

IXD has many discursive influences and subsequently has many paradigmatic approaches to theory ranging across positivism, interpretivist, design science and critical theory. In this essay, I will limit my discussion to theoretical accounts from philosophy and psychology as they are useful in considering the 'human actor' in the conceptualisation of technological mediation. To this point the remainder of this paper will introduce and discuss philosophical concerns related to a phenomenological account of experience as well as psychological influences on IXD centered on Activity Theory.

Philosophical influences

- **Embodiment**

Fundamental, to understanding IXD from a philosophical position is the notion of embodiment. Embodiment takes the position that while technology extends what it means to be human, this extension is inherently related to our embodied, situated selves 'being', 'moving through' and in 'conversation' in and with the world.

Embodiment is associated with Phenomenology, a philosophy that focuses on the everyday experiences of people and the phenomena that they encounter (Benyon 2014:106) in their 'life-world' (Husserl in, Dourish 2004:106). As we will discuss later, Phenomenology addresses experience as originating in individuals subjectively but collectively shared through a shared common socio-cultural background (ibid).

Phenomenology, most notably through Husserl (1859-1938) and Heidegger (1889-1976), rejects the notion of Cartesian dualism (Dourish 2004:105), which separates thought from action. Heidegger, particularly, stresses that thinking is a repercussion of 'being' and that 'being' comes first (Dourish 2004:107). For Heidegger, the world around us generates our understanding of the world as our understanding of the world is essentially an understanding of how we are in it (ibid, Wendt 2014:15). As Dourish states "We inhabit our bodies and they in turn inhabit the world, with seamless connections back and forth" (2004:100). This notion of thinking while 'being' in the

world is often referred to as ‘embodied cognition’ and speaks to a realisation that there can be no separation of mind, body, and the world in our thinking and doing in the world.

In light of interaction, embodiment is impactful in two fundamental ways. Firstly, it describes how people contemplate use, while in the act of use and, secondly, speaks to a form of thinking that takes place in relationship to ‘doing’ and the world. This last point relates to ‘use’ but also extends to include the type of reflective thinking/doing involved in creative acts of making.

- **Flow and contemplative action**

In the design of ‘use’, there is always a tension between flow and contemplation. ‘Flow’ relates to a state of use during which, the technology that supports the users’ activity recedes into the background of the activity. For example, when playing a computer game, the experienced player will be immersed in the game, seemingly oblivious of the controls and screen that channel and control the game. Contemplative action, on the other hand refers to the considered and conscious use of technology to support activity. An example of this would be the inexperienced gamer learning how to control the game conscious on the indexical relationship between the control and the avatar, or the conscious intention we bring to transferring money online.

Heidegger termed these aspects ‘present at hand’ which refers to the conscious use of an object to perform an activity with ‘ready to hand’ used to describe the natural flow of use contained within the interaction of the person and the technology (Dourish 2004:109). While Heidegger sees ‘present at hand’ as the necessary precursor to flow, I believe these notions of flow and contemplation can also be viewed in a less hierarchical sense in which contemplation and flow can be, depending on the activity, be more or less appropriate. An example of this is that 90% of the time I drive my car, I am in flow, however, given an unusual or difficult activity to perform such as reversing out of a bay in a busy parking lot, my relationship with the car switches to a ‘present at hand’ one where I am conscious of the gear, the brakes, the steering wheel and my surroundings.

Intentionality and intersubjectivity.

Intentionality refers to the relationship between an entity and its meaning (Dourish 2004:109). Intersubjectivity, on the other hand refers to the common understanding of meaning (Dourish 2004:132). In Phenomenology, where experience is recognised as a subjective state, intersubjectivity denotes how different people within a context can have or come to have the same understanding of a particular phenomenon. In essence, intentionality and intersubjectivity

are the conceptual building blocks that the designer, through the medium of the interactive product, uses to communicate the meaning for users 'in the course of activity' (Dourish 2004:138).

In IXD intentionality is conveyed through a range of communicative devices such as poetics and affordance. While poetics is the language of visual art and design, the concept of affordance is arguably less well known. Affordance, however, is fundamental to understanding embodied cognition. Affordance refers to the observable properties that determine how an entity can be used (Norman 1990:9). For example, the door handle in Figure 1 affords that your hand should move up or down too open, while the oven knob indicates through its roundness that it should be turned. Chairs afford that we sit in them, beds that we lay in them, levers that we pull them, buttons that we push them. Affordance are key cognitive devices that communicate with the person the opportunities and limitations of their environments.

Dials afford that we turn them

Door handles afford that we pull them

Chairs afford that we sit in them

Grips afford that we handle them

Figure 1: Various examples of affordance

Coupling

Coupling is concerned with the relationship between actions, entities and meaning in the realisation of effective activities. Coupling refers to the use of an entity in an intentional manner by the user to the extent that the entity recedes into a 'natural' state of interaction with the body. Examples of coupling include prescription glasses that become an extension of the wearer eyesight, a professional cricketer's bat, or an artist's paint brush. Coupling is a prerequisite for flow and particularly in regards to technology introduces notions of the post-human, as the technological mediation of the body that extending what it means to be human.

Co-created narratives of experience

While flow, contemplation, intentionality and coupling address modes of embodied engagement, co-created narratives of experience refers more directly to the embodied self's dialogical relationship with the world and its entities. As discussed earlier, people, as embodied actors, generate an understanding of their life-worlds through their engagement with the world. Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of 'creative understanding'[1] is described by Wright and McCarthy (2010:51) as when new meanings and shared understanding emerge through engagement with others, in alternative iterations of talking and listening. While creative understanding is used by Wright and McCarthy to describe participatory learning it's a useful construct for describing the embodied experience of being in the world, specifically in terms of engaging with entities in the world.

Our engagement with artefacts is always discursive albeit perhaps at an experiential level rather than a spoken one. In traditional media the discursive narrative while perhaps conditioned through affordances and symbolic means is always generated in human contemplation for human consumption. Interactive products, within which I include artist's books, however, differ fundamentally in their ability to, through their functional and embedded media, respond to the human narrative with narrative in an iterative and evolving manner. Thus to design the interactive product is to contemplate conversation and storytelling over durations and episodes of time.

From philosophy to psychology

So far in this essay, philosophical theories that inform IXD have been discussed, but a question remains as to how best can these propositions be applied in practice? For IXD, which has at its heart a commitment to actionable and often emancipatory change, phenomenology provides a number of consideration that inform practice. Perhaps, most clearly is the notion that the life-

[1] See *Technology as Experience* (McCarthy and Wright 2004:12) for a detailed account of creative understanding.

worlds of people central to phenomenological understanding must be better understood by the designer before a consideration of action can take place. Furthermore, Interpretivist approaches accept that exploring the life-worlds of people results in complexity that can only be only ever be interpreted by the designer; as opposed to explicitly known. Design and other forms of research have a number of interpretivist modes of engaging with users' subjective and intersubjective experiences. Methods include but are not limited to ethnography, observations, qualitative interviews and narrative interviews. Many of these approaches are valuable in constructing understanding of peoples' current situations and the problems they face. However phenomenological interpretations can be less useful in describing users' preferred experiences or in other words the future they would like to inhabit.

To this point, I have found Activity Theory (AT) to be of great use for recognising design potential, in user communities, in a manner that conceptually aligns with many of the philosophical positions associated with a phenomenology account of IXD. In practical application, I believe the philosophical and psychological theories of IXD should be applied in an integrative manner in which the philosophical exploration provides a rich background of meaning from which the psychological activity-based understanding emerges and eventually orientates action.

Activity Theory

Activity Theory is a Marxist theory (Kaptelinin & Nardi 2012: 13) developed in the early half of the 20th century by Russian socio-cultural psychologists including Alexey Leontiev, Lev Vygotsky and Sergei Rubinshtein. Fundamental to AT is the notion that activities are generative forces that transform those performing the actions (*the actors*) as well as the entities in the world encountered by the actors during their performance (Kaptelinin & Nardi 2012:13). Furthermore, AT employs two assumptions. Firstly, that actors have needs that determine and organise their activities, and, that secondly, activities and associated actors mutually determine one another (Kaptelinin & Nardi 2012:13).

In brief, the second assumption refers to the relationship between the actions we, as humans, perform and the result of the action on us. For example, my ability to cook using a new recipe is based on the recipe, the ingredients, the state of the kitchen and my knowledge of cooking. But cooking the meal will affect how I cook all subsequent meals. Thus, my experience of cooking is conditioned by my previous experience of cooking and will subsequently condition my future experience of cooking. In this sense, there is a continuous iteration where action generates knowledge, but knowledge in turn orientates appropriate action. In many ways, the concept of

experience emerging from previous experience equates with Husserl's 'life-world' accounts of experience which forms the subjective and intersubjective world of human meaning.

However, as this section is related to designerly concerns of *what could be*, I will focus on how AT provides an approach to understanding human need and the speculative considerations for determining how best to organise and support these needs. For this purpose, the remainder of this section discusses theory related to motivated activity in AT.

Figure 2: The hierarchical structure of human activity. Adapted from Hassenzahl 2010: 44

AT suggest that human activity is can be described in a hierarchical structure as described in Figure 2. In the hierarchy (Kaptelinin & Nardi 2012:28; Hassenzahl 2010:44), activities consist of actions and motivations. Actions are goals that are typically recognisable to the actor performing them. Motives, on the other hand, are often only tacitly recognised by the actor and emerge from the lived experience of the actor rather than through the immediacy of the action. Motivations orientate goals and are the final purpose of the goal. It's worth noting that many of the steps involved in completing the goal may not be directly indexical to a specific motivation and may be coloured by cultural practice, other motivations and subjective problem solving strategies. For example, if we think about the goal of 'making a phone call' as a stand-alone goal stripped of motivation making a phone call is a pointless act. To whom? For what purpose? Would we make a call to just for the sake of making a call? Thus generally, we have some motivation for making a call. We need to connect, be heard, accomplish something etc. However,

we don't necessary think about our actions in these motivational terms, we just make the phone call. Additionally, our decision to make the call can hinge on outside factors such as 'cheaper calls after 7pm' or 'privacy'. Hence, the action 'wait till I am alone' or the secondary motivation 'save money' colours the goal of making the call

Goals in turn are comprised of smaller sub-units of activity called operations that provide the conditions for the actions to occur. For example, am I using a mobile phone, a landline or an old radial dial phone to make the call? Each phone realises the activity but each in fundamentally different set of conditions.

In terms of design, what makes the hierarchical structure particularly useful is it can be applied to determine the scope of design problems. For example, when conceiving of interactive products, we can use the hierarchy to:

1. Assess if existing goals align with users' life-motivations. If they don't, chances are that users won't feel the design product is relevant to them.
2. To identifying users' motivations. We can then consider alternative goals (and subsequent conditions) that we can support through our artefacts. As we address users' life-motivations there is a good chance our new concepts will be relevant to our users.
3. Recognise that if goals align with motivations and users still struggle to use our products, then we can assume that we need to rethink the operations and conditions that support the goals.

Concluding remarks

It is perhaps in reference to this third point that we can begin to speculate as to another level of relevancy between artist books and interactive products. While this paper has outlined the theoretical concerns of IXD that may or may not be brought to bare on artist books, I believe there is a need for future work that explores what types of theory and practices could transcend artist's books and inform IXD. But, perhaps in my opinion, what would be even more compelling is work that seeks to speculate as to how both IXD and artist book thinking could influence our developing world of smart spaces and objects and the activities, we will perform in and with them.

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Archival remnants: following traces of human presence and agency amongst the records of an archive

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Abstract

This presentation will examine some of the material aspects of the historical records held by the Western Cape Archives and Records Service, to examine evidence and traces of human agency and intervention in the creation and maintenance of South Africa's oldest archive collection. The study of the material aspects of books and documents is increasingly being recognised as an essential part in the study of ideas and the dissemination of knowledge as a socio-cultural phenomenon examined by various disciplines within the humanities (for example, history, anthropology and philology, amongst others). This presentation will attempt look at what the material elements to be found within this archive's collection could offer the community of practitioners creatively engaged with the idea and practise of "the book".

The manner in which archival records have been shaped over the course of their lifespan, from the time of their creation and initial manufacture, to their use as administrative documents and record in their subsequent ordering (and, sometimes, re-ordering) into an archival collection over time has left material traces of the process. It is a process shaped by a number of factors, both of a practical nature (such as current technology), and, of the prevailing sensibilities and fashions.

Some of these traces are important to the conservation treatment and repair process of the archival record; in that they provide evidence of earlier forms of a document that may be more appropriate to modern conservation concerns. While other aspects raise important questions about the limitations and reach the conservation treatment process, and, whether aspects of the document often removed in the conservation treatment and repair process are not intrinsically vital to the document's authenticity and identity.

This illustrated presentation will draw on examples found in the Archive.

Acknowledgements and thanks

Dr Robert Shell (1949 – 2015): always encouraging, support that was more valuable than you probably ever realised. This is not the article we discussed back then, but it's a start. Your memory and enthusiasm constantly looked over my shoulder in the conceiving and writing of this. Josephine Minicki (1916 – 1999): whose interests and personality have profoundly shaped mine, which I only came to realise when it was too late to say thanks in person. Abubakr Jardine, Conservation Assistant at the Western Cape Archives and Records Service: not only for his valuable assistance in preservation work at the Archives, but also for his help and support over the years.

Introduction

As a point of departure, if we take that artist's books display a much more interventive interaction with the page and the book-structure – as the materials, fabrication and composition are there to be manipulated to the artist's specific intent, or are accepting of a more explorative and whimsical outcome.

What then of the actual historical archives? What can they offer us in terms of an understanding of the creative impulses and routines of manufacture involved in the making and shaping of a historical record, within its particular spatial and temporal context? What kind of dialogue is possible with the past in this way?

Without negating the appalling history of this country that many of these records document; nor, the necessary debate currently being played out in the public realm with regard to the place of historical collections with their origins that appalling history; nor, the acknowledged problematic nature of the archive,[1] as a construction in the exercise and maintenance of power. Maybe – somehow, there is the possibility of a dialogue with the material evidence of archival records that can inform our idea of creation, agency and transformation of records from spare carriers of

[1] For a useful summation of the issues around archives, see: Swartz, J & Cook, T. *Archives, records and power: the making of modern memory,* 2002.

"factual" information, to a more fleshed-out understanding of the human presence and agency present in the composition of these records?[2]

Archival records are more than just the textual or written information that is contained in them. Their material aspects also bear witness to their act of creation, a lifespan of use and eventual afterlife within the archive. Documents undergo active transformation, even before being bound into volumes or gathered into tied bundles destined for archival storage. The transformation leaves behind more palpable traces of the human hands that shaped these records.

As a conservator I am naturally interested in this kind of a dialogue, as many of these remnants serve as sign-posts that guide conservation treatment and repair decisions, as they bear witness to earlier forms and iterations of a document, as well as of earlier forms of harm and / or purposeful alteration. I am of a mind to think that those creatively engaged with the page and the binding as medium of expression could also possibly be interested to see what an archive could reveal.

I would like to share with you some of what I have found in the Archives of the Western Cape; as it is important to establish our own history of the archive, in all its elements, no matter how tentative and partial that narrative may be. In no way am I sure of an entirely successful outcome in this exercise. It may well be that this is no more than a very useful exercise in the ordering and marshalling some thoughts and experiences I have had in working with the records at the Archives. I hope it will be more, or at the very least, that it may just be the start of something that will progress and grow.

Background and context to the Western Cape Archives and its collection

The Western Cape Archives and Records Service is the oldest and second-largest archive in South Africa. It holds some 45 linear kilometres of shelved records in its care. Its records begin in 1651, with the minutes taken on board of a ship.[3] The Archives has had several locations

[2] Comaroff (1992:34); Stoler (2002:109)
[3] Colonisation of South Africa began in 1652, when representatives of a Dutch company , the Dutch United East India Company (Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie or VOC),landed at what is now Cape Town to establish a refreshment station for ships traveling to Asia for the spices and other goods from Asia. For more on the history of the VOC and its archives, please see the following link: http://www.Tanap. net/content/voc/ history/history managevoc.htm and http://www.tanap.net/content/voc/organization/organization_intro.htm

throughout its history since its establishment in the late 19th century, including that of the current Cape Town Castle, Iziko Slave Lodge Museum, and the National Library's Centre for the Book. Its contents are predominantly that of the business of government: be that government the colonial administration of the day, or later administrations and regimes, including our current post-apartheid administration. There is also have a small but significant "non-public" records collections, items donated to the Archive's by private persons or organisations that are considered to be of an enduring informational value.[4]

South Africa's national archival system has its origins in the legislative and administrative mechanisms that regulated colonial rule. These saw an extensive official and non-official record creation and -keeping by colonial officialdom, missionaries, travellers, public figures and scholars, amongst others. During the 19th century, there was a growing awareness locally, of the concept of archives as repository of the paper-based records of European colonial setter's doings.[5] The origins of South Africa's current institutionalised archives system, as an instrument intended to preserve the records of government, dates back to the late 19th century. In 1876, the Cape Colonial government administration (then under the control of the British) appointed an ad-hoc commission to collect, examine, classify and index the archives of the colony. Embryonic archival services were later established in Natal, the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony around the turn of the 19th century.

It was with the promulgation of the *Public Archives Act No 6 of 1922,* that the nature and shape of our archival system was formalised. Despite a number of revisions of archival legislation since then, the format has remained largely the same.[6] In the Act the administration of government

[4] The custody and care of South Africa's archival heritage is shared to varying degrees between private individuals, civil society institutions and organisation, and the state. In South Africa, the distinction between the keeping of private and public records is somewhat blurred – public (i.e., government) archives have been mandated to collect non-public records of enduring value since the first archives legislation was promulgated in South Africa in 1922 (Archival Platform 2015:19-20).

[5] Though the focus of government archives of the colonial era was to document the deeds to the European settlers; those classed as bon-European and/or African entered the domain of the archive, in ways that were inadvertent and ways that were intentional. However, their voices – such as have survived within the archival record - were framed within institutional settings in which power relations were uneven, sublimating their voices within the surviving record. African lives entered the archive in commissioned ethnological and other surveys that were instrumental in establishing authority over the land and its people – maintaining control and reinforcing a particular hierarchy of knowledge essential to colonial control. Other, inadvertent ways in which non-Europeans entered the archival record included court records and correspondence with officialdom have also left faint traces of lives and deeds past (Archival Platform 2015:20; Stoler 2002:100).

[6] See Archival Platform (2015: 20 -23) for a summation of the various legalisation revisions by subsequent political regimes, including that of the Apartheid-era Bantustans or "Homelands". Subsequent chapters two and three in the report trace the history of Archives post-1994. Also, see Coates (2009:9-32) for an overview of the start of British colonial Administration at the Cape Colony from 1806.

records was to be centralised under the control of a Chief Archivist (falling under the, then, Ministry of the Interior), along with the establishment of four provincial-based repositories; as well as a fifth archive to house the records of central government to be located in Pretoria, the administrative capital of the Union of South Africa. The Chief Archivist was tasked with the management and preservation of national and provincial government records that were no longer required for immediate day-to-day administrative purposes within government departments and offices.[7]

Historically, and currently – as an agency of the state, the public archives service mirrors the political and administrative changes of our country's historical trajectory. Archives in South Africa were shaped initially as an instrument of colonial regulation, and more latterly by the prevailing apartheid ideology and its supporting bureaucratic culture. Under colonial and apartheid rule, public archives had a narrow mandate in respect of public records; and, the guiding apartheid-era policies saw a very uneven collection of non-public records.[8]

The nature and the functioning of the Archives at the Western Cape is shaped and circumscribed by an Act of legislation, and, various pieces of policy and governmental guidelines that sets out its broad obligations to the public. The two major functions outlined in the act of legislation are to preserve the records and to make them accessible to members of the public, as well as to officials who may need use of them.

The nature of the archive and archival collections: as constructed entities, and as sites for enquiry

The Western Cape Archives and Records Service like many other archives is a curious institution that straddles a number of roles and functions, not all of which have a comfortable relationship with each other. Some of these roles are officially framed in the legislation that guides its functioning and official reason for its existence (that is, of governmental repository to retain records considered to be of enduring value for future generations); to others that have evolved

[7] Archival Platform (2015:20-21). Other responsibilities of the Chief Archivist also included advising government department about the care and custody of public archives in their care; acquiring non-public records; making documents accessible, or withholding access (Archival Platform 2015:21).
[8] Archival Platform (2015:23).

in the course of time, and, the changing nature of the academy (for example, as heritage institution,[9] and, as a site of knowledge production and research), amongst others.

In the last few decades, there has been an extensive engagement with the various aspects of what constitutes "The Archive". This has ranged from questions about the archive as institution, as government technology and strategy of privileging certain kinds of knowledge, and as a method of surveillance, amongst others This unpicking of the archive's imaginary status as a depository of the entire history of a society, and of the myth that a coherent story can be told from the documents it holds[10] ranges from puzzlement for the need of such an institution in the first place; as well as the beguiling, yet deeply problematic, promise of the archive as a form of convenient eternal artificial memory; to deep examinations of the particular focus and subject matter, and, naturally also towards the omissions and ellipses of the, ultimately fragmentary documentary record. The engagement has been from members of the academy (for whom the archive has been an extraordinarily profitable and valuable site of enquiry in recent decades), to communities both celebrated, denigrated and omitted from the archival record, and more latterly, of the technology companies who are now beginning to scan archival holdings.[11]

Archives (their generations of archivist staff, and the collections they have shaped)[12] are no longer credibly considered to be either neutral or passive custodian of equally neutral (and

[9] Traditionally, records stored in archives fulfilled a legal function; however, over time archives changed from being legal depositories to being sites of historical research. By the late-19th century archives had morphed into a hybrid institution based in public administration and historical research alike. It is still a matter of professional debate as to where the emphasis should come to lie.

As they enter the archive, the papers of which offices rid themselves are resurrected as archival sources consulted by historians as partly-objective correlatives of the living past. Archives appear to have a transformative power all their own: to change what could otherwise be considered rubbish (i.e., mounds of largely unused paper) into culture. This is part of the complexity and slipperiness of the archive's role and functioning in societies (Spieker 2008:xii).

[10] No archive can practically or realistically be the sole depository of the entire history of a given society, so its status is also very much an imaginary one. Through archived documents we are presented with pieces of time, which need to be assembled: Fragments of life to be placed in order, one after the other, in an attempt to formulate a story that acquires its coherence through the ability to craft links between the beginning and the end, resulting in a montage of fragments that creates an illusion of totality and continuity (Mbembe 2002:21).

[11] Appandurai (1986:ix); Clanchy (1993:3); Hamilton & Liebhammer (2016:22-23); Kopytoff (1986:64, 70- 75); Mbembe (2002:2); Piggot (2007:237-8). The archive has also shaped art practise in the 20th century, from Dadaist montage, to late 20th century installation (Spierber 2008:1).

See Clanchy (1993) for an account of the development of utilitarian literacy in Europe, from and for practical purposes of day-today business and governance, rather than that of creative literature.

[12] All manner of historical cultural and social factors can and have come into play to explain personal record-keeping behaviour; the personal characteristics and traits also need to be considered. Modern archival appraisal theory acknowledges inevitable subjectivity; archivists see themselves as co-creators or co-authors actively shaping collective and social memory. Archival collections are not brought about by themselves., they are brought together by human agents (Piggot 2007:239, 251)

indisputable) facts.[13] Archives are shaped by a variety of factors, including that of the blighted history of colonial occupation and later apartheid-era administration. The nature of the archival profession and the process of managing records in government offices, before they even enter the archives, and then later once they arrive at the archives means that archives are not static entities, but are constantly being refigured, both from within and from the outside. the technologies of creation, preservation, use are changing all the time, the archive is being added to and subtracted from, its organisational dynamics are always shifting ; the archive is porous to societal processes and discourses.[14]

The legislation that governs the functioning of the Archives casts a very wide net in terms of what can be considered an archival record – literally anything and everything – as long as it is considered to have informational value. In actual practise, what is retained is a very narrow slice of what is created. Archives hold in their care the paper work that no longer circulates within the bureaucracy of government. Paperwork that has outlived its immediate day-to-day relevance and use, but is still deemed to be necessary or important enough to retain (Spieker 2008:ix). Despite the popular conception of the archives as a store for all documents ever made, there is a progressive winnowing process that occurs in terms of records management protocol. This process begins in the office of origin (i.e. the government department in which the records are created), and, continues once the records have been transferred to the Archives.[15] This is why in our collection we find wooden plaques, slate chalkboards, commemorative seaweed vuvuzelas from the 2010 Soccer World Cup, and the leather swimming trunks of the first person to successfully swim between Robben Island and the mainland, as well as assorted textile items ranging from small flags to souvenirs for the opening of the Cape Parliament in 1875 printed on silk. The popular idea that historical archives are solely paper-based doesn't stand up to scrutiny,

[13] The individual human actor behind the activities and transactions that records document and archives memorialise is an inadequately investigated and theorised aspect of archival studies, in spite of the acknowledged importance of the human context in archival theory. It has been suggested that the records appraisal process includes records creation, and that archivist's values change throughout their multiple mediations of the record in the process of its journey towards archiving, and its actual archiving. Thus the archive is constantly evolving and being actively shaped by human interloceurs. Rather than being faceless institutions, Individual behaviour has been relevant to methods and management practises of archives organisations (Appanduari 1986:3-5; Hamilton … et al. 2002:7 Piggot 2007:237-8;)

[14] Hamilton … *et al* (2002:7); Hamilton & Liebhammer (2016:23); Piggot (2007:239, 251).

[15] Rerecords only arrive at the archives, after a minimum of 20 years following their creation, as it is usually at this point where the records have outlived their immediate day-to-day usefulness, but do require for possible future consultation. This is the point at which records are transferred to the Archives. Once at the Archives, records undergo an ordering and description process that allows records to either be integrated into the existing records from a given governmental department (for example, Home Affairs, Supreme Court, etc.), or, that allows the records to be separated into broad categories of meetings (minutes), correspondence, and daily business of a given governmental department.

one you actually start scratching around in a collection. Of course, we do have records in more "modern" formats such as photographic prints and negatives (of which the earliest are on glass, as well as the later film-based ones), as well as the more recent formats of CDs and DVDs, amongst others.

Archival records, as a curious form of artificial memory, still exert an important pull on human imagination for many human societies and, in the shaping of their understanding of their culture and history – for better or worse. The better understanding that we now have of the very subjective nature of archival collections; even the official ones, whose ostensible mission was to accumulate an all-encompassing record that could universally be agreed upon as a sound and sufficient representation of events past (both distantly and less-so), have been revealed as deeply problematic notions, if not outright fictions.

This understanding has called for a re-engagement with the archive, which has been underway for some time. The new way of looking that has been demanded includes the material and physical aspects of these documents, amongst other aspects.[16] Where formerly they were considered merely a carrier of information, function and form (and re-formation) are increasingly being recognised as having their own importance in the construction and shaping of the nature of the archive – and require their own engagement by the variety of professions and interested parties engaged with archives. This re-engagement with the material aspects of an archive includes ploughing new routes through the accumulated documentation and casting a wide net to engage with both material and social practises that created, transformed and sustained the archival collection.[17]

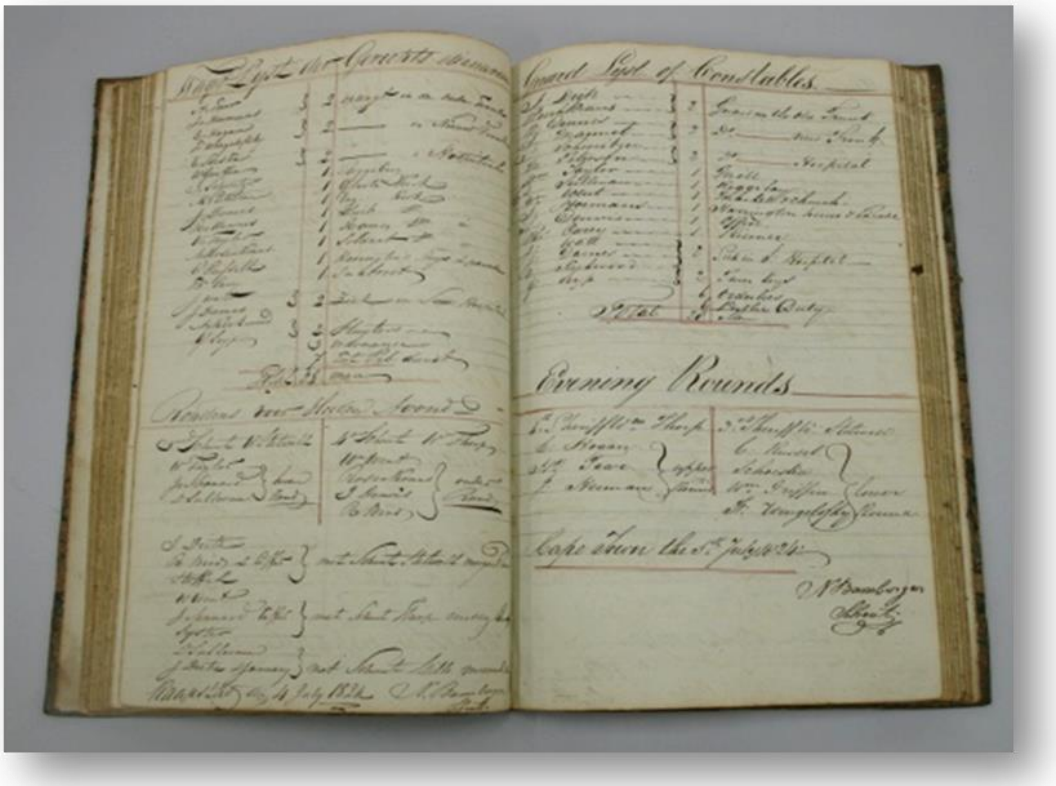
[16] Hamilton … et al. (2002:9); Hamilton & Liebhammer (2016:22-23); Kopytoff (1986:64, 70- 75).

[17] Archives-based researchers have been urged to forgo their obsession with the unearthment of "classified" or "secret" archival documentation as a heroic goal and an assumption that this is where the ultimate colonial / state information lies Archives need to be investigated as an epistemological strategy, and colonial archives as a technology of rule / power (Stoler 2002:89-100). As well as Hamilton & Liebhammer (2016:22-23); Kopytoff (1986:64, 70- 75).

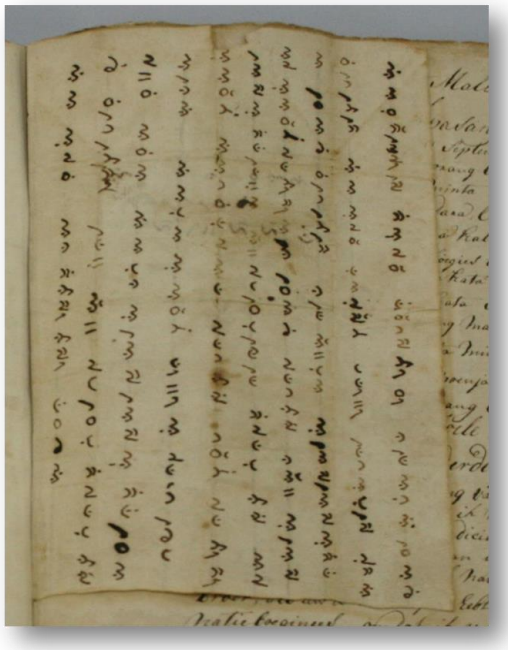
See also the 2016 UK Guardian newspaper article about the discovery of colonial-era archival records relating to Kenya's Mau-Mau anti-colonial movement. https://www.theguardian.com/ news/ 2016/aug/18/uncovering-truth-british-empire-caroline-elkins-mau-mau

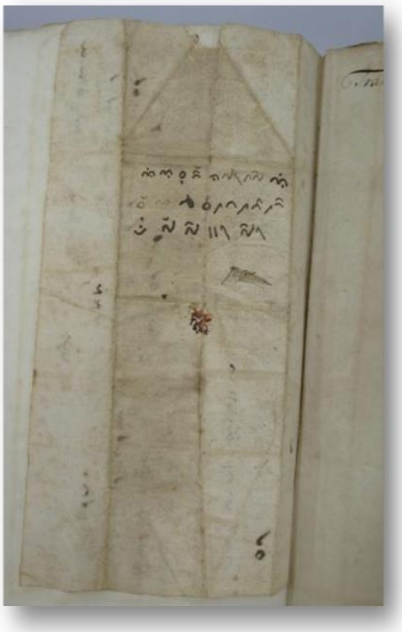
[Summarised version of PowerPoint presentation]

AG (Algemene / General) Photograph collection 16821 – 6823 | Officially, there are only 3 photographs in this album that are part of the Archives' collection according to the numbering on the album's spine. Yet, there are approximately 131 separate photographic images mounted into this personal album. One image at the bottom left hand page's gutter is one of the officially recognised images. Not one of the mounted photographic images pictured below is officially part of the Archives' collection.

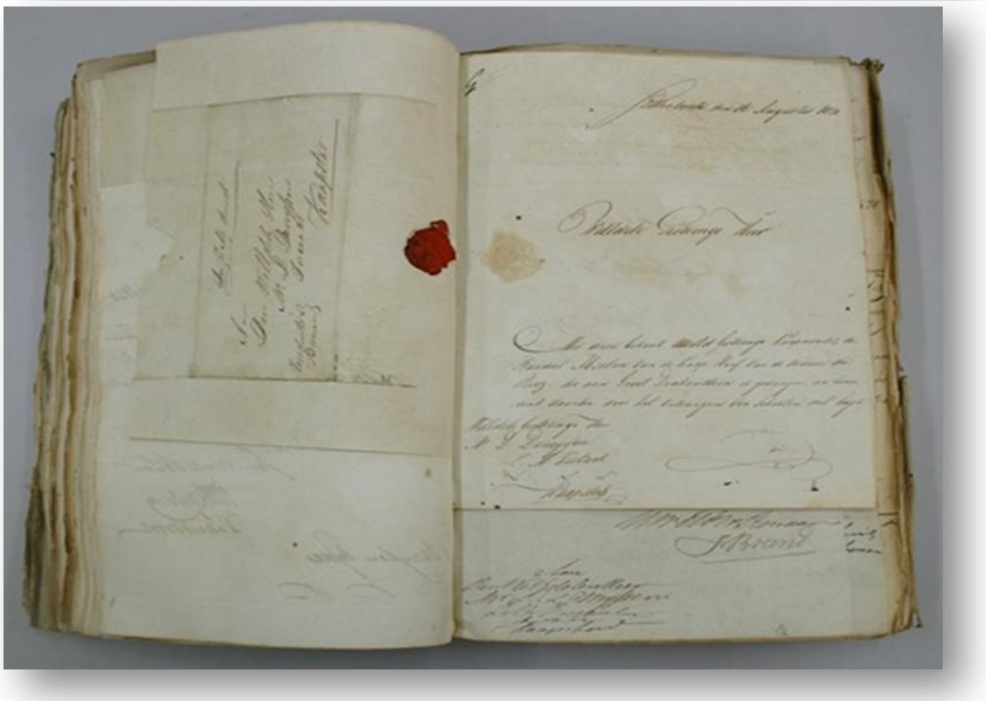


AG (Attorney General) 17B | Much research conducted at the Archives requires going through masses of paper. Every now and again you can stumble across a document that neatly encapsulates historical change. This volume is one of those few examples. It shows the precise moment when the Cape Colony changed from Dutch to English language in the administration of nightly security patrols in 5 July 1824. Below is an image of the bookbinder's stamp placed on the inside of the book's front cover. The street, Mostert Street that the bookbinder's business occupied is still to be found in Cape Town. The "Britannia" watermark of the paper is also clearly visible.





CJ (Court of Justice) 373 | In this volume dating from 1760, is a confiscated amulet written in Malay. The embedded surface dirt on the recto shows how the item was folded and the remnants of the sealing wax can be seen at the centre of the piece of paper. The amulet is bound into the volume of documents (image below), on the right-hand can be seen the translation into Malay (using the Roman alphabet), and then a subsequent translation into Dutch below it.



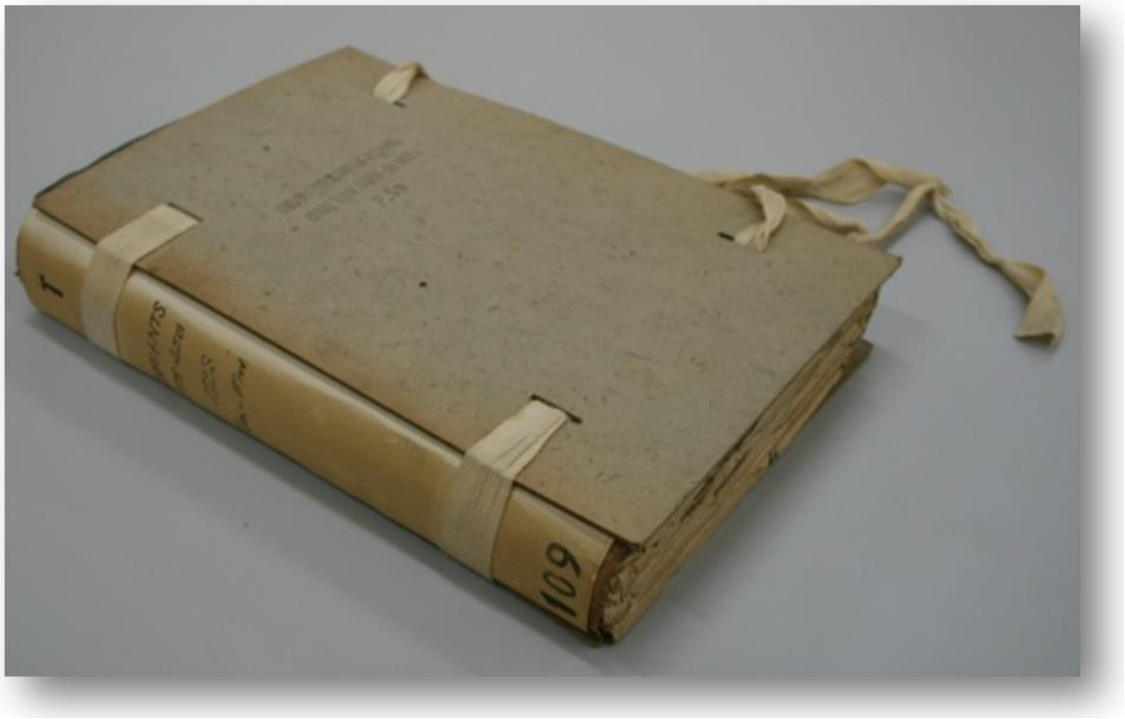
AG (Attorney General, Inkomende Briewe) 23 | A letter-fold with wax seal contained in a volume of correspondence from the Treasury, in a volume dating 1820. The renewed focus on the material aspects of embodied cultural preactses, as well as the discovery of various upoened caches of letters, has led to the practise of "letter locking" becoming an area of study. This project aims to examine hisotrical modes of varying intricacy that secured letters and other forms of correspondance.[18] It is easy to overlook the seemingly decorative elements found in historical documents as merely the quirk of aesthectics and stylistic fashion; but many elements popularly deemed to form part of the tradtional aesthetic of bookmaking had practical reasons for their being. One example is the practise of decorating a book's text edges with marbled patterns; the pattern would easily reveal if pages had been removed from the book, an important factor for ledgers containing financial records for example.

The material in the Western Cape Archives has thus far encountered has as yet not provided an ectactularly intricate example. Many of the letters follow a similar pattern of a foolscap sheet folded in half along the long edge and then the edges folded in from the sides towrds the middle to form an oblong, such as that pictured above.

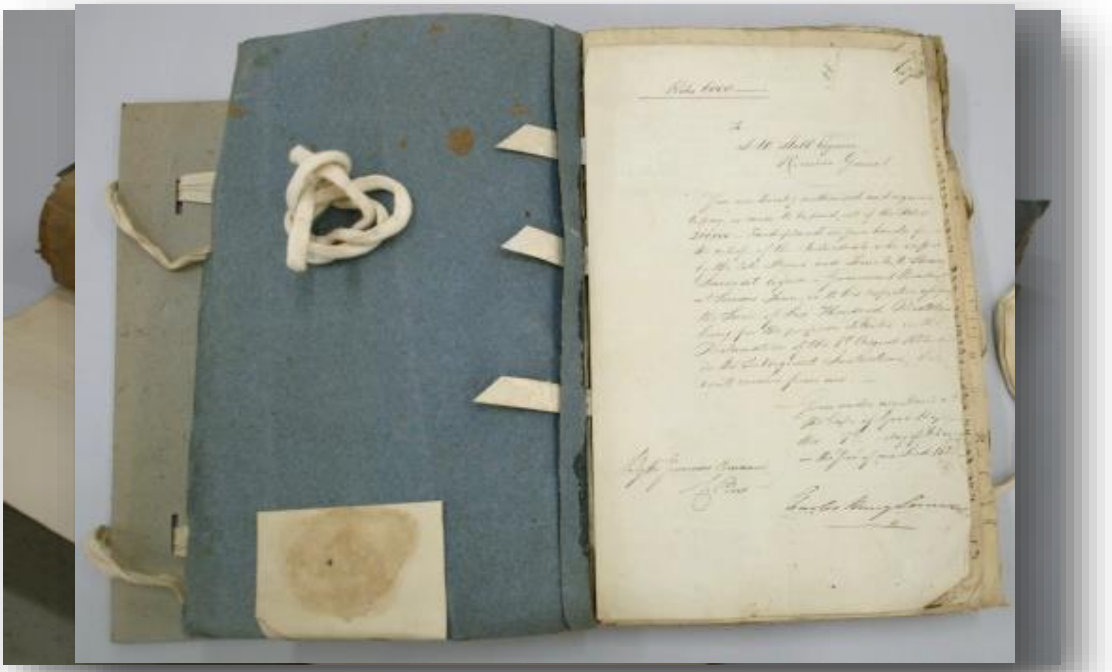
Given the attention that has emerged regarding this practise it raises the important question as to the extent to which any conservation process should go (if any) in removing the ingrained surface dirt and fold marks (both potenetial sites of physical deterioration in paper-based documents) of such items; given that their (formerly under-appreciated) testatory capacities of the embodied practises that made and shaped the record over the course of time; as well as the visual forms of the production of knowledge that operate alongside (and in conjunctin with-) the textual / written element of the documents, first as dispatched letter and then later as part of a bundle of records consigned to the archive are now being better understood and valued in their own right.[19]

[18] For more information on the study, please see the following online: Letterlocking resources website http://www.Jana dambrogio.com/letterlock/ and https://www.bessofhardwick.org/background.jsp?id=143, as well as https://www.theguardian.com/world/ 2015/nov/08/ undelivered-letters-17th-century-dutch-society

[19] Birch (2015:sp); Hamilton & Leibhammer (2016:21, 23).



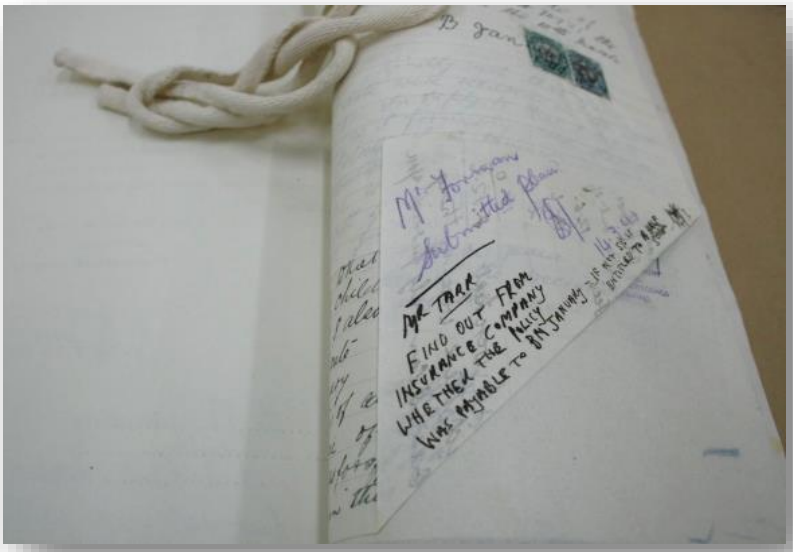
T(Treasury) 109 | Layers of materials, often containing archival labelling systems and regimes from previous iterations of the Archives' organisation provide a visual biography of the continual process of remaking archival documents. This item's layering begins with a document box (not pictured), and temporary file cover ties (pictured). The layers, peeled open, continue to show changes to the documents over time, the paper spine forming part of the document's temporary cover reveals and earlier numbering on a craft paper spine adhered over the temporary printer's paper cover.



T (Treasury) 109 | The opened cover reveals a volume prepared for formal binding into boards and provided with a cover intended to be temporary. In the course of time become a far more permanent, and is a surviving indicator of earlier binding practises. The temporary cover has had to be augmented with boards and box to provide protection for the item, as well as a substrate for archival metadata. The vellum sewing slips can be seen, laced through the paper cover's fold at the gutter. An example of the kind of rebinding that occurred in the course of time is this binding (below), which formed part of the rebinding activities during the 19th century (the records inside the volume date from 1744 – 1789).

2568

MOK (Master's Office, Kimberly) and MOOC (Master's Office, Orphan Chamber) 6/9/6895 | A bound volume of estate files from the MOK (Master's Office, Kimberly) archival group. Personal effects of a deceased person, found at their hospital bedside. The person died indigent and was given a pauper's funeral. As technology and bureaucracy evolved during the latter part of the 19th century, ever more new types of records were included in the official files, and ultimately in the archival record – photographic images are an example of this. This volume is interspersed with blue paper, which was fashionable from the mid-18th century till the early part of the 20th century, and has no apparent legal or other significance in its presence within official government records. Below is a commonly used device for making notes on government documentation, folding a corner over and making a note. Visual elements such as this add layers of material and visual evidence of the making and remaking of archival records over the course of time.



Conclusion

At the end of all this is there in fact, anything to be learned from these archival records? Or am I just engaging in a form of mystification of things that are no more than the relics[20] of a succession of oppressive colonial systems that have wrought tremendous suffering that continues to echo through our society today? Is my work here, not dissimilar to that of the museum staff whom John Berger contemptuously described as being little more than the keepers of relics of a thoroughly un-democratic past, and whose only achievement is that they have managed to survive (admittedly with the aid of human connivance) to current times? Or is there something to be gained from looking yet again and even – anew?

The late Johan Berger's demand for an engagement with the imagery and material goods of the past in a different manner, a manner that has the potential to build a new kind of power, not allows us to begin to tell our own stories and histories, no matter how tentatively and partially.[21] This power would also allow us the possibility of defining our experiences more precisely where words are inadequate.[22] The material objects of the past, as avenue of this engagement, are one of the few lines of communication that we have that will allow us a measure of access to the past, however imperfect and contingent that access may be. [23]

In in engaging with the concept of the archive as an actively resourceful space of creative intensity, ingenuity and of rich historical force – a reinvigoration of the object within cultural study becomes a necessity.[24] Material things, like persons, have social lives and biographies that can be recovered and studied. These biographies have the potential to illuminate the past and its shaping over time. [25] As material goods, archival records are not merely survivors of the past; they are travellers through time, changing shape and accruing meaning in the course of time.[26] In any given archival collection past and present are enmeshed in a web that snags and catches in all sorts of places, both expected and unexpected, across both time and place. The

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[20] Berger (1972:32); Hamilton & Liebhammer (2016:22-23); Kopytoff (1986:64, 70- 75).
Appandurai (1986: --)notes that there is a particular set of issues concerning authenticity and expertise that revolves around the idea of "originality" that are especially visible in the domain of art and art objects. Archival records are also considered unique in their own right, which opens up yet other engagements with them.
[21] Paton (sa:); Van Der Vlies (2012: 8-10).
[22] Berger (1972:32).
[23] Ibid; Hamilton & Liebhammer (2016:9, 26-27); Nichols (1990:8).
[24] Comaroff (1992:34); Stoler (2002:87, 109).
[25] Appandurai (1986:3-4); Edwards (2011:56); Hamilton & Liebhammer 2016:21-22); Nichols (1990:2, 7-8).
[26] Hamilton & Liebhammer (2016:21); Nichols (1990:8).

extraordinarily dense and thickly layered visual and textual forms have a rich testatory capacity for studying the learnt and embodied practises that contributed towards their initial creation and subsequent remaking over the course of time as an archival collection. As well as the complicated shifts in the organisation of knowledge and modes of production, such shifts have a cultural dimension that cannot be deduced from-, or be reduced to changes in technology and economic necessity.[27]

The manufacturing and craft processes, both embodied and technological, that preoccupy (to varying degrees) practitioners of the artist's book are certainly present in the archival material. For those inclined toward a sympathy for the historical craft and process of book and document making in their work, there is much to be found in historical exemplars and modes of formal and contingent making/remaking of this historical collection. There is basis too, for those interested in flouting the stylistic and processual conventions for their own ends, bearing in mind that many of the structures and formats favoured by modern book artists have their origins in actual historical examples, hinting possibly at certain parameters imposed by form and function that are not as easy to escape as one might imagine.

Ultimately, there remains much to be studied and teased out from the piles of accumulated paper, board, ink pigment, wax, textile ribbon and thread, and skins within any given archival collection. There is also much to be studied and understood in the process of human making of this collection, particularly within the context of a colonial historical trajectory, such as ours.

[27] Appandurai (1986:47); Beniger (1986:6).

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Special Collections and Rare Books - the same family?

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Definitions and interpretations

As the manager of Archiving and Special Collections at the University of Johannesburg's Library, I usually have to explain the meaning of these words to people on introduction.

"Special Collections" is a term, widely used by University Libraries for non-book material, described as "unique" and "supporting research" (10). In the case of UJ, "special collections" also describes special *book collections* and therefore our local description reads: "*A special collection is a collection of materials segregated from a general library collection according to theme, ownership or origin. A collection may consists of mixed media e.g. books, documents, maps, audio-visual material as well as objects and/or framed pictures"* (11, p.3).

"Rare books" also have many definitions (8, p.1-2). Gakobo believes "*there is no real distinction between a book and a rare book*" (6, p.406). In short, at UJ Library we define our rare books as "*a collection of new, used, rare and out-of-print books of artistic, literary or historic research value*" (11, p.3).

Our department was also labelled with the term **"archives"** during the period 2007 to 2014 when the institutional, archival repository was included into the Library's 6-storey home at Kingsway Campus. Alas! The home became over-crowded and the University's archival documents had to be returned to the Records Management Department to take care of their own elderly.

The definition of "archives" I like best is found in the study material of UNISA's "Archival Principles and Practices*": Archives are records of enduring value, selected for permanent preservation. Archives will generally be preserved in an archival repository ... also known as "archives"* (12, p.3).

Though today's generation of students are not familiar with the word "archives/archiving", which resulted in an initiative to shorten our name to "Special Collections" only, institutional procedures prescribed it to remain part of our name. You will therefore find two areas at our Doornfontein Campus Library's "Archiving & Special Collections" section: the rare books library and the archives (8, p.61.) Together they are called "the special collections" (9, p. xi-xii).

Being in Africa, another term closely related to "rare books" is **"Africana".** I shall always fondly remember the impression I had of the "Africana Room" when I was a first year student at Stellenbosch University. I was awe-struck by the very old books with gilded lettering on the spines, shelved in classy wooden shelves.

When we as students discussed the term "Africana" in our library lecture, the lecturer admitted that different people give different interpretations to the word. In its broadest sense Africana can be used for any book about Africa, all books written by people from Africa, books published in African languages and books published in Africa (2, p.5). Some restrict it to books about Africa, south of the Sahara. Because of the mining and trade activities, UJ Special Collections chose to limit it to publications south of the Zambesi River. The only certainty is that "Africana" is not synonymous to "rare book" (2, p.5).

For the sake of my work at UJ, we have buried the word "Africana" and replaced it with **a niche** to define our framework for collection management.

Collecting rare books in an academic library

- **The focus of an academic library**

UJ Library supports teaching and learning, as well as research by making relevant study material available (6, p.405). The libraries on the four different campuses focus strictly on the university's curricula, textbooks, journals and book lists for extensive reading. Almost 60% of the above-mentioned is available in e-format.

The Archives & Special Collections do have an annual budget for buying **rare books.** We have been able to buy even postcards and photo albums, as long as it has been bought on an antiquarian book auction. We have to motivate our requests for approval to buy these items as "fitting our niche" and" relevant to our specialised areas for research."

In 2012 we identified a niche according to which books and what kind of themes we already had in the special collections, and according to those fields we would like to expand in our effort to build a collection that would attract global attention (3, p.21).

The obvious **niche** was Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand, known for mining and business. Into this framework could be fitted an architectural collection about the buildings of Johannesburg in the early days up to the early seventies, collections about Johannesburg's diverse inhabitants, its education, sport, art and culture.

- Selection criteria

The most important criterion is to implement our vision or our raison d'être, i.e. supporting research, by carefully balancing the niche theme and the description of a rare book, to ensure that we do not duplicate acquisitions for UJ Library's open shelves, reserve collections or reference works (6, p.407).

We select books which are "rare" in the sense of out of print, 1st editions, signed by the author, limited editions, books with special maps, art work or photographs which will not survive the students' markings or pocket knives on open shelves. Apart from restricted to "in-library-use" we also take care of the handling of those books (with gloves) and the necessary security measures (7, p.160).

- The book as form of art

Fortunately our collection policy gives us the loop hole to complete existing small, peripheral collections to our niche. As we always had a good collection of South African botany books, we could buy the *Highgrove Florilegium* in 2011 for the pure pleasure of a book of art, because four of the artists are South Africans.

UJ is especially focussing on the issue of de-colonisation and Africanizing of our collections in 2017. Because we already have a good collection of books on Irma Stern, we recently bought special editions named *Zanzibar* and *Congo* … it sounds like "Africa"?! I just have to add that we actively collect books on writers, politicians and artists with African names too ... especially if they are originally from the greater Johannesburg area.

I sincerely believe that it is the educational task of any librarian working with rare books to educate the younger generation of today to respect and love The Book as form of art. I have mentioned how many e-books students use nowadays. They should never forget the feeling of handling a physical book. Thomas van der Walt quoted Roderick Cave in his presentation at a Symposium on Rare Books: "If something doesn't humanize the student (and the librarian) in his diet of computers and automated gadgetry, they will all be barbarians. Some already are" (2, p.9). I find this so apt for 2017!

Any book to me is a piece of art - papermaking, binding, capturing the contents. I once saw a tin on the shelf of a curio shop with the label, telling that it contains "the wind captured on Table Mountain." Apart from the physical binding process of a book, capturing ideas, information, feelings, emotions and beliefs in a book (like the wind in that tin) is an art!

UJ's books of art

- I have already mentioned the two volumes of the *Highgrove Florilegium,* handmade and signed by His Highness, Prince Charles.
- We also have *I Ching for the 'African Renaissance'* … You read it from back to front.
- The *Fook Book I* of Walter Battiss is another of our crown jewels.

Many people ask about old books; maybe because we are such a young university, we do not host incunabula. Our oldest works are: the English translation of Peter Kolb(en)'s: *Present State of the Cape of Good Hope,* published in 1727 and Justinian's *Institutionum sive primorum totius iurisprudentiae elementorum libri quator,* published in 1566. There are only a few other works of this age.

As an African University, UJ would rather focus on our indigenous languages. At our Special Collections, we are proud of the Van Warmelo collection of the Quran and Bibles in about every indigenous language.

Doing justice to the most beautiful works of art in a rare book collection

University libraries in 2017 consist of much more study space and computers than ten years earlier. Display facilities and -areas are limited. The study area of "Archiving and Special Collections" is surrounded by art and creates an inspirational, creative area.

We do have an annual programme of exhibitions, displays and public lectures to promote the usage of our collections at UJ Library. The "crown jewels" that I referred to earlier are however almost guarded like the Mona Lisa. Especially since South African universities have become the targets of violent student protests and arson, it is doubtful if the original books of art will easily be displayed; we would rather do an online exhibition.

Special Collections and Rare Books - the same family?

The conclusion is: Family indeed! Collecting rare books in an academic institution differs however considerably from the collection of a private collector.

To summarise:

- The academic institution has to stay true to its raison d'être.
- "Special Collections" also have to pass the test of relevancy by proving its contribution to research and the provision of trustworthy resources.
- The collection's theme is defined by the vision of the University e.g. "African Renaissance" and the Department's niche - Johannesburg, business and mining (3, p.18).
- In applying the selection criteria for new items, the contents of the book is as important as the format in which it is presented (3, p.20).
- The librarian managing rare books does influence the rare book collection in a limited way as a result of her love for the book as a form of art, the knowledge of the market for rare books, and the final choice of the more valuable item.

If you would ask me if I find it very restrictive to manage a rare book collection which is so regulated and defined in terms of a niche, I would reply positively. Because of the confined space, the continuous growth in knowledge, techniques and technology to produce books, and

the need to stay relevant to the institution and the users of our collection, a defined niche is necessary.

But something is missing! Who will preserve the Book as Art?

Ironically, the University of Johannesburg has the money to buy rare books, has the facilities like climate controlled storage, protected by a gas fire prevention system and security systems. But an individual like Jack Ginsberg collected (and kept for years) the most wonderful collection of artists' books. After UJ shrugged their shoulders, Wits stepped in to preserve his collection.

There are various special collections of art which have been offered to us, but those containing more objects than documents, could not be accepted. What does UJ do to preserve art collections? We are looking at our Faculty of Arts with eyes full of hope, to be instrumental in changing the situation by having a new development right here on this campus - maybe “special art archives"?

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The Jack Ginsberg Book Arts Centre at Wits Art Museum

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This paper outlines the evolution of the Jack Ginsberg Book Arts Centre to be established at Wits Art Museum (WAM) and examines the context out of which the Centre arises; the relationship with WAM and the institutional structure at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (Wits) within which both are located.

WAM is the beneficiary of the remarkable donation of the Jack Ginsberg book arts collection. The collection has been assembled over the last five decades by this individual donor and altogether comprises roughly 7000 items; 3000 are artists' books (including 400 by SA artists); 3000 are items in the Archive (also called the Bibliographic Collection) on the history and development of the book arts genre; and the balance is made up of a significant collection of monographs on South African artists. The collection has already been the subject of significant scholarship, primarily by University of Johannesburg lecturer David Paton, and much work has already been undertaken to make the collection accessible worldwide through the extensive website he has develop.[1] Paton also curated an exhibition of the collection at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in 1996, the first exhibition of artists' books ever held in South Africa and at the time one of the largest exhibitions of its kind in the world. At WAM the entire collection will be housed in a purpose-designed facility at WAM, with dedicated storage, display, research and ancillary areas and will be made available for research, teaching and display.

Where academic purpose and an urban way of life merge

WAM is an African art museum at Wits that was launched in 2012 after a 10-year development and fundraising process. The museum evolved into its current form from its initial iteration as the Gertrude Posel Gallery (GPG), a smaller venue within the main administration building at the university called Solomon Mahlangu House (previously Senate House).[2] The GPG was created in the late 1970s with the intention of showcasing modern art, and was enabled in part by a

[1] www.theartistsbook.org.za

[2] The building was renamed in 2016 after representations made by the #feesmustfall movement were adopted

donation to the university from the Johannesburg businesswoman after whom the entity was named.[3] In 2002, after three decades of exhibition and education programming, the GPG was closed as part of the development of the Student Enrolment Centre, a "one-stop" shop for first year students registering at Wits.

There followed a long process of development including undertaking a space needs analysis based on an estimation of likely growth for 15 years; selecting an appropriate location within the university's five campuses; compiling a design brief; holding a national architectural competition to award the tender; adjudicating the submissions; working with the winning team[4] to fine-tune the design; costing the plans; convincing university management that the new museum project was viable;[5] and embarking on a fundraising campaign. 75% of the R42 million raised to create the new museum was contributed by individual private donors[6] with the balance being covered by the university.

The museum is located on the corner of Bertha Street (the extension of Jan Smuts Avenue) and Jorissen Street in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. This is a busy suburb close to the central business district and the 5000 m² site incorporates a disused petrol station and portions of three adjacent buildings along the south east edge of the university's East Campus, where the university 'shakes hands' with the city. The museum literally connects the city with the campus and is at the leading edge of Wits' development of its cultural precinct, where the arts (fine arts, music, drama and digital arts) engage with the public. The major financial investment to create WAM catalysed urban regeneration and revitalization in the area, part of the university's goal to change Braamfontein into a vibrant urban node, where academic purpose and an urban way of life merge.

There are four main display areas within the museum, each with distinct characteristics. Two or three exhibitions with diverse profiles are held simultaneously, as part of a strategy to encourage audience development and growth. This is based on the understanding that particular audiences will be attracted by different kinds of exhibitions. Exhibition profiles include internally generated

[3] The Gertrude Posel Core Gallery at WAM is named in recognition of that legacy.
[4] Nina Cohen, Fiona Garson and William Martinson. Martinson subsequently relocated, so was not part of the implementation of the project.
[5] One of five capital campaigns undertaken by the university simultaneously, an extremely unusual situation.
[6] The names of all 46 donors are alphabetically reflected on the donor board at the entrance to the museum. Contributions ranged from R100 to R12 000 000.

exhibitions of African art from the holdings,[7] externally curated survey exhibitions[8], historical exhibitions[9], exhibitions of work by contemporary artists,[10] solo exhibitions[11] and group shows.[12] Annual student graduate exhibitions,[13] ad hoc PhD exhibitions,[14] cross-disciplinary collaboration across faculties[15] and institutions, and exhibitions that focus on objects-based research[16] make up the exhibitions offering. Since launching in 2012, WAM has held 58 exhibitions, between 10 and 12 per year, and over 100 000 visitors have been recorded.

Resources for research, teaching and engagement

Within the university's institutional structure, WAM falls into the group of entities[17] in the Research Office that reports directly to the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Research, in addition to the six Centres of Excellence[18] that are held in Faculties across campus. University museums like WAM are generally regarded as resources for research, teaching and engagement and form part of universities' mission to examine, preserve and increase knowledge. They are also, however, resources that consider their programme in relation to multiple audiences. In addition to the academic constituencies of staff and student bodies, university museums address sectors outside the academy, such as the general public, the neighbourhood, school and tourist audiences. In situations such as WAM's in South Africa, where access to art education is so restricted, the few existing art facilities feel this responsibility particularly keenly and consequently allocate scarce resources to meeting this need. Much of WAM's programming is positioned to act as an interface between the public and the academy, for example the extensive

[7] *Beadwork, Art and the Body: Dilo Tše Dintši/Abundance* 2015; *Stars of the North: Revisiting sculpture from Limpopo* 2015.
[8] *Gerard Sekoto: Song for Sekoto* 2013, *Time and Again: A retrospective exhibition by Penny Siopis* 2015.
[9] *A Lasting Impression: The Robert Hodgins Print Archive* 2013; *Moses Tladi (1903 – 1959)* 2017.
[10] *Meaning Motion - Tegan Bristow and Nathaniel Stern* 2013; *Alfredo Jaar: The Sound of Silence* 2016.
[11] *Santu Mofokeng - Chasing Shadows: Thirty Years of Photographic Essays* 2012; *TAPESTRIES - William Kentridge: A collaboration with the Stephens Tapestry Studio* 2014; *Unsettled Frontier Wars: One Hundred Years War of Resistance by Xhosa Against Boer and British: Photographic exhibition by Cedric Nunn* 2015
[12] *Fak'Ugesi Lab: Exploring Cultural Technologies for Future Joburg* 2015.
[13] Variously called *Newwork* or *Gradshow,* these showcase the work of graduating students from the BAFA degree in the Wits School of Arts.
[14] *Susan Woolf: Taxi Hand Signs: Symbolic Landscapes of Public Culture* 2013; *Jeremy Wafer: Survey* 2013
[15] *Queer and Trans Articulations: Collaborative Art for Social Change* Gabrielle Le Roux and Zanele Muholi 2014 with the Wits Institute of Diversity Studies; *Satellite Cities – Svea Josephy* 2015 with Wits City Institute.
[16] *Activate / Captivate: Collections re-engagement at Wits Art Museum* 2015; *Lifescapes: Six Object Biographies* 2017.
[17] Microscopy and Microanalysis Unit, the Evolutionary Studies Institute; Global Change and Sustainability Research Institute; Central Animal Service and Gauteng City-Region Observatory.
[18] Human Development, Mathematical and Statistical Sciences, Strong Materials, Biomedical TB Research, Palaeosciences and Integrated Mineral and Energy Resource Analysis.

education programmes, tours, walkabouts, workshops and school programming offered by the museum.[19]

This joint external and internal focus can expose university art museums to the threat of being considered 'non-core' to the higher education project, while simultaneously sometimes being considered important assets in universities' ongoing ranking battles, or occasionally considered essential to those institutions' community engagement goals. Sometimes the mandate extends even further and university art museums are regarded as the guardians of national cultural treasures when official institutions are not able to fulfil this role, a much weightier remit than the prosaic expectation of providing advice on the installation of artworks in management offices. Comprising about 11 000 classical, modern and contemporary items of African art, the WAM holdings have been shaped over decades by academic inquiry. Collections are tangible manifestations of the research interests of the scholars involved, and increasingly exhibitions are viewed as research made manifest, while their attendant publications further extend the distribution of research beyond the academy.[20]

The collections include a wide range of items that differ in factors like scale, country of origin, medium, source, date and method of acquisition. Although they are isolated examples, the earliest works included probably date to the 4th century C.E. Most works date from the 20th and 21st centuries and have been assembled primarily in recognition of their aesthetic value. The component sub-collections have unique histories, the largest being the Standard Bank African Art Collection that was established in 1978 and forms almost 50% of the total WAM holdings. Its growth and development have been sustained by an annual grant from the Standard Bank and its parameters have been shaped by the university's teaching programme and the research interests of the African art lecturers. The linking of arts and education was a key part of the partnership and the creation of a major teaching resource and collection of national and international significance that bears testament to Africa's unique cultural heritage.

[19] These activities are mostly funded by external sources, corporations like Bidvest and diplomatic units like the Royal Netherlands Embassy.
[20] Examples include *A Lasting Impression: The Robert Hodgins Print Archive,* a multi-author publication that features the 400 + collection of prints donated to WAM by the artist; A *Long Way Home: Migrant Worker Worlds 1800 - 2014* that explores the creative modes of self-expression by the migrant labourers who shaped modern South Africa and *African Dream Machines*: *Style, Identity and Meaning in African Headrests* by Anitra Nettleton, one of the art historians whose research has so profoundly impacted on the development of the African art collections.

Another important collection component is the Wits Museum of Ethnology Collection that was assembled between the 1930s and 1960s by anthropologists conducting fieldwork. This material has been amalgamated into WAM in tranches as art historians at the university increasingly included the items in their teaching programmes and exhibitions and publications from the late 1970s onwards. The collecting provenance of these items is of particular interest both from the standpoint of the shaping of the art historical and anthropological disciplines and from a consideration of issues of notions of authenticity. The Wits Art Museum Collection was established in the 1950s primarily as a teaching collection by the then professors of Architecture and Fine Art[21] and is supported by a modest grant from the university when possible. Major donations of artworks have significantly extended this component of the holdings since its inception, notably by Vittorino Meneghelli[22] and John Schlesinger.[23] The Sekoto Collection[24] and Maria Stein Lessing Collection[25] are important more recent donations, as are the substantial gifts by many artists such as David Goldblatt.[26]

A broad context of research archives

Art collections already constitute important research archives, but within the holdings at WAM there are also specialist research areas: The Anthropology Photo Archive over 400 historical African photographs[27] as well as the Reverend WFP Burton Photo Collection; The Neil Goedhals Collection,[28] The Walter Battiss Archive[29] and the Judith Mason Archive, donated by the artist's family in 2017 and still in the process of being unpacked. The existing archives, though individually named and acknowledged through attribution in exhibition and reproduction captions, are not independently housed in dedicated areas but are physically integrated into the museum's storerooms.

[21] John Fassler and Heather Martienssen.
[22] Classical African artworks presented in 1978.
[23] Over 100 South African artworks presented in 1977.
[24] Over 300 drawings and sketches by Gerard Sekoto, repatriated in 1989 and formally donated in 2010.
[25] Artworks assembled after the death in 1961 of this influential art history lecturer, including works by Alexis Preller and Maggie Laubser, were presented in 1965. The collection was further augmented in 2003 by her husband Leopold Spiegel.
[26] The Home Land Series of 42 photographs presented in 1987.
[27] Including the Reverend WFP Burton Photo Collection as well as photographs by anthropologists such as Eileen Jensen Krige and Jacob Daniel Krige, Edmund Hugh Ashton, Percival Kirby, Hilda Kuper and Audrey Richards.
[28] From the artist's estate after his death in 1990.
[29] Over 600 artworks donated by Jack Ginsberg after exhibition on *Walter Battiss: I invented Myself: The Jack Ginsberg Collection* in 2016.

In addition to those at WAM, there are numerous research collections lodged across different faculties and research units[30] at Wits University. The breadth and scope of the university's collections was demonstrated in the *Wits 90 Treasures Exhibition*[31] that was held at WAM in 2012, and included diverse objects such as Nelson Mandela's handwritten notes for his statement from the dock during the Rivonia Trial, the first recording of *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* in 1923, a gorgonopsian skull from the Permian period, a 13th century breviary, the Sol Plaatje Siege of Mafeking diary, the world-renowned Taung skull and Australopithecus Sediba fossils; rock engravings; an iron lung and Herbert Baker's blueprints for the Union Buildings. It is within this broader context of research assets at Wits, and the art collections at WAM in particular, that the Jack Ginsberg Book Arts Centre will be created.

A major philanthropist and supporter of the arts

Jack Ginsberg, the collector and donor of the artist's book collection that will form the heart of the eponymous Book Arts Centre is a major philanthropist and supporter of the arts who has been recognised across many platforms. In 2013 he was awarded the Business Arts South Africa (BASA) Art Champion Award; in 2014 Wits University presented him with a Gold Medal in recognition of his major contribution to the South African arts sector; in the same year he received the Inyathelo Philanthropy Awards 2014 Award for Philanthropy in the Arts; and was invited to present at a colloquium in collaboration with the Museum of Modern Art Library to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Centre for Book Arts in New York City. Ginsberg, a graduate of Wits University, is a long term supporter and donor to the museum and other units of the university.[32] He was instrumental in facilitating a substantial donation towards the building of the new museum and funds to grow the museum's small reference library[33] and is one of WAM's most consistent donors of artworks, having given the museum over 100 pieces since 2012, excluding the major Walter Battiss donation in 2016.This is particularly significant considering the limited resources that the University itself is able to allocate to the development of the WAM art collection, resulting in reliance on generous donors to grow the holdings in any significant way. Ginsberg also serves on the WAM Advisory Board and the WAM Acquisitions Committee, where his extensive

[30] Such as the Historical Papers at the William Cullen Library Special Collections, the Adler Museum of Medicine, the Origins Centre, the Planetarium, the Bernard Price Institute for Palaeontological Research, the Anatomy Museum, the School of Architecture and Planning, the Life Sciences Museum, and the Institute for Human Evolution.
[31] Part of the university's activities celebrating 90 years since achieving full university status.
[32] Including Drama For Life (DFL).
[33] From the C.J. Petrow family foundation.

knowledge and experience in the South African art sector are hugely appreciated. Beneficiaries of his support, financial and advisory, in addition to WAM include Artists Proof Studio and Johannesburg Art Gallery.[34] Numerous artists have also benefitted through the sales of their works to Ginsberg and through The Ampersand Foundation residency programme he has established in New York City.

A commitment to global standards of academic and research excellence

The offer to donate the Jack Ginsberg artists' books collection to WAM was accepted with wholehearted enthusiasm by the university which recognised the vast potential that this asset brings to the museum and the potential for sustained academic inquiry across multiple disciplines. These extend beyond history of art and fine arts to include graphic design, book binding, object studies, typography and printmaking.

The Jack Ginsberg Book Arts Centre at WAM is to be constructed as a discrete unit within the physical envelope of the museum building. A dedicated area has been allocated that will house new offices, a separate research and display area and the significant storage facility for the collection. WAM's existing small reference library will also be moved from its current location and incorporated into the new Centre on the second floor of the administrative wing of the museum. The architects' design necessitates the relocation of the storeroom that currently houses the large-sculpture component of the WAM holdings, so the footprint of the museum is being expanded accordingly and the area within University Corner that will house WAM increases by one floor. Full climate control and goods lift modifications needed to expand the envelope will be undertaken, and once completed the Centre will offer the opportunity for researchers and scholars to access the collection, on an appointment basis, hitherto only available by visiting the donor at his home.

The Jack Ginsberg Book Arts Centre will make a major contribution to WAM and Wits University's commitment to global standards of academic and research excellence and of high quality, rigorous public engagement.

[34] Ginsberg also served on the board of the Johannesburg Art Foundation.

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'Inspiration by Design':[1] Collecting artists' books in the National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

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This week of "Booknesses" has been really wonderful and I am delighted to be here. Among the stated purposes of the colloquium was "to make meaningful global connections". The benefits are truly flowing in all directions: I have taken in more than I can possibly offer you, in holding forth about my own library in England. At all events, thanks to Jack Ginsburg Johannesburg has no need to envy the artists' books collections of any other city in the world. In this talk, in the spirit of informal sharing called for by David Paton at the opening of this colloquium, I will simply offer you a brief characterisation of the artists' books in the National Art Library (NAL) in London, together with one or two general reflections, and a mention of a very few recent acquisitions (and how we afford them). I welcome conversations with other librarians and curators, and also with artists and publishers: I know that you are often interested to understand what libraries are looking for, and there is a duty on public collections to be as transparent as possible.

So: I come from a large art library in a national museum in London,[2] within which artists' books of every kind have been collected in significant numbers. On the widest definition of artists' books, we probably have something around 8,000. Our primary role is as a research and reference library: artists' books constitute 1% or less of the library's holdings as a whole, and we have correspondingly small resources for acquiring more. Nonetheless, the collection is well known, highly regarded and quite well used.

[1] The phrase 'Inspiration by Design' is borrowed from the title of an exhibition about the history and collections of the National Art Library, shown at the State Libraries of Victoria and New South Wales in 2015. See http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/inspiration-by-design-the-worlds-most-beautiful-books-come-to-melbourne-20150320-1m3tat.html

[2] For information about the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum, see http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/n/national-art-library/. Images of the Library are readily searchable online. The Library catalogue is at http://catalogue.nal.vam.ac.uk/ . Images of a small selection of our artists' books can be found in V&A Search the Collections https://collections.vam.ac.uk/ : currently the most effective search is in 'More Search Options', in the 'Object name/title' box, type 'artist's book'.

I will speak a little about the institution as a whole, because it helps to explain the wide range of types of artists' books that have been collected in the library. Also, being a museum, a memory institution, it has been quite adept at evolving its identity through reviving and reinterpreting that history, rather than discarding it. And one useful approach to selecting artists' books is to consider how they can be imaginatively related in some way to organisational themes or existing collections, whether of books or of other kinds. To illustrate this point I'd like to swerve first to an example in another library, before proceeding through the door of my own. Some of the North Americans in this room may have seen the fantastic exhibition 'Of Green Leaf, Bird, and Flower' at the Yale Center for British Art a couple of years ago.[3] There, the library curator Elisabeth Fairman built up a focussed collection of contemporary artists' books, somewhat outside the Library's usual more historical remit, by selecting those that related well to the natural history manuscripts that were already a strength of the library's special collections. This type of approach would make sense for anyone starting out on collecting artists' books in an institution. It also got me thinking about how, in selecting and cataloguing artists' books in the National Art Library, we had focussed mainly on their form, technique and aesthetics, and perhaps under-emphasised their themes and subjects.

The Victoria and Albert Museum, known as the V&A, is Great Britain's national museum of art and design. It's important to understand that the 'and' in 'art and design' isn't simply additive but conjunctional. It implies that the techniques and values of art are applied to the creation of economic products. State art education in Britain started in the 1830s, explicitly to train designers rather than fine artists. As well as practical skills the students were supposed to study nature and historical styles, thus the School of Design included a collection of objects and illustrations, and of course a library. In the 1850s the whole enterprise was re-launched after the Great Exhibition, and included a greatly expanded museum that was open to the public. The idea here was to raise the taste of British consumers, further to stimulate good design. What lay behind all of this was the belief that Britain was losing out in international markets due to the superior design of European products. Some of you will be familiar with Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of culture, and what he calls the 'disavowal' of cultural capital. Players on the cultural field behave as if what they do were for art's sake, its own reward, but in fact, says Bourdieu, they are laying down capital aimed at tangible future rewards. The programme behind the V&A was quite the opposite:

[3] For a brief summary see http://britishart.yale.edu/exhibitions/green-leaf-bird-and-flower-artists-books-and-natural-world. For the full catalogue, see Elisabeth R. Fairman, ed., *"Of Green Leaf, Bird, and Flower": Artists' Books and the Natural World* (Yale University Press, 2014).

its ideology was overtly utilitarian, and if anything was disavowed it was art for its own sake. This is rather a strong defence for the arts - even if the 'softer', moral and spiritual justifications are not far behind.[4] So, the museum, co-located with an art school, was educational in the broadest sense, and it was also accessible to all. And its first director, Henry Cole, bundled these ideas together with the wonderful declaration: 'This museum will be like a book, its pages always open, and not closed'.[5]

Accordingly, to begin with, the art library of this museum was very much an informational resource rather than a curatorial one. In this capacity, as well as books, catalogues and journals, it accumulated visual resources, including illustrative and ornament prints, design drawings, and photographs. By the early 20th century these '2-d' resources had gained collection status in their own right, and today they are separately curated, sister collections of the Library within the V&A's Department of Word and Image, equally accessible to the public in a dedicated Prints and Drawings Study Room. Meanwhile the Library proper had also embarked on collecting examples of books as *objects* of art and design, including illuminated manuscripts, bindings both historic and contemporary, books of the fine printing revival, and selected illustrated books (over and above ordinary illustrated books on arts, crafts and design, which remain our stock in trade).[6]

In the 1930s the Library began to notice and acquire both books conceived by artists, especially the Surrealists, and those in which major contemporary artists had contributed illustrations for co-ordinating publishers who were often also their dealers, in collaboration with superb printmakers and sometimes also with contemporary writers. (I see enterprises such as Dieu Donné and The Artists' Press, who have presented at Booknesses, as in different ways heirs to this model.) Early acquisitions included Albert Skira's first two books - Picasso's Ovid and Matisse's Mallarmé, to be followed by almost all the books published by Ambroise Vollard, including his first, *Parallèlement*, with Pierre Bonnard's wonderfully direct and intimate lithographic drawings, dating as early as 1900. The Library built up a pretty good selection of these 'modern artists' illustrated books' (often dubbed 'livres d'artistes'), and held a major

[4] Among many histories of the V&A see for example Julius Bryant, ed., *Art and Design for All: the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: V&A Publishing, 2011). For Bourdieu's theory see his *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993).
[5] Henry Cole, 'The Functions of the Science and Art Department' (Introductory Addresses on the Science and Art Department and the South Kensington Museum, no. 1) (London: Chapman and Hall [for the Privy Council's Committee on Education], 1857, p. 21.
[6] See Elizabeth James, 'Collecting the Art and Design of the Book After 1909', in Rowan Watson [et al], eds., *Word & Image: Art, Books and Design from the National Art Library* (London: V&A Publishing, 2015), p. 45-65.

exhibition from its holdings in 1985, 'From Manet to Hockney'.[7] We have continued to acquire new publications of this kind to the extent that shrinking funds allow. A recent example was the latest book from the prolific Jim Dine: *Jewish Fate*, which features striking, life-size lithographs of Dine's trademark hardware tools.[8] We do not aim at comprehensive representation of individual artists, but didn't have another Dine book using the same technique, and our Prints curator colleagues also enthusiastically supported this acquisition.

Jewish Fate is also noteworthy for being Dine's own text. Those curators and collectors who prefer the conceptual and democratic strain in artists' books may be more tolerant of high-end luxury productions if they do at least feature the artist's own ideas and writings. Matisse's *Jazz* (published by Tériade, 1947) is a key example but I think also of Rouault's *Cirque de l'Etoile Filante* (Vollard, 1938), Leger's *Le Cirque* (Tériade, 1950) and Kandinsky's wonderful, early *Klänge*, with its abstract woodcuts (Reinhard Piper, 1913).[9]

The accessibility Henry Cole asserted has always been upheld by the National Art Library, and several artists have gone on record saying how influential it was to be able to hold and study these books in London while they were still students, including Ronald King, whose Circle Press was perhaps the foremost English printmaker-book press from the 1970s to 90s.[10] A bookbinder commissioned to bind one of our precious Picasso books once commented on the grubby state of its plates, to be told unashamedly that this was due to the amount of handling it had received from students over several years.[11] I should say that today we issue the most valuable of these books only by appointment - though we would still never turn down an informed request.

It's worth noting that the National Art Library also supports illustration in ordinary trade publishing, not by collecting but through an annual series of awards.[12] It remains part of the V&A's philosophy that the point of having rare and valuable collections is to influence and inspire today's designers of mainstream things. This came across in an important exhibition organised by the Library in 1979: 'The Open & Closed Book'. Its breadth looks almost eccentric, but it was a really

[7] See Carol Hogben and Rowan Watson, eds., *From Manet to Hockney: Modern Artists' Illustrated Books* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1985).
[8] Jim Dine, *Jewish Fate* (London: Enitharmon / New York: Ruth Lingen, 2016). See http://www.enitharmon.co.uk/product/jewish-fate-jim-dine/
[9] For a full, page-turning view of *Klänge* see https://www.moma.org/s/ge/collection_ge/artist/artist_id-2981_role-1_sov_page-95.html thanks to MoMA, New York.
[10] Quoted in Cathy Courtney, Speaking of Book Art: Interviews with British and American Book Artists (Los Altos Hills, Calif. / London: Anderson-Lovelace; Red Gull, 1999), p. 10, 27.
[11] James (2015), p. 53.
[12] See http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/v/v-and-a-illustration-award/

exciting conglomeration of many contemporary developments, and it picked up on conceptual art, concrete poetry, the dynamic revival in bookbinding, and new technologies such as microform and animation.[13] It might almost have constituted an in-house riposte to the canonical assembly of big-name works being collected at the same time towards 'From Manet to Hockney'. It was curated by Robert Kenedy, an art critic and poet as well as librarian, who sadly died soon afterwards. Most of the works in 'The Open & Closed Book' were loans, although some were later acquired. Works that we would clearly recognise as artists' books appeared in many of the categories, but the term itself does not appear in the catalogue, although it was current by this date. Book objects, including a giant wooden codex by Helen Fesenmaier and Eileen Hogan installed on the pavement outside the museum, were classified as 'models, maquettes, three dimensional objects'.

The year 1985 (as well as 'From Manet to Hockney') saw the publication of the book of essays edited by Joan Lyons, *Artists' Books: a Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, the first reference of its kind and still a core text.[14] I think it served as a handbook during the Library's most prolific collecting period in artists' books, which began soon after, under the enthusiastic leadership of the Keeper Jan van der Wateren, who had come to England in the mid-1960s – from South Africa! He personally built up the collection, getting to know artists and receiving regular visits from dealers, activities we undertake only sparingly today with our much smaller acquisitions programme. He took a thoughtful and philosophical view of the role of artists' books in their historical moment, and collected to represent the field as fully as possible.[15] Among quite a number of libraries collecting artists' books in Britain and London, the NAL had the widest remit, admitting conceptual sculptures like Martin Creed's Work no. 88 ('a sheet of A4 paper crumbled into a ball'[16] and the unique, 'Book in a Jar', containing "sour milk, a sketchbook/diary and fermenting rice" - and no it wasn't even by Dieter Roth ...[17] This is not the only example of a decomposing book acquired in those days: I'm afraid we might be less adventurous today.

[13] The full roster of sections was: Private presses, Illustration, Fine binding, Concrete poetry, Typography, Conceptual art, Commercial publishers, Children's books, Calendars, Ex-libris designs [bookplates], Literature, Models, maquettes (three-dimensional objects), Audio-visual aids. See the catalogue, *The Open & Closed Book: Contemporary Book Arts* [ed. Robert Kenedy] (London: HMSO, 1979).
[14] Published Rochester, NY: Visual Studies Workshop Press.
[15] See Jan van der Wateren, 'Celebrating the Art of the Book', in Michael Humby, ed., *Libraries and Information Services: Studies in Honour of Douglas Foskett* (London: Institute of Education Library, University of London, 1993), p. 113-127.
[16] See http://martincreed.com/site/works/work-no-88
[17] Colin Hall's 'Book in a Jar' was destroyed in the presence of the artist in 2009, for conservation reasons. See http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/issue-57/book-in-a-jar/ .

Jan van der Wateren also promoted and ensured visibility for artists' books, with a long series of displays, in three or four showcases at the threshold to the Library reading room, and occasionally in a larger museum gallery.[18] At the end of the 1990s however he seems to have decided that the collection had reached its critical mass, and turned his attention to other matters (notably comics), prior to his retirement in 2000. There followed some years of less collecting activity, with budget cuts and institutional restructuring. At one point it was declared that we could no longer afford to purchase artists' books at all. During this period we were sustained by the annual support of a trust in the name of the artist printmaker Birgit Skiöld (1923-1982), which funded some modest purchase awards at the annual London Artist Book Fair, with the purchases coming to the Library. A panel, including myself, the head of prints at the V&A, an artist representative of the Trust, and a librarian did the selection from another institution. I can recommend such a collaborative approach to acquisitions: we used to have a wonderful day of sharing enthusiasms and debating our differences of judgement. There was generally a gentle bias towards books that exemplified excellence in creative printmaking, in honour of Birgit Skiöld – who by the way set up the first open print workshop in Britain, where artists could come to make work and learn techniques, in 1958. A complete archive of Birgit's own prints and books (mostly made in collaboration with the poet James Kirkup) is held by the V&A and has also been digitised.[19] She was also deeply interested in papermaking.[20]

By 2008 the NAL had regained its confidence in and commitment to collecting artists' books (albeit on a smaller scale than before), and this was signalled in a major exhibition, 'Blood on Paper', which included a historical survey based on our own collection, plus borrowed works by famous names including Anthony Caro, Anselm Kiefer, Damien Hirst and Olaf Eliasson. This was a spectacular and popular exhibition (and the occasion of my first acquaintance with David Paton!). As a pendant to this show, I organised a medium-sized gallery display entitled 'Certain Trees', which was actually an exhibition curated by Simon Cutts, the founder of Coracle Press, shown earlier at two venues in Europe. It made a nice contrast with 'Blood on Paper': small books from an interrelating group of artists of modest fame, with a definite sense of community and cross currents. Once again, the V&A staged its broad-church approach to artists' books.[21]

[18] The Library had a gallery of its own until the late 1970s.
[19] See http://www.birgitskiold.com/.
[20] See Silvie Turner and Birgit Skiöld, *Handmade Paper Today: a Worldwide Survey of Mills, Papers, Techniques, and Uses* (London: Lund Humphries, 1983). The only African paper mill mentioned in the book was set up in Dar es Salaam by the American Don Farnsworth.
[21] See the catalogues: Elena Foster and Rowan Watson, *Blood on Paper* (London: V&A Publishing, 2008); *Certain Trees: the Constructed Book, Poem and Object 1964-2006* (Saint-Yrieix-la-Perche: Centre des livres d'artistes,

So, what of today? We are still following more than one stream: interested on the one hand to see what important artists make of their encounters with the book, and on the other, what is going on at street level, the 'democratic multiple', now greatly furthered in production and/or distribution by the internet. Our most substantial recent acquisition is a massive work in colour wood engraving by British sculptor Bill Woodrow. It has been executed with master printers in Italy, and is a fascinating extension (literally - 8 metres long when opened) to the artist's other work. It portrays a mountainous landscape, in non-naturalistic colours and really creates a landscape in space.[22] This is a grand acquisition (terrifying to handle), made possible through the generosity of a private benefactor.

A priority for the NAL at present is photo books. We aim to support the success of the V&A's Photographs collection: like prints and drawings, photographs were originally library resources, but the collection has been independently and brilliantly developed since the 1970s; as of 2017 it's being massively enhanced by the acquisition of the Royal Photographic Society's collection. But equally, there is a huge outpouring of photo books at present and we wish to represent this dynamic period of production while it lasts. (It is a collecting principle to prioritise the contemporary: we rarely acquire retrospectively to 'fill a gap', even in our regular collecting.) We also have an enthusiastic benefactor supporting this policy.

Not all photo books are essentially documentary, but among the qualities we value in this medium are compelling, beautiful or original reflections on the urgencies and ephemeralities alike of our time in history, the circumstances of individuals, and the fate of the world. Thanks to an exhibition of South African photography in 2011 we acquired a few recent examples by artists from this country, including Zanele Muholi, Guy Tillim, and Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse for instance (and would be keen to consider more).[23] The museum's engagement however dates back to the 1980s, when it received a large donation of work from David Goldblatt.[24]

2006). Gallery leaflets for both shows were also produced: contact Elizabeth James for remaining copies: e.james@vam.ac.uk

[22] For an image see http://sculpture.uk.com/programme/lost-a-new-work-by-bill-woodrow/

[23] See the catalogue: Tamar Garb, *Figures & Fictions: Contemporary South African Photography* (London: Steidl, in association with V&A Publishing, 2011) and extensive webpage: http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/f/figures-and-fictions-contemporary-south-african-photography/

[24] See http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/d/david-goldblatt-and-the-v-and-a/ .

Among lighter-hearted photo books recently purchased, I recommend Greg Jones's *Still Works* (2015): portraits of household appliances discarded on London's suburban pavements.[25] This is an example of a book selected for its special resonance in the context of a museum where similar products are on display as examples of contemporary design.[26]

Raising Water (2013) by Sjoerd Hofstra and Karen O'Hearn was the kind of purchase for which in the National Art Library we make a written case, due its cost. (In fact I try to ensure that the recommendation is placed on file for all 'special' acquisitions, not least to provide useful briefing for subsequent cataloguing or presentations about the object.) We already have several earlier works by these artists, known for their sophisticated use of pop-up elements. These are popular with our readers, especially student groups, and can be related to our holdings of children's books and other entertaining formats (such as paper peepshows), but the justification for acquiring an additional example was partly that here the movable engineering is exposed to view. Further, the style of this book is noteworthy, in its knowing relation to conceptual books, with prosaic photography and minimal drama (like Ed Ruscha), a title derived from Lawrence Weiner, and dictionary-definition text (like Joseph Kosuth).[27]

During the Booknesses Round Table discussion on Friday afternoon, William Kentridge said (if I recall right), 'Our books are our autobiography' (referring to one's personal library). With that in mind, I'd like to end by mentioning *'Vita'* by Jukhee Kwon, acquired by the NAL in 2014 (enabled by the V&A's Samsung fund for Korean art).[28] One-off book objects, and sculptures made out of books, are not a foremost priority for the National Art Library today, but particularly eloquent examples remain relevant, as we contemplate the implications and the limits of the digital. Kwon, a graduate of the well-reputed book arts programme at London's Camberwell College of Art, shreds the pages of abandoned books to create spectacular sculptures, sometimes large-scale and dramatically coloured. Here though she has transformed an Italian poet's autobiography into a small nest,[29] evoking the idea of being 'curled up with a book', perhaps. 'For me', she says, 'each book has individual personality, and it has narrative and history - like a human being.'

[25] See http://www.selfpublishbehappy.com/2016/02/still-works-by-greg-jones/
[26] See for example http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O48612/ and http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O146046/
[27] For a video of this book in action see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nslgCwprqLU
[28] An image of *'Vita'* is linked from the artist's gallery page http://www.octobergallery.co.uk/artists/kwon/
[29] Vittorio Alfieri (1749-1803), *Vita: Scritta da Esso* (1804 etc) is a classic of Italian literature and Romantic 'self' writing.

The Reading Game. Provocations, Multilingualism, Typography

Paul van Capelleveen

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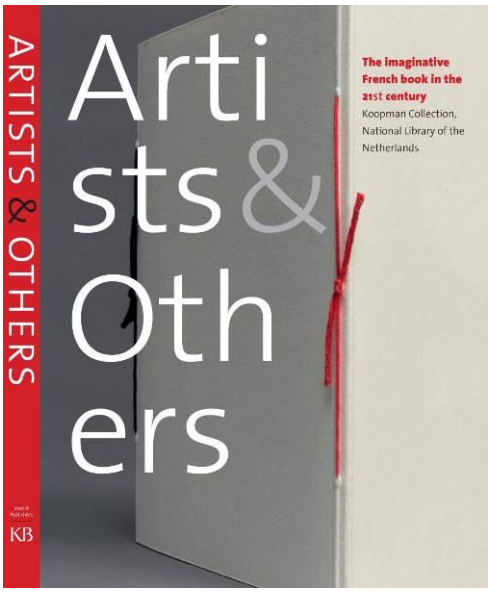
Some artists/printers complicate the layout of pages by including translations in bilingual or even multilingual editions. What happens if the text is not simply in one language, but in two or more parallel texts and translations? What is considered to be the task, option, or position of the reader?

I have selected the work of three artists who also act as printers of their own work: Jean Vodaine, François Da Ros, and Johannes Strugalla.



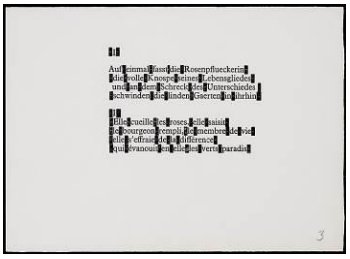
These books can be found in the Koopman Collection of the National Library of the Netherlands, and some of these have been described in my recent publication *Artists & Others*.

If I say reader, I also mean ‘spectator’, ‘viewer’, ‘observer’ and ‘perceiver’, ‘participant’ and ‘co-producer’, as readers want to engage more actively with the art works. One might say, without too much exaggeration, that readers have become like “gamers”.

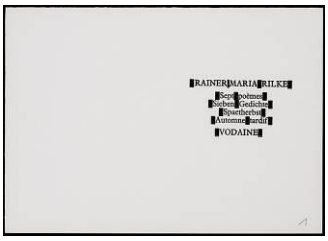
In some cases readers are expected to create exhibitions, to actively pull out, arrange and organize the components: Bartleby & Co's *Cookbook* is an example.
How far should the reader go? Usually it is not possible, as has become customary in the virtual world of Internet, for the reader and maker to interact. The important aspect is the mental activity stimulated in the reader, and especially the relaxed approach, so that - , as Johanna Drucker once put it – "the eye massages the weary brain into a new configuration".

The three artists who are or were their own printers mainly focused on images and typography to produce a visual effect in their multilingual books. The first of them is Jean Vodaine. Born in Slovenia as Vladimir Kaučič, he grew up in Metz, in the Lorraine region of France. Vodaine was an author, translator, illustrator, magazine editor, and a printer, who used a visual typography since the early sixties.

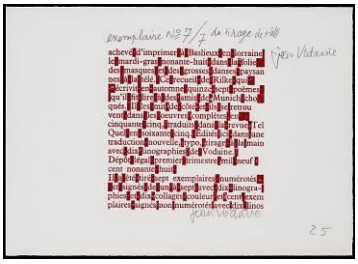
In 1998 he published an edition of seven erotic poems, the so-called "phallic poems" of the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke. The multilingual area of Alsace-Lorraine – German and French territory by turns throughout the course of history – was perfectly suited to a bilingual edition. The seven poems were not published during Rilke's lifetime, and had been written in 1915, when Rilke wanted to explore sex, and particularly the erection, as a theme for poetry. The poems were included in the posthumously published edition of his collected works. A French translation became available in 1965, but Vodaine produced a new one. He set and printed the book and illustrated it with linocuts.



The book contains 25 loose leaves of which 13 contain the poems, the others comprising title, linocuts, and colophon. Only page 3 contains both the German and French text of a poem, the other texts are each printed on a separate page, the German text preceding the French translation.

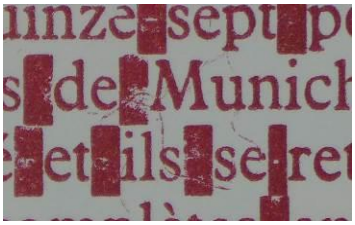


The title page contains the names of Rilke and Vodaine, as well as the title in French, which encloses the title in German. The page also displays remarkable black “decorations”. These also occur within the text space of the poems, in between the words and at the beginning and ending of most lines.



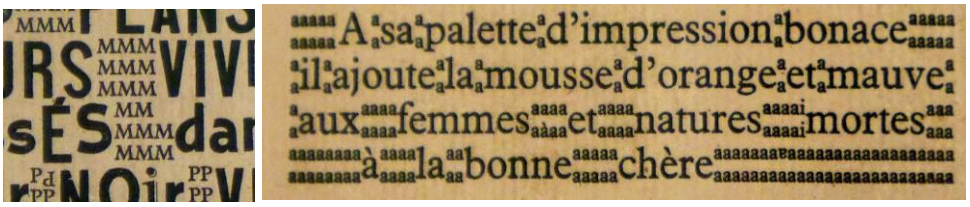
The cover title and the colophon are worded in French only. The book was not intended for the German market; all Vodaine’s publications were produced for French readers and bibliophiles (who probably could not read the original German text).

Vodaine wanted the printing not to be too neat or clean. He decided to use the space between the words as visual typography: there are seemingly raised spaces between all the words.



Vodaine did not care about the evenness of the printing, most black and red rectangles show white spickles and spots, and the printed matter was dirty, dust is visible, and even a hair.

Some letters were not printed correctly, and Vodaine simply inserted a letter in handwriting, as in the word “leise”. He didn’t even try to imitate the form of the printed letter “e”. The manifold black rectangles were intended as decorations, and the pages display a certain regularity. Vodaine had used these word divisions, inked in black, earlier, in the late 1960s.



For these so-called “typogrammes”, he also inserted other small blocks of type, such as a series of letter “a”s or “p”s, instead of blanks, all meant to slow down reading. He used different fonts and type sizes for words and paragraphs, which heavily influenced the readability of the text.

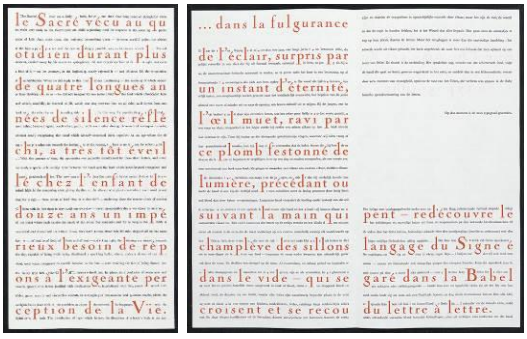
The word divisions can also be seen as a special type of punctuation mark that achieves the opposite of what Mary Norris wrote about the use of commas, dashes and semicolons by Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson and Henry James:

‘They accumulate in a way that can make sentiments feel simultaneous, although it’s impossible to read two things at once. It’s like a trio in opera.’ In contrast, Vodaine’s divisions make sentiments feel asynchronous and separate. In a way, though, one could argue that the result is similar to what happens in Henry James’s stories: ‘the pauses seem to indicate facial

expressions - raised eyebrows, pursed lips, a puckered brow. They heighten the prose.' And so, Vodaine's black divisions intensify the reader's focus. What does it mean if a poem about sex keeps being interrupted by the typographer?

Often, Vodaine would treat the typography of a text differently in comparison to the facing translation, but in *Sept Poèmes* the German and French texts received an identical treatment. The black forms seem to slow down the reading process considerably, as if each word should be read individually, but that is not how our brains work. A slowing down of the reading process is not exactly what happens. Reading is an continuous process of forward and backward looking along the lines of a text, and when the process is slowed down, what happens is that the returning to pieces of text or decoration that have not been identified immediately as words will be repeated a few times. Even these repetitious backward movements happen at a vast pace, but they make the reader more aware of the obstacles and uncertainties.

The reading process itself is not slowed down, but the interpretion process is postponed, or interpretations are quickly followed by new suggestions. Moreover, the disturbing influence of the inked in rectangles is perhaps even stronger before the reading starts. The image of the page as a whole intimates that an alternative reading path is necessary, just like a page of poetry demands another level of concentration than a page of prose.


le Sacré vécu au qu
otidien durant plus
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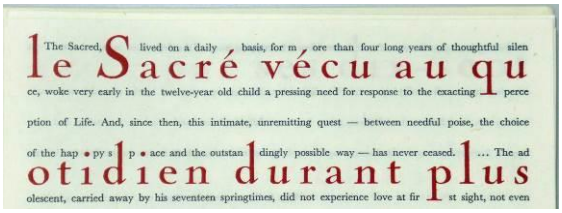
... dans la fulgurance
de l'éclair, surpris par
un instant d'éternité,
l'œil muet, ravi par
ce plomb festonné de
lumière, précédant ou
suivant la main qui
champlève des sillons
dans le vide – qui se
croisent et se recou
pent – redécouvre le
langage du Signe é
garé dans la Babel
du lettre à lettre.

We now turn to François Da Ros's 'Experience of Babel'. Like Vodaine, François Da Ros was born outside France, in Italy, and he grew up in the Bourgogne region. From the sixties to the eighties he was employed by two major printing firms in Paris, and he worked on more than 150 artists' books in collaboration with Picasso, Miró, and others. In 1983 he started up his own studio, and continued printing artists' books for customers, but in 1999 he decided that in future he would only print books for his own publishing company. His first book, published in 1991, was called *Anakatabase*.

Anakatabase is a multilingual book, containing a short text on printing written by Da Ros himself, and translations into 20 languages, including Dutch and Japanese.

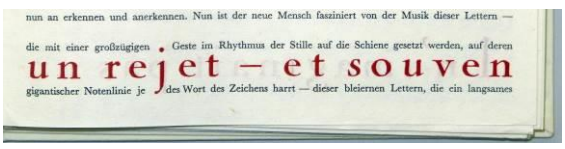
The French text was set in Nicolas Cochin's typeface – a large 36 point type – and printed in carmine. In between the lines of this text, the 20 translated texts have been printed in Baskerville – a small 9-point type.



Usually, printers and graphic designers strive for invisibility. The American printer Theodore Low De Vinne wrote that the reader does not want to see the printer, but to hear the author, and, in a 1932 lecture Beatrice Warde asserted that printing should be transparant. However, with artists' books the reader needs to hear the artist's voice and the author's voice, and frequently the printer should be considered an artist as well. François Da Ros, surely, is a printer who wants to be heard. His selection of types and the arrangement of text are aimed at creating obstacles and difficulties, as he sees them as gadgets that may reveal hidden meaning.

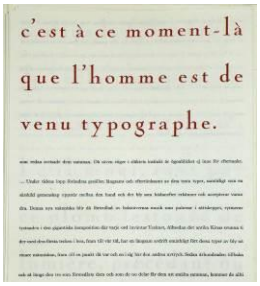
In *Anakatabase* the French text is not easy to read, although it is printed in a large typefont. The beginning is confusing. The text does not start with a capital letter L for "Le sacré", but with small letters for the article, followed by a capital for "Sacré". The words appear in the second line of the page. The first text line is the beginning of the English translation. Words are broken off, but no hyphens have been used.

The last word of the first French text line is not a French word at all, but only the beginning of the word "quotidien". It is against all rules to break off the word after the u, but the printer has ignored them. French letters and punctuation marks appear in the line of the English text. The acute accent on the word "vécu" interrupts the word "more". The French text disturbs the English translation.



Some words have been divided over two pages. “Souven”, which is not a word, continues as “Souventes fois” (“often”). The text itself is about the typographer, the young compositor of sixteen or seventeen years old, who learns his trade, and slowly gets to appreciate his material, a special relationship arising between his hand and the lead type. Gradually a fascination with the music of type grows on him. Knowing this, the reader can appreciate the unusual composition as a musical composition, with French dots, apostrophes and accents placed in the space reserved for another language. The letters and lines of type can be likened to musical notes and to staves on a page of music. Da Ros describes this music as a confusion of consonants, vowels, diacritics, and exclamation marks.

He argues that it is this music that awakens the young compositor, who rediscovers the language of the Sign, hitherto lost in this Babel of letters he was working on. Da Ros concludes: this is the moment at which “man became typographer”.
Anakatabase was his Tower of Babel.



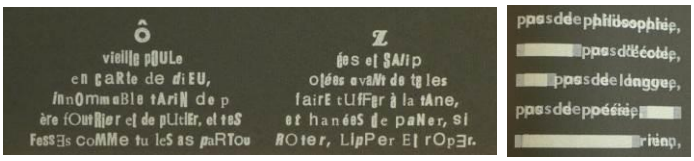
And when this statement is made in the French text, suddenly, the confusion stops, the intermingling of languages comes to an end. The French conclusion is at the top of the page, while the last piece of translation is placed underneath. Finally, text and translation have been separated, they occupy their own territory on the page.

Having reached the end of the text, the reader may re-read the story. Comparing the reader to a gamer (again), we might argue that the reader has reached the next level. But even if one is a linguist of some genius, among the 20 languages there must be several that the reader doesn’t master. For the reader too, this book is a Babel-like experience. Reading one of the translations,

one is constantly reminded of the original French text, obviously because it has been printed in red, and it hinders the reading of the translation.

It draws attention to the fact that one is not reading the original, but a derivative text with less authority than the authentic one. In artists' books produced by artists who also act as printers, such as Vodaine and Da Ros, the reader has to find alternative reading paths. Vodaine's texts can be followed, with some difficulty in a linear way, although the line is obstructed by the filled in spaces between the words. In Da Ros's book, texts have been intertwined, and there is a meaning in this, which can only be found by an analysis of the type and the typographical events.

The visual typography of Johannes Strugalla poses other problems. Despalles éditions was established in 1982 by the French publisher Françoise Despalles and Johannes Strugalla, a German artist of Lower Lusatian descent. Despalles éditions specialized in graphic art and artists' books. The printing and publishing side was established in Mainz with a gallery in Paris. Many of the Despalles publications are bilingual; in German and French. They link German authors to French artists and vice versa.



His typographical design reminds one of dadaistic practices, collage, and visual poetry. Letter-spacing is uneven, the distance between letters is sometimes increased or decreased to affect density in a line or in a block of text.

The further in the book one gets, the more problematic a normal reading becomes. Different typefaces have been used within one sentence. Capitalization is not standardized. Texts have been printed transversely.

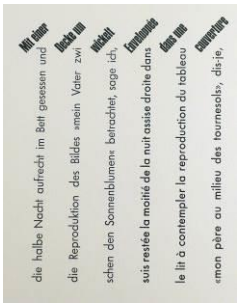
In *Ziemlich Gedichtkopfessen* – (the title means something like Rather Poem-Head-Food) - the font size varies considerably, letters are crossed out, there is overprinting, upper and lower case letters are heavily interspersed and the text occasionally is made to fan out in all directions. Letters can be squashed together as in a ligature or alternatively kept separate; the word spacing is very irregular, as is the line spacing.

Strugalla asserted that his visualizations introduce a simultaneous reading, and that his contribution interrupts the progress of the text.

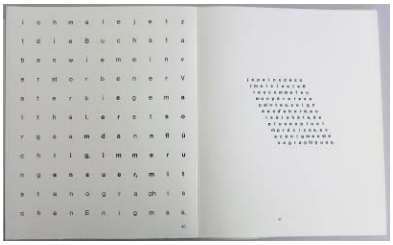
The text is written by the Austrian author Friederike Mayröcker. The author's manuscript looks like an ordinary prose text. Strugalla decidedly changed its appearance. Each block of text has been designed differently as an individual visual entity in order to reveal the internal structure of the intermittant pieces of "écriture automatique".

The first text page in the book after the title page, the impressum and the motto, looks like a contents page, but it lacks a column of page numbers, instead there is a quantity of plus and minus signs. The text on this page is about an invoice and the author compares it to a labyrinth. The typography not only expresses textual associations; the design is also a visual answer to the etchings by the French artist Monique Frydman.

The form of the text near the bottom edge of page 18 is a “translation” of the purple ink lines in the etching on the facing page. Each page in *Ziemlich Gedichtkopfessen* has a different layout, a different text orientation, and invites the reader to adjust the reading path.



Texts and translations have been broken up in small pieces; but they have not lost their individuality; they have been integrated, but not fused, and can easily be identified. On page 20 there are three columns on the left in German and three columns on the right in French. But text and translation are not always on the same page, and the visual appearance of the German text and its French translation is not always identical.



Page 40 and 41 display two contrasting forms (a square and a parallellogram), but the contents is identical, on the left German, on the right French. They merely *appear* to be different. Also,

the reader may initially try to find some French words on the left page, but there are none. For that, one has to turn to the facing page, and to the other form.

A similar presentation appears on page 21, where the German text is set in a triangular form, displaying type in different sizes, while the French translation is set across in one line near the edge of the page. Strugalla's design visualizes and emphasizes the layers and the development of the text on the one hand, and configurates the design in accordance with some of the images.

It can be observed that the artists/printers treat texts in several ways, slowing down the interpreation process, while visualizing and complicating the linear reading path. They do tend to explicitly separate the original text and its translation, although these can be made to look distinctly different or even be in conflict. Vodaine treats text and translation as parallel texts without distinction offering French readers a new translation that can be compared to the German original. Da Ros treats his original French text as the main body of text, while the twenty translations are placed in between the lines. Strugalla has developed the visualization of the text and the translation to such a degree that both, original text and translation, have the dual capaciy of text and image.

All three, in a way, serve a multilingual audience, and seek to reach a new audience for texts by the means of parallel translations. The translations are not visualizations in the first place, but are really meant to be read as texts in their own right. Vodaine introduces, again, Rilke's erotic poems to a French audience, Da Ros introduces his own texts to twenty language areas, while Strugalla, as usual tries to establish a link between German and French culture by introducing a German writer to a French audience. As the three books were issued in limited numbers only, between 80 and 100 copies, the intended audience seems to be too small for this task. Consequently, the conclusion must be that these books display a high degree of idealism.

Now, I want to add a *coda* about the reading game.

Usually, because of the limited edition and of the degree of difficulty, an artists' book will reach only a specialized small audience. The exact opposite might also be claimed. Günther Kress, in *Literacy in the New Media Era*, discussed the non-linear reading that is inherent to new internet media, such as gaming where the complex interrelation of text and images poses no problems for young readers, viewers or players: "The screens of computer (or video) games are multimodal – there is music, soundtrack, writing at times – yet overwhelmingly these screens are dominated by the mode of image. As the graphics become ever more sophisticated, the forms of reading necessary to play at least some of the games successfully become more subtle and demanding."

Linearity is not seen as a useful approach to the reading of the screen; the player needs to construct a reader path on the basis of visual clues such as colour and spatial configurations of various kinds. The point, according to Kress, is that readers who come from such screens to pages are used to reading differently, they are experts of a non-linear reading path. His description of the reading path of a gamer can be compared to that of the reader of an artist's book. An order must be established "through principles of relevance of the reader's making", and subsequently "to construct meaning from that".

Two final suggestions then.

Potentially there is a larger audience for artists' books – that is, if one takes into consideration the strategies that readers must develop in order to understand them. Artists, printers, booksellers, librarians, and curators just need to tell these gamers that artists' books exist.

Secondly. Games depend on surprises, challenges and have already formed conventions of their own. Artists' books usually are personal deviations from existing patterns, formats and conventions. Still, a thorough look at similar image-depending phenomena will open up the all too closed world of artists' book critics and enlarge our understanding of the reader. We might learn more about the way that artists' books work if we incorporate in our research the subject of new media literacy.

3. Roundtable Panel Discussion: *South African Book Arts as a Democratic Force*

Book Arts as a Democratic Force

Kim Berman

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In 1983 I left South Africa for Boston. I was a politically aware and active student at Wits University, making etchings from photographs of banned political graffiti on the walls of Johannesburg. By the mid-1980s a popular uprising was underway calling for making black communities “ungovernable” Many friends or comrades at Wits were repeatedly arrested and held under detention without trial, others fled the country, others killed. One of the key instruments used by the apartheid government to neutralize political dissent was the State of Emergency. A state of emergency was partially declared in 1985, and then throughout the country in 1986. Television and cameras were banned from all events, and any visual means of depicting the growing organizing and police repression, including graphics, artworks, graffiti, and posters.

The Medu Art Ensemble’s landmark 1982 *Culture and Resistance Symposium* and exhibition in Botswana, (for which I sent some prints) called for the production of activist art. This inspired organisations such as Community Art workshops (CAP) in CT and Screen Training project (STP) in Johannesburg to train and print T-shirts and posters for the UDF, COSATU and many other orgs. People could wear T-shirts or put up banners calling for a rally or funeral, before they were ripped down or confiscated by the police. Most of these organizations were banned during the State of Emergency 80’s, and police detained many of the activists and printers, forcing them to go underground.

In the meantime had joined the ANC in exile and volunteered in the support of some underground organisations. In particular, we smuggled out the work of Afrapix collective, arranged multiple exhibitions around the USA University Divestment campaigns. My partner and I at the time edited a News-briefing called “Uncensored” to distribute ANC news bulletins through the SA office. My

own work, where I was a Masters student at the Museum School of Fine Arts in Boston, (the home of Clement Greenberg and Abstract Expressionism) became increasingly didactic and political.

I became obsessed with the artists book as democratic force. Books were banned, books were powerful, they were seen as a threat to the state. My work took on more and more of a documentary shout-out. I called my Masters show State of Emergency, (in 1988) and from small books, they became larger friezes spanning a narrative until they were standing screens, I think partly due to the frustration of communicating the realities in South Africa at the time, and getting the art community around me to try and address my work beyond the painterly or seductive surface of the print. During my 7 years in Boston, I was also an apprentice printer at the original Artist Proof Studio, assisting artists edition beautiful 20-colour multiple plate flower prints for the Hilton Hotels. My *Alex under-Siege* work now hangs in the Constitutional Court. I think Albie Sachs saw it in Boston and ten years later invited me to do a sequel as part of the Fires of the Truth commission series. I see this work as a book.

I watched Mandela's release from Boston in 1990 and heard him call for all South Africans to return home to build a democratic future. I packed up my life, sold my possessions and bought a beautiful French Tool etching press and in 1991 opened APS in Johannesburg with the late Nhlanla Xaba. I saw this at the time, and as it has evolved today, an act of discovering and deepening democracy in printmaking. After returning home after 7 years away, I made a series of artists books about "Rediscovering the ordinary" when I traveled around the country working for the same SA organization, now called SADF, using landscapes as a metaphor for both hope and light on the horizon, and pain of a fractured and devastating past, held in the land.

I am so delighted that the artist book in South Africa is coming full circle, and is finally being seen in full light… Like my many books over the years that stay hidden in draws or collections, they are celebrated in Booknesses and speak to the rich diversity of shape and expression of our fraught and vibrant democracy. And I particularly want to pay tribute to my dear friends Jack Ginsberg and David Paton as custodians of this extraordinary South African legacy and their enormous generosity and life's- work in giving back the artists books through David's remarkable website and Jack's extraordinary collection that will be bequeathed to WAM and the public, as a true democratic force….

Collaboration

Mark Attwood

Director of *The Artists' Press*, White River, Mpumalanga, ZA

mark@artistspress.co.za

The Artists' Press was started 25 years ago to be a collaborative printshop. We set out to provide a space where artists could bring their ideas and turn them into limited editions of ink on paper. Our role as a print studio from the outset was to provide the space and equipment to make this happen.

Almost every artist has their own unique way of approaching a collaboration, and we try to figure out what it is they want, and how we can help them get the look they want.

Most of our collaborations centre around producing prints as a flat work on paper, but books have always been very appealing to us and from the outset we have been drawn to collaborative book projects.

When we are working on a regular print project it's really just the printer and artist working together and getting to know each other and what the possibilities of the process are and the results can usually be seen within a week or two, but making a book is more like making a film, there are so many more possibilities to consider.

There are so many more people who need to be involved to work out typography, layout, rhythm, structure, process and work flow not to mention the actual printing and binding, all of which can make a project grow from weeks to years to complete.

We have done books that are very traditional in structure like *The Ultimate Safari* by Nadine Gordimer which was Nadine's short story combined with lithographs by 3 un-tutored artists, or *The Human Race* by Robert Hodgins which is a single poem and a lot of black and white images.

We have done books that have involved collaborations between artist and poets like *Selected Poems* by Patrick Cullinan and Judith Mason that have included, typography, lithography, gold leaf and wooden marquetry covers.Judith used the painterly qualities of lithography so well in

this book, and on one page extended the edge of the paper to fold out like a paper aeroplane, going beyond the traditional limits of the page. For each book Judith did a unique oil painting frontispiece on canvas which was tipped into the book.

We have published a book with Belinda Blignaut, titled *Anti-Body* which was made by laying objects onto light sensitive lith film and exposing it to light to create transparent pages that as you page through the book you can see down through a number of pages at a time, and the text starts to become reversed and confusing.

We have made large fold out books of multiple panels mounted on cloth for William Kentridge, for *Pocket Drawings* we made letterpress printed boxes to house the book. *Learning the Flute* was letterpress printed on actual pages of the Chamber's encyclopaedia.

Breathe is an animated flipbook that can't be flipped through unless you view it on the accompanying CD Mounted inside the back cover. Perhaps the book that has involved the most complicated collaboration for us was *Qauqaua*, a traditional Nharo folk tale produced in collaboration with the Kuru Art Project in Botswana. We started this book with story telling workshops where storytellers from around the Ghanzi area in Botswana gathered to tell and record traditional stories. The artists then selected one folk tale told by Coexae qgam, which they wanted to put into a book.

The story was transcribed in Nharo and translated into English by Hessel & Kobi Visser, two Dutch missionaries living in Ghanzi who have made it their life's work to translate the bible into Nharo. They made sure the translation was ethnographically correct, with every click in the correct place.

Nharo Folk tales are not like European folk tales, there isn't a beginning, a middle and an end with a clear moral lesson. They are cyclical in nature, and we had to preserve this ebb and flow in the printed story.

The printing was all done by hand, and the lithographs involved many runs to get the rich colours, making it many months of edition printing.

We wanted to print this book letterpress to get that lovely embossed into the paper look, so we found and purchased a letterpress proof press just for this project. We spent a few years working on layouts, sending proofs up to Botswana, getting feedback from the artists, changing the layout until everyone was finally satisfied.

We took lithographic plates up to the artists' own studio in Ghanzi and spent a few weeks collaborating with the 9 artists involved in the project. The images were proofed on their etching press, and all the plates later returned to Johannesburg for editioning.

Once printed, all the printed images were taken back to Botswana for the artists to sign, and then we could fold and collate the printed sheets ready to hand over to Peter Carstens who did the binding for us. The leather we had chosen was hand-tanned goatskin from the Kalahari that was vegetable tanned in Ghanzi by a local leather project. The only problem being that goat skins are either small and thin from young goats, or large but thick from older goats, but very few thin skins were soft and big enough for our book, and after the first few books Peter returned all the big skins to us saying they were just too thick to use. We spent years trying to find enough large and thin skins and eventually worked out that using a block plane on a litho stone we could thin the leather by hand to make it workable, and were able to finish the edition of 100 books. It is the first book ever printed in the Nharo language, and I believe one of the most important projects we have ever done, and it just wouldn't have been possible without all the input from all the different collaborators along the way.

Reflecting on the zine #University of Students

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We are in a space in South Africa where everybody has a right to their voice. “You cannot impose your will on us. We have our opinions, we have our own mind. You speak, allow us to speak.”

Democracy is brought to life through public participation, where citizens respond to and take responsibility for issues that affect their daily lives.

The creation of book art can be a form of articulating the interests of groups, in this instance the the creation of the zine #University of Students based on the #*FeesMustFall* movement. The movement encourages critical thinking by questioning the current state of inequality that plagues South Africans of various levels.

#*FeesMustFall* is about questioning and challenging the commodification of education and basic needs that are required for a dignified standard of living. These needs are translated into human rights which are protected by the constitution. Human rights come with responsibilities, including that of building a society that respects the rule of law. All should be held accountable to the rule of law no matter what rank.

It is about occupying and deconstructing the current colonial and imperial status quo and constructing one aimed at occupying spaces and claiming ownership over material structures such as property and ideational norms such as people power.

Psychologically, South Africans are suffering from the after effects of the apartheid government, the current state of corruption and the reality of broken promises stained in blood and tears.

South Africans are angry, depressed, disappointed and desperate for change. This form of suffering manifests itself through political protests in various forms of media. South African

students have taken stock of their political power and are starting to demand change through protest which involves arts and culture in the form of song, dance and visual reproductions of lived experiences.

Artist books provide tangible and digital creative forms of information that can be replicated and distributed as a means of civic dialogue in response to challenging issues in the public arena, this is essential to democracy because multiple voices can be heard, seen, read and responded to.

Artists and the work we produce plays an important role in creating social dialogue about issues facing society through various artistic means. The powerful role of art becomes apparent when we look back into history and see how oppressive governments such as the apartheid regime sought to suppress expression that opposed their brutality.

The government banned television, radio, and newspaper coverage, but this did not stop international criticism and action. In democratic South Africa protesting is a tool that South Africans have used to raise issues in the streets, on the internet and through art and culture. The mainstream media provides a spotlight for protesting communities, sometimes telling a skewed narrative of the events due to government stakeholders.

Various forms of media are continually targeted by the government in an attempt to regulate expression under the guise of security. The mainstream media is constantly being accused of blacklisting and censoring those who do not comply with their narrative.

As a young South African taught to stand up for my rights I created this zine in an attempt to create an alternative narrative and spread awareness about the *#FeesMustFall* movement based on photographs that I captured between September and December 2016 in and around Pretoria.

Art such as artist books and zines provide multiple viewpoints to current affairs and stimulates public engagement and political activism in citizens from all walks of life. DIY culture promotes agency, a do it yourself attitude to problems that need solutions based on personal responsibility.

This speaks to democracy, which is a government for the people by the people. Knowing that my voice is important allows me to create art as a form of social commentary that can be shared

easier and faster thanks to media such as the internet. The internet is at threat like the mainstream media of being censored with government arguing for the necessity to curb fake news and prevent an increase in violent protest around the nation influenced by news reporting.

Zines are inexpensive reproductions or democratic multiples that can be themed around any topic of interest to the zine maker or the reader. I used this means of production as an artist because this form of art can be distributed freely and produced cheaply thanks to photocopy machines and platforms such as this Booknesses Colloquium.

Democracy fails when the citizens who hold the power become disengaged and apathetic to the power they yield. We cannot solely rely on the government to regulate itself and give us the information we desire. We live in a democracy because our forefathers fought to the death for basic human rights such as freedom of expression, which speaks to the true nature of what it means to be an artist. We therefore have the responsibility to use our art to communicate to with the world in which we exist.

Cultural institutions such as The University of Johannesburg and FADA Gallery, through the Booknesses Colloquium have provided forums for civic dialogue and have gone beyond just being producers and exhibitors of art.

The process has been democratic to the extent that it was an open call for artists around the country to participate. The platform provides a diverse range of book arts and book-objects from South African artists, designers and students which encompass traditional, experimental and digital responses to the book as an artwork.

The government and institutions of higher learning have become arenas of political protest and national upheaval. Students feel that the government continues to say that the Constitution is the ultimate protector of every citizen’s human rights, which were previously denied to the majority of people under apartheid. Yet continues to violate the constitution to maintain power and suppress opposition. It is up to us the people to demand that our rights are protected.

This can be done through book art.

Siyafunda Online

Siya Masuku

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Siyafunda Online is a Johannesburg-based publishing company that was founded on 12 September 2016 by Siya Masuku. Soweto-born Siya is an experienced graphic artist and children's book writer and illustrator.

Siyafunda Online has published a book called Siyafunda: isiZulu, authored by Siya Masuku. The book was edited by his mother, Noqibile Nxumalo, a highly-experienced isiZulu teacher in Emseni Primary School, Emdeni, Soweto.

The printed book may be purchased directly from Siyafunda Online or selective book merchants countrywide. The online, interactive, version of the book includes animated characters and voice narrations.

Siyafunda Online seeks to create a platform whereby artists who promote South Africa's indigenous languages (and cultures) may have access to exhibit and sell their works. There is a need to harness the gifts that these artists have and enable them to give back to their communities by making learning more accessible to others.

It is not only through the minds of the learners that we need to connect, but with their hearts. Our purpose, therefore, is to show the youth a new world through their own languages.

There is a shortage of books (and other art forms) written, or created with a focus, in isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sesotho, Sepedi, Tshivenda, Setswana, Xitsonga, siSwati or isiNdebele. It is necessary to balance the language barriers in our literature, especially at primary level.

Siyafunda Online seeks to focus on vernacular art forms throughout various disciplines such as visual arts, poetry, music and storytelling, to foster collaborations that help children and young adults learn in their mother tongue.

The Story

In 2015, inspired by a casual conversation Siya Masuku had with his mother on the lack of books at the primary school where she was teaching, Masuku decided to make an illustrated alphabet book to help children learn isiZulu at primary level. He began work on the animal-themed 25 letter alphabet in February 2015.

During the process, the animal theme turned out more complex than he had imagined and it meant that he had to create the graphite illustrations and the writing in tandem. It became a much longer process than he had anticipated. There is a particular lack of books for young people written in South Africa's vernacular languages. Siyafunda: isiZulu took a year to make and another year to publish it.

In 2016, Masuku launched a crowd-funding campaign to raise money to turn his prints into a digital platform too, with an interactive website. Masuku has also written an extension of the Siyafunda: isiZulu book in the form of a story, Siyafunda Efamu.

In South Africa, there are 11 official languages. But in this multilingual country there are still multiple tensions between South African's with different native tongues. Language is important because it is a tool that we can use to transfer ideas. We have the opportunity to create ideas that can help us progress and learn from each other by using this tool called language effectively. Evolution happens through gradual and constant change and that is a scary thought for some of us. If we use our creativity constructively, our cultures are likely to evolve for the better. We ought to embrace our diversities and use this as a springboard to spread our ideas.

Why do we do it?

For native Zulu speakers, the idea of the book is to assist with improving vocabulary, association, pronunciation, reading and writing from a young age. This, in turn, will ensure that learning other subjects in Zulu later on is far easier.

Children whose primary language is not the language of instruction in school are more likely to drop out of school or fail in earlier grades and often resort to a life of crime or have limited employment opportunities.

But beyond the effect of using it as a tool for native and primary school Zulu speakers, the practical spin-off is that adults who are looking to expand their basic language skills could benefit too, especially from the interactive modules.

Private teaching institutions have received the book well. Their methods of teaching include tablets and personal computers to teach each learner, this is the purpose of Siyafunda Online. The Reggio approach to learning has influenced a great deal of their teaching philosophy and they see Siyafunda Online as an ideal fit.

Anyone can subscribe to Siyafunda Online for interactive modules. The modules feature narrations from professional teachers and storytellers. This enables parents/gaurdians to help children learn isiZulu at leisure.

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