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The sound of a book: Sound as generator of narrative in the reception of selected new media objects as books

Context for an exhibition

> Avant-garde filmmakers have collectively set out to reinvent the rhetoric of sound…they have sought to explore its vast potential, its abstract, symbolic, concrete and evocative qualities, its dialectical relation to the visual image. (Lucy Fischer 1981:9)

My article examines the phenomenon of sound as a narrative creating device in selected new media objects commissioned for the exhibition: *Navigating the Bookscape: Artists' Books and the Digital Interface*.[1] In the article, I propose that the aural, far from being simply an expected convention, facilitated by the digital nature of the work, fundamentally enhances the reading and reception of these works within the conventions and experience of the book.

As part of the exhibition *Navigating the Bookscape: Artists' Books and the Digital Interface* which I curated for the Aardklop Arts Festival (September 2006) and the FADA Gallery, Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, University of Johannesburg (October 2006), I chose 17 Artists' Books from the Jack Ginsberg Collection of Artists' Books.

These 17 books facilitated an argument that many of the conventions of the digital environment or electronic screen, i.e. scrolling, multiple page openings, hypertexts, interactivity and navigation, amongst other phenomena, have been presupposed, suggested or in fact achieved in the 'phenomenal' or Artist's Book and that the book, in the hands of the artist, becomes infused with what Johanna Drucker (2003:np) terms "interpretive acts". And so I attempted to explore the suggestive ways in which these 17 South African books were already virtual, where the codex, as an interactive and dynamic form, was grounded in what it *did* rather than what it *was*.[2]

In taking 'the digital' as a loose basis on which to explore some contemporary artists' concerns with the book, I then attempted to open up a place for debate by pondering on what the 'digital' and the book have to offer each other when they meet, blend and

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collide. I commissioned five artists: Kim Lieberman, Andre Venter, Paul Emmanuel, Giulio Tambellini and Marc Edwards to each produce a work which, while exploring elements of the digital environment, also attempted to acknowledge the conventions, and experience of, negotiating one's way through a book.

The artists were presented with the following criteria:

As an invited artist, your brief is to interrogate the relationship between the conventional codex and 'the digital'. This interrogation can focus on one or more of the following:

* Produce and print images and texts on and from the computer, while binding the book in the conventional manner

* Produce a book which interrogates the nature of digital interventions with the book as content

* Produce a book which is accessed on the web or via other digital or electronic mechanisms in the gallery space

* Present a book through projected or other electronic means

* Exploit software packages or construct own software that impacts on the presentation, perception and reception of the book

* Construct a book which interrogates the material, structural and navigational conventions of the codex through some form of digital intervention.

I included Lieberman's seminal *Amazon.com - digital* (2001 | 5761) (Figure1)

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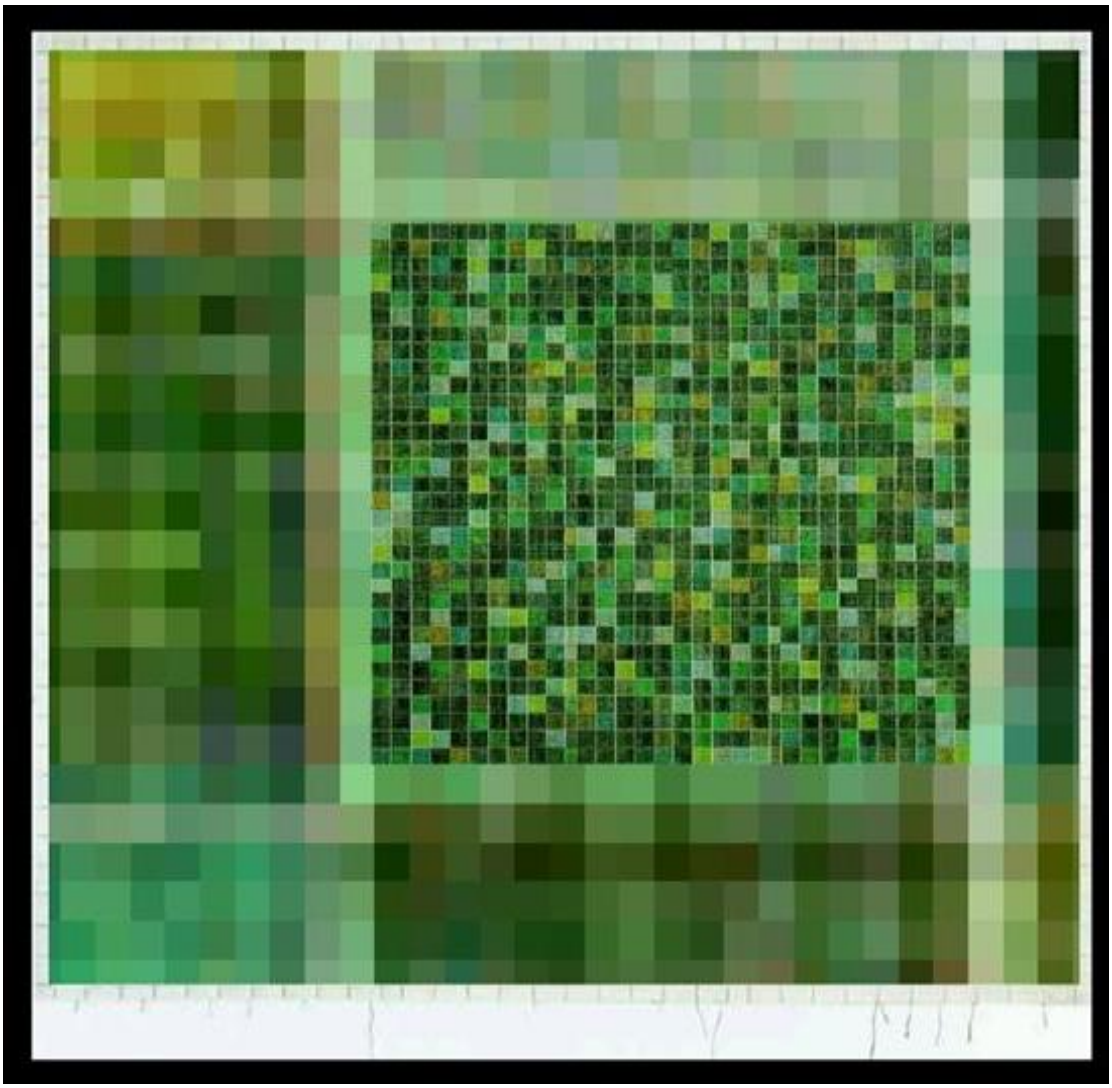

Figure1: Kim Lieberman *Amazon.com – digital* (2001 | 5761). Digital Flash animation for projection.

which I had first seen on Marcus Neustetter's *switch on/off* exhibition at Die Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK), Oudtshoorn, in 2001 and which, in many ways, was the catalyst for this exhibition. "In this work" says Colin Richards (2000:4),

> we can link the dots between forests, books, information and in fact the entire cultural ecologies we inhabit. The wired world in which everything comes to connect with everything, nothing is ruled out…The intimacy of the globe is woven by threads of a million messages floating and spinning in ethereal space.

In *Amazon.com - digital* I was confronted by what the work was suggesting and how the work was achieving it. The screen was a book containing pages, yet each page

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became a ‘book’ containing even more ‘pages’ with each ‘page’ containing threads of ‘text’, each containing the whole image, and thus, restarting the reading process from scratch. Of critical importance to this work, however was its accompanying soundtrack consisting of sounds seemingly derived from a set of rain sticks.[3]

I read this work as a book whose digital pages suggested a program for the way in which a book facilitates visualisation of the textual narrative. *Amazon.com* suggested to me that an exhibition on the intersection between the codex and the digital book was needed. *Navigating the Bookscape: Artists’ Books and the Digital Interface* became that exhibition.

The Sound of a Book

> The audio byte has become its own theme song, a pervasive and inescapable cultural phenomenon whose ubiquitous presence in all aspects of our lives - design among them - reflects an almost global preoccupation with sound as a kind of validating force. In a world gone virtual, if you cannot hear it, is it really there? Are you really there? (Jessica Helfand 2001:128)

Although the artists’ responses were conceptually, thematically, technically and visually diverse, one important similarity caught my attention. Five[4] of the six digital works included sound as a critical element of their work.[5]

These works seemed to probe recent shifts in the visual arts from, what Carine Zaayman (2005:160) calls, “the move towards less object-based more project-based art, more non-gallery art, a sense of events as art, the rise of audio art…”, work which is then fundamentally different from e-zine, e-books and image/text-rich websites which operate as navigable information rather than as artworks.

A question which may be asked of technology, is where exactly its information, and by extension its content, resides when the machine is switched off? With the advent of digital memory which is internally calibrated through clocks, default memory settings, tiny batteries and other devices, information is (usually) stored and kept safe from

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loss. We have come to expect this every time we reboot our PCs and laptops, each time we switch our cell phones back on. In today's sophisticated software environment, an ability to remember every detail of data at the nano-moment before a power failure, and its ability to return that information without loss has become more than simply an advantage, it has become critical! This ability to preserve and retain is, in my view, founded upon the printed page, upon the book's role of recording, retaining and redelivering the exact information again and again, faithfully and without corruption. It is perhaps this infallibility which caused the book to be burned and destroyed when deemed a carrier of corruption, while as a material object, it remained neutral and constant.

Yet it is perhaps a question one may begin to ask of the codex. If the digital clock keeps 'ticking' and updating, in the case of the computer or cellphone when switched off, while the book remains dormant when closed, does the digital not have some other advantage[6] in the manner in which its technological self can constantly update and thus change – a notion internationally acknowledged in that remarkable 1-second duration between 31:12:99:23:59:59 and 01:01:00:00:00:00 when so many people believed that their world would be traumatically transformed.

When the book is closed, it does something more that remain inaccessible, it terminates the imaginative source, the facilitation and evocation of memory's locations, sounds, smells and sense of things as they might be. This termination is more immediate than that caused by the ending of a film or musical recital as the codex has inherently neither image nor sound to generate save that which it stirs in one's imagination. Of this condition, Katherine Hayles (2000:80) states that filmic and other image/text conventions capture "a reader's sense that the imagined world of the text lives less on the page than in the scene generated out of the words by the mind's eye". Florian Brody (2000:136) describes this condition as the promise lying between the covers which mystically extends the mind of the owner, while Helfand (2001:119) describes narrative fiction's ability to "…transport us to a different time and place, an alternative space in which we make silent observations, imperceptibly casting ourselves inside a story's domain." It is not surprising then, that many makers of Artists' Books have looked to those sensorially-rich, sound-generating and utterly interactive book-objects made for toddlers and children for ways in which to exploit the book as a phenomenal object.

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Amanda Du Preez (2005:140) asks us to consider if a "…tool become[s] politically meaningful only once the human hand picks it up?" She asks us then to differentiate between, and understand, technologies which have political properties in themselves and those which become political in their interaction with humans. I term any content-generating device 'political',[7] and the political act of constructing meaning begins, in *Navigating the Bookscape*, with accepting that what one is hearing is an aural narrative, presented, read or imposed on the reader/viewer. These digital books seem to call out to one across the gallery space, vying for one's attention, first aurally and then only visually. In projecting their narratives into space, these sounds are able to take up powerful political residence via the agency of the human ear before communicating through the conventional eye or hand.[8]

In terms of my argument that these new media objects operate within the conventions of bookness, Zaayman (2005:157) reminds us that:

> …we should not be fooled into thinking that new media technologies present a total departure from older cultural objects. In fact, many new media technologies are popular precisely because they augment and extend realities we are already familiar with. It is therefore important to take a double view of new media: on the one hand, there is the sudden expansion of the computational possibilities of computers, which allows unprecedented distribution and sophisticated manipulation of original content. On the other hand, these technologies and their possibilities enhance existing cultural objects, such as magazines, fine art images and music.

Zaayman (2005:158) then invokes Lev Manovich's (2001:13) notion that "one cannot understand new media without setting them against, as well as locating them in, so-called older [and present] media" and remembering that new media objects can remain as alienating, opaque and intimidating as any other media, and sometimes more so.

Hayles (2000:83) often encounters the virtual book as a fetishised, anachronistic and fragmented object of desire, however, a more pedantic example of this location within

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‘older media’ is provided by software packages which emulate the experience of viewing and turning a paper page.

Such software packages usually provide what Drucker (2003:np) terms “a kitschy imitation of page drape from a central gutter [as] one of the striking signs of book-ness” complete with simulated shadows and a variety of MPEG sounds from which one may choose an appropriate simulacrum of that most indexical of book qualities; the sound of a turning page.[9]

But it is the simulation of the sound of something more than the turning of a page which interested me when viewing the digital books on *Navigating the Bookscape* and which now becomes my focus. Helfand (2001:125) points out that

> “[t]he relationship between what we see, what we hear and what is ultimately recorded by the mind is of enormous consequence today, as the invasion of sound…extend[s] the media spectrum by raising and distorting our perceptual (read visual) expectations.”

Zaayman (2005:170) believes that artists “…move images and sounds around the cultural sphere. In this mode, meaning is not fixed, but rather content specific, and fluid”.

What interests me here is the ease with which Zaayman associates ‘sound’ and ‘image’ in the domain of the artist, something which ‘digital-’ or ‘new media’ has not only made possible, but established as a norm. This is by no means the case within ‘traditional’ media in which sound is still often regarded as inappropriate or difficult.[10]

With this seemingly seamless appropriation of image and sound within new media objects and the easy assimilation of sound into the viewing experience – facilitated by even basic software packages, the expectation of sound within these products has been established. I wish to argue, however, that in the examples of new media objects on the exhibition, sound occurs not because it easily can, nor because of an expectation that such objects move the reader/viewer from older, codex-based image/text relationships to a newer-media image/sound relationship, but because this

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relationship is the very thing which triggers the imaginative narrative, the text or political content, of these objects, as books.

Zaayman (2005:159) cites Mark Postner's notion of digital media within the public sphere as 'a space' rather than 'a tool', and suggests that "this new mental space constitutes a virtual geography of sorts, and like any space, the topography of that space has a determining influence on the activities within." Although Zaayman is referring to a more broad-based 'Cyberdemocracy', I argue that my chosen examples of digital books on the exhibition generate 'internal activity' within the 'mental space' of their reader/viewers by exploiting sound as narrative.

Of such 'internal activity within the mental space' of the reader/viewer, Kahn (2006:3) states:

> In reality, sounds are never far enough above or below society to escape poetics, bodies, materials, technologies, discursive and institutional contexts or the beck-and-call of phenomenology's 'auditory imagination'. All that needs to happen is to admit that consciousness plays a part in auditory perception. Even if one wished to maintain a strict division between a type of musical listening that imagines to hear only sonic and phonic content and other types of listening that hear a range of other contents riding the vibrations of sound, then all that needs to happen is to admit the possibility of different modes of listening existing simultaneously or oscillating quickly…It's splittin' the mind in two parts. It's making one part of your mind say 'oo-bla-dee' and making the other part of your mind say, 'what does he mean?'

Candour aside, but with this in mind, new media devices and technologies have the ability to enter and define new understandings of time and space and, as such, through the examples on this exhibition, can trigger the imaginative narrativity of the experience of reading/viewing a book.

But "for those in search of narrative rapture" asks Brody (2000:135) "technological media are indeed seductive: Why take the trouble to dream when you can so easily consume that which has already been visualised?". Brody (2000:135/6) contends,

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however, "…that digital media – unlike film and video – have the potential to emerge as a new type of book...because the book has the quality of captured memory". He continues (2000:142):

> The computer spawns the electronic text, a volatile form that paradoxically returns the text to our heads while at the same time enmeshes it in an even more sophisticated apparatus. The rampant confusion, and even revolt, that such a blurring of boundaries brings in its wake can be minimised by applying those rules for places and for images defined for the art of memory, making them hold for books as well as for new media systems.

This memory can be stoked by the fuel of *narrative* for which Mieke Bal (1985:8) defines the conditions as: actor, narrator, text, story and fabula (descriptions) with the actors experiencing connected events. Yet Manovich (2001:228) notes that narrative is rather less easily defined in new media terms. This is because of the vast range of objects and actions currently crowding under the label[11] and, more particularly, notes Manovich, the fact that "we have not yet developed a language to describe these new strange objects" (2001:228). What is clear is that not all new media objects are, or operate as, narratives and that narrative is often paired with the concept of i*nteractivity*, itself a contestable pairing.

The ubiquity of interactive new media objects seems to support the pairing, but this pairing is not so straightforward when confronted with two particular works on the exhibition. When viewing these works, the expectation that new media objects are *ipso facto* 'dynamic', and interpreted by interactive acts, is not always appropriate or fulfilled.

I now examine the element of sound in two of the new media objects from the exhibition. In doing this I investigate the implication of their use of sound as a critical element in the reception of these digital works as books. If a critical convention of bookness is narrativity (whether linear/logical or non-linear/disruptive), then sound, as an agent of narrative, may help position these works within the convention of reading and negotiating bookness. For the purposes of this article, I will limit my discussion to an analysis of Edwards', *Authentic – not authentic, self practice from 11/04/05 to 12/05/06* (Figure 2) and Emmanuel's *The Lost Men Project (Grahamstown)* (Figure 3).

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Figure 2: Marc Edwards, *Authentic – not authentic, self practice from 11/04/05 to 12/05/06* (2006). Digital animation on double screen portable DVD player.

Figure 3: Paul Emmanuel's *The Lost Men Project (Grahamstown)* (2006). Touch screen animation and headphones on pedestal.

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In the wall-mounted double DVD screens of *Authentic – not authentic, self practice from 11/04/05 to 12/05/06*,[12] Edwards records both images and sounds on his Sony Ericsson P910i cell phone and processes these in Photoshop. Edwards describes his process thus:

> In this work I have used a technique of the self as a means of making, where cyberspace is considered as a site for practice. As a site of a politics of identity, where we have difficulty in truly identifying the authentic, I begin with the production of an online diary, not unlike a blog, not as confessional, but as self writing. I produce identifying documentation in an attempt at an authentic finding of my place in the world through a practice of care. Although this practice is rooted in writing and as a result refers to the idea of book, the outcome is a daily digital self portrait (Paton 2006:30).

What is of importance in the reception of Edwards' work is his refusal to engage interactivity as a convention. With no keyboard, mouse or other interactive device, he denies us tactility and any haptic relationship with the digital object. We are expected to stand close and observe and listen. How then is narrative achieved?

A section of his video includes sounds of the pre-flight testing of aircraft flaps which provide an awkward and ambiguous (in that they are more animal-like than machine-like) relationship with what one is viewing on the screens; a constantly changing collage of filmic and still images, some of which have become autographically altered[13] (Figures 4a & 4b).

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Figure 4a: Marc Edwards, Still from *Authentic – not authentic, self practice from 11/04/05 to 12/05/06* (2006).

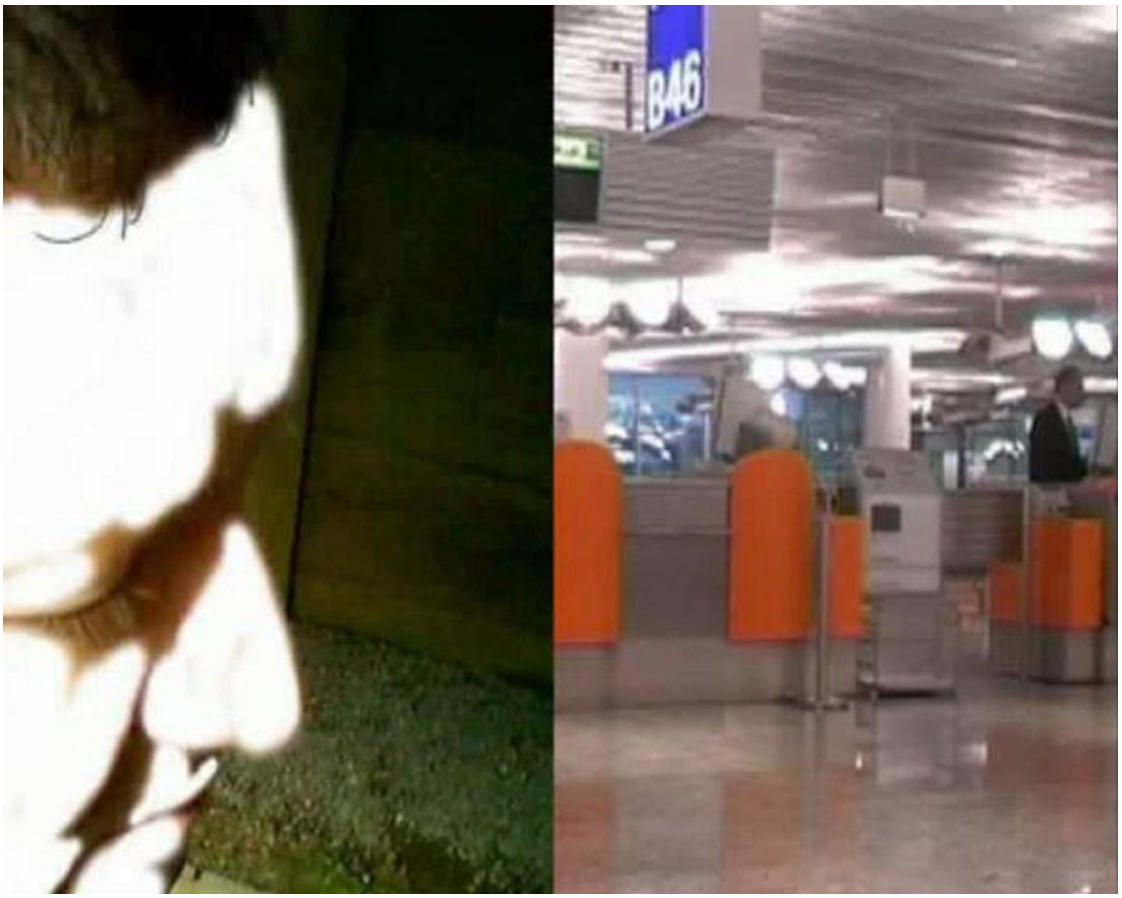

Figure 4b: Marc Edwards, Still from *Authentic – not authentic, self practice from 11/04/05 to 12/05/06* (2006).

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The screens simulate the recto/verso symmetry of the pages of a book, but the sounds interfere with this symmetry and drive the narrative as a space of flux. As insecure and tenuous a text as this might be, Edwards' refusal to engage interactivity is taken one critical step further, by providing for us what the imagined narrative might be.

In providing a non-linear narrative and ambiguous image/sound relationships[14] as the text in his work, Edwards attempts to replicate the fluid, flux-laden sensuality with which we associate the metaphysical, imaginatively-charged narrative space of reading/viewing a codex: Something which begins to provide, at least an expanded notion of what I am calling 'bookness' over the rather more limited reception of the book a merely a physical object or container. Fischer (1981:12) describes this as "a sense of physical presence…created, not to much by the composed and rarefied visuals, as by the concrete materiality of sound."

In this work, Edwards replaces the haptic intimacy of handling a book with an image/sound relationship which helps to establish the imaginative narrativity of his content. Edwards provides us with the elements of our potential imagination in all their slippery ambiguity. What seems to have been achieved, and presented to the reader/viewer, is a imaginative visualisation of the book's content rather than a book, whose content we need to discern; this is, so to speak, a book about the book.

If Edwards' work required no tactility, then the ambiguity of the image/sound relationship suggests the manner in which we experience the intimacy of visualisation when reading a book. My argument then is that Edwards has reconfigured Bal's conditions for narrative by the work itself becoming the actor, narrator, text, story and description while the viewer, experiencing these events, attempts to connect them. The critical catalyst of the reception of this 'connection' however, is sound, without which, the work would descend into a mere juxtaposition of two modes of image making.

Brody (2000:146) seems to sum up Edwards' reconfiguring of elements and promotion of a new narrative of ambiguity, stating that the "dynamization of text and the book as

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they move into the electronic matrix unhinges the dependency between reading, the printed word, and truth-value."

In contrast to Edward's denial of interactivity in the generation of this 'new narrative of ambiguity', Emmanuel's work confronts the reader/viewer with an aural encouragement, in fact an instruction, to enter and engage the narrative, literally through touching the screen.[15] A romantic, tactile relationship is encouraged between reader/viewer and hardware with the aural narrative unfolding and driving the work at the interface between fingertip and screen, between flesh and light: established through an aural invitation to "touch me, touch my skin".[16]

The narrative invites the reader/viewer to put on the headphones, touch the screen and activate the work. In this way, Emmanuel's intimacy in *The Lost Men Project (Grahamstown)* cannot be more different from Edwards' distance.

Of this intimacy, Emmanuel (in Paton 2006:34) states:

> For me, the viewer-'book' relationship is an interactive one: physically, emotionally and conceptually. To experience a 'book' one is enticed to engage with separate revealed 'stations' or parts, not the entire object all at once, as one would experience a single image. I also feel that in the 'book' experience, this engagement is initiated by the viewer. I have chosen to use a touch-screen monitor as the 'interface' between viewer and 'book', each 'page' being revealed in response to the viewer's touch…The touch sensitive screen replaces the 'page' of a traditional book. By touching the screen, the page is 'turned'. The tactile quality of paper is often used to 'talk' about the subject matter of an Artist's Book. I wanted to use the cold unforgiving surface of a glass screen to talk poignantly about intimacy and alienation, the body being soft and warm to the touch.

When compared with Edwards' combined sound/image/static/filmic work, Emmanuel's sound/image/touch work activates its narrativity differently. For Hayles (2000:80), virtual books – when compared with filmic books - operate according to a different convention as

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> unlike film, this imagined world consists of text that the user is invited to open, read and manipulate. Text is not left behind but remains in complex interplay with the perceived space into which the screen opens…because the computer is an interactive medium.

This ‘complex interplay’ is revealed as a content-generating device in the work when the reader/viewer responds to the verbal invitation to touch the screen. The names of young men who died in the Frontier Wars fought in the Grahamstown area in the 1820s and 50s were set in lead type and pressed directly and painfully into Emmanuel’s skin (Figures 5a, 5b & 5c).

Figure 5a: Paul Emmanuel’s detail of embossed text into the artist’s flesh from *The Lost Men Project (Grahamstown)* (2006).

Figure 5b: Paul Emmanuel’s detail of embossed text into the artist’s flesh from *The Lost Men Project (Grahamstown)* (2006).

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Figure 5c: Paul Emmanuel's detail of embossed text into the artist's flesh from *The Lost Men Project (Grahamstown)* (2006).

When withdrawn after a few minutes, a photograph was taken before the impression disappeared. The embossed text and the read names of the dead are what one views and hears on each page of the work. After touching the screen, a new page is revealed causing the remaining impressions of these names to slowly fade away.

Bal's 'narrator' is crucial here. Without its voice, the touch screen is simply a replacement for the click of the mouse or the 'enter' button; the physical interface facilitating trite interactivity; the mere agent of advancement through a set of images. With the narrator's words in our heads however - and remembering that reader/viewers don a set of headphones in order to isolate themselves from ambient noise - the reader/viewer enters the narrative, with the act of touch becoming, not only the digital equivalent of page-turning, but the very creation of content.

With the indexical marks of a traditional type face embossed deeply into the skin visible one moment then having this trace spoken away by the narrative the next, through replacing paper-turning with screen-touching, and printed text with sound, Emmanuel, too, constructs an ambiguous narrative. This ambiguity is achieved through a combination of instructions/commands and lists of words/names which seem to have numinous powers of healing. As the narrative enters our ears, so the agents of pain disappear from view: an aural/visual expansion of how we might experience this content had it been printed in the form of a codex.

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Conclusion

In this article I have isolated the element of sound in two particular works from the *Navigating the Bookscape: Artists' Books and the Digital Interface* exhibition in order to demonstrate how, as generators of narrative, sound elements, whether ambiguous or directive, facilitate a convention of bookness.

For Edwards, his construction of an ambiguous and flux-laden relationship between images and sounds spawns an equivalent of the imaginative narrative which reading might release. In this way, the interrelationship and sharp disjuncture between the elements of this work read as 'the book about the experience of reading a book dealing with Edwards' particular choices of texts and images'. Yet I believe that he moves even further. Through this ambiguous relationship between image and sound, Edwards is perhaps responding to, and answering, Helfand's (2001:127) concerns that sound, as an often overly determined and orchestrated component in the visualization of ideas, can represent

> …a fundamental corruption to the senses. It telegraphs the ending. It interrupts interpretation. It brainwashes the audience. And, more often that not, it drives the design, so that visual matter is, in a sense, choreographed to mimic the ebb and flow of the music, to respond to changes in rhythm, to mirror a voiceover, a crescendo, a bridge, or a refrain.

Edwards, despite denying the tactile interactivity associated with digital investigations and thus providing the reader/viewer no options or choices, still succeeds in constructing a complex yet plausible narrative by which we can navigate his story.

In contrast to Edwards, Emmanuel exploits the sensual experience of negotiating a codex-based narrative by calling on the reader/viewer to replicate the handling and thumbing of pages. This haptic relationship with the book is heightened into a series of touch-sensitive response to sounds and verbal invitations. It is the element of sound which lies at the heart of Emmanuel's work and which not only directs and leads the reader/viewer to activate the process of morphing the images, central to the content of

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the work, but also to releasing the roll call-like narrative as the healing element of this ‘book of the dead’.

In this manner, Emmanuel, too, might put to rest, Helfand’s (2001:129) concerns and difficulties with “the forced connections between design and sound” in many new media objects by presenting the reader/viewer with what she calls “user-driven sound” and an example of one of “…the provocative ways for visual thinkers to contribute to this contemporary media landscape, a new way of embracing sound”.

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Endnotes

[1] A digital catalogue of this exhibition can be viewed at www.theartistsbook.org.za

[2] The reading of a codex remains one of the most interactive and hypertextual of experiences evidenced by a reader's ability to flip from place to place in a book and consult the index – itself a remarkable example of a hypertextual database.

[3] The sound of the rain sticks became an iconic representation of an environment into which the viewer walked and which drew the viewer to the work. The appropriateness of the sound was only fully realized as the visual narrative came into view and became congruent with the audible narrative.

[4] Tambellini's work acknowledged the implication of sound in that, if the video tape strips which connected the image to its casing were pulled across an electronic head, sound and image would be generated.

[5] A vast tradition of aural art exists which is not part of this project but which is important to acknowledge: See Douglas Kahn (2001) for a history of sound in the arts. I need, however, and in particular, to flag Willem Boshoff's *KYKAFRIKAANS* (1980) which is an early example of sound/image narratives comprising visual-poetic texts meant to be performed. The sound of these read/performed texts (including blank spaces and silences) helps to unlock the narrative which then aids the reader/viewer in deciphering and thus reading the conceptually and visually dense work as a page from a book. C.f. my *Willem Boshoff and the Book* (2000:57). Since 2006, Boshoff has been systematically producing professionally and carefully constructed recordings as the aural illuminations of his visual poetry. Some of these recordings were presented at a public lecture, FADA, University of Johannesburg on 25 July 2007 before moving onto the Michael Stevenson Contemporary, Capetown, in November 2007. Recent international examples of video/sound/book relationships include Guy Begbie's works: *House of Memory*, *BS6 6HR Domestic Interior* and *Reading Writing* (2006) found at http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/begbie.htm

[6] Notwithstanding the fact that the purpose of *Navigating the Bookscape* was to undermine conventional notions of the advantages of the digital over paper-based books, the point here is to acknowledge the potential advantage of digital update as a space of change.

[7] A book can be seen to have political properties only when read, digested and acted upon, yet some books are, by their very presence in the world, political. A best-selling novel carries less political power when opposed to Mao's Red Book, for example, yet a novel by Salman Rushdie caries, for some, as much political power as a religious text.

[8] My attention has been drawn to Luce Irigaray's (1992) argument that if space is not empty as it is filled with the density of air, vision is based and dependent upon touch, that is, the touch of light on the eye. This, she argues is achieved without fusing vision and touch and reducing one to the other. Kelly Oliver (2001:79) suggests that Irigaray further attempts to forge an argument for a close association between sight and sound which too exploits the density of air.

[9] An example of this can be experienced at http://page-flip.com/demos.htm

[10] Kahn (2001:116) states that many problems can be credited to a general lack of understanding about sound as "there is, after all, little discourse on sound" and cites Jean Baudrillard's difficulty with the theoretical implications of sound when in response to a question, he answered: "…the sphere of sound, the acoustic…is really more alien to me than the visual. It is true there is a feeling about the visual, or rather for the image and the concept itself, whereas sound is less familiar to me. I have less perception, less analytic perception, of this aspect."

[11] See Manovich (2001:19) in which possible limits of new media are discussed and questioned. Diverse objects as the Internet, Websites, computer multimedia, computer games, CDs-ROM, DVD, virtual reality, TV programs using digital media, 3D animation, compositing, text-image composition using digital and computer equipment including printers, computer distribution

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mechanisms and media storage devices are mentioned. But what too of ATMs, in-store digital kiosks and the cell-phone? Just how broad can the term 'new media' be stretched?

[12] In this work, the viewer is confronted with a white plinth (no more than 1m high) placed against a white wall and which contains, and thus hides, the prerequisite hardware. From behind the plinth extend two data cables which are attached to two portable DVD screens (each measuring 140mm (h) X 210mm (w)) placed immediately next to each other, at eye level. The screens display video images (both static and moving) which have, in places, been manipulated to resemble paintings, drawing and prints. Accompanying the images is a soundtrack of ambient sounds which are both congruent and incongruent with the images.

[13] A comparison can be drawn between Edwards' photographic/autographic switching and Robert Breer's 1980 experimental film *T.Z*. in which sketchily drawn visuals are conjoined with concrete, material sounds (Fischer 1981:12)

[14] Fisher (1981:9-12) provides evidence for the sense of spatiality achieved by avant-garde and experiential filmmakers through exploiting narrative fragmentation, disruption and disjunction between image and sound. In this way, a self-reflexivity, which reveals the mechanics of the filming process, is created and which, itself, becomes a meta-narrative opposing the convention of a clean sound-image illusion in favor of exposing the existence of two discrete tracks.

[15] In this work, the reader/viewer is confronted with a black pedestal which, like Edwards' work, contains the hard drive. Upon the pedestal is placed a touch screen monitor and a set of headphones. On putting on the headphones, the reader/viewer is instructed to activate the visual narrative by touching the screen. The images consist of parts of the artist's own body which have been embossed with the names of dead soldiers. The aural narrative is a 'roll call' of the dead, and as the names are read, the embossed names are slowly erased from the screen. On touching the screen again, another body-image and set of embossed names appear and are read.

[16] Oliver's (2001:68) discussion of Irigaray's "tactile look as caress" seems most pertinent here as Emmanuel's work seems to require a caress in order to activate the sense of healing. This healing is manifested in the visible change from embossed, painful flesh to 'healed' flesh as a result of touching the screen.

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