

Beginning and ending

In setting myself the task of writing a thesis that could be read in a non linear fashion, drawing out a line of argument that follows a linear trajectory becomes tenuous at best, impossible at worst. I will start with outlining some of the threads of arguments and then show how they all begin to speak to one another.

My central inquiry is about forms, the way that they shape and order knowledge, and the ways in which these forms come to affect the receiver of the knowledge. It is the moment of encounter, its affective potentials, that, I argue, lie within the form, rather than the content of the material being presented.

I wrote this thesis after having made and exhibited the practical work about which I write. This is important because the thesis is about modes of display. I learned something valuable from each kind of display strategy that I used. These include: a large book, a giant stack of A4 paper, a maquette for a larger sculpture, made out of index cards, placed in a vitrine, a wall text, a video performance, a participatory installation and a heap of small pieces of paper on the floor.

This Rolodex is another experiment in testing how the form of something determines the content therein. The movable cards and fragmented text are mobilised as forms that facilitate an understanding of the performativity inherent in all acts of classification.

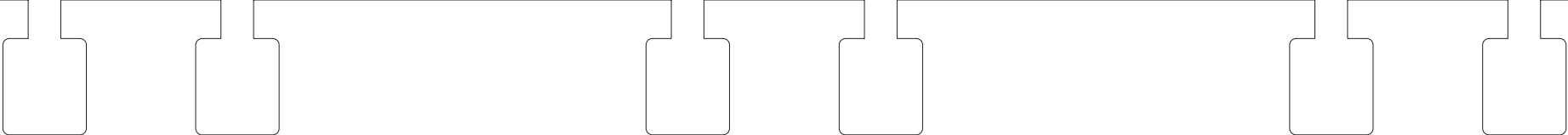
Another formulation of the theory of performativity is taken up, through the work of Dipesh Chakrabarty and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, which uses the term to describe a bodily experience as opposed to the rationalisation of abstract thought, and is ascribed to ‘pedagogical’ approaches.

In keeping with this line of thinking around the performative as lived or felt experience, I look at a case study that Shireen Ally references in her article, *Material Remains*. Here, the messy materiality of an abandoned archive in a damp warehouse affords the possibility of a personal, affective experience to someone who finds a document about himself in the heap of papers.

This story led me to ask the question, what if all archives were messy and disordered like this one? On one hand the material would be difficult to access from the point of view of a researcher looking for empirical information, on the other, the material would be left open to an infinite number of possible meanings. Before the ‘raw-information’ of an archive is mediated through acts of appraisal and categorisation by an archivist, there exists within it the latent potential for infinite configurations, and thus infinite different meanings.

The Johannesburg City Library, as a site, provided a meaningful answer to the above question. The large, colonial style building, filled with shelves to categorise books, and therefore, knowledge, was also filled with piles of books and boxes that had not yet been categorised and put away. The tension that this created between mess and order allowed for the site to be a generative space for artistic and knowledge production.

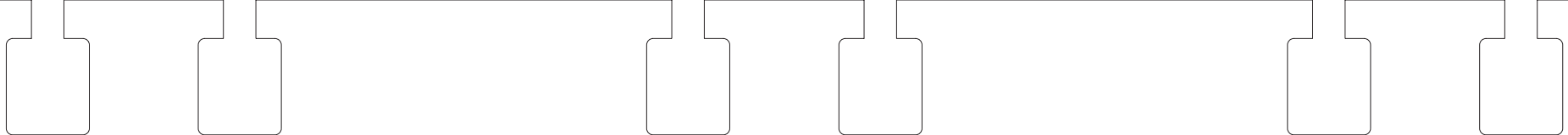
An investigation into these different forms of display; of material that is ‘supposed to’ be ordered, but isn’t, or institutions that are ‘supposed to’ order and classify, but fall short, have come to inform the strategies of display I have used in my practical work. Through a close analysis of my practical works, I show how I have mobilised the tension, discussed above, between mess and order, to afford the viewer a performative, affective experience upon encountering the work.



Title

Performing Mess:

The generative potential of disorder in institutions of order.



Abstract

Beginning a research project at the Johannesburg City Library in 2013 was the catalyst for the body of work presented here for my Masters dissertation. Since it had been closed for renovations, and reopened in 2012, the Library was filled with boxes of books waiting to be ordered and put away, and old furniture piled up in empty rooms. There was a tension between the structure of the library, an institution whose purpose is to order and classify knowledge, and the state of its contents, which were disorderly and messy.

This paradoxical relationship between mess and order is one which I have mobilised in my practical work, and other case studies upon which I have drawn. Through them, I argue that the tension between mess and order can be a productive space for knowledge/artistic production.

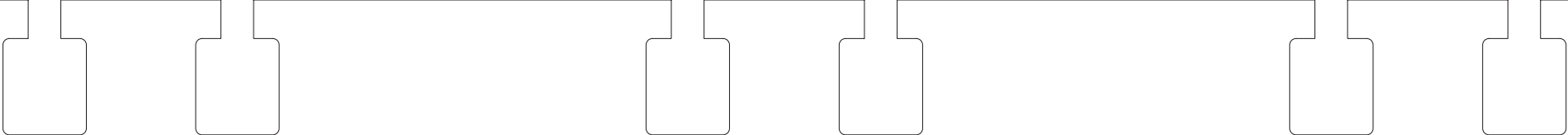
I look at sites like the Johannesburg City Library as examples that present a strategy for display that I have found to be useful in my practical work. These strategies include presenting piles or heaps of papers, which prompt the viewer to sort through, pick something up, or find something amongst the 'mess'.

I use the term 'serendipity' to describe the experience of 'coming across' something on one's own. The serendipitous experience is one that gives the discovered object an air of specialness, something that 'I have found, that therefore must have some special relationship to me'. A presentation by Shireen Ally on her paper, *Material Remains* illustrates this point through an anecdote she shared, about the neglected archives of the administration of the former Bantustan, KwaNgane.

In my own work I mobilise the fragment as an important tool for freeing text of being bound to one specific meaning. A text read as a singular phrase, can adopt many meanings, often personal, in that they are imagined by the viewer. By freeing text of its contextual 'order', one opens possibility for another kind of serendipity, one that is formed through the implication that a piece of text can relate to a viewer in a very personal way.

I invoke the theory of performativity in relation to display strategies of mess and fragmentation. A performative speech act is one that changes the ontological status of the subject that is being implicated by the speech act. Because fragmented pieces of text, displayed 'messily' do not have prescribed categories (meanings), they enable the viewer to enact his or her own meaning-making. Through this, the fragment comes into being as part of the given category; the ontological status of that phrase is changed through the act of categorising. This reminds us that all categories are in fact constructed and are not inherent to the subject of classification.

Here, the form of the Rolodex as a device that holds both my written and practical research embodies the theory of performativity as it allows for pages to be taken out and put back, can be read from any point, facilitating non linearity and fragmentary text. Paradoxically, the Rolodex also performs the function of an ordering mechanism.



Mess and Order

Research question:

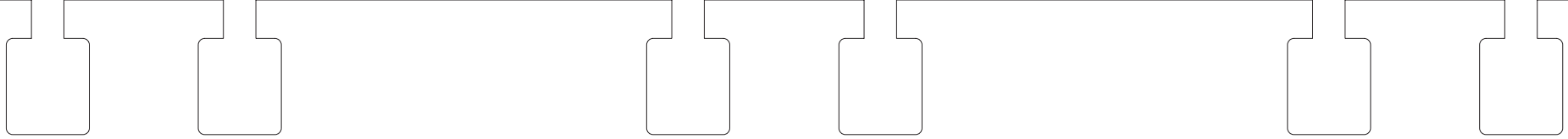
What is at stake in the display of an archive, when it is encountered by a public¹? What do the modes of mess and order afford the experience of the viewer towards the material with which they are being presented?

The vignettes herein deal with archives that present a dialectical relationship between order and mess. None of the examples represent fully ordered or completely ‘messy’ archives. It is the tension between these two forms that, I argue, allows for a productive encounter; the mess providing a possibility for serendipitous, personal bodily encounters while the order provides access to information that one already knows one is looking for. Mess favours the embodied, performative and affective qualities of lived experience, which are often foreclosed by pedagogical or positivist systems of classification.

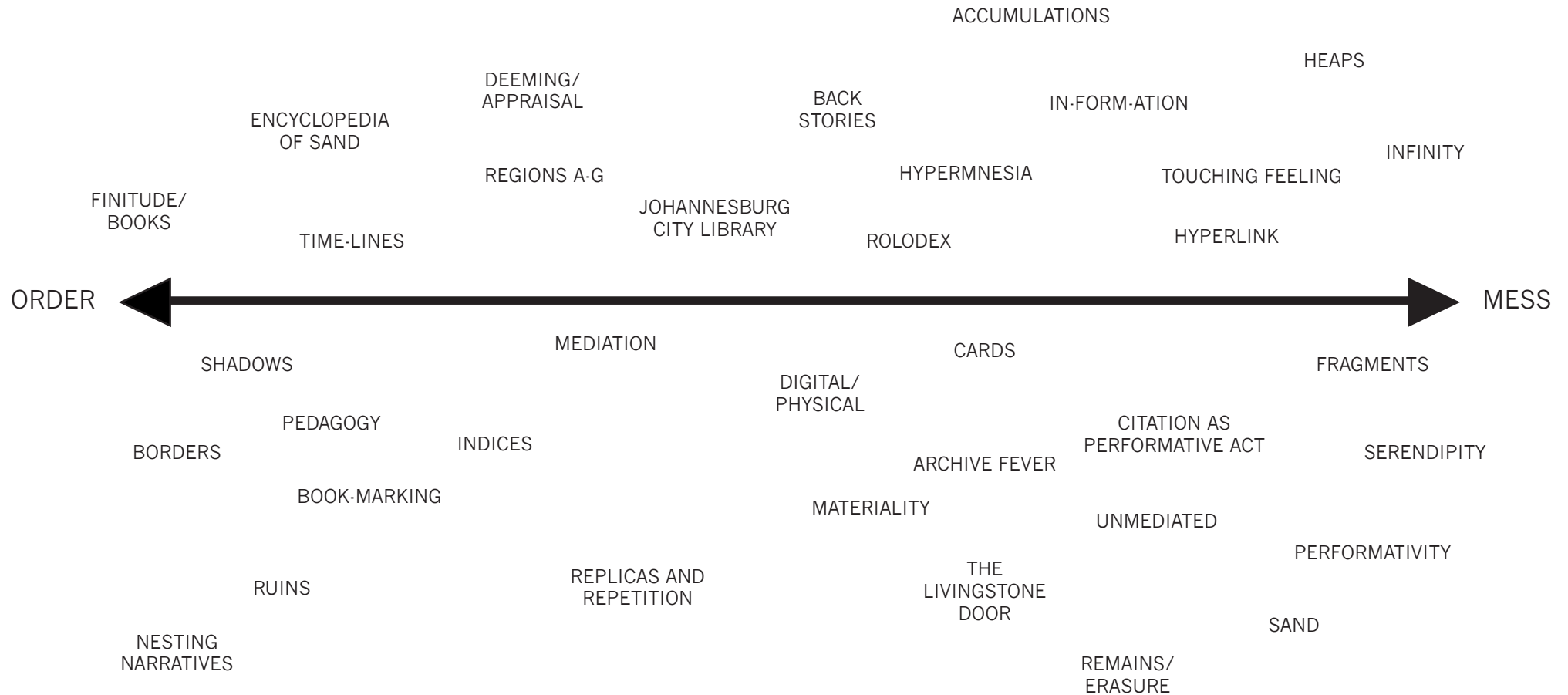
I am therefore concerned with the FORM of the archive. How are the politics of encounter informed by the forms that shape the archive? And what are the implications of the results of these encounters on the ways in which knowledge is produced, received and disseminated; on a personal and a public level?

The point of analysis happens on the level at which we may experience an encounter with a piece of information- a word, a photograph, a page, a book- found in a pile of papers, a heap, a box of old photographs, a damp warehouse full of rotting and moulding documents, the bedroom of a loved one who has just died- as opposed to the way in which we might encounter a piece of information filed away, under a pre-ordained classifying system, for instance, in a library or an official archive.

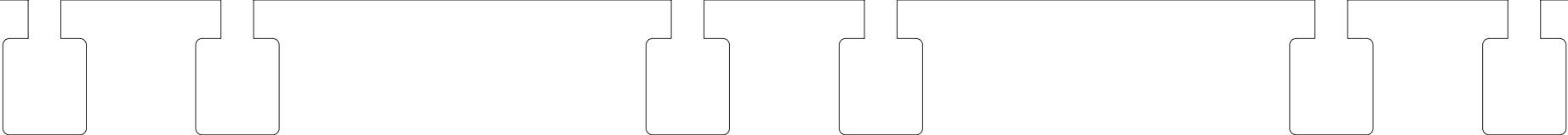
¹ The concept of ‘publics’ will be theorised in PERFORMATIVITY using the text: Warner, M. 2002. Publics and Counter Publics (Abbreviated Version). *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (4), November: 413-425



Mess and Order



One way of looking at my thesis is that all of the points on the grid can be organised along a spectrum between 'Mess' and 'Order'. My work is invested in trying to understand what is at stake at different points along the dialectical spectrum between these two modes of display.



Mess and Order

I have mobilised the terms ‘mess’ and ‘order’ in my research question. Below, I have listed words that define these terms as I have used them in my thesis. The Rolodex, as a form, sits between these two modes because it is an ordering mechanism, that is not fixed, it is circular and cards can be moved around, removed and replaced.

MESS

piles	chaos	infinite
boxes	decay	papers
leftovers	physical	tag
heaps	experiential	networks
scraps	overwhelming	connections
unmediated	hypermnestic	chance
unclassified	performative	fragments
excess	affective	inclusive
material	personal	potential
remains	bodily	open
serendipity	tactile	fluid
accumulation	participation	‘real’

ORDER

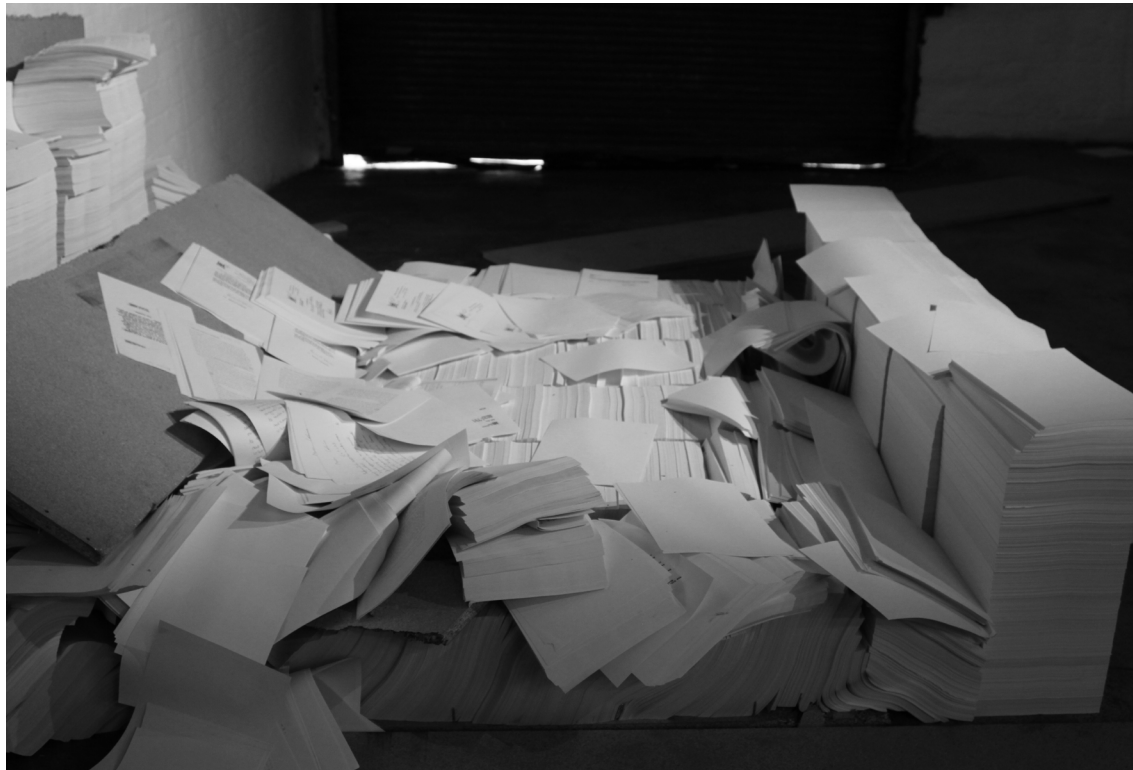
libraries	tables	hierarchy
pedagogy	lines	linear
mediation	words	positivist
official archives	categories	exclusive
books	indices	closed
finite	documents	rational
encyclopedias	sorting	abstract
files	deeming	imagined
timelines	choosing	borders
shelves	appraisal	constructs
numbers	museums	language
letters	graphs	digital

Mess and Order



These photographs were taken while setting up the installation of the *Livingstone Door* at the GoetheonMain for the *Nesting Narratives* exhibition. Although they are merely process shots, they embody the central investigation in my thesis; the tension between mess and order.

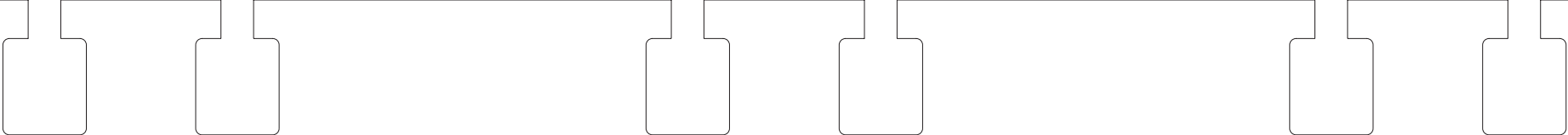
Mess and Order



These photographs were taken while setting up the installation of the *Livingstone Door* at the GoetheonMain for the *Nesting Narratives* exhibition. The one on the left shows the stacks of paper neatly stacked inside the wooden scaffolding. As soon as the scaffolding was removed, the paper stack fell down. The stacks were so heavy that they snapped the chip-board scaffolding as they fell backwards.

Notes on how to read this Rolodex: Symbols, fonts, headings, formatting and referencing

HEADINGS	Pages that form part of the main argument/ thesis have got headings set in News Gothic, 12pt type. The heading indicates the conceptual theme of the page (e.g: ROLODEX), that can be found on the grid (See the card labelled 'The Grid' for details)
Footnotes ¹	Numbered footnotes are used on the pages described above. These pages follow a conventional style of academic writing and referencing.
Citations ♦	Some pages contain a single quotation. Symbols are used in these cases to reference the full citation details.
Meta- Text	Pages (such as this one) that do not have headings like ROLODEX, are called 'Meta- text' pages. They form part of the text but also sit outside of it, explaining or framing the rest of the body of the text in which the argument is being made.
Captions	Captions appear underneath images as per convention. On other pages, captions appear on the bottom of a page that contains a piece of text from an artwork that I am re-presenting in a new format in the Rolodex.
<i>Quotation</i>	Long quotations within the body of the text are indented and italicised. Stand-alone quotations on single pages have also been italicised.



Quotation

...composing a work entirely out of quotations ensures that the material within the collection can remain mobile, elements can be shifted at will.▼

Throughout the text there are pages (like this one) that contain a singular quote. They are all set in Baskerville, 24 point italic. The references have deliberately been listed on a separate page, which acts as a reading list that points to the key texts in my thesis.. The fragmented texts function as a way of freeing the quotation of authorial voice and perhaps opening up meaning to include potential others that would be foreclosed by using the quote in context. The use of stand-alone quotations advocates for the ability of a series of quotes on their own to present an argument in themselves. The academic convention of using quotations to ‘substantiate’ ones argument may be overridden by the position that a series of quotations in fact ARE the argument.

On other pages, longer quotations are inserted into the text. Instead of ‘weaving’ the quote into the body of the text, I have chosen to quote substantial sections. This, again, speaks to the ability of a quote to make its own argument.

Referencing

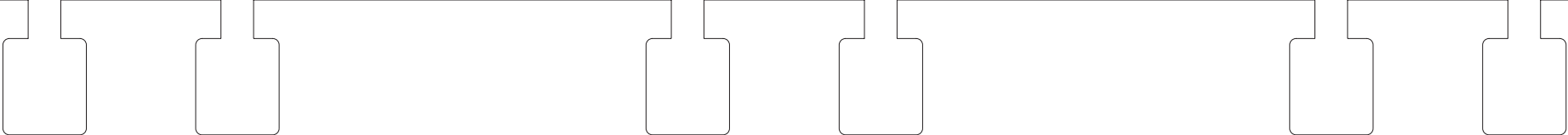
I have used two different styles of referencing in the following pages. The first is a conventional footnote¹ that is used on pages that conform to conventional academic-style writing. The text on these pages is mostly laid out in two columns, in 11 point Baskerville regular. Because each page is functions as a discreet entity, footnotes start from one on every page. Full citations for these references are listed under the heading: Bibliography.

The second style uses symbols (like this one♦) for stand-alone quotations. The citations for these quotations, set in 24 point Baskerville italic, appear under the heading: Reading List

¹ Like this one

Reading list

- ◆ Stewart, S. 1993. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, p. 37.
- ✧ Borges, J. L. 1998. 'Library of Babel'. *Collected Fictions*. Trans. Andrew Hurley. New York: Penguin, p. 113.
- ✱ Borges, J. L. 1998. 'Library of Babel'. *Collected Fictions*. Trans. Andrew Hurley. New York: Penguin, p. 112.
- ♠ Marks, U., Schwarz, G., Shwarz, M. & Wizisla, E. 2007. *Walter Benjamin's Archive*. Trans. Leslie, E. London, New York: Verso, p. 31.
- Reagle, J. 2011. 'The Argument Engine'. In Lovink, G. and Tkacz, N. (eds.) *The Wikipedia Reader*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, p.19.
- ✱ Lubinsky, T. 2015. *Performing Mess: The generative potential of disorder in institutions of order*.
- ▲ Kindall, S. and Stern, N. 2011. 'Wikipedia Art: Citation as Performative Act'. In Lovink, G. and Tkacz, N. (eds.) *The Wikipedia Reader*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, p. 171
- ★ Austen, J. L. 1962. *How To Do Things With Words*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, p. 6
- ✦ Austen, J. L. 1962. *How To Do Things With Words*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, p. 6
- ♣ Austen, J. L. 1962. *How To Do Things With Words*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, p. 5
- ✱ Warner, M. 2002. 'Publics and Counter Publics (Abbreviated Version)'. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (4), November: 413-425, p. 418
- ✱ Warner, M. 2002. 'Publics and Counter Publics (Abbreviated Version)'. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (4), November: 413-425, p. 413
- ✚ Derrida, J. 1995. *Archive Fever*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.17
- ❖ Derrida, J. 1995. *Archive Fever*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.18
- ✱ McLuhan, M. 1968. 'The Medium is the Message'. *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul: 7-21, p. 10.
- ✱ Foucault, M. 1969. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge, p. 7.
- ✱ Foucault, M. 1970. *The Order of Things*. London: Tavistock, p. xiv.
- ⊛ Creet, J. 1991. 'Danilo Kis's "Encyclopedia of the dead" and the Fantasy of Hypermnesia'. In Comay, R.(ed.) *Lost in the Archive*. Toronto: Alphabet City, p.267.
- ☆ Borges, J. L. 1998. 'Library of Babel'. *Collected Fictions*. Trans. Andrew Hurley. New York: Penguin, p. 117.
- Ally, S. 2014. *Material Remains: Artifice versus Artefact in the Archive of Bantustan Rule*. Paper presented at the NRF Chair in Local Histories and Present Realities Seminar 16 April 2014, p. 10.
- ❖ Kosofsky Sedgwick, E. 2003. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, p. 6.
- ✚ Beckett, S. 1957. *Endgame*. London: Royal Court Theatre.
- ✱ Stoler, A. L. 2011. *Along the Archival Grain: Thinking Through Colonial Ontologies*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, p. 4.
- ❖ Harvey, L. E. 2006. 'Lawrence E. Harvey on Beckett 1961-2'. In Knowlson, J. and Knowlson, E. (eds.) *Beckett Remembering, Remembering Beckett: a centenary celebration*. New York: Arcade Publishing, p. 133.



Works cited

Row A

ROLODEX:

Grossman, A. J. 2009. *Obsolete: An Encyclopedia of Once-Common Things Passing Us By*. New York: Abrams Image.

FRAGMENTS, CARDS:

Marks, U., Schwarz, G., Shwarz, M. & Wizisla, E. 2007. *Walter Benjamin's Archive*. Trans. Leslie, E. London, New York: Verso.

HYPERLINKS:

Reagle, J. 2011. 'The Argument Engine'. In Lovink, G. and Tkacz, N (eds.) *The Wikipedia Reader*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.

CITATION AS PERFORMATIVE ACT:

Kindall, S. and Stern, N. 2011. 'Wikipedia Art: Citation as Performative Act'. In Lovink, G. and Tkacz, N (eds.) *The Wikipedia Reader*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.

Van Der Velden, M. 2011. 'When Knowledges Meet: Wikipedia and other Stories from the Contact Zone'. In Lovink, G. and Tkacz, N. (eds.) *The Wikipedia Reader*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.

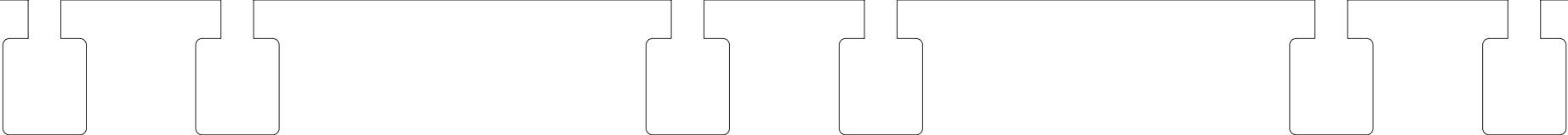
PERFORMATIVITY:

Chakrabarty, D. 2002. 'Museums in Late Democracies'. *Humanities Research IX* (1): 5- 12.

Warner, M. 2002. 'Publics and Counter Publics (Abbreviated Version)'. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (4), November: 413-425.

IN-FORM-ATION:

Gurney, K. 2013. 'Performing Theory'. *City Scapes*. Cape Town: African Centre for Cities. Issue #4.



Works cited

Row B

SHADOWS:

Interview with Ben Gapare at the Wits Historical Papers, Johannesburg, January 2015.

DEEMING/APPRAISAL:

Interview with Verne Harris, 02/05/2014, at the Nelson Mandela Centre for Memory in Houghton, Johannesburg.

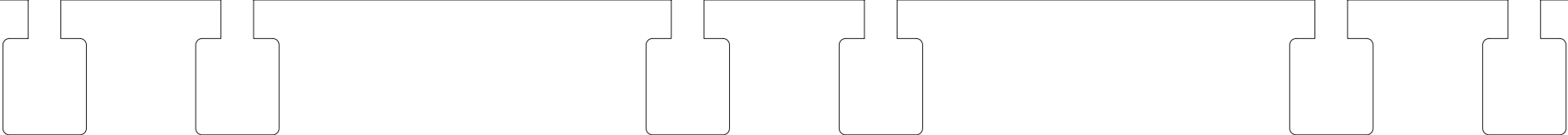
Harris, V. 2007. *Archives and Justice: A South African Perspective*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists.

HYPERMNESIA:

Creet, J. 1991. 'The Archive and The Uncanny: Danilo Kis's "Encyclopedia of the dead" and the Fantasy of Hypermnesia'. In Comay, R.(ed.) *Lost in the Archive*. Toronto: Alphabet City.

UNMEDIATED:

Osthoff, S. 2009. *Performing the Archive: The transformation of the archive in Contemporary art from repository of documents to art medium*. New York: Atropos Press.



Works cited

Row C

JOHANNESBURG CITY LIBRARY:

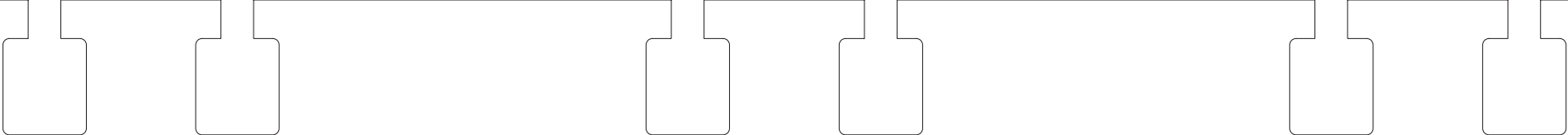
Mbembe, A. 2013. 'Africa in Theory'. Presented at WISH Seminar at University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (8 April 2013).

TIME-LINES:

Rosenburg, D. and Grafton, A. 2012. *Cartographies of Time: A History of the Timeline*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

MATERIALITY:

Ally, S. 2014. *Material Remains: Artifice versus Artefact in the Archive of Bantustan Rule*. Paper presented at the NRF Chair in Local Histories and Present Realities Seminar 16 April 2014.



Works cited

Row D

HEAPS:

Beckett, S. 1957. *Endgame*. London: Royal Court Theatre.

Comay, R. 2002. 'Introduction'. In Comay, R.(ed.) *Lost in the Archive*. Toronto: Alphabet City.

Balsom, E. 2008. *Qu'est-ce qu'une madeleine interactive?: Chris Marker's Immemory and the Possibility of a Digital Archive*.

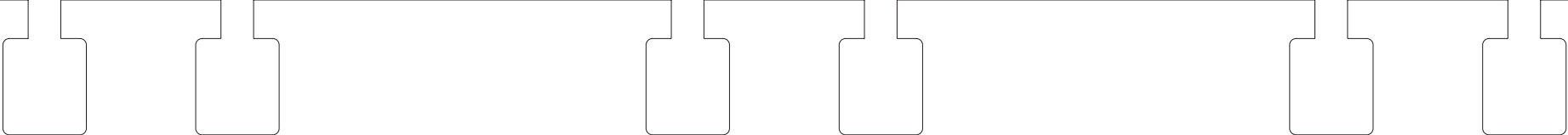
BACK STORIES:

Byala, S. 2013. *A Place That Matters Yet: John Gubbins's MuseumAfrica in the Postcolonial World*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

REPLICAS AND REPETITION:

Osthoff, S. 2009. *Performing the Archive: The transformation of the archive in Contemporary art from repository of documents to art medium*.

New York: Atropos Press.



Theory and Practice

This Rolodex; the object, along with the pages herein are presented as my full submission for my Masters in Fine Arts dissertation. Conventionally, a Masters in Fine Arts is completed in two parts. At the end of the degree, the student submits a written paper and makes an exhibition of their practical work. The written paper should reflect on the practical body of work, connecting it to theory while using case studies of other artists' work to demonstrate the argument being made.

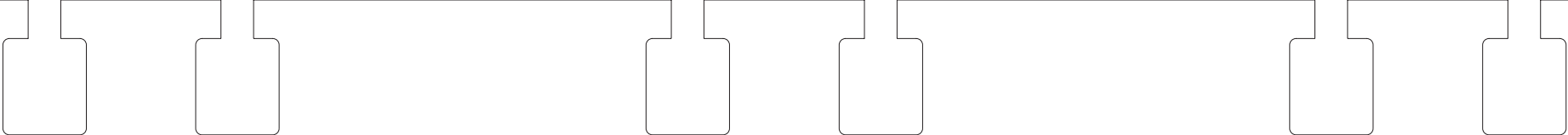
The Faculty of Humanities requires two bound copies of the written dissertation and one digital version on CD upon submission. The Rolodexes will be submitted to Faculty as 'bound copies' (the pages are, after all, impermanently bound by the Rolodex). No additional, conventionally bound copy will be handed in. This gesture is a pointed one.

The Rolodex does not 'stand in' for an exhibition, nor is it an overly-designed binding mechanism for my written thesis, the object presents a proposition; what if the argument made by the written text and the practical work can be augmented in one form? Perhaps it is more compelling to present one argument in one unified form, than trying to present an argument through two very disparate forms; the academic thesis and the exhibition.

Here, ideas, theory, writing, practical work, archival enquiries, research projects, exhibitions, documentation, case studies, residencies and process work, are not differentiated, nor are they placed on an epistemological hierarchy. The aim is for the form of the Rolodex to be able to hold, standardise, and order all of these disparate kinds of content.

I will not be staging an exhibition to accompany my submission. The practical work that I am submitting towards my MFA has all been exhibited throughout the two year duration of the degree. Each work was made in a specific context, relating to a specific place, archive, institution or idea related to an exhibition. To show all of these works again, in one space, would be to deny them their site and context specificity.

The artworks that are included in my Rolodex are not simply documented as installation shots of the original iterations. (As I will discuss in the card on 'Documentation', my works do not photograph particularly well). I have used the form of the Rolodex to dictate a new incarnation of the works, in which the uniformity of the cards, the materiality of the paper, and the non-linear, circular motion of flipping through the cards, necessitates a re-imagining of the formal elements of the works.



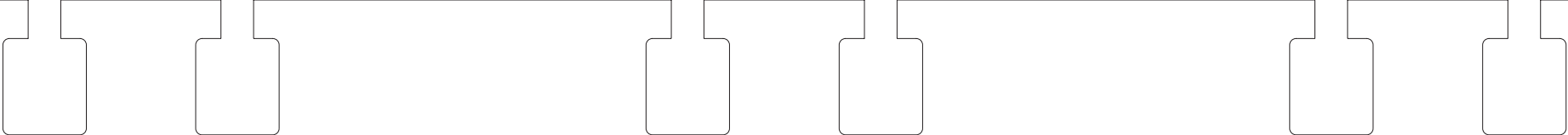
Documentation

The documentation of my work always poses an awkward problem. My work usually takes the form of an installation, using small pieces of paper and text, which, when photographed, look like nothing more than some hazy pieces of text on a grey background. Some of the works have a participatory, or a performative element. These are particularly hard aspects to photograph.

This is not a unique problem. Many artists who work in mediums such as installation and performance struggle with the necessity to document their work for future reference. On one hand, the work has to be able to live beyond the short amount of time in which it was displayed or performed, but on the other hand, it turns into something completely different when it is photographed. The photograph is not the work, although it circulates to a far wider public, and has a far longer lifespan than the actual event ever will.

I see this Rolodex as a work in itself (one which will have to be documented as well) but within it, I have subjugated each work to the confines and dictates of the form of the Rolodex. In this way they respond to their new context of display, and thus function as parts of the argument being presented, rather than an auxiliary reference.

Installation shots and descriptions of the works have been included, and elements from each artwork will appear in the Rolodex throughout. I have used black and white photographs, in keeping with the aesthetic of office-stationary and photocopied documents. The photographs that document my practical works are not so much included as descriptive visual aids, rather, their function as documentary evidence of exhibitions and artworks.



Strategies of Display

My research question reads as follows:

What is at stake in the display of an archive when it is encountered by a public? What do the modes of mess and order afford the experience of the viewer towards the material with which they are being presented?

The question is about display. It asks how the way that something is displayed can affect the way it is received by the viewer. Therefore modes of display that are used in this Rolodex are of particular importance. I have considered display on a number of different levels, from the overall look and feel of the Rolodex itself, to the contents, in which I apply strategies such as graphs, tables and an indexing grid to show overall connections between pages.

I have also used various strategies to lay out the text within the pages. Firstly, I have used the strategy of fragmenting text throughout. This is an important strategy that I use in my practical work. I have found that through fragmenting text, more open-ended meanings are suggested.

I have borrowed strategies of display from exhibition displays. While some pages are laid out with paragraph text, others simply display a

quote. The convention of wall text in exhibition display allows the curator to prompt the viewer to think about a text while looking at a piece of art, or a selection of works. These texts are often in the form of quotations.

Similarly, fragments of texts from my practical body of work will appear on individual cards, captioned with the title of the work. In a museum display, or exhibition, the viewer is drawn in and out through mechanisms of scale. A small label underneath a large painting, a large wall text in relation to the rest of the display etc. This rhythm is something which I have tried to capture in this work.

This again, is an experiment in not separating out the exhibition from the written text. Thus exhibition modes of display are employed as another means of communication in the text.

Practical work completed towards masters dissertation

Artworks:

*Reproduction of the card catalogue index of maps in the
Harold Strange Africana Library*

2013

About 3000 individual index cards,
digitally printed on Munken Pure 240gsm paper, 74mm x 127mm
Installation dimensions variable
Installed at Johannesburg City Library foyer, Johannesburg

Life of Forms

2013

About 500 individual index cards,
digitally printed on Munken Pure 240gsm paper, 74mm x 127mm
Installation materials:
Metal rods, coloured stickers, table and vinyl wall text
Installation dimensions variable
Installed at *Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism Life of Forms*
project space, GoetheonMain, Johannesburg

The future is not what it used to be

2013

Book; 146 pages, leather bound with gold title lettering
841mm x 594mm
Shown at *Regions A-G*, Johannesburg City Library, Johannesburg

Bookmarking

2013

About 50 bookmarks,
digitally printed on Munken Pure 240gsm paper, 240mm x 38mm
Yellow acetate strips, 210mm x 10mm
6 performers
Performed at *Regions A-G*, Johannesburg City Library, Johannesburg

Sandbag

2013

Video documentation of performance
10:40

Shown at *Ville[s] en- Jeu[x]*, Le-Maillion Theatre de Strasbourg,
Strasbourg, France

Encyclopedia of Sand, After After Borges

2013

Vinyl wall text
Dimensions variable
Installed at *Ville[s] en- Jeu[x]*, Le-Maillion Theatre de Strasbourg,
Strasbourg, France

*Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly there's a heap, a little heap, an
impossible heap*

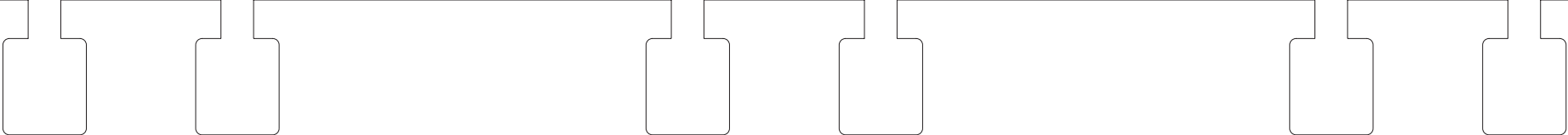
2013

Digitally printed text on paper
Dimensions variable
Installed at *Ville[s] en- Jeu[x]*, Le-Maillion Theatre de Strasbourg,
Strasbourg, France

The Livingstone Door

2014

180 000 pages, white A4 80gsm bond paper, photocopied
Dimensions variable
Installed at Nesting Narratives, GoetheonMain, Johannesburg



Practical work completed towards masters dissertation

Exhibitions:

Although I participated in a number of exhibitions during the course of my Masters enrolment, the following exhibitions were conceptualised, organised, managed, curated and installed by me, in collaboration with Ruth Sacks.

Regions A-G

9 November - 9 December 2013

Johannesburg City Library

Johannesburg

Participating artists:

Ruth Sacks, Talya Lubinsky, Mbali Khoza, Georgia Munnik, Francis Burger, Bettina Malcomess, Rangoato Hlsane, Euridice Kala, Fabian Saptouw, Victoria Wigzel and Zakara Raitt.

Artist books by:

Alphabet Zoo (Minenkulu Ngoyi & Isaac Zavale), Sebastian Borckenhagen, Angela Ferreira, Dorothee Kreutzveldt & Bettina Malcomess, Raimi Gbadamosi, Jonah Sack, Fabian Saptouw.

(*Regions A-G* began as an artists' research project in early 2013. The project was initiated by Ruth Sacks and I.)

Nesting Narratives

3 - 27 April 2014

GoetheonMain

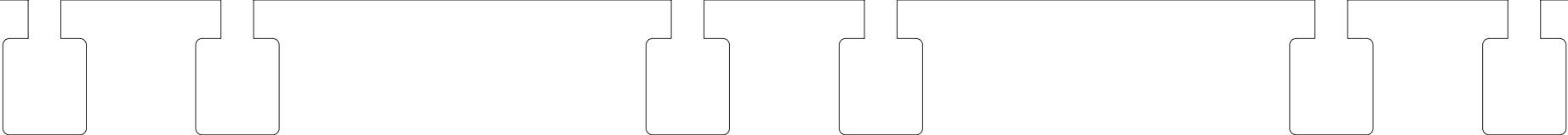
Johannesburg

Participating artists:

Talya Lubinsky, Ruth Sacks, Frances Burger, Ashley Mabeba, George Mahashe.

Co-curated by Thato Mogotsi

(*Nesting Narratives* continues the work initiated through the *Regions A-G* project)



Objects of Study

Archivists:

Verne Harris is the project manager for the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory. I interviewed him in his office in May 2014. Extracts from our conversation appear throughout the text.

Ben Gapare is the only volunteer archivist in South Africa. He works once a week at the Wits Historical Papers. I interviewed him once outside the Cullen Library on Wits campus and spent time with him in the appraisal room at the Wits historical papers in January 2015.

Research on an unconventional archive in South Africa:

Shireen Ally is a lecturer in the Sociology department at Wits University. I have drawn upon a paper that she presented, titled *Material Remains*, at the NRF Chair in Local Histories and Present Realities Seminar, Senate House, Wits University, 16 April 2014.

Short Story:

Encyclopedia of the Dead (A Whole Life) by Danilo Kis

Institutions:

MuseumAfrica Archives, Newtown, Johannesburg.

Johannesburg City Library, Johannesburg CBD.

Wits Historical Papers, located in the William Cullen Library on Wits East Campus, Braamfontein, Johannesburg.

Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory, Houghton, Johannesburg.

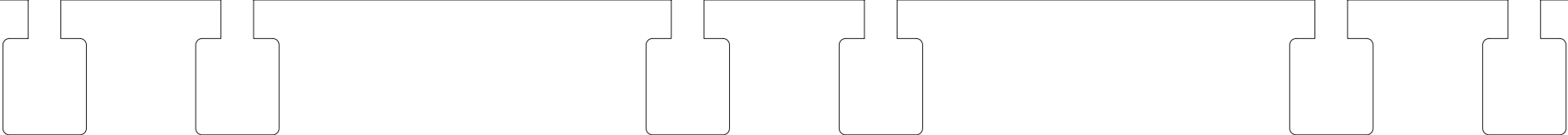
Artworks (other than my own):

Wikipedia Art by Nathaniel Stern and Scott Kindall (2002).

Atelier of Paulo Bruscky by Paulo Bruscky (2004).

Speilberg's List by Omar Fast (2003).

Strange Pamphlets by Frances Burger (2014).



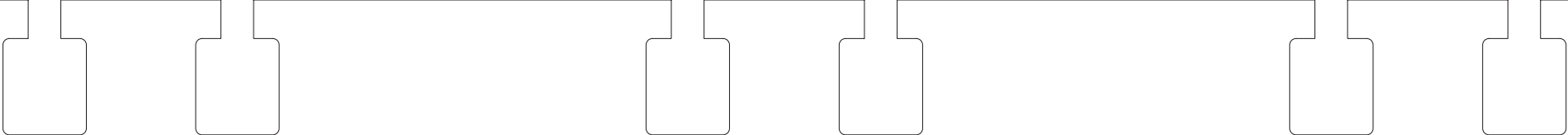
The grid

Every Rolodex has an indexing system. Conventional ones are ordered alphabetically. As indexing and the ordering of knowledge are important concepts in my thesis, the mechanism for indexing the content thereof was a pertinent consideration. Quite early on in my writing process, I decided to use the grid that I had designed for the artwork titled, the *Life of Forms*. This work is discussed in greater detail elsewhere, but the point of using a grid, with only letters (A-D) and numbers (1-9), was to show that all indexing or classifying systems are arbitrary, no matter how rational or descriptive they may seem.

So this grid, with 36 points seemed like as good an indexing system as any to use as a structuring device for my thesis. I came up with 36 categories under which to organise the pages of my thesis. I then had the task of placing the headings into the grid in a meaningful way, this

is a process that continued throughout the period of writing my thesis. Almost every time I worked on my writing, I changed the configuration of the headings within the grid.

At times the content determined the position of the headings but at others, I had to fit the content into headings within the grid that were more overtly imposed, because of the restriction of the grid, with 9 columns and 4 rows. All of this is to say that the placement (and chosen headings) that appear in this version of the grid, are by no means the only or final configuration. The categories, and connections made between them are tenuous and contingent. The longer I would have worked on this document the more times they would have been reconfigured.



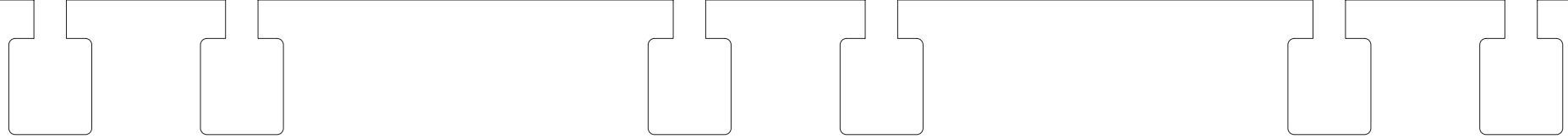
Configuration

In this iteration of the Rolodex, I have chosen to order the pages as follows:

The rows of the grid (A-D) are grouped thematically. Row A introduces the parameters of the research question and deals with performativity in relation to the fragment. Row B deals with structuralist and post-structuralist approaches to the archive, as far as the role of the archivist is concerned. Row C looks at modes of display, and the possibilities for affective encounters in the differing modes of what I call ‘order’ and ‘mess’. Row D looks at accumulations or collections of objects, in which the singular object gains a new ontological status once it becomes part of a collective.

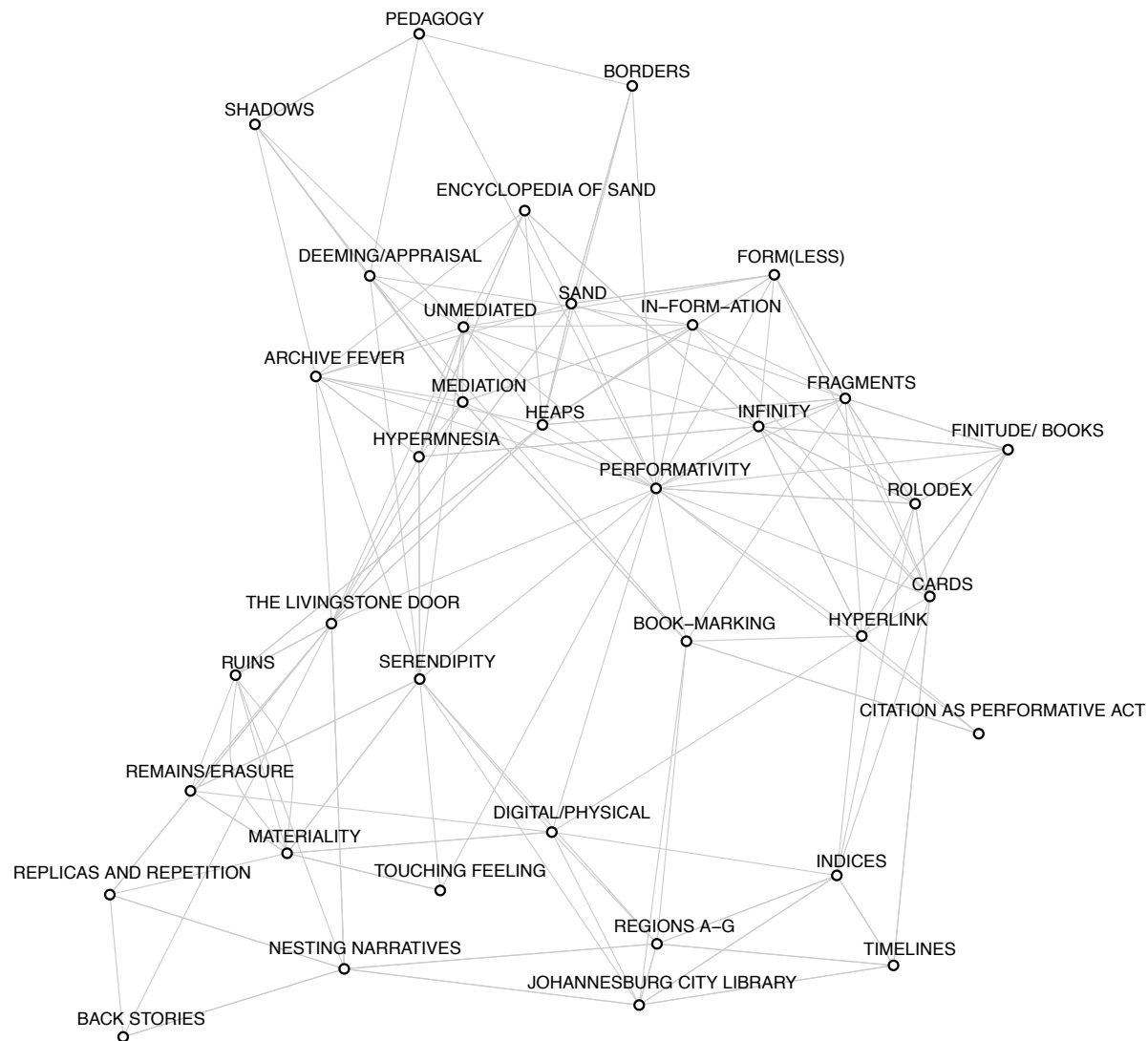
The columns of the grid (1-9) are arranged to illustrate the central question in my thesis. Through looking at various case studies, and my own work, I ask what are the affective qualities of different modes of display. I look at the spectrum between ‘order’ on one side and ‘mess’ on the other. These two concepts will be unpacked further in the text. I am interested in examples which embody a tension between the two modes, thus I have organised the columns as a spectrum: number 1 talking about the most ‘ordered’ kinds of displays, and 9 representing the most ‘messy’ strategies.

Despite having organised the grid in this particular way, there are other connections to be drawn between cards, and many other configurations in which the cards could be organised.



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
A									
	FINITUDE/ BOOKS	ROLODEX	INFINITY	FRAGMENTS	CARDS	HYPERLINK	CITATION AS PERFORMATIVE ACT	PERFORMATIVITY	IN ·FORM- ATION
B									
	SHADOWS	PEDAGOGY	DEEMING/ APPRAISAL	MEDIATION	BOOK- MARKING	ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SAND	HYPERMNESIA	UNMEDIATED	ARCHIVE FEVER
C									
	JOHANNESBURG CITY LIBRARY	REGIONS A-G	INDICES	TIMELINES	DIGITAL/ PHYSICAL	SERENDIPITY	MATERIALITY	TOUCHING FEELING	REMAINS/ ERASURE
D									
	BORDERS	HEAPS	SAND	FORM (LESS)	NESTING NARRATIVES	BACK STORIES	THE LIVINGSTONE DOOR	RUINS	REPLICAS AND REPETITION

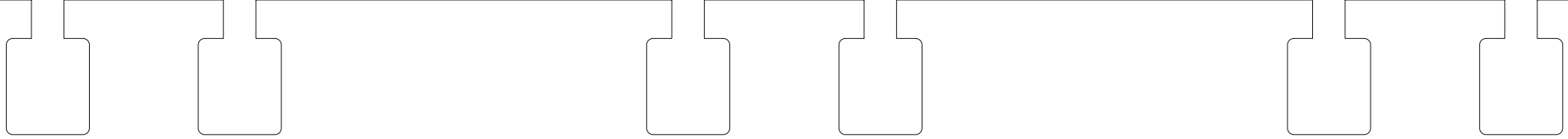
The above grid appears on the back of every page in this Rolodex. The points on the grid are all labelled with a theme or topic. One of these headings appears on the front of each page. One heading can be used for multiple pages or just a single page. The point on the grid that corresponds to the heading on the following page, will be filled in with a red sticker. Dots are filled in at points that indicate other pages to which they relate. Pages can be read like a double page spread, with the body of the Rolodex acting as the ‘spine’. Therefore, on the back of one card, is the sticker categorisation for the following card. When reading the front of one card, the back of the previous one will be simultaneously visible, as it will be facing it.



A force graph is used to display relationships between concepts aesthetically. Each concept is plotted as a point and joined with concepts that are related with straight lines. To start, it is assumed that all concepts repel each other. Springs or elastic bands join those concepts that are related. The graph is created so that related concepts are pulled close together while unrelated concepts are more distant.

	FINITUDE/ BOOKS	ROLODEX	INFINITY	FRAGMENTS	CARDS	HYPERLINK	CITATION AS PERFORMATIVE ACT	PERFORMATIVITY	IN-FORM-ATION	SHADOWS	PEDAGOGY	DEEMING/APPRaisal	MEDIATION	BOOK-MARKING	ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SAND	HYPERMnesia	UNMEDIATED	ARCHIVE FEVER	JOHANNESBURG CITY LIBRARY	REGIONS A-G	INDICES	TIMELINES	DIGITAL/PHYSICAL	SERENDIPITY	MATERIALITY	TOUCHING FEELING	REMAINS/ERASURE	BORDERS	HEAPS	SAND	FORM(LESS)	NESTING NARRATIVES	BACK STORIES	THE LIVINGSTONE DOOR	RUINS	REPLICAS AND REPETITION
FINITUDE/ BOOKS																																				
ROLODEX																																				
INFINITY																																				
FRAGMENTS																																				
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HYPERMnesia																																				
UNMEDIATED																																				
ARCHIVE FEVER																																				
JOHANNESBURG CITY LIBRARY																																				
REGIONS A-G																																				
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NESTING NARRATIVES																																				
BACK STORIES																		</																		

This graph lists the 36 categories laid out in the following pages. The same categories are listed in the rows and the columns. A dot appears on the grid at the intersection of two categories that are conceptually linked. Here, an overall picture of the connections between different themes and cards can be read.



The grid: Row A

Row A introduces the form of the Rolodex as a conceptual tool, looking at the kinds of theoretical constructs that the form evokes.

Here, I link the form of the fragment to the theory of performativity. I argue that a fragment holds greater possibilities for potential meanings because it is freed from the authorial voice. Stripping a piece of text from its larger context allows the reader to imagine meanings other than that to which it is bound in the body of the text.

The form of the Rolodex, with its removable and movable cards, as opposed to the form of the book, I argue, allows for a fragmenting of text that is useful to the production of knowledge. Because it is bound between covers, a book is read in order, from beginning to end. A Rolodex, on the other hand is circular, so can begin and end anywhere.

Along with the performative aspects of the Rolodex, as well as the physical cards that fill it, I discuss the hyperlink as a form that extends the generative possibilities of the fragment and the card. The hyperlink

enables digital text to be infinitely annotated, cited, connected to other texts, images, or sounds. In this section, I show how the indexing system of the grid and stickers, draws upon the conceptual possibilities of the hyperlink. To this expansive network of cross references, tangents, reminders or links, I assign the category of INFINITY.

I use one of my own works to illustrate some of the theoretical constructs that I introduce in this section. The work is called *Life of Forms*. In it, the audience is asked to look through a pile of index cards, lying in a pile on a table. Each card has a fragment of text on it. A simple grid invites the audience to categorise these cards according to personal connections, and chance encounters with a few cards (unless someone spent hours looking through the pile, it would be impossible to see all the text on all the cards at once. Setting up an artwork so that an audience member is prompted to 'find' things by chance, is a strategy that provides a space for an affective experience and performative role for the spectator.



FINITUDE/
BOOKS



ROLODEX



INFINITY



FRAGMENTS



CARDS



HYPERLINK



CITATION AS
PERFORMATIVE
ACT



PERFORMATIVITY



IN-
FORM-
ATION

THE BOOK/ FINITUDE

*The metaphors of the book are metaphors of containment,
of exteriority and interiority,
of surface and depth,
of covering and exposure,
of taking apart and putting together.
To be 'between covers'- the titillation of intellectual or sexual reproduction.
To be outside the cover, to be godlike in one's transcendence,
a transcendence of beginning collapsed into closure,
and at the same time,
to be 'closed out'. ♦*

ROLODEX

The form of the Rolodex reflects on the themes explored in the research that it contains. My research speaks to the politics of encounter, looking at how the forms that contain information come to inform our reception of that knowledge. Thus, the form that contains my thesis becomes another tool for demonstrating the concepts being evoked in the content thereof.

The Rolodex; a rotating index card holder, was invented by Arnold Neustadter, an inventor from Brooklyn, in the 1950's¹. In her book, *Obsolete: An Encyclopedia of Once-Common Things Passing Us By*, Anna Jane Grossman chronicles the life and death of the Rolodex. She explains that the traditional address book became unwieldy in the 1950's since it was very common for middle class families in America to move houses frequently. ("Between 1948 and 1970, an estimated 20 percent of all Americans moved each year", she writes).²

Pages cracked with layers of caked White-out. New phone numbers meant that, when there was no longer room under M, a coda symbol would have to indicate that those entries were being placed in W. The S's were mostly residing on an inserted piece of paper clipped to the back cover and any completely new entries were just going to have to wait until you could find a replacement book. Sure you could just start a new book every few months, but who had the time!

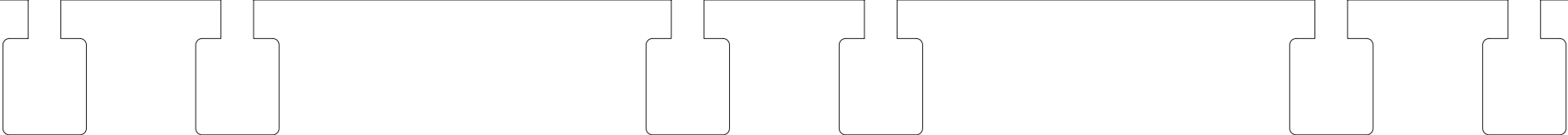
1 Grossman, A. J. 2009. *Obsolete: An Encyclopedia of Once-Common Things Passing Us By*. New York: Abrams Image, pp. 148.
2 *ibid*, pp. 148

The kind of mess described here is the kind of mess described here that I wish to unpack further. Names, numbers, addresses, that do not neatly fit into the space allotted to them in the old fashioned address book, speaks to the way in which pre-ordained categories are always insufficient when faced with the messiness of real life.

Neustadter's solution to this mess, was to create a system whereby cards could be removed and added; the innovation of the Rolodex was that it was not bound, it was not a finite object, with a finite amount of pages and lines dedicated to each letter of the alphabet.

Similar forms, like library index cards existed, but the mechanism of the Rolodex, which made it accessible for home and business use was new.

Of course, the internet, cellphones, Google... etc, have made this piece of technology obsolete. But I would like to argue that there are some valuable lessons to be learned from this form, concerning the possibilities of encounter, when information is not bound (literally and metaphorically). When separate cards contain fragmented text, and can be moved, read in any order or direction, or can be removed completely, the text is freed and the viewer/ reader is afforded a more personal/ affective experience of the information at hand.



ROLODEX

This custom-made Rolodex was made especially to hold my Masters thesis. Instead of smaller index cards, which are held by commercially made Rolodexes, this one holds A4 pages. The Rolodex is an edition of three. Ben Law-Viljoen assisted me in designing and making them. While some of the parts had to be outsourced for manufacturing, Lionel Claasen, a technician at the Wits School of Mechanical, Industrial and Aeronautical Engineering workshop, in the North West Engineering Building, fabricated many of the parts.

Below is a description of how the Rolodex was built, written by Lionel, who works in the North West Engineering workshop:

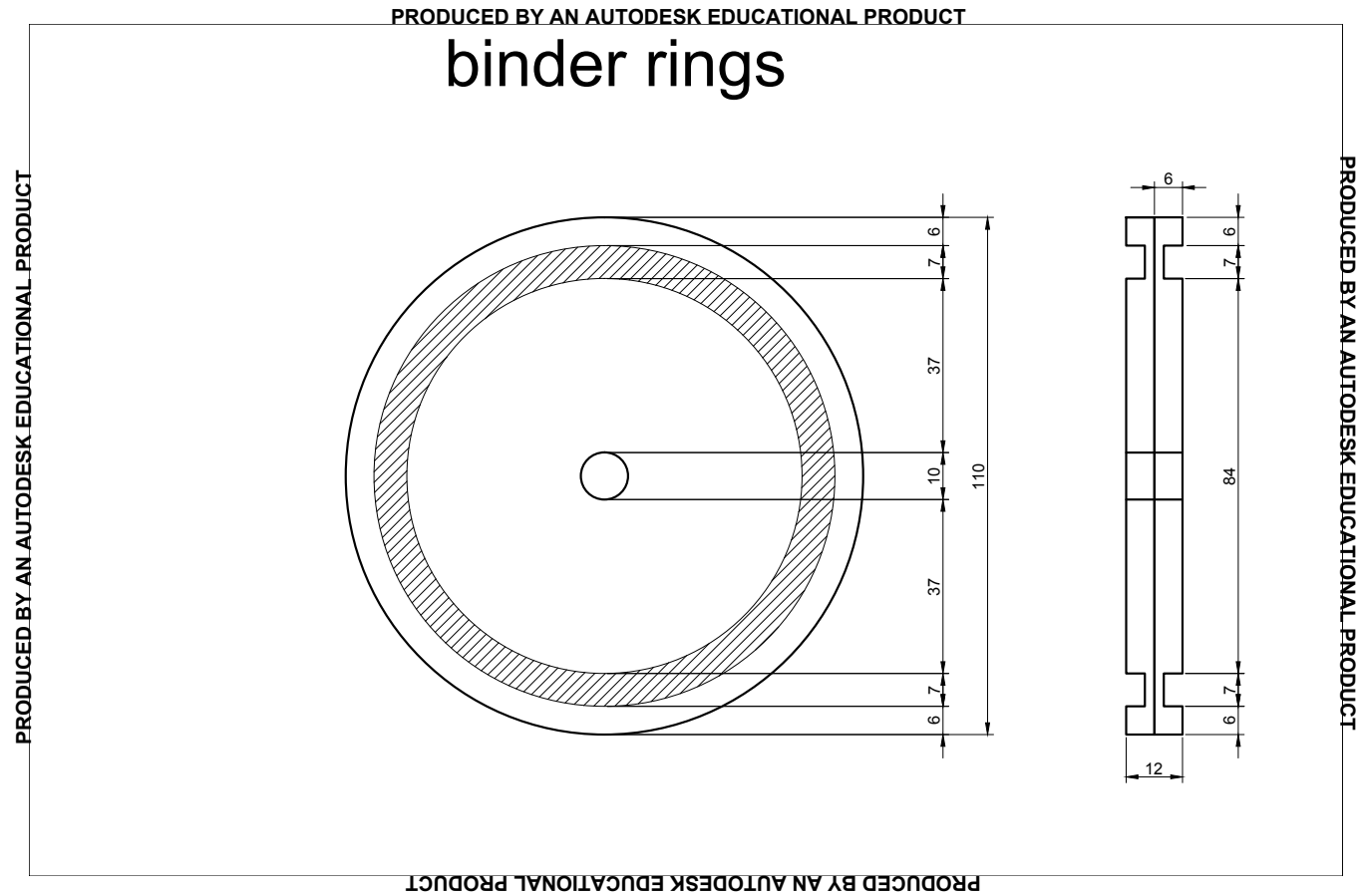
Firstly I took the wood and cut the different pieces to approximately 2mm from final thickness, which was then finished to thickness on a milling machine using a fly cutter, once that was done I manufactured a mandrill so that I could put all the wooden section for 1 roller together, then I proceeded to turn the wood to the correct diameter, which included finishing with fine sandpaper.

Once that was done all the aluminium pieces had been delivered so I proceeded to machine those pieces. Firstly I drilled a 10mm hole in the centre of all of them, and once manufactured a mandrill onto which I could fit all the pieces of the same size and proceeded to turn them to the correct diameters, there after I proceeded to final turn the profiles on a CNC lathe, once that was done I could proceed with the wooden handles.

The handles where a challenge, as I had to make a program using only one tool to rough and final turn each handle, and then using some fine sand paper manage to get a decent finish.

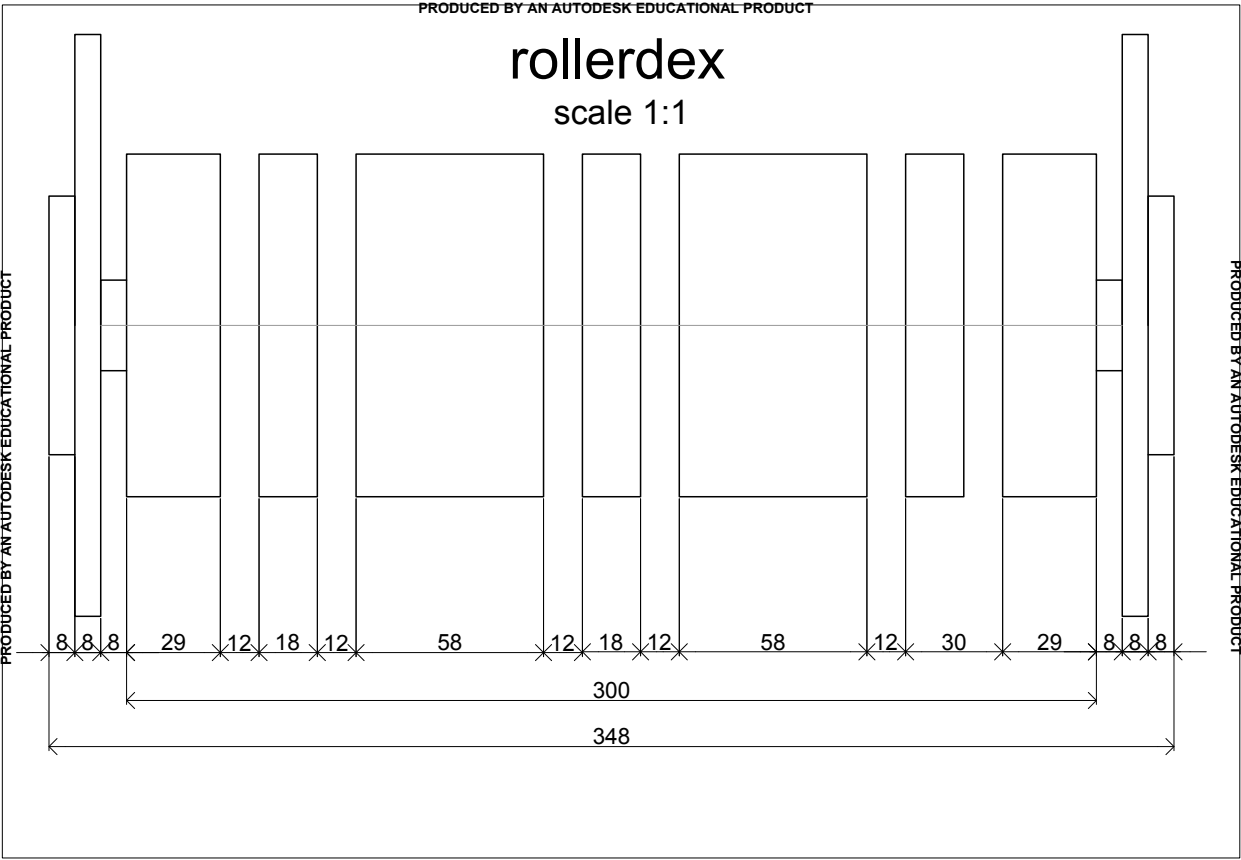
I am a qualified artisan with vast amount of CNC experience who has been employed at Wits for 3 years.

ROLODEX



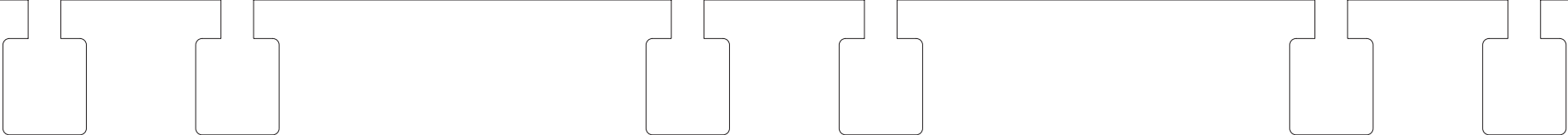
Margeaux Adams, an architecture student at Wits University did CAD drawings for the CNC machining of the stainless steal discs.

ROLODEX



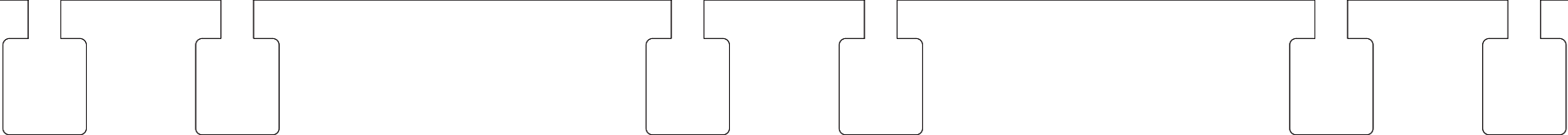
PRODUCED BY AN AUTODESK EDUCATIONAL PRODUCT

Measurements for Rolodex parts, designed by Ben Law-Viljoen.



ROLODEX

*The mystics claim that their ecstasy reveals to them a circular chamber
containing a great circular book, whose spine is continuous
and which follows the complete circle of the walls ✧*

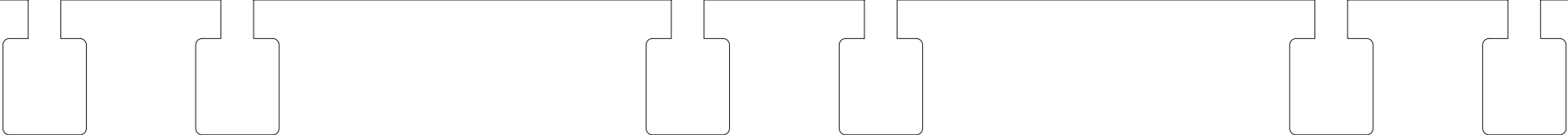


INFINITY

The form of the Rolodex suggests the possibility of the infinite. Its circularity means that it does not conform to the linearity of a traditionally bound book, which structurally dictates a beginning and an end, bound between covers, making the book a finite form. The circular form of the Rolodex does not have a beginning or an end.

The concept of infinity is invoked within the latent possibilities that I ascribe to mess. I argue that mess (defined as any grouping of things that are not ordered or not easily accessible), is a form that contains infinite possibilities, in that one who encounters it can have infinite imaginings, enactments or ordering.

As I discuss in the card, **FRAGMENTS**, the fragment has a similar infinite quality. Fragments of text, because they are removed from their context, possess the possibility for infinite interpretations.



INFINITY

*The universe (which others call the Library) is composed of an indefinite and perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries **

FRAGMENTS

The book entitled *Walter Benjamin's Archive* provides insight into the forms in which Benjamin wrote and archived his writings. The chapter entitled 'Scrappy Paperwork: Collecting and Dispersal', gives a lengthy explanation of Benjamin's understanding and appreciation for the German word *verzetteln*: which in English can be translated as "scrap", "disperse", "hack up", "lose", "waste"¹.

The concept of *verzetteln* was in use in another way at the time as a prevalent term in library science or lexicography: in this context, it means, "to excerpt", "to disperse things that belong together into individual slips or into the form of a card index"².

Therefore, the meaning of *verzetteln* is two-fold: "failure, fragmentary, unachieved" on the one hand, and on the other, "a particular method of making information manageable"³.

When Benjamin fled from Berlin to Paris in 1934, he dispersed [*versetzung*] his library, and manuscripts amongst friends across Europe. His personal

archive and works in progress were split up across countries, in the knowledge that his work could be destroyed at any one of the sites to which it was sent. Not only were manuscripts fragmented and dispersed; his materials for writing became scarce, and working conditions became harder.

*In exile, it would seem, economic need dictated that that everything he got his hands on be used (or re-used): the reverse sides of letters sent to him, postcards or an invitation to review, library forms, travel tickets, an advertisement for S. Pelligrino, prescription pads discarded by his friend...*⁴

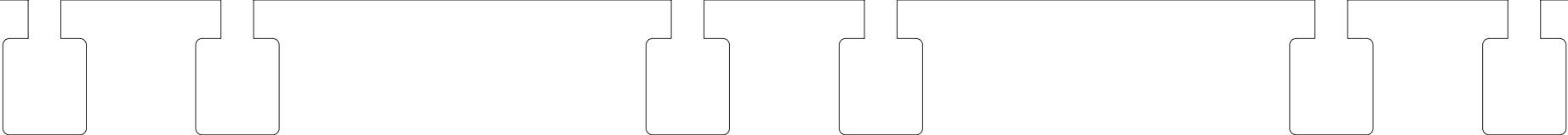
In this explanation of the term *verzetteln*, as well as in the circumstance that determined Benjamin's dispersal and fragmentation of his archive and writing materials there is a dialectic relationship between chaos and order. A fragmenting that may have been necessity in the process of writing also becomes an important form in works such as *The Arcades Project* (1927-1940), where fragments of writing and images become a fitting metaphor for the partiality that defines ones' experience of the city.

1 Marks, U., Schwarz, G., Schwarz, M. & Wizisla, E. 2007. *Walter Benjamin's Archive*. Trans. Leslie, E. London, New York: Verso, p. 30.

2 *ibid*, p. 30

3 *ibid*, p. 30

4 *ibid*, p. 31



FRAGMENTS

The fragmenting of text is a strategy that I have found useful in my own work. I've found that when fragments are extracted from a larger body of text, they take on a more ambiguous meaning. No longer tied to their original context, they allow for imaginative and poetic interpretations.

Theoretical texts have been quoted intermittently throughout the Rolodex. These texts have been fragmented, so as to make the point that a text can have more potential meaning when its broken into fragments.

Fragmented text is used as a device in the following works:

Life of Forms

2013

About 500 individual index cards,
digitally printed on Munken Pure 240gsm paper, 74mm x 127mm

Installation materials:

Metal rods, coloured stickers, table and vinyl wall text

Installation dimensions variable

Installed at *Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism Life of Forms*
project space, GoetheonMain, Johannesburg

Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly there's a heap, a little heap, an impossible heap

2013

Digitally printed text on paper

Dimensions variable

Installed at *Ville[s] en- Jeu[x]*, Le-Maillion Theatre de Strasbourg,
Strasbourg, France

Pieces of text from these two works also appear intermittently throughout. The text was initially placed on smaller pieces of paper or cards when they were displayed in installation format. As the works have been re-imagined to conform to the constraints of the Rolodex, text is laid out on a full card. A caption with the name of the artwork appears at the bottom of the cards.

CARDS

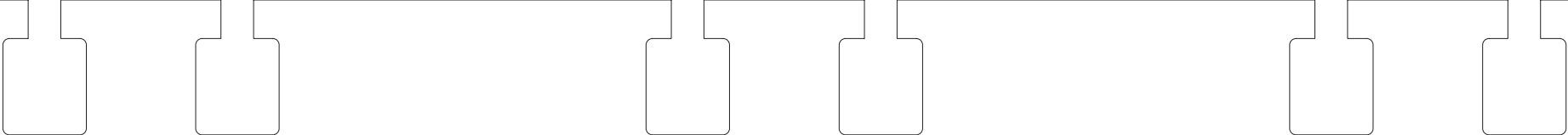
*But when shall we actually write books like catalogues?*¹

*The court library at Vienna introduced a card index catalogue in around 1780, because the bound catalogue could not accommodate the flood of entries. **Parish registers are entered on slips or even card**, in order to deploy the entries independently of the pace of their transmission, and to be able to order them according to different criteria. Transfer to individual scraps or cards makes possible lexical projects such as the Goethe-Dictionary, which began to index the Weimar edition on slips of paper in 1946. Slips, or their stronger sisters, index cards- of which the Journal for Organisation declared in 1929 “cards can do everything”- stand out because of their flexibility and thus they represent modernity.*

Benjamin recognised the artistic potential of this method of sorting Mallarme named his own “a working instrument for poetry in the form of a card file” (SW 4, p.117). In One Way Street, Benjamin points out a revolution in the administration of knowledge. The present mode of scholarly production demonstrates that “the book is already an outdated mediation between two different filing systems: for everything that matters is to be found in the card box of the researcher who wrote it and the scholar studying it who assimilates it into his own card index (SW 1, p.456). Benjamin repeatedly treated the elements of his texts according to the principle of building blocks: he copied them out, cut them out, stuck them on new sheets of paper and arranged them anew, long before such procedures became established in electronic word processing under the name “copy and paste”... Benjamin’s idea of composing a work entirely out of quotations ensures that the material within the collection can remain mobile, elements can be shifted at will. At the outset all material is of equal value: knowledge that is organised in slips and scraps knows no hierarchy.”²

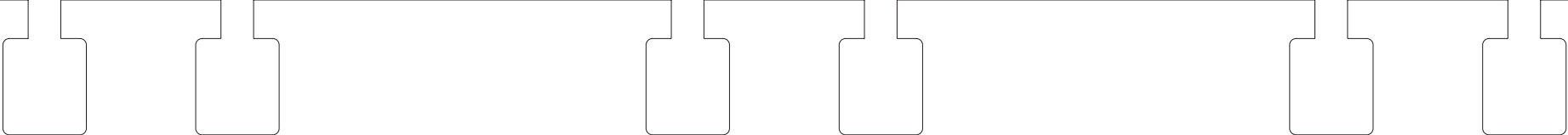
1 Walter Benjamin, *One Way Street*, p. 457 quoted in Marks, U., Schwarz, G., Shwarz, M. & Wizisla, E. 2007. *Walter Benjamin’s Archive*. Trans. Leslie, E. London, New York: Verso, p. 31.

2 Marks, U., Schwarz, G., Shwarz, M. & Wizisla, E. 2007. *Walter Benjamin’s Archive*. Trans. Leslie, E. London, New York: Verso, p. 31- 32.



CARDS

*At the outset all material is of equal value:
knowledge that is organised in slips and scraps knows no hierarchy.■*



CARDS

The works listed below use index cards as their primary medium. *Reproduction of the card catalogue index of maps in the Harold Strange Africana Library* replicates the full index cards collection of maps of Africa, found in the card cabinets in the Africana Library at the Johannesburg City Library. *Life of Forms* uses index cards as a reference to indexing. In this artwork, the audience are invited to create their own categories or groupings of cards and use an indexing system to track their groupings.

*Reproduction of the card catalogue index of maps in the
Harold Strange Africana Library*

2013

About 300 individual index cards,
digitally printed on Munkens Pure 240gsm paper, 74mm x 127mm

Installation dimensions variable

Installed at Johannesburg City Library foyer, Johannesburg

Life of Forms

2013

About 500 individual index cards,
digitally printed on Munkens Pure 240gsm paper, 74mm x 127mm

Installation materials:

Metal rods, coloured stickers, table and vinyl wall text

Installation dimensions variable

Installed at *Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism Life of Forms*
project space, GoetheonMain, Johannesburg

HYPERLINKS

The grid at the back of each page functions as an indexing system. It becomes a way of making an argument, through creating links that are not linear, the viewer/ reader is asked to follow the strands of the argument through following the physical 'hyperlinks' which are embodied by the filled in dots on the grid at the back of each card.

A hyperlink, when reading text online can act as a footnote. If the reader clicks on a piece of hyperlinked text, that link can take the reader to another tab, which provides the source article, an article that explains that point more in depth or an article that is conceptually linked to the ideas being discussed. A hyperlink can also link to an image, or any other kind of visual media on the Internet.

Joseph Reagle, in an article called 'The Argument Engine' writes¹:

Belgian documentalist Paul Otlet [...] recognised that with technology one would be able to 'detach what the book amalgamates, to reduce all that is complex to its elements and to devote a page [or index card] to each'.

[The] notions of decomposing and rearranging information are again found in current Web 2.0 buzzwords such as 'tagging', 'feeds', and 'mash-ups', or the popular Apple slogan 'rip, mix, and burn'.

1 Reagle, J. 2011. 'The Argument Engine'. In Lovink, G. and Tkacz, N (eds.) *The Wikipedia Reader*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, p. 18

Kevin Kelly, technology proponent and founding editor of Wired, wrote in the May 2006 New York Times Magazine essay about the 'liquid version' of books²:

Instead of index cards and microfilm, the liquid library is enabled by the link and the tag, maybe 'two of the most important inventions of the last 50 years'.

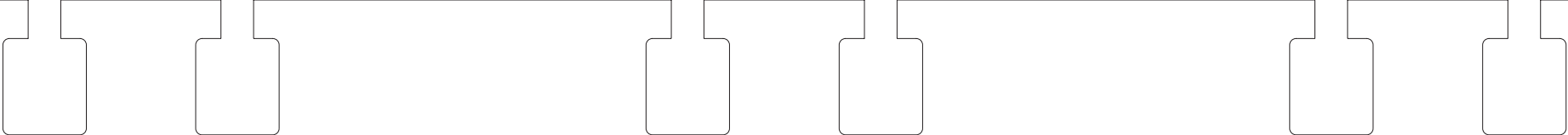
The real magic will come in the second act, as each word in each book is cross-linked, clustered, cited, extracted, indexed, analyzed, annotated, remixed, reassembled and woven deeper into the culture than ever before. In the new world of books, every bit informs another; every page reads all the other pages. [...] At the same time, once digitized, books can be unraveled into single pages or be reduced further, into snippets of a page. These snippets will be remixed into reordered books and virtual bookshelves.

...the liquid library 'is the digital equivalent of tearing out the pages of all the books in the world, shredding them line by line, and pasting them back together in infinite combinations.

Reagle writes that this is the way that he uses the 'brick-and-mortar library' today: 'I browse. I peek into books. I take notes from chapters here and there. A digitized library allows me to do the same thing, but with vastly greater scope and vastly greater focus'.³

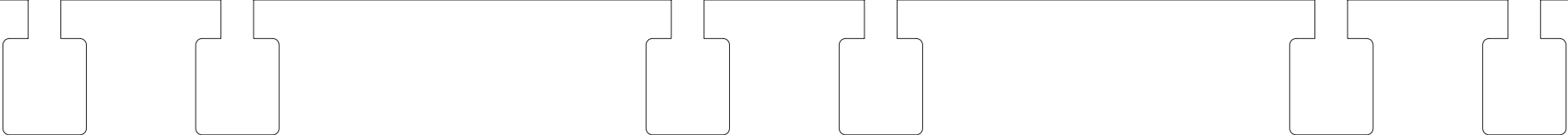
2 *ibid*, p. 19

3 *ibid*, p. 19



HYPERLINKS

*the link and the tag, maybe ‘two of the most important inventions
of the last 50 years’ ■*



HYPERLINKS

*The kind of argument that can be made through a series of links, tags, quotations... is different from a conventional linear argument because the material is not bound by its context, it is not static because it is like building blocks that have been arranged in one configuration, to make one version of a structure, but the blocks can easily be reassembled into a different kind of structure.**

CITATION AS PERFORMATIVE ACT

Nathaniel Stern and Scott Kindall, write about their project, *Wikipedia Art*, in an article called ‘Wikipedia Art: Citation as Performative Act’¹. For the project, they created a Wikipedia page called ‘Wikipedia Art’, and simultaneously published fabricated articles online, about the project, *Wikipedia Art*. These articles were cited on the Wikipedia page so as to legitimise the ‘truth’ of the content.

The criterion for any article to be accepted by Wikipedia’s editors is that the information can be verified by other online sources. Citation is the threshold for ‘truth’; the truth of the citation is not the threshold; the citation becomes true once it is cited on Wikipedia. Stern and Kindall’s work calls attention to the performative nature of ‘citationality as truth’.²

As another article in the same publication points out³, one of the problematics with this threshold of truth is that it disqualifies forms of knowledge that are not citable on the internet. Indigenous knowledge, non-linguistic forms of knowledge, for example, or any other type of knowledge that does not easily fit into the structure of online media. The idea of ‘all knowledge’ being stored on the Internet is obviously a utopic, but also an exclusionary one.

1 Kindall, S. and Stern, N. 2011. ‘Wikipedia Art: Citation as Performative Act’. In Lovink, G. and Tkacz, N. (eds.) *The Wikipedia Reader*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.

2 *ibid*, p. 168

3 Van Der Velden, M. 2011. ‘When Knowledges Meet: Wikipedia and other Stories from the Contact Zone’. In Lovink, G. and Tkacz, N. (eds.) *The Wikipedia Reader*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.

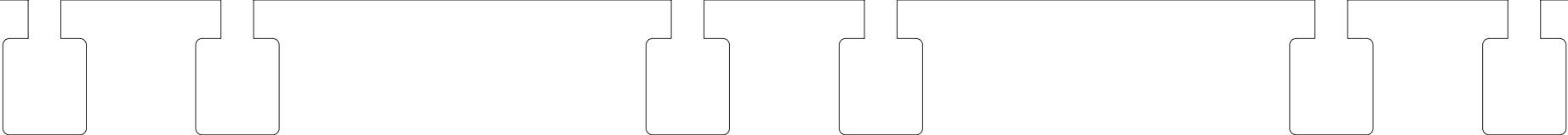
On Wikipedia, “a small group of self-selected editors make somewhat arbitrary choices that come to be accepted as truth”⁴. Similarly, with conventional modes of categorisations, the object of classification only becomes part of any given group because it is placed there. The ‘speech act’ (as referred to by Austin⁵) that classifies is thus a performative one; it **brings the object into being as part of that category**.

All acts of naming or classifying are performative in the sense that they cause the object of classification to be put into a category, which effects their ontological status. In this way, all speech has a performative dimension.

Performativity is one of the key theoretical constructs on which I base my argument. In cards to follow, I show how performativity can be linked to a participatory action that is prompted through the display of ‘mess’. Performativity is also explained in terms of bodily or lived experience, thus connecting the attributes of ‘mess’ as a mode of display as one that can bring about bodily affect and participation upon publics who encounter it.

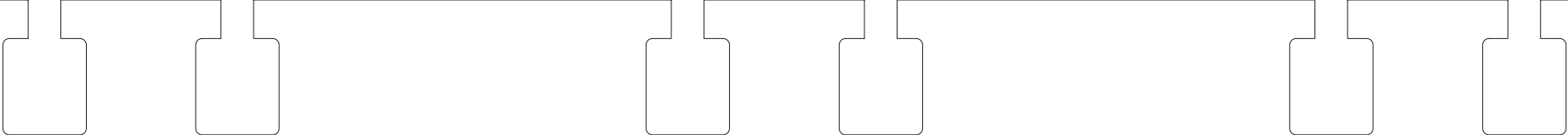
4 *ibid*, p. 170

5 Austin, J. L. 1962. *How To Do Things With Words*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press



CITATION AS PERFORMATIVE ACT

The citation often comes to constitute how we know the thing itself. ▲

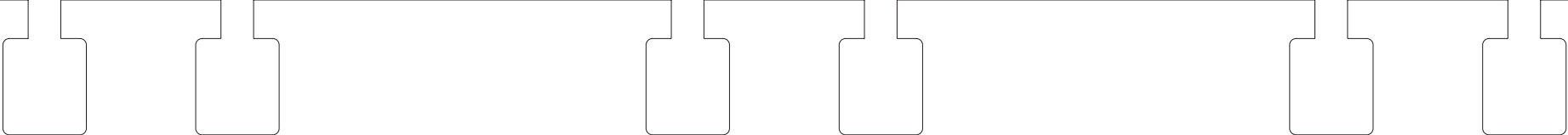


PERFORMATIVITY

None of the utterances cited is either true or false.★

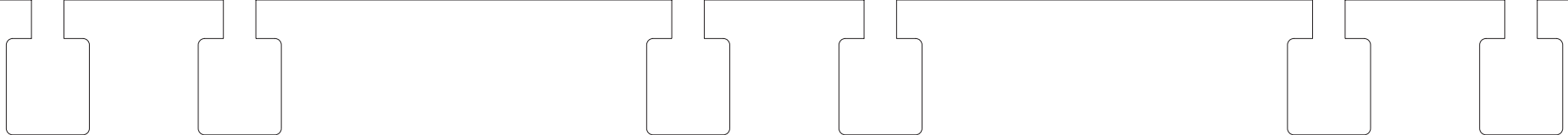
PERFORMATIVITY

*When I say before the registrar or alter, 'I do',
I am not reporting on a marriage, I am indulging in it. ♦*



PERFORMATIVITY

- a. they do not ‘describe’ or ‘report’ or constate anything at all,
are not ‘true’ or ‘false’.*
- b. the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which
again, would not normally be described as saying something.**



PERFORMATIVITY

Dipesh Chakrabarty's article 'Museums in Late Democracies'¹ applies the theory of performativity to museum and library practices. He writes that in a performative model of democracy, museums allow for a bodily, lived experience of history, whereas institutions such as libraries comply to a pedagogical model of democracy. These institutions are pedagogical, he writes, because they collect objects, artefacts or books under predetermined categories.

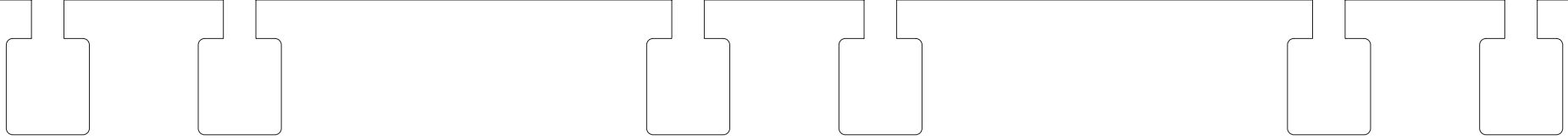
Chakrabarty uses the District Six Museum in Cape Town as an example of a museum which functions under the conditions of a performative democracy. He writes that the museum "opens itself up to the embodied and the lived. It provides as much 'experience' as it does 'abstract knowledge'."² The museum is less centred around displaying history

within predetermined categories, and more about engaging with living memory and embodied knowledge. It does this through assimilating many forms of production, contemporary artworks, writing and other cultural productions which are grouped and displayed through a process by which the objects themselves determine the category that is produced for them.

This model of performativity bears more similarity to the models of internet classification, (discussed in [HYPERLINKS](#)), by which the objects themselves determine the classifications under which they fall, or in fact bring the classification into being (rather than the objects being brought into the ontological status of the predetermined category)

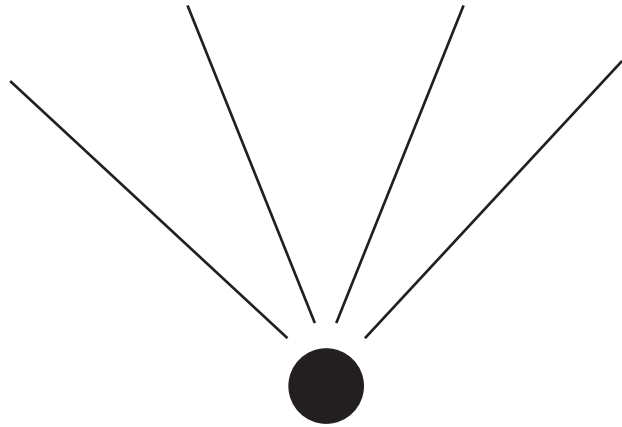
1 Chakrabarty, D. 2002. 'Museums in Late Democracies'. *Humanities Research* IX: 1 (5-12).

2 *ibid*, p. 9



PERFORMATIVITY

PERFORMATIVITY

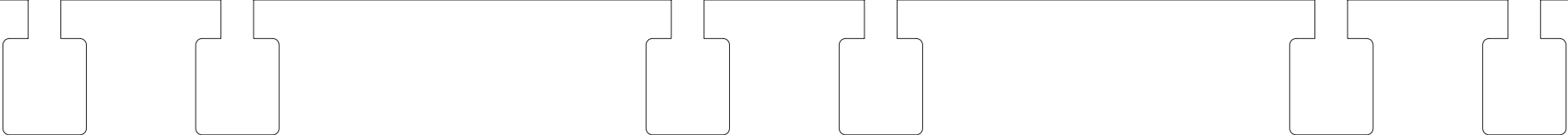


Performative models are generative of
new and multiple categories

PEDAGOGY



Pedagogical models ascribe to pre-existing categories.
Things must always fit into one of these prescribed formations

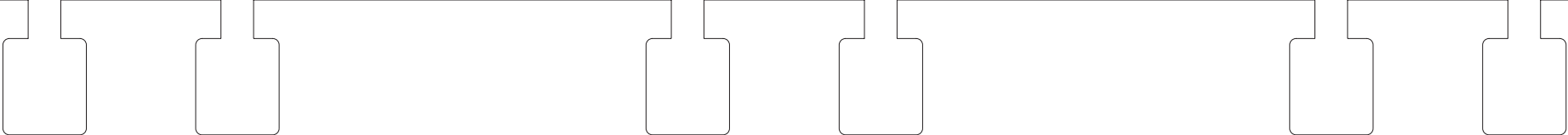


PERFORMATIVITY

My research question reads as follows, **What is at stake in the display of an archive, when it is encountered by a public? What do the modes of mess and order afford the experience of the viewer towards the material with which they are being presented?**

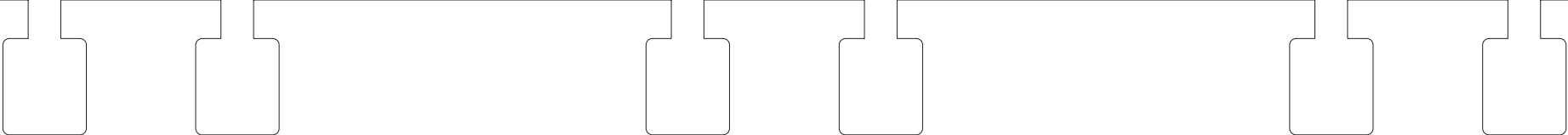
I mobilise the term ‘publics’ in my research question. Michael Warner theorises the idea of a public in *Publics and Counter Publics*¹ Warner’s conception of a public is inherently performative. He writes that a text brings a public into being. Even though the author of a text is not aware of the exact addressee, the mere fact of writing and publishing a text brings an unknown addressee into being: a public.

*A policeman says: ‘Hey you!’. In the moment of recognising oneself as the person addressed, the moment of turning around, one is interpolated as the subject of state discourse.**



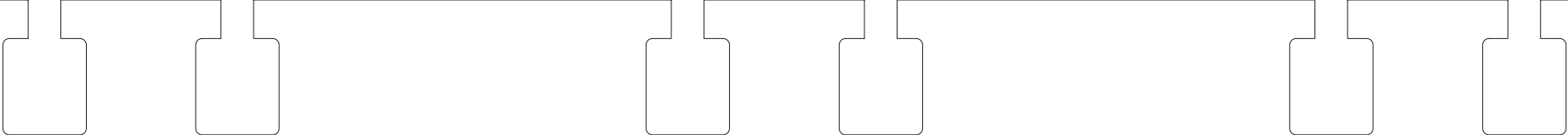
PERFORMATIVITY

*A public is a space of discourse organised by nothing other than the discourse itself. It is autotelic; it exists only as the end for which books are published, shows broadcast, websites posted, speeches delivered, opinions produced. It exists by virtue of being addressed.**



IN·FORM·ATION

the technical structuring of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivisation produces as much as it records the event †



IN·FORM·ATION

*what is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way.
Archivable meaning is also and in advance codetermined by the structure that
archives❖*

IN-FORM-ATION

I attended the *Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism: Life of Forms* in June 2013, and made a work for the accompanying exhibition at the GotheonMain. The 10 day conference, held at WISER at Wits University was themed, *Life of Forms* in 2013, proving to be commiserate with my research interests. The following text is a selection of excerpts from the JWTC website, describing the themes of the Workshop:

What is at stake in maintaining or blurring the distinction between form and content or form and matter has been insufficiently explored. In the process, critical theory's power to engage with some of the major transformations of our times has been weakened, and the way has been paved for a rehabilitation of a formalist kind of criticism that is divorced from histories and genealogies of power and can hardly grapple with the psychic life of aesthetic forms.

Meanwhile, it is nowadays recognized that the plasticity, mutability and interchangeability of forms is the style - if not the substance - of our era. So is the extent to which contemporary forms - a family of phenomena including media, surfaces and technologies, genres, institutions and other widely recognized containers - have become forces, waves of energy and modes of organization of the real in and of themselves.

Indeed more than perhaps at any other period of the late modern age, forms permeate contemporary life worlds and practices, generating effects of various kinds and, in the process, redistributing the sensible. Expressed in physical, social, legal, aesthetic, economic, imaginary, virtual or immaterial terms, they have an effective presence in our culture and make the same claim to reality and immediacy as more tangible artefacts. Transformational masks, they keep folding in matter and content on one another.

As Arjun Appadurai argues, they are "filled or inhabited by specific voices, contents, messages and materials". They circulate, undergo historical mutations, congeal into bodies and publics and work to manufacture particular psychic, emotional, social and political selves. They act as catalysts for new experiences and perceptions in sites of human activity as diverse as politics, religion and the law, money and finance, literature, painting, photography, film, television and music, urbanism, architecture and design, computer programming and digital life, genetics, neurobiology and neuroscience, knowledge and other modes of cognition. Even when they have become obsolete or have been turned into figures of anachronism, emptied of their original content, they still retain an uncanny power to speak, and they can still be drafted in the service of various kinds of human projects.

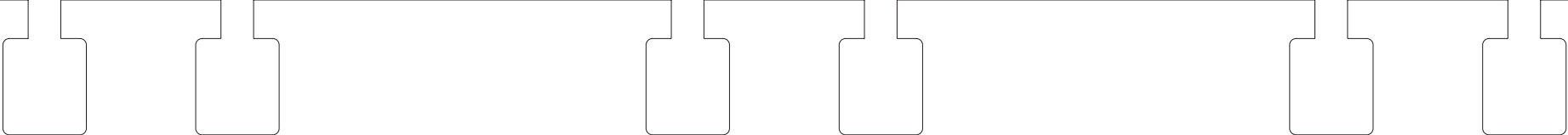
Propelled in large part by the ongoing global amalgamation of cultures under the sign of the market, forms no longer constitute the "ideal fixed structure", the rigid handicap, the limitations or the boundaries Simmel not so long ago thought they were. Like life itself, they have become a restless flux - structures and events, processes and assemblages at the same time. They have turned into the movement of life itself. Like life itself, they are "streaming". They have achieved an objective materiality and acquired a social life of their own.

Does this mean that we have reached a stage when life can no longer overflow every form, reach out beyond form or destroy what it has formed? What has happened to Simmel's

statement according to which "life is always more life than there is room for in the form allotted by and grown out of it"? To what extent do contemporary forms mirror the neuronal organization of the brain (decentralized, flexible, pliable, highly adaptable)? If form has become its matter, where does this leave the social, the political, the aesthetic, or the subject? What prospects and possibilities does it open for democracy, freedom, the human and the non-human in our times?

The 2013 JWTC Session will revisit these questions and those pertaining to the relation between humans and the forms they create. A special attention will be given to: (1) the ways in which historically as well as in the present, forms translate life and life translates forms; (2) the modalities of the entanglement of forms of life and the life of forms and the conditions under which life and forms constrain one another and open one another to new possibilities; (3) the types of humans, of beings, of spaces, and of desires that specific forms vicariously create.

We will also study forms, or collectives of forms, as actors in their own right and not simply as vehicles for human signs and representations. We will examine, in particular, the ways in which forms bring humans and non-humans (or signifying agencies) together in particular configurations; the relation of forms - especially latent forms - to time, to art and to the imagination; to the twin logic of immediacy and futurity or transparency and opacity; to entropy and destruction.



IN-FORM-ATION

The work that I produced for the *Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism: Life of Forms* project space exhibition at GotheonMain in 2013, plays a central role in the shaping of my conceptual project as well as informing my thinking around the physical form of the Rolodex. I use the heading 'IN-FORM-ATION' to explain that the form in which information is placed, plays a large role in determining its meaning.

In keeping with the theme of the conference, *Life of Forms*, I decided to make a work that interrogates the concept of form through the content generated at the conference itself.

As a participant in the workshop, I took continuous notes throughout the ten day program of lectures and discussions. The phrases that I chose to document were specifically decontextualised, writing down fragments of text rather than trying to capture the lecture or discussion word for word, like a stenographer. The fragment frees the text from its original contextual meaning, allowing the viewer to ascribe new, personalised meanings to the text.¹

Once all of the phrases were collected, I placed each individual piece of text on its own index card. On the opening night of the exhibition I laid out the hundreds of cards in a heap on a table, a simple grid of metal poles hammered into the wall behind it. On the back of each card was a corresponding grid of circles. This grid is the same one used on the back of the cards in this Rolodex.

1 See FRAGMENTS

Coloured stickers were placed next to the grid. Each of the 36 points had a different coloured sticker assigned to it. In this iteration, instead of using coloured stickers, I have assigned themes or headings to each point on the grid.

The audience at the exhibition was invited to use stickers to group the cards lying in a mess on the table, and place them up on the grid on wall. The function of this 'made up' classifying system was to draw attention to the fact that all acts of classification are performative. Only because the viewer has picked up a group of cards, put the same coloured stickers on the back, and placed them on a rod sticking out of the wall, do they become designated to that category, determined by the random place on the grid upon which they are placed.²

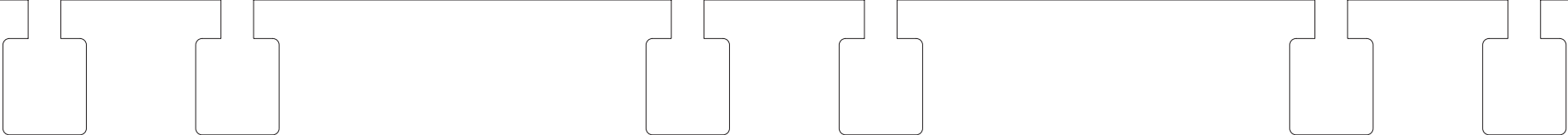
All information has to go through some sort of mediation process in order to be rendered understandable for public engagement. My interest lies in the ways in which the mediation process comes to shape the information, and in turn, shape the experience of the viewer/ reader at the moment of encounter.³

Here, displaying the cards in a disorganised pile on the table, gave the viewers the opportunity to 'find' cards in the mess, and create their own categories or order, thus performing the act of classification.⁴

2 See PERFORMATIVITY

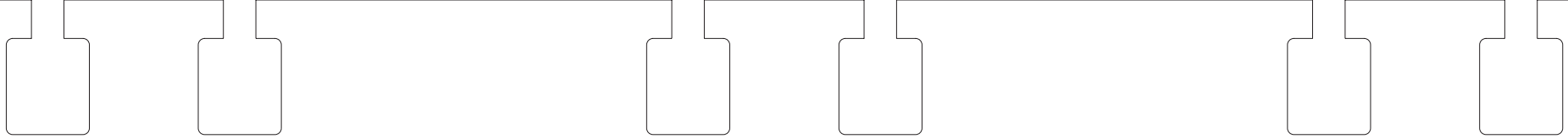
3 See MEDIATION

4 See SERENDIPITY



IN·FORM·ATION

*The electric light is pure information. It is a medium without a message, as it were, unless it is used to spell out some verbal ad or name.**

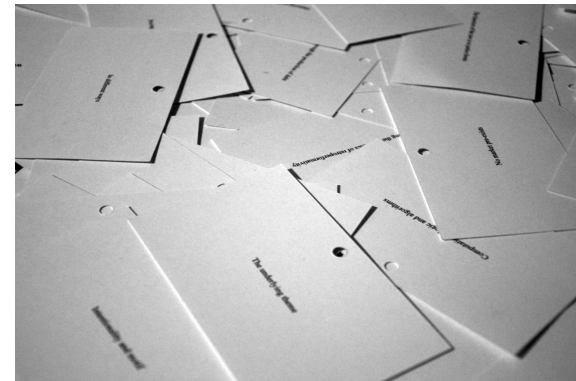
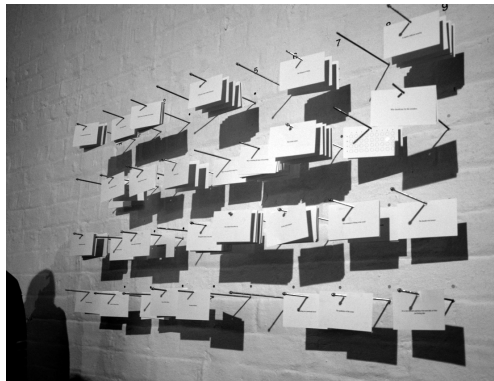
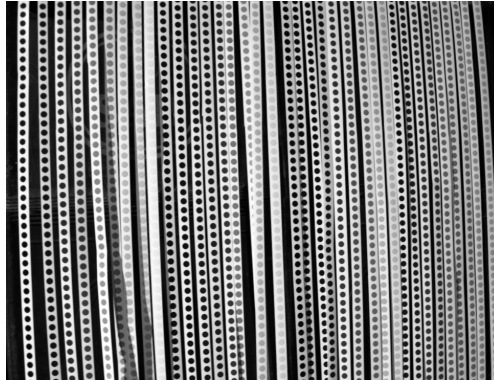


IN·FORM·ATION

in **-form-** *ation*
per *ative*

The above graphic shows the central role of **form** in the construction of knowledge.
All acts of naming/ classifying are performative.
The categories in which information is placed constitutes the meaning of the information

IN-FORM-ATION



Life of forms, GoetheonMain, installation shots

IN-FORM-ATION

Kim Gurney wrote about my work, *Life of Forms*, in an article published in the biannual print publication, *CityScapes*.¹

The JWTC probably has more in common with contemporary art's current performative turn than it intends—"performing theory" as one participant put it. I will review then in the spirit of the project by borrowing somebody else's form: an artistic reflection on the JWTC workshop itself that encapsulated and critiqued it simultaneously. It did so in a quiet, playful and elegant installation in the modus operandi of the trickster, infiltrating the very forum it reflected upon. It managed this by speaking back to the linguistic form of the JWTC itself. As Sarat Maharaj writes in a paper on visual art as knowledge production (2009), there is "thinking through the visual" and then there is what he calls the somewhat crimped mode of "visual thinking" based on a linguistic model. Talya Lubinsky, a JWTC workshop participant, managed the former with an installation created for the associated exhibition Form/ Formulations. Day by day, she sat in the workshop transcribing notes of participants' contributions.

She typed excerpts out onto archival cards and made the resulting mass of quotations available to exhibition viewers at the Goethe Institute's project space at Arts on Main. Viewers were invited to collate these musings into whatever groupings they chose, indicating this with coloured stickers, and hang them onto ordering pegs. They were also free to alter others' selections and take cards home. Meanwhile, at the same sorting table, a collaborator sat picking up these archival cards and re-transcribing them at random. These sentences were communicated to a third person, seated in a public courtyard outside the gallery with a megaphone, broadcasting the sentences to reanimate them once more.

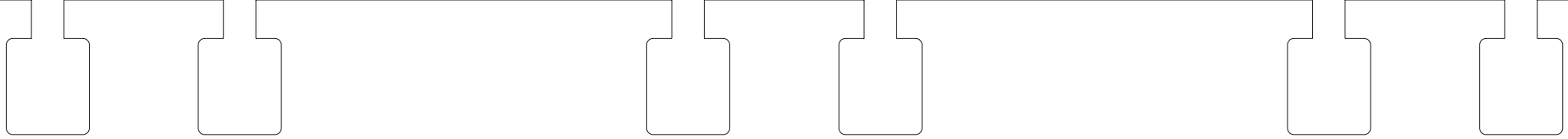
Picking up the cards at this exhibition was an unnerving experience: on the one hand it was a pithy summary of some key contributions; they also carried a different power devoid of both context and gesture, one might even say the posture of delivery. Related, the archival cards suggested a matter of record against notes, conversations, recollections and other feedback loops. This was particularly poignant on the exhibition's opening night as Ntong Edjabe, editor of Chimurenga, had just been fabulously misquoted in a JWTC presentation, ironically in a session called "Cooking Data"—one of the first archive cards I chanced upon put the correct quote to rest. I filed it immediately on a group peg for mistranslations. Workshop participants who interacted with this artwork were in this way re-enacting their original spoken performances, selecting words (theirs or others) and giving them "a social life of their own". These dissembled sentences also revealed something about their potential beauty. A recurring theme during JWTC was a search for new language and a desire for fresh ways of speaking that reflected differently joined conceptual dots, a new discourse, fresh thoughts, novel formats and ultimately imaginaries. Lubinsky's work drew attention to both the richness of the words used in this endeavour, and the paucity of language at the same time.

This artwork repeated itself at a Cape Town exhibition a month later at the Michaelis Gallery. Viewing it this time in a new context, a different meaning offered itself: this constantly morphing archive not only plays with communication strategies but comments upon the shifting nature of knowledge production itself, and the interplay of power and chance in the record's presence and absence. I played my part by picking a hole. I took a card as memento. It reads: "We are doing this because we are alive"

Overleaf: Reimagining of the work, *Life of Forms*, to fit the structure of the Rolodex. One fragment of text was placed on each index card for the installation. The cards were placed messily on a table, thus the audience could not see all the phrases at once. For this reason I have arranged the phrases on the next page overlapping one another so that only some phrases are visible.

¹ Gurney, K. 2013. 'Performing Theory'. *City Scapes*. Cape Town: African Centre for Cities. Issue #4:

nting culture
 Almost chaotic form of music
 t implies a vision
 life
 sactional aspect
 Tourists and foreigners
 Making sense of your
 Generate debt in many forms
 Risk itself could be more
 Created an island in the middle of the city
 for ourselves
 with a style of dance
 of the global south
 Come of those emergent things
 Regardless of what we do at work
 munal place, a meeting space and a trading space
 The major form of labour today
 Some form of monkey dance
 Labour for the production of debt
 ou become an interpreter
 It appears to have very little to do with
 ere's a box specifically mapped for you
 Embrace the impossibility of giving form to the music
 Friends will take us to places
 You don't need to justify anything
 ontribution will be repaired as an embraced
 Called upon to state
 In a very divided city
 Behind the many initiatives
 A form is first of all something that is opaque
 Begin to collect contributions
 Speaking a different language
 se to justify anything
 Very elementary
 Immediate tool for starving the beast
 That's not equity, that's debt
 A logic of justification
 Fully exposed to the volatility
 The dangerous magic
 Hypervisibility became invisibility
 We start to imagine a more vibrant publication
 ic is the weapon
 Risk making and profit making
 There is no absolute necessity for us to know why we are doing
 what we are doing
 Allows real dialogue
 Being in the gut of the city is very literal
 This is the core of the logic of the
 derivative
 The rapid developments which were barely imaginable
 Surrounded and suffocates us
 The buffers of insulations
 Some undiluted suffering
 They are going to engage with us on our own terms
 As is evident in all the people who for sale
 are here
 Debt refusal
 Thank you for being here
 Power to gather masses
 Through a financial lens
 What it means to live there
 Absolute and relative
 We need 12 million dollars
 The logic of the derivative
 Surplus value
 Risk is made available
 The difference was profit in the hands on capitalists
 The global spread of the global imaginary
 To return to the work
 The occupy movement
 I'm left with this project that we started
 We had some interesting pieces
 One is also seeking some-
 thing different
 I found myself in a place
 What I know added to my
 experience
 I'm pleased to see so many friends in the room
 What do you have in stock
 Land upon the turntable
 Very few countries in the world have escaped
 The most direct reply
 You have following different places
 Doing precisely that
 The market as a form is full of all sorts of
 meanings
 Closer than this
 Nobody gives form to music
 We met in Yeoville
 Long street he requirement to
 play a specific role
 To be drawn out from one's self
 Avoid becoming blind to the outside
 It is only a matter of time
 The first friend I
 A relationship of detachment
 and attachment
 To make a given amount of labour
 The difference was profit in the hands on capitalists
 The global spread of the global imaginary
 To return to the work
 The occupy movement
 I try to drive down the throat of the city
 The same commodity
 Power to gather masses
 There is a landing space for the
 All of this leads to your further exclusion
 A question of visibility and invisibility
 You derived from your reading
 Velocity to the rhythm
 His idea of opacity
 Exclusion
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 We met in Yeoville
 Long street he requirement to
 play a specific role
 To be drawn out from one's self
 Avoid becoming blind to the outside
 It is only a matter of time
 The first friend I
 A relationship of detachment
 and attachment
 To make a given amount of labour
 The difference was profit in the hands on capitalists
 The global spread of the global imaginary
 To return to the work
 The occupy movement
 I try to drive down the throat of the city
 The same commodity
 Power to gather masses
 There is a landing space for the
 All of this leads to your further exclusion
 A question of visibility and invisibility
 You derived from your reading
 Velocity to the rhythm
 His idea of opacity
 Exclusion
 Noise and silence
 The most direct reply
 You have following different places
 Doing precisely that
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 Doing precisely that
 The market as a form is full of all sorts of
 meanings
 Closer than this
 Nobody gives form to music
 We met in Yeoville



The grid: Row B

In row B, two South African archivists' approaches to the archive, are compared to one another. Their opinions differ regarding how visible the archivist should be in the archives which they have published. One of them, Verne Harris believes that the archivist should make him/herself as visible as possible within the archive. He argues that all archives are highly constructed forms and thus the archivist has a duty to lay bare their motivations (political/ personal or otherwise) for appraising and categorising the collection in a particular way.

Harris is heavily influenced by Jaques Derrida's archive theory. Thus, he propagates a post-structuralist approach to the archive. On the other hand, Ben Gapare believes that the archivist should hide him/herself as much as possible in the archives he/she publishes, allowing for the content to 'speak for itself'. His approach fits into a structuralist paradigm.

The contradictions between these two approaches to archive theory opens up a debate about the difference between the form of a 'mediated' and an 'unmediated' archive. Although no archive is truly 'unmediated',

I look at the way in which the act of deeming what material is to be included, and the structuring and categorising of it, has everything to do with the meaning of the knowledge that will be disseminated through the archive.

I argue that unmediated archives lend themselves to what Derrida terms 'hypermnesia'. The term, borrowed from Freud, refers to a desire to remember or know everything. It is this drive that, Derrida says, creates the psychological impulse to archive and record. This drive works against memory, as when memory is recorded, it is no longer memory, it has been turned into history.¹

The physical form of hypermnesia, or of the way it is imagined to exist (because it can only exist in the imaginary) is one that is too vast and overwhelming to ever be grasped by one individual. Herein lies a paradox that is picked up by Danilo KIs in his short Story, *The Encyclopedia of the Dead*.

¹ Derrida, J. 1995. *Archive Fever*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.



SHADOWS



PEDAGOGY



DEEMING/
APPRAISAL



MEDIATION



BOOK-
MARKING



ENCYCLOPEDIA
OF SAND



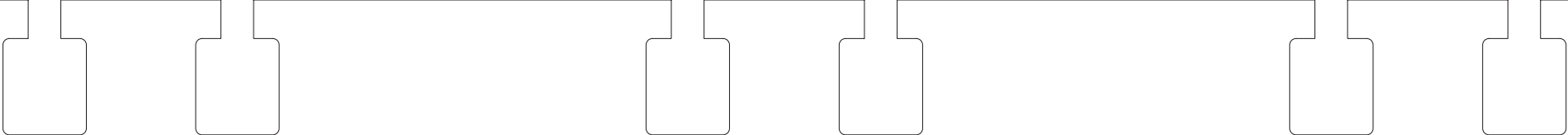
HYPERMNESIA



UNMEDIATED



ARCHIVE
FEVER



SHADOWS

Ben Gapare volunteers as an archivist at the Wits Historical Papers, at the Cullen Library at Wits University. As well as teaching full time at a private college, he spends every Friday afternoon curating archives. Although, he says, archiving is his passion; he has chosen not to be formally employed by any institution. Being the only volunteer archivist in South Africa (as he tells me proudly), affords him the independence he feels is critical to maintaining integrity in his practice.

I met with him on the benches outside the Cullen library one Friday afternoon¹, following a stint in the archives. To open up the conversation, I told him about a similar conversation that I'd had with archivist Verne Harris at the Nelson Mandela Foundation, whose approach to archiving is a post structuralist one. He believes that an archivist should lay bare as much information about why he/ she chose to include which material, as well as why they chose to categorise it in the way that they did. He goes so far as to say that an archivist should include a biography of themselves when publishing an archive, so that the researcher/ viewer of the archive is given context about where the archivist is coming from/ why he/she made certain choices.

This could not be further from Gapare's structuralist approach. He believes that the archivist should exist 'in the shadows' of the archive. Their own ideological/ political leanings should be hidden, at best, or lurking in the shadows, at worst.

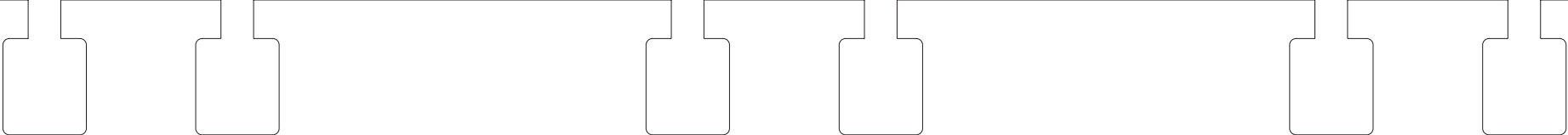
He describes his work quite simply as sorting and digitizing material that is donated to the Historical Papers. His aim is to order the material in any given collection so as to provide easy access, both physically and epistemologically to the 'end-user' of the archive.

His methodology is cold and rational, relying on three principles in deciding what is included and or discarded from the archive: reliability, validity and triangulation.

Once he has decided what to include, he uses the inductive approach in categorizing the material. This means that the material dictates the categories that are created, as opposed to the deductive approach, which starts off with a predetermined set of categories within which material must be placed. (The inductive approach is similar to the 'performative' model discussed in the card PERFORMATIVITY, and the deductive card is similar to the 'pedagogical' model referred to in the same card)

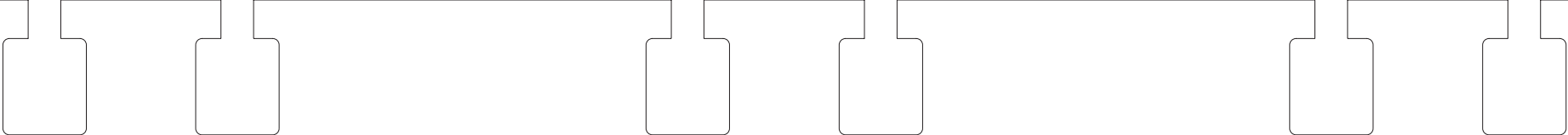
The goal, he says, is to create an archive in which any researchers, coming from any ideological standpoint could see themselves, rather than seeing the ideological standpoints of the archivist. Harris would strongly disagree; he would argue that any act of categorisation, or deeming what is to be included, is an act that creates knowledge and comes to dictate how the information is received in the future.

1 We met in January 2015.



PEDAGOGY

*History now organises the document, divides it up, distributes it, orders it, arranges it in levels, establishes series, distinguishes between what is relevant and what is not, discovers elements, defines unities, describes relations. The document, then, is no longer for history an inert material.**



DEEMING/ APPRAISAL

I visited Ben Gapare in the appraisal room at the Wits Historical Papers. This is where the collections get ‘dumped’ when they are first donated to the archive. Gapare’s job is to sort through the mess of papers, files, books and other paraphernalia and decide what can be deemed worthy of being included in the archive. After this process has been completed, the task of categorising begins. Mostly, he tells me, articles get left out of the archive because they are physically damaged, and so would compromise the rest of the collection, or because they are repeats.

Verne Harris relates an anecdote¹:

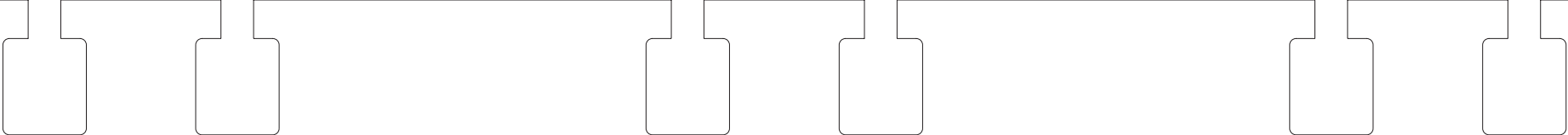
After my mother in law died we were cleaning out her house. My son found a box full of old family photos in the back of a cupboard in her bedroom. He was excited and called us over to see what he had found. The walls in my mother-in-law’s house were lined with framed family portraits. All of them logically ordered, chronologically, one family on one side of the wall, the side on the other... My mother-in-law deemed the photos she framed and hung on the wall to be worthy of ‘the official archive’. The ones to be displayed. She shoved the ‘left-overs’ into shoe boxes. All of the photos where someone wasn’t looking at the camera, the ones which are out of focus, those are the ones that tell the more poetic stories of the family’s history. We decided to get rid of most of the photos in the boxes.

In his book, *Archives and Justice* ², Harris outlines different appraisal theories. These are used by official archives as rules to determine what material is included in the archive. The South African State Archives Services, for example, operate under one dominant, all embracing question, “Does this record possess actual or anticipated research value?”

As Gapare shows me his current project, the archives of an influential South African trade union, it becomes clear that all theory and procedure are eclipsed by the fluid decisions made by the archivist ‘at the coalface’.

1 The text is transcribed from an interview, so is not verbatim. I conducted the interview on 02/05/2014, at the Nelson Mandela Centre for Memory in Houghton, Johannesburg.

2 Harris, V. 2007. *Archives and Justice: A South African Perspective*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists.

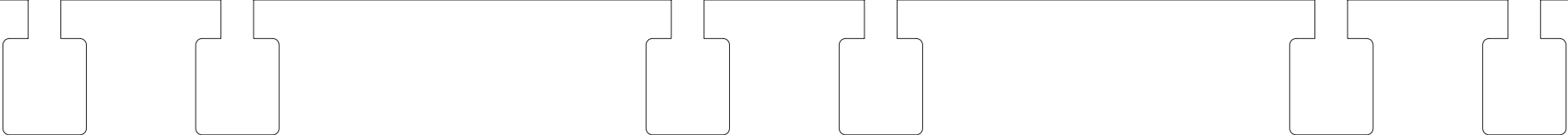


MEDIATION

Ben Gapare relays a story about the Glenn Moss archive, which he recently published. He tells me that when Moss donated his personal archive to the Wits Historical Papers, it had already been personally categorized by Moss. Gapare disregarded the groupings made by Moss in his interpretation of the material. He says that Moss was shocked by the radical changes but had thought that Ben's reconfiguration captured the essence of the story that the archive could tell.

I then posed the question to him: What is lost and what is gained through the mediation of the archivist? What kinds of personal narratives are we losing in disregarding the way that Moss had organized his own material?

What is gained asserts Ben, is that the material is preserved for historical purposes and both physical and epistemological access is granted to those approaching the archive.

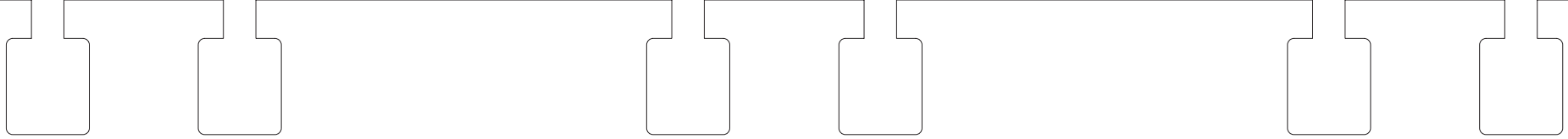


MEDIATION

Verne Harris, a long-time archivist and archive theorist, relays a debate he had been having recently with a close friend of his who was dying. The debate was around the question: What would be a more accurate representation of you, after your death?

1. A poem written about you by someone who knows you extremely well and is exceptionally adept with words.
2. Or, your personal archive, left exactly as it is at the moment you died.

The first option presents a highly mediated and distilled version of who you are. The second, means that all of the documents, books, records, etc. that you have accumulated, ordered (or not ordered) yourself, **left exactly the way in which you had intended them to be, unmediated by anyone other than yourself.**



BOOK-MARKING

Victoria Wigzell, Zakara Raitt and I conceptualised a performance, called *Bookmarking*, for the *Regions A-G* exhibition, held at the Johannesburg City Library in November 2013. The work consisted of 6 performers who were holding bookmarks that I had designed and printed. The bookmarks had slits in the middle where a yellow piece of acetate slotted in and could be moved up and down the page, as a way of highlighting pieces of text. A few days before the performance I asked library staff to choose one book in the library and use the bookmarks to highlight a piece of text.

On the morning of the exhibition, the performers walked from one of the bookmarked books to another, handing bookmarks to visitors along their way. On the bookmarks was an instruction to do the same as the library staff had done.

The idea was for the performers to activate spaces in the library where work was not being shown. The performers did not walk around in a group, rather, they were staggered a few minutes apart so as to create a constant stream of people moving in the same direction. This was to subtly point visitors to the bookmarked books around the library.

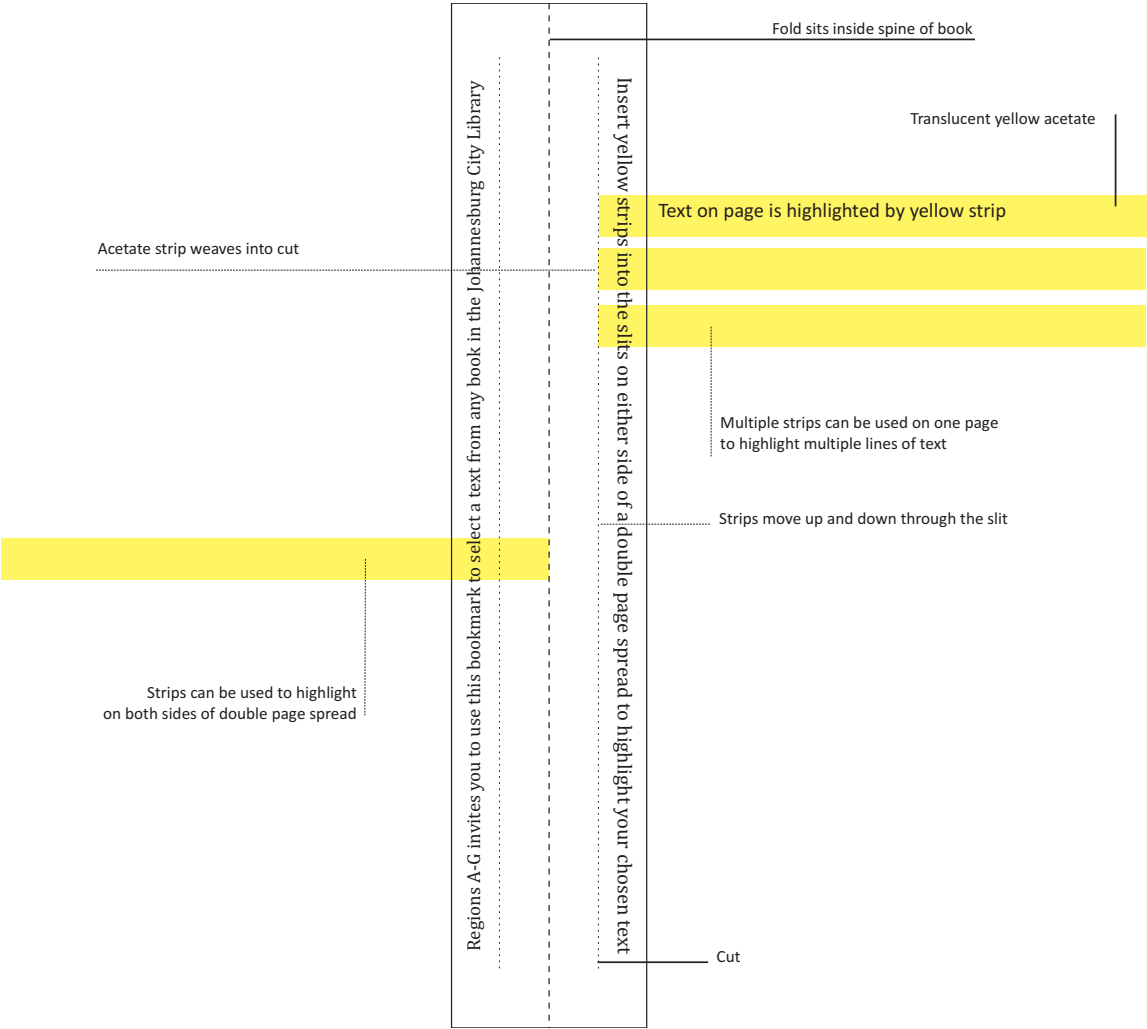
The performance also allowed for the staff, including security guards and librarians, to participate in the exhibition.

Regions A-G invites you to use this bookmark to select a text from any book in the Johannesburg City Library

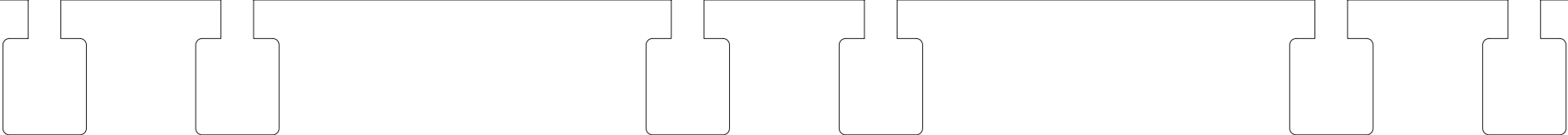
Insert yellow strips into the slits on either side of a double page spread to highlight your chosen text

An example of the bookmarks made for the performance.

BOOK-MARKING



Instructions for using the bookmark.

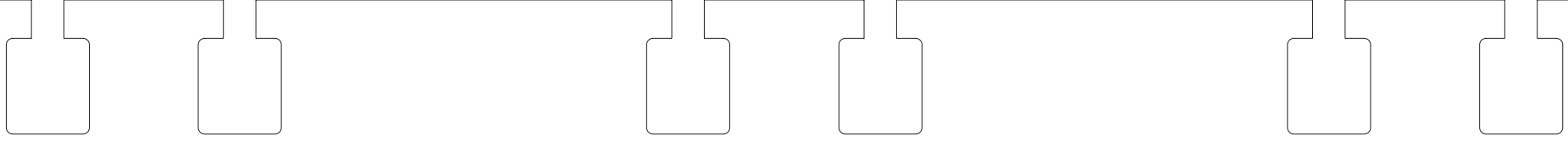


ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SAND

Grains that are compacted by rain
Grains that have been lifted from footsteps
Grains that have been even more compacted by footsteps
Grains that are slightly larger than others
Grains that are translucent and sit on the surface above the compacted sand
The whitest grains that are very small and lie between the darker grains
Grains which lie under ash from a cigarette
Grains which are under my shoes
Grains on the surface which are drier than other grains
Grains that are lighter and looser than the ones underneath
Grains which lie on top of clear plastic in order to keep it from flying away
Grains which are darker than the lightest ones and lie between others that are darker than they are
Grains out of which plants are growing
Grains that have been collected out of small mounds
Grains which have been blown outside of the gates
Grains which lie on the tar outside
Grains which have crossed the border
Grains which are below the surface and therefore cannot be seen
Grains which form small valleys where dark sand accumulates
Grains which were intended for the beach but never arrived
Grains that are stuck to the rust inside metal poles
Grains that are impossible to count

Grains which are constantly becoming smaller
Grains which are all different from one another
Grains that have never seen the sea
Grains that are between the surface and the ground
Grains which look exactly like other grains
Grains that are not in an hourglass
Grains that cover a circular piece of land
Grains that have been stepped on by birds
Grains that are touching wood
Grains that are not infinite but cannot be counted
Grains that stick together
Grains that fall apart
The grain that suddenly makes a heap
Grains that have been fetched from the floor
Grains that are important
Grains that were once sawdust, and now are sand
Grains that are trapped in an hourglass
Grains that are stuck between the cracks
Grains that fell out along the way
Grains that have been imported from Australia
Grains that form the base of a building
Grains that create a castle which is easily destroyed
Grains that have never been seen

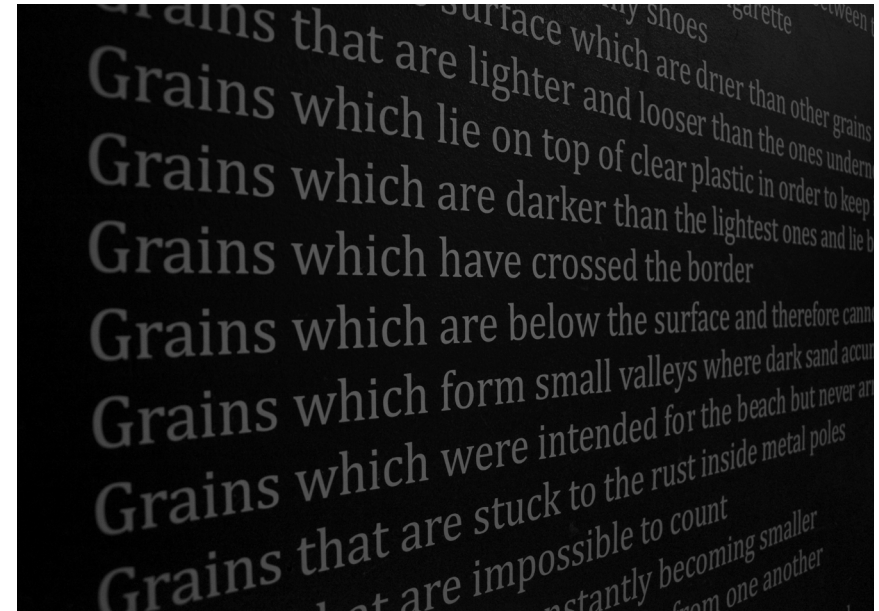
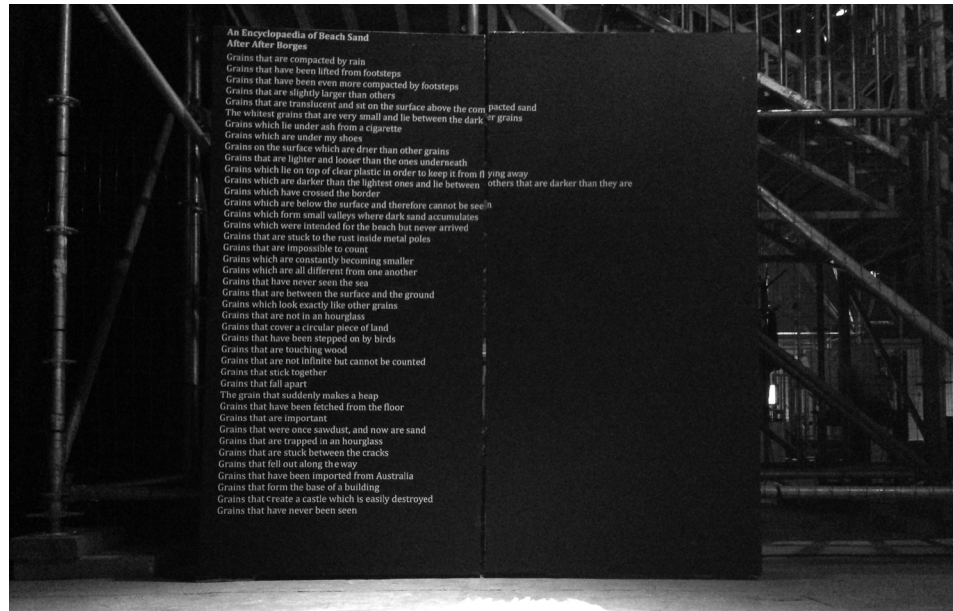
Encyclopedia of Sand, After After Borges. This text was exhibited as a wall text at the *Ville[s] en- Jeu[x]*, at Le-Maillon Theatre de Strasbourg.



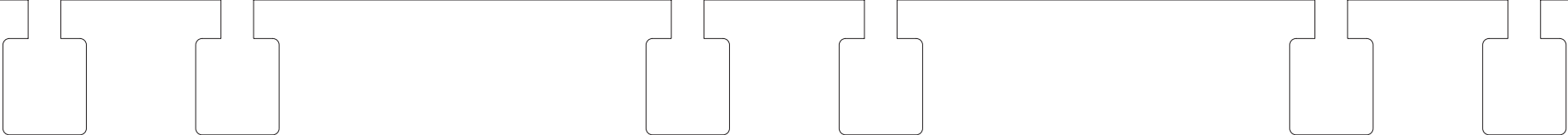
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SAND

*'animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off 'look like flies'.**

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SAND



Encyclopedia of Sand, After After Borges, installation shot



HYPERMNESIA

demanding total recall and refusing selection ★

HYPERMNESIA

Hypermnesia is a term used by Jaques Derrida in *Archive Fever*¹. The term refers to the desire to know or remember everything: “the fantasy of full memory”². Julia Creet writes about this theory in her article based on Danilo Kis’s “Encyclopedia of the Dead” and the fantasy of hypermnesia’.³

The story follows a woman who goes on a trip to escape the grief of her father’s death. She comes across an underground cave, where she finds an archive that records the lives of every person on earth. The only people not included in this archive are those that are referenced in Encyclopedias, people whose lives are already recorded.

But, these records are different to those one would find in a conventional encyclopedia. They tell every detail of a persons life, written upon the moment of their death.

Kis writes about a real life archive at the end of his story. This one exists in Salt Lake City in the USA; The Mormon Genealogical Archives:

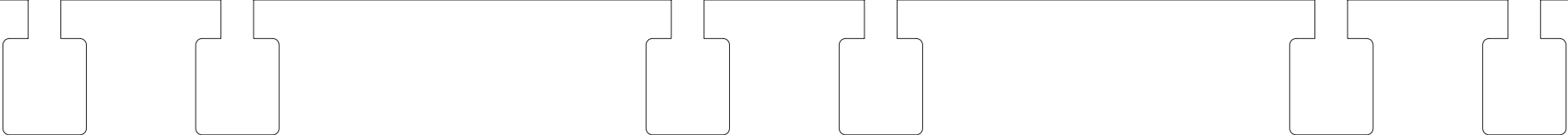
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- 1 Derrida, J. 1995. *Archive Fever*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
 - 2 Creet, J. 1991. ‘The Archive and The Uncanny: Danilo Kis’s “Encyclopedia of the dead” and the Fantasy of Hypermnesia’. In Comay, R.(ed.) *Lost in the Archive*. Toronto: Alfabet City, p.267.
 - 3 *ibid*, p. 267.

*In a labyrinth of tunnels and rooms blasted into rock, the names of eighteen billion people, living and dead, are stored on 1,250,000 microfilms... six immense halls lined with a double layer of concrete... currently contain as much information as is contained in six million books of three thousand pages each. The names in these archives have been collected from all over the world towards the ultimate goal of recording- until when?- the whole of mankind, past, present, and future, in the name of retroactive baptism for the ancestors of those ‘unfortunate enough to have missed the Mormon revelation’.*⁴

The refusal to select, to include or exclude, to form hierarchies of importance, is a quality to which I ascribe the physical manifestation of mess. Even when digitally ordered, an infinite excess of information renders it impossible to read fully. Herein lies an important paradox. In Kis’s story, the narrator tells us that what she is relaying about the story of her father’s life is only a clumsy rehashing of the insignificant notes that she managed to jot down in the dark cave.

*Unlike the historical archive, in which the distinction between what is historically significant and what isn’t is enacted through the process of selection- a form of political power, this particular archive is dedicated to the impossible principle that everything is important.*⁵

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- 4 *ibid*, p. 274
 - 5 *ibid*, p. 270



UNMEDIATED

In her book, *Performing the Archive*¹, Simone Osthoff writes about the work of Paulo Bruscky, a Brazilian artist who was highly involved in the Brazilian Mail Art movement of the 60s and 70's. She describes the artist's studio, a two-bedroom apartment in Recife, Brazil, which houses one of the most important archives of Brazilian Mail Art in the country:

Fifteen thousand works- along with the artist's own oeuvre, books, newspaper articles, and other works ranging from artists' books and sound poems to films and videos. Packed to the ceiling with papers, files and all kinds of objects from brushes to kitchen utensils...

Upon visiting his studio for the first time, the curator of the 26th Sao Paulo Biennial in 2009, Alfons Hug, invited Bruscky to exhibit his entire studio, exactly as it was, in the Biennial.²

¹ Osthoff, S. 2009. *Performing the Archive: The transformation of the archive in Contemporary art from repository of documents to art medium*. New York: Atropos Press.
² *ibid*, p. 24.

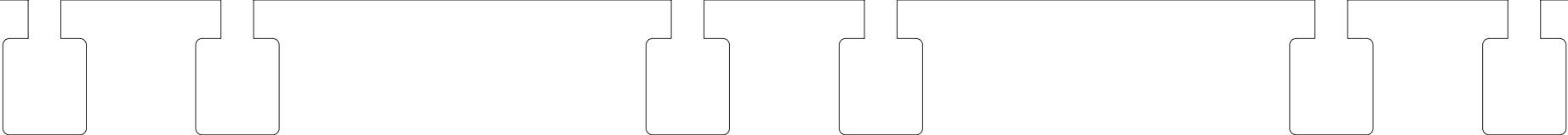
UNMEDIATED



Paulo Bruscky's archives in Torreeao neighbourhood, Recife, Brazil.
Photograph by Leo Caldas, provided by the artist.
(Taken from *Performing the Archive*)



Atelier of Paulo Bruscky, Paulo Bruscky, Brazil 2004.
Installation shot, Biennale de Sao Paulo.
Photograph by Daniel Trama. (Taken from *LatinArt.com*)



The grid: Row C

Row C deals with the productive possibilities of the tension between mess and order. The site of the Johannesburg City Library (JCL) acts as the catalyst for this inquiry. Since the Library's recent renovations, boxes of books and other materials were left lying around, waiting to be put away on shelves. The tension between the Library, an institution built for the purpose of ordering knowledge, and the physical state of disorder in which I found it, proved to be a productive site for artistic production.

This productivity is illustrated through documentation of work that was made during a year long research project at the Library, which culminated in a show there at the end of 2013.

I discuss two works made from the indices at the Harold Strange Africana Library on the third floor of JCL. Through these works, I show the narrative potential of indices; when titles are listed in chronological order, they can tell a story. Without any further intervention in meaning-making, the indices themselves have got epistemological value.

I also explore the different kinds of engagements afforded by one index, which is housed in a card cabinet, and another, which is digitised. Both exist side by side in the JCL.

Furthering my investigation into the generative possibilities afforded by a tension between mess and order, I look at an article by Shireen Ally called *Material Remains*. Ally describes an encounter with an archive of a former Bantustan administration, that had been left to rot in a damp warehouse for the past 20 years. She relays an anecdote about the affective qualities that a document takes on for a man, who, while helping her clean up the mess in the warehouse, comes across the warrant for his arrest in the 1980's.

From this story, I argue that the state of mess in which the archive was found, allowed for a 'serendipitous' moment, giving the document more of an affective impact on the person who found it.

The materiality of the mess, then, is another factor that contributes to the particular affective quality of the document. I use the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick to connect materiality to affect and performativity.



JOHANESBURG
CITY LIBRARY



REGIONS A-G



INDICES



TIME-LINES



DIGITAL/
PHYSICAL



SERENDIPITY



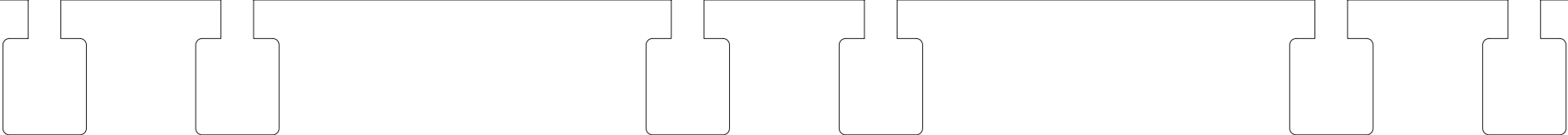
MATERIALITY



TOUCHING
FEELING



REMAINS/
ERASURE



JOHANNESBURG CITY LIBRARY

Located in the busy banking district of the Johannesburg CBD, the colonial ‘Italianate’ architecture of the Central Johannesburg Library (JCL) building is in constant contact with the everyday life of the city and its inhabitants. During a summer afternoon thunderstorm, people walking home from work take shelter in the foyer of the Library; people without jobs or with nowhere to go sit in the cool and quiet newspaper room on the underground floor; a group of skateboarders can be found skating on the paved square known as the ‘library gardens’ outside the building on any given afternoon.

These organic uses of the space, which is one of the only buildings in town that is free and open to the public allow for a reading of the way in which the colonial history of knowledge and its hierarchical and fixed classifications is constantly challenged and subtly undermined by the fluid and amorphic forms of life conducted in the city. The building’s multi-layered uses speak to what Achille Mbembe calls “the creativity of practice” that exists in African cities. He writes that this “creativity of practice is always ahead of the knowledge we can ever produce about it”.¹

The Johannesburg City Library in particular lends an even more nuanced reading of the categorisation system. The building originally housed the Africana Museum, opened in 1935, which has been fully moved to its current location in Newtown since 1994, reopened under the name MuseumAfrica. The various collections of the museum, including a ethnographic, a geological, 18th Century Dutch furniture and silverware, China from the Dutch East India Company, transport and costumes are now stored in the Museum Africa building. Thus the history and location of the Library building play an important part in linking the kinds of classifying systems used in the library with the colonial project, which had everything to do with creating categories and documents to record every aspect of lived experience for purposes of control and imposition of ideology.

1 Mbembe, A. 2013. ‘Africa in Theory’. Presented at WISH Seminar at University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (8 April 2013).

JOHANNESBURG CITY LIBRARY

One of the artists who participated in *Regions A-G*, Francis Burger, **happened upon a discarded box in one of the basement storerooms in the newspaper archive**. On the box was written ‘Strange pamphlets’ (the label ‘Strange’ refers to the Harold Strange Africana Library, but incidentally speaks to the strangeness of the content of the box). *Strange Pamphlets* became the title of the work that she exhibited for the exhibition *Nesting Narratives* (2014). She writes:

Strange Pamphlets combines reproductions of items found in the Johannesburg City Library over a series of visits to the newspaper archive (with some detours via the library’s archival storage). The reproductions include: reports of anti-Apartheid pamphleteering from the National Party’s clandestinely launched propaganda newspaper the Citizen, 1976; images from a 1995 Scope magazine; and a collection of photograph from the personal albums of Mr and Mrs G. Carleton-Jones, variously dated around 1936.

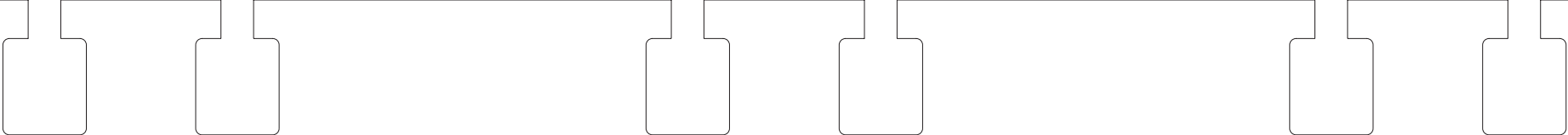
The photographs depict the Carleton-Jones’ mining exploits alongside everyday scenes at their Johannesburg estate ‘Dunfallandy’, as well as wildlife documented during various expeditions around Southern Africa. Mr G. Carleton-Jones was a mining engineer and chairman of the Consolidated Gold Fields of South Africa, now Gold Fields, responsible for opening many mines around the Witwatersrand including Robinson Deep, Sub-Nigel, ‘Simmer & Jack Gold Mines’, Driefontein and Kloof mines during the late 19th and early 20th century. The albums were found on a shelf in the Strange Pamphlet collection (of Harold Strange) amongst a smelting ledger, news clipping albums and the creased copy of Scope.

The happen-stance of the physical context in which she found this archival material, among other printed matter that seemed to be left —over, or misplaced, is of importance in her description of the work. In fact, it is central to the work’s existence. In this case, the mess, or disorder of the Library was useful, if not vital to the work that was generated from that space.

JOHANNESBURG CITY LIBRARY



Antonia Brown and Karin Tan performing on the steps of the JCL during the *Regions A-G* research period.



JOHANNESBURG CITY LIBRARY

My practical research around forms of classification began at the Johannesburg City Library (JCL) at the beginning of 2013. There was some public interest in the building after the Library's renovations and reopening in 2012. After attending a tour of the newly renovated building towards the end of 2012, I knew that this would be a fruitful site for artistic intervention. Soon afterwards, fellow artist Ruth Sacks and I began to conceptualise an artist-run research project in the JCL.

The research project, called Regions A-G, used the Library as a resource from which to conduct research; using its books, newspaper archives, indexing systems, architectural space, or the location of the building in inner city Johannesburg as ground for artistic research and to allow that research to eventually take a form that would be shown in the Library building.

The JCL building closed in 2009 for three years as it underwent major renovations. Since its reopening, boxes filled with books and piles of books still litter the building in its various rooms. The boxes and piles point to the uneasiness present in all classifying systems. The material reality of lived experience is always in excess of the names and systems

for which order is produced. Clusters of unused furniture are stored in otherwise empty rooms; most notably a room with a glass door, called the 'exhibition room' is being used as such. Rows of chairs, desks, shelves and cabinets create an image of excess of the paraphernalia of classification and order. The defunctness of these objects, and their repetition is a reminder of the constructed and over-determined nature of classification systems.

The JCL has proven to be a particularly instructive site as, like all libraries, it is an edifice that is built to house the ordering and classification of knowledge. But, the mess and disorder proved to be an essential asset to fellow artists and myself who worked on a research project there (called Regions A-G), throughout 2013. Access to certain kinds of material would not have been possible without the mess that seems to be pushing against an order, which is constantly running, but not keeping up with itself in the Library.

Once again, the dialectic tension between mess and order provides a rich breeding ground for the discovery of things foreclosed by either one or the other mode of display.

REGIONS A-G

Regions A-G is a research project initiated by Ruth Sacks and I early in 2013. The Johannesburg City Library was the site about which the research was conducted, in which artistic experiments were carried out, and eventually where we held an exhibition in November of the same year.

Around March 2013 we invited artists, Rangoato Hlsane, Euridice Kala, Bettina Malcomess, Francis Burger and Mbali Khosa to begin working on the project alongside Ruth and me. At this point, despite having applied for funding, the project had no budget. We left the perimeters open so as to allow the project to evolve organically (we also couldn't promise the artists any money, so their involvement was completely on their own terms).

The name of the project came from the Joburg City website, which lists the libraries in Johannesburg as being part of one of seven 'regions': 'Regions A - G'. We wanted a name that referred to the kinds of arbitrary classifications made in libraries. This one was as good as any, without directly using library categories.

Part of the Regions A-G project was an initiative to start an artist-book collection at the Library. Towards this end, we started displaying artist-books in a vitrine in the foyer of the Library, changing the display once a month, to showcase different artist-books, which were then donated to the Library.

Primarily a research project, Regions A-G uses the Johannesburg City Library as a productive space to question the values implicit in the structuring, ordering and dissemination of knowledge. The artists involved variously engage with the colonial structures of knowledge that have historically been imposed and are now inherited forms in the South African context.

The yearlong research project culminated in an exhibition in November 2013, which was held in the Library and its' surrounds. I exhibited the work, *The future is not what it used to be* on the third floor of the library, in a room adjacent to the Harold Strange Africana Library.¹

The work *Reproduction of the card catalogue index of maps in the Harold Strange Africana Library*, was an experiment that I exhibited in the vitrine that had been set up in the foyer of the Library between April and May 2013. Although I did not exhibit this work in the show, it was an informative experiment conducted under the Regions A-G project.²

1 I discuss this work further in the card INDICES and TIMELINES.

2 I discuss this work further in the card INDICES and TIMELINES.

REGIONS A-G

List of works exhibited

1. Talya Lubinsky, Zakara Raitt & Victoria Wigzell *Bookmarking*

A continuous performance to take place on Saturday 9 November from 10:30am to 12:30am. Library employees have been asked to pinpoint their favourite passages in books from the collection. Various performers have been choreographed to then locate these and bookmark them, guiding visitors through the space as they do so.

2. Artist Books (Including work by: Alphabet Zoo (Minenkulu Ngoyi & Isaac Zavale), Sebastian Borckenhagen, Angela Ferreira, Dorothee Kreutzveldt & Bettina Malcomess, Raimi Gbadamosi, Jonah Sack, Fabian Saptouw) Part of the Regions A-G project has been to install a vitrine in the foyer of the library that showcases different artist books on a monthly rotation. Seen here are books that have been on show this year, alongside a taste of what's to come. Some of the books are available for paging through upstairs in the Michaelis Art Library.

3. Ruth Sacks

Twenty Thousand Leagues Under Seas

Installation and book launch of Sacks' new artist book. The work is comprised of a series of textual and visual interventions into an old English translation of Jules Verne's classic late 19th century tale of underwater travel, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. The book launch is kindly hosted by the French Institute of South Africa

4. Fabian Saptouw *100, 000 DPI*

A drawing consisting of approximately 100,000 dots made using a black 0.2 Unipin Fine Line pen on Fab- riano Rosapina

5. Bettina Malcomess *Anne Historical Presents: the sale of lot 537 (the facts and circumstances)*

6. Mbali Khoza and Georgia Munnik *Do It Like This*

This multi-media piece is an exercise in substitution, addition and subtraction between the uneven vocabularies of Zulu, Fanagalo and English, attempting to pull them into one another. It is part of an ongoing project based on J.D. Bold's Fanagalo Phrase-book, which provides the vocabulary that has been made to contradict, confuse and corrupt itself through the use of basic equations.

7. Rangoato Hlasane

*An icon is not necessarily an anthem**

A re-enactment of Dollar Brand's 'Mannenberg Is Where It's Happening, played outside the doors of Kohinoor, 11 Kort Street, Johannesburg in 1974. *Titled borrowed from John Edwin Mason

8. Fabian Saptouw *Tower*

Sculpture made up of approximately 10, 000 Redfern White PVC Ring reinforcements, 5mm dowel

9. Fabian Saptouw *1, 000, 000 endings*

Exactly 1, 000, 000 periods/full stops printed using a dot-matrix printer on 241 sheets of perforated paper

10. Talya Lubinsky

The future is not what is used to be

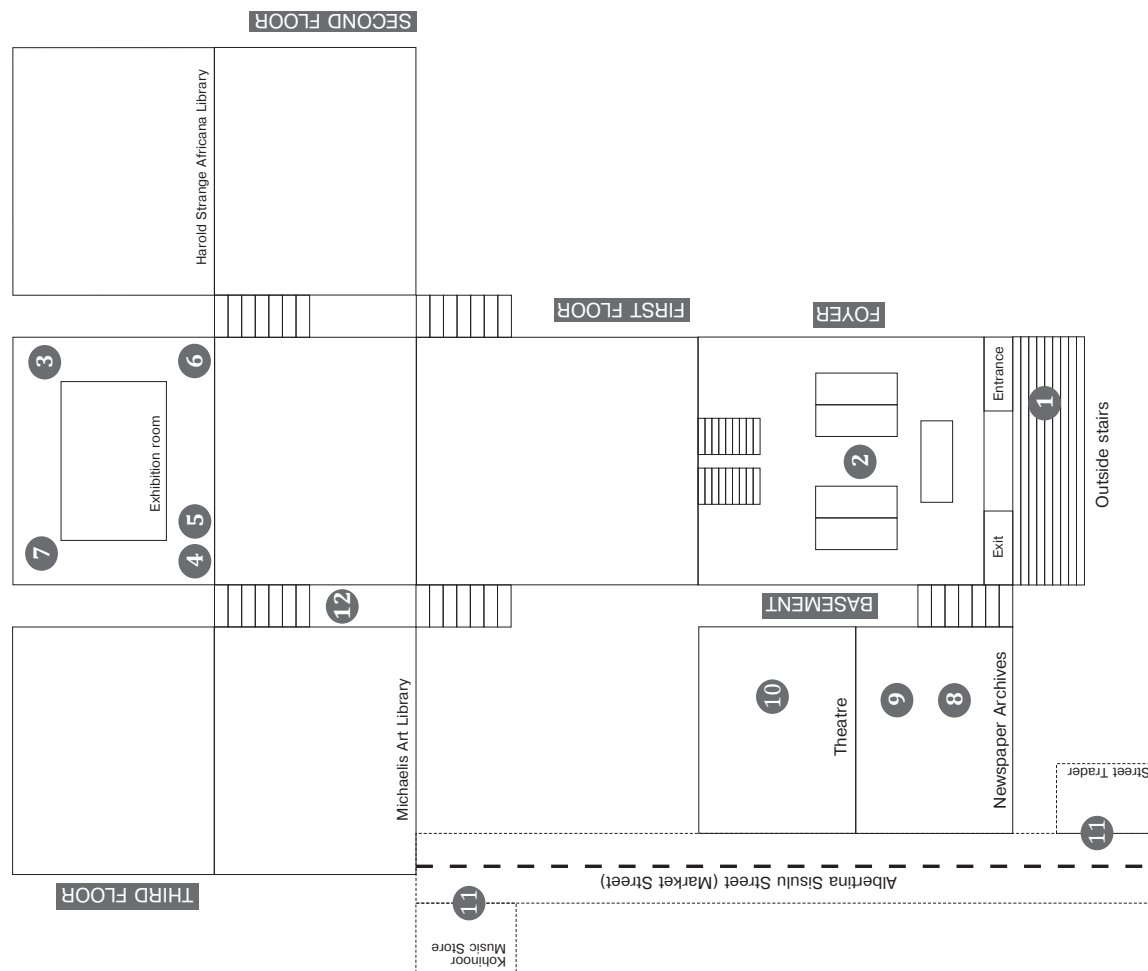
This book may be read as a time-line, in which every book in the Africana Library, with the word "future" in its title, is listed. The 145 titles are arranged chronologically, according to their year of publication, starting in 1849 and ending in 2012.

11. Francis Burger *Bad Books*

This ongoing project, taking place in various locations, consists of a reading list that maps trajectories of the 1970s Information Scandal within the Johannesburg City Library. Tracing opportunistic paths between political manoeuvres, front companies, people, and publications, the reading list begins in the newspaper archives with the story of model Bubbles Maondo and muscle man Jannie Beetge. The list will be marked out gradually within the library by yellow post-it notes. The Bad Books project continues research undertaken in early 2013 at Zuid Afrika Huis in Amsterdam, the University of Stellenbosch library and the National Library in Tshwane.

Call numbers, images and other fragments will be uploaded sporadically to:
www.bad-books-regions-a-z.blogspot.com

REGIONS A-G



Map of the artworks exhibited in the Johannesburg City Library at *Regions A-G*, 9 November - 9 December 2013.
The numbers on the map correspond to the numbers in the 'List of works exhibited'

REGIONS A-G



1.



2.



3.



6.



7.



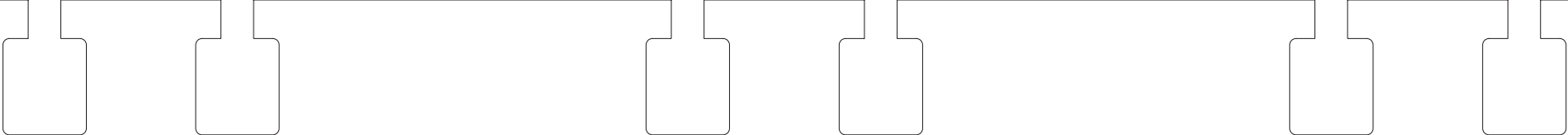
11.

Regions A-G, Installation shots.

REGIONS A-G



Regions A-G, view of JCL foyer with vitrines.



INDICES

The following works: *The future is not what it used to be* and *Reproduction of the card catalogue index of maps in the Harold Strange Africana Library*¹ mobilise the index as a text in its own right. As lists, simply displayed as themselves, indices can communicate something on a larger historical or social scale than perhaps any one of the individual objects or books in the collection that they serve. Viewing indices as a whole text allows for the often hidden or over-looked and seemingly mundanely functional form to be given a meaning of its own. In the display of the index, something beyond the possible meanings of the individual objects themselves is revealed.

The work entitled *The future is not what it used to be*, lists all of books in the Harold Strange Africana Library with the word ‘future’ in their titles. The Africana collection holds only non fiction books about Africa. Every page of this A1 size book displays the year of publication and title of one of the 145 books listed, in chronological order (starting in 1849 and ending in 2012).

¹ Discussed further in TIMELINES

This leather bound book, titled on the cover in gold lettering, references the large atlases that are lying haphazardly on tables in the Africana Library. The physical size (841mm x 594mm) of the pages facilitates a slow, laboured turning of pages, alluding to the weight of history as time passes.

The titles and dates of publication act as a narrative, telling the story of how conceptions of the future at any given moment are much more indicative of the moods, ambitions and fears of that present, rather than that of the imagined future that they project. The book provides a historical view into conceptions of the future in Africa.

1849:
The Past and Future of Immigration;
or The Book of the Cape

1877:
Thoughts upon the Present and
Future of South Africa and Central
and Eastern Africa

1882:
Natal, its Early History, Rise, Progress
and Future Prospects as a Field for
Emigration

1889:
Matabeleland: The Future Gold
Fields of the World: Its people and
resources

1902:
War Horses Present and Future; or
Remount Life in South Africa

1903:
Cape Colony for the Settlers:
An account of its urban and rural
industries, their probable future
development and extension

1905:
The Zulu in Three Tenses: Being a
forecast of the Zulu's future in the
light of his past and his present

1907:
A Book of Heroes: Boys and Men: A
record of the past and an inspiration
for the future

1914:
Your Future Career: A guide to skilled
occupations and a dictionary of trades

1927:
The Future

1940:
Your Future Career: A book on
vocations for South African boys and
girls

1948:
What of the Future? South Africa's
present day problems analysed

1954:
Future Indefinite

1959:
The Economic Future of South Africa

1960:
Kwame Nkrumah and the Future of
Africa

1960:
The Future of Law in Africa

1960:
Face the Future

1960:
The Vision Splendid: The future of
the Central African Federation

1961:
Verwoerd: The End: A look back from
the future

1962:
The White Man's Future in Black
South Africa

1963:
The Past and the Future of Kaffir
Races

1964:
They Built the Future: A chronicle of
Makerere University College, 1922 -
1962

1965:
South Africa: A Land with a Future:
Impressions of a journey of discovery
with camera and sketching pad
through South Africa

1965:
Land Tenure in South Africa -
Past, present and future,
Being the apportionment, tenure,
registration and survey of land in
South Africa and proposals for
the establishment of a cadastral
system for the Bantu areas of South
Africa

1965:
The Foreign Policy of African States:
Ideological bases, present realities,
future prospects

1966:
The Outlook for Gold Mining: The
role of the gold mining industry in the
future economy of South Africa: A
memorandum

1968:
Natal, Republic of South Africa;
province with a future

1968:
1948 - 1968- And Now, the Future!
A survey of the National Party
Government from 1948 - 1968

The future is not what it used to be.

This list was displayed inside a large, A1 book. In the book, each title, with its date of publication was placed on its own separate page

1968:
Social Aspects of a Rehabilitation
in a Multiracial Society: A survey
of the development of existing
services and facilities for, and
future needs of the physically
disabled, and related legislation, in
South Africa

1968:
Science Fiction Novels and the
Tales of The Future

1972:
Not Alone: A story of the future of
Rhodesia

1972:
Phalaborwa: Mining city of the future

1973:
The Future Leaders

1973:
No Past, No Present, No Future

1973:
Vanderbijlpark, Transvaal, South
Africa: Town Council: Faith in the
future

1974- 1987:
RSA 2000: Dialogue with the Future:
Republic of South Africa Two
Thousand

1974:
Portugal and the Future

1975:
Stepping into the Future: Education
for South Africa's Black, Coloured
and Indian peoples

1975:
Educational Planning for the Future

1976:
The Leopard Panthera Pardus in
Africa: Report of survey of the
present status and future prospects of
the species throughout Africa, south
of the Sahara

1977:
Origins: What new discoveries reveal
about the emergence of our species
and its possible future

1977:
The future of the University of
Southern Africa

1978:
The Land Problem in Rhodesia:
Alternatives for the future

1978:
The Future of the Karoo: Report on
a national symposium held in Graaf
Reniet, 1- 3 November 1978

1978:
The Third World War: A future
history

1979:
Perspectives on South Africa's future

1979:
People of the Lake: Man, his origins,
nature, and future

1979:
Is Anyone Out There Listening:
Essential reading to understand the
future of women in business

1980:
South Africa, now and in the future

1980:
Suffer the Future: Policy choices in
Southern Africa

1980:
South Africa's Relationship with
the West: Current trends and future
prospects

1981:
Future Perspective

1981:
Saldanha Bay- Langebaan: A unique
heritage- full of history and promise
for the future

1981:
Towards a Certain Future: The
politics and economics of Southern
Africa

1981:
Future Perspective: Afrikaans

1984:
Federalism and the Future of South
Africa

1984:
Southern African Peace and Security:
Foundations for the future

1984:
A Foundation for the Future: The
Darling and Hodgson Story, 1934-
1984

The future is not what it used to be.

This list was displayed inside a large, A1 book. In the book, each title, with its date of publication was placed on its own separate page

1984:
The San in Translation. Volume 2.
What future for the Ju/Wasi of Nyae-Nyae

1986:
Dispensations: The future of South Africa as South Africans see it

1986:
The Past and Future of !Kung Ethnography: Critical reflections and symbolic perspectives: Essays in honour of Lorna Marshall

1986:
Disinvestment, the Struggle, and the Future: What black South Africa really think

1986:
Education: Past, present and future

1987:
Natal/KwaZulu: Present realities, Future hopes

1987:
Freedom, the Universities, and the Future

1987:
A Vision of the Future South Africa: Papers presented at a one day symposium to commemorate the 21st anniversary of the Vaal Triangle Technikon (11 November 1987)

1987:
United States/ South African Relations: Past, present and future

1987:
East London, Republic of South Africa: Gateway to the future

1987:
Perspectives on the Political Future of South Africa

1988:
Reform and the Future: A collection

1988:
Race Relations: Survival kit for the future

1990:
Eastern Europe and South Africa: Implications for the future

1990:
The Myth Makers: The elusive bargain for South Africa's future

1990:
A Black Future: Jesus and salvation in South Africa

1990:
No Easy Ride: The rise and future of the Black taxi industry

1990:
Shaping a Future South Africa: A citizens' guide to constitution-making

1991:
South Africa in the Region: A Post-Apartheid future

1991:
Soviet Policy on South Africa: Past, present and future

1991:
The Future of Security and Defence in South Africa: Papers

1991:
Rhinos Past, Present - and Future?

1991:
Education in a Future South Africa: Policy issues for transformation

1991:
The Crucible: Forging South Africa's future

1991:
Continuity and Change in South Africa's Present and Future Foreign Policy

1991:
Has the Mfecane a Future?

1992:
An African Response to the Question of Apartheid

1992:
South Africa After Apartheid: The end of Apartheid, future regional cooperation and foreign aid

1992:
Towards a Post-Apartheid Future: Political and economic relations in Southern Africa

1992:
A Future South Africa in the African Context: A South African perspective

1992:
Squatters, Violence and the Future of the Informal Settlements in the Greater Durban Region

The future is not what it used to be.

This list was displayed inside a large, A1 book. In the book, each title, with its date of publication was placed on its own separate page

1992:
A Future South Africa in the African
Context: An African perspective

1992:
Believers in the Future

1992:
Federalism: The shape of the future?

1992:
A Wasted Future

1992:
Black Youth in Crisis: Facing the
future

1992:
Parktown, 1892- 1992: The past with
a future

1993:
Our Destiny: Our common future in
Africa

1993:
The Future of TAZARA in a Post-
Apartheid Southern Africa

1994:
The Prodigal Returns: The
Commonwealth and South Africa,
past and future

1994:
The United States and South Africa:
Partnership for the future

1994:
Our Country, Our Future: A teaching
pack about South Africa

1994:
Akasia: Garden and industrial city of
The future

1994:
Creating a Future: Youth policy in
South Africa

1994:
Human Rights and Democracy: An
education for the future

1994:
Outside of the Metropolis: The future
of South Africa's secondary cities:
An executive summary

1994:
Building the Future on the Best of the
Past

1994:
Election '94 South Africa: The
campaigns, results and future
prospects

1994:
Soweto: We are the future

1994:
The Namibian Peace Process:
Implications and lessons for the future

1994:
Forums and the Future: Proceedings
of a conference convened by the
Centre for Policy Studies on the
significance of South Africa's forums,
and their future in Post- Apartheid
South Africa

1994:
The Future of Civics?

1994:
The University of Zululand looks to
the future

1995:
Bridges to the Future: Prospects for
peace and security in Southern Africa

1995:
Education and Politics in Namibia:
Past trends and future prospects

1996:
Art in South Africa: The future
present

1996:
Johannesburg, a Special Study on the
Conditions for Foreign Investment: A
Corporate Location report

1996:
Embracing the Future: Inaugural
address

1997:
St. Peter's College: Bravely into the
future

1997:
Park City: The blue print for the
future

1997:
Novel Histories: Past, present and
future in South African fiction

1998:
South Africa and the Future of the
Non- Aligned Movement

1998:
Women Creating the Future: An
anthology of women's writing in
Southern Africa

The future is not what it used to be.

This list was displayed inside a large, A1 book. In the book, each title, with its date of publication was placed on its own separate page

1998:
South Africa's Future: From crisis to prosperity

1999:
A Better Future: The United Democratic Movement, towards a winning nation in ten years

1999:
Chronicle of the Truth Commission: A journey through past and present, into the future of South Africa

1999:
No Future Without Forgiveness

2002:
Constitution Hill: The history of our future

2004:
South Africa 2014

2004:
Zimbabwe: The past is the Future: Rethinking land, state and nation in the context of crisis

2004:
Apartheid's past, Renaissance Future: South Africa's foreign policy, 1994-2004

2004:
The Shackled Continent: Africa's past, present and future

2004:
Historic Overview of the Witwatersrand Goldfields: A review of the discovery, geology, geophysics, development, mining, production and future of the Witwatersrand goldfields as seen through a geological and financial association spanning 50 years

2005:
Soweto: Roadmap to the Future: Eradicating gravel roads

2005:
Gender Instruments in Africa: Critical perspectives, future strategies

2005:
Trade, Development, Cooperation: What future for Africa?

2006:
Kaelo: Stories of Hope: Companies and communities working together for a brighter future

2010:
Mining the Future: The Bafokeng story

2010:
Future Africa: Prospects for democracy and development under NEPAD

2011:
Tracking the Future: Top trends that will shape South Africa and the world

2011:
'The Future is in the Hands of the Workers': A history of FOSATU: Historical papers archives project

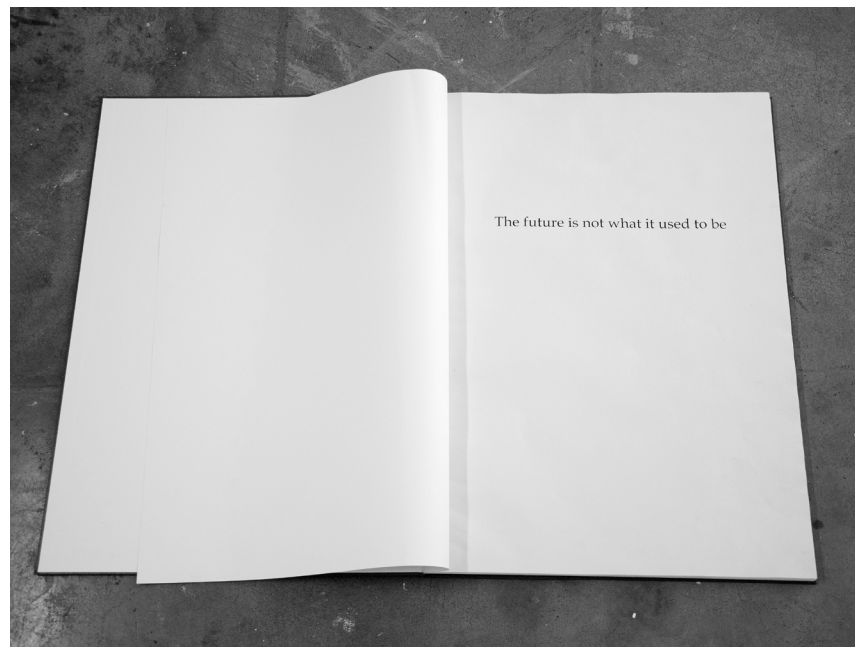
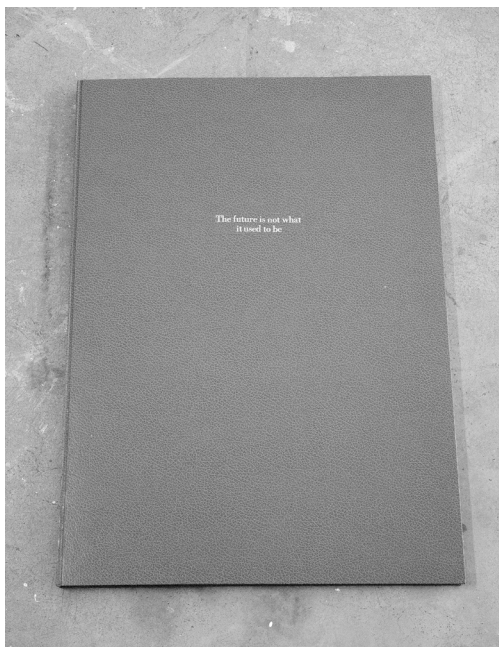
2011:
Walk Out, Walk On: A learning journey into communities darling to live the future now

2012:
Lost in Transformation: South Africa's search for a new future since 1986

The future is not what it used to be.

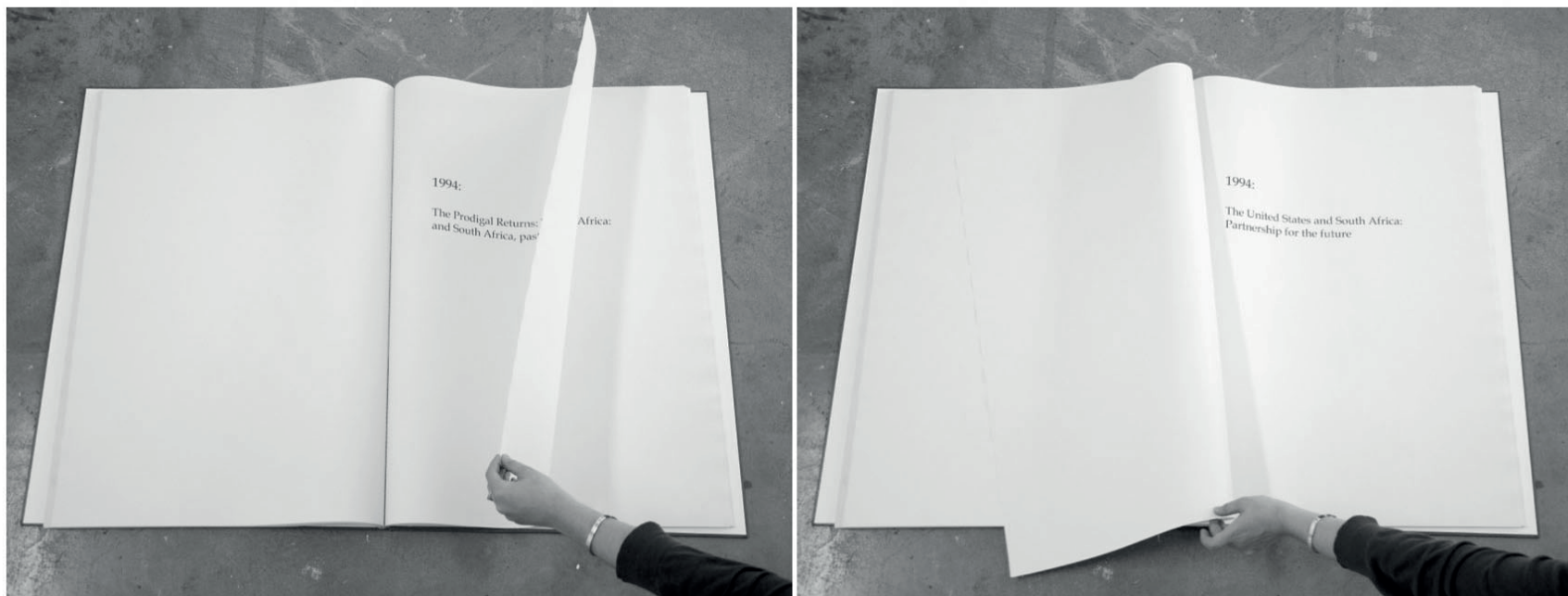
This list was displayed inside a large, A1 book. In the book, each title, with its date of publication was placed on its own separate page

INDICES

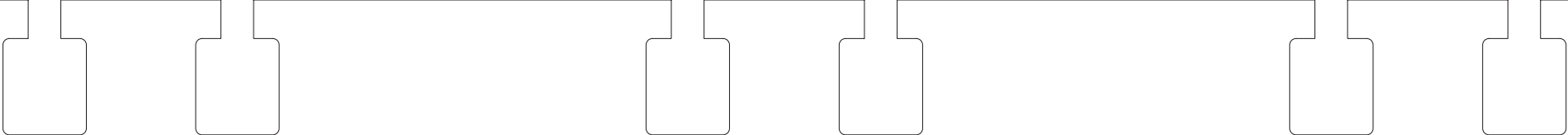


The future is not what it used to be, Installation shots.

INDICES

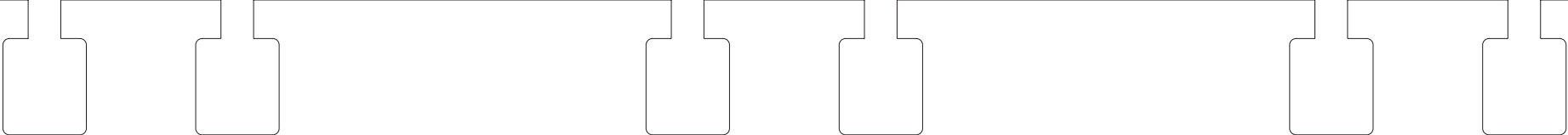


The future is not what it used to be, Installation shots.



INDICES

To locate book A , consult first book B which indicates A 's position; to locate book B , consult first a book C , and so on to infinity $\star$



TIME-LINES

Working with the indices in the Harold Strange Africana Library at the Johannesburg City Library, I created two works; *Reproduction of the card catalogue index of maps in the Harold Strange Africana Library* and *The future is not what it used to be*. As well as mobilising indices as source material, the works mobilise another form of ordering or structuring knowledge and history; the time-line.

The first is a time-line that uses the index cards used to index the maps of Africa in the Library. The second is another time-line (in the form of a book), indexing all of the books in the Africana Library that contain the word 'future'.

In the *The future is not what it used to be*, the time-line evokes a narrative that folds conceptions of the past and the future onto itself, disrupting the notion of linear time. The time-line also tells a story about the history of foreseen futures, which are always more telling about the present in which they were published.

For the *Reproduction of the card catalogue index of maps in the Harold Strange Africana Library*, I painstakingly reproduced each one of the over 3000 index cards cataloguing every map of Africa that exists in the Africana Library. The index is stored in card cabinets, which are ordered according to region and chronologically. When the index cards

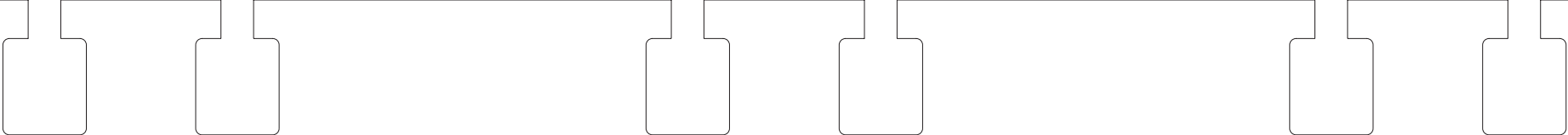
are presented as a chronological list (or time-line), they present a succinct history of the colonisation of Southern Africa and the displacement of its people.

In their order, they begin indexing the first maps of the Cape made by early Dutch explorers. As the index moves along in time, so too does it move inland, charting the movements of European settlers in the country and on the continent. More recently, maps reflect Apartheid spacial geography. Index cards name maps that designate certain areas (like Soweto) as black townships. The conflation of time and geography in the ordering structure of this index speaks to the politics of cartography in Africa, which is so closely aligned colonialism.

The book *Cartographies of Time*¹ charts the history of visual representations of time. Herein, the narrative and historiographical possibilities of the time-line are explored. Rather than being a dry, rational listing of events, with obvious cause and effects, "...The chronologies [the ways in which time is represented] of a given period may tell us as much about its visions of past and future as do its historical narratives."²

1 Rosenberg, D. and Grafton, A. 2012. *Cartographies of Time: A History of the Timeline*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

2 *ibid*, p. 23



TIME-LINES

The line, as W.T.J. Mitchell writes, is almost always the visual metaphor for time¹:

The fact is that spatial form is the perceptual basis of our notion of time, that we literally cannot 'tell time' without the mediation of space. Mitchell argues that all temporal language is "contaminated" by spatial figures. "We speak of 'long' and 'short' times, of 'intervals' (literally, 'spaces between'), of 'before' and 'after'—all implicit metaphors which depend upon a mental picture of time as a linear continuum. Continuity and sequentially are spatial images based in the schema of the unbroken line or surface; the experience of simultaneity or discontinuity is simply based in different kinds of spatial images from those involved in continuous, sequential experiences of time. And it may well be that Mitchell is right. But recognizing this can only be a beginning. In the field of temporal representation, the line can be everywhere because it is so flexible and its configurations so diverse.

The importance of the line, specifically the cartographic line is evoked in the work, *Reproduction of the card catalogue index of maps in the Harold Strange Africana Library*. Using the index cards from the index of maps in

the Africana Library, I attempted to create a structure along which these cards could be hung. The structure was to follow the line of one of the oldest maps housed in the Africana Library, depicting the coastline of the Cape, where the original Dutch explorers landed in Africa in the 1600's.

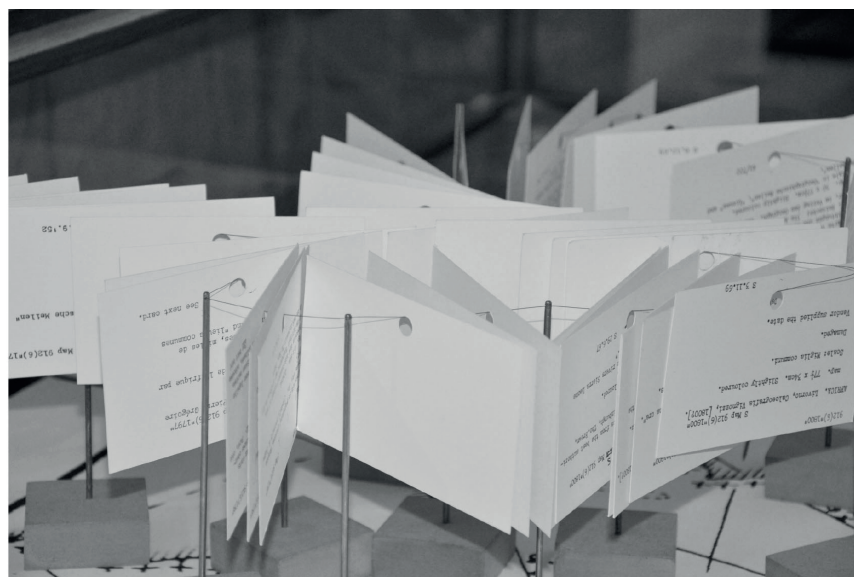
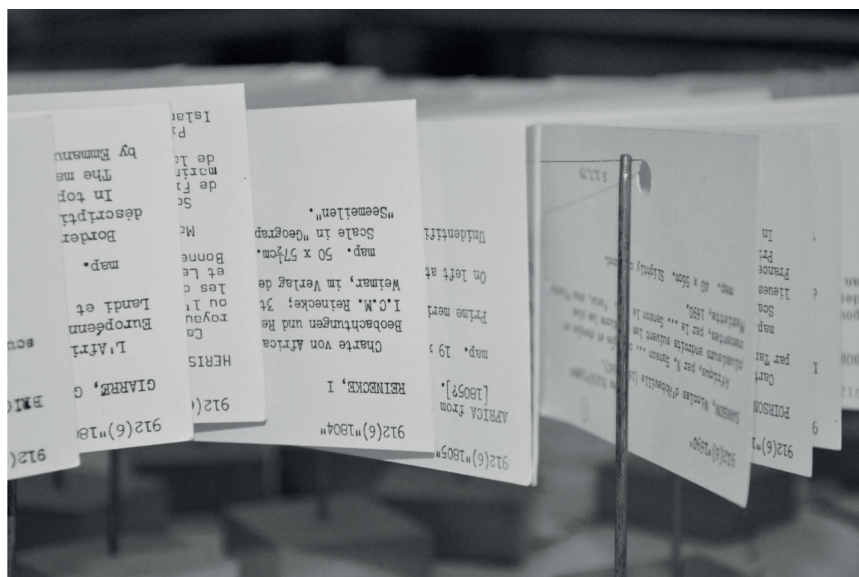
The original coastline that was drawn by early cartographers actually falls in the middle of town, near parliament in Cape Town. My initial intention was to construct a washing-line type structure, along the 'incorrect' coastline drawn by 17th century cartographers.

In practice, the project ended in its preliminary phases, a maquette for the larger structure was displayed in a vitrine in the lobby of the Johannesburg City Library. The larger scale project was not realised.

The future is not what it used to be evokes the idea of the line in a slightly more metaphoric way. The form of the book causes the viewer/ reader to page through the book in a linear fashion.

1 Rosenberg, D. and Grafton, A. 2012. *Cartographies of Time: A History of the Timeline*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, p. 13

TIME-LINES



Reproduction of the card catalogue index of maps in the Harold Strange Africana Library, installation shots

TIME-LINES

912(68)

S Pam 094(68)

The SPREAD of printing in South Africa: supplement
to South African libraries, 6, No. 2, Oct. 1938.

map. 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ cm.

912(68)

S Pam 38(68)

UNION of South Africa. Railways and harbours.

Lines of communication: the story of 300 years
of transport in South Africa, together with an
illustrative map, presented by the South African
railways and harbours administration in celebration
of the Van Riebeeck tercentenary. [Johannesburg],
(Hortors, printer), [1952?].

folder. illus., maps. 28cm.

912(68)

S L Map 912(68)

MARINE casualties in Southern African waters,
1552 to 1913. — Stellenbosch : SA Shipping
News, 1986

1 map : ill. , 52 x 67 cm. on sheet 71 x 101 cm.

S 16. 11. 87

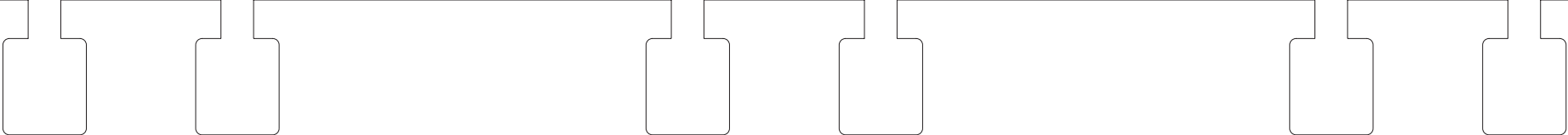
912(68)

S Pam 629.2

ROYAL automobile club of South Africa.

The Union highways and byways, etc. (Johannesburg,
H.W. Vorenberg, printer), [1937?].

40p. illus., maps. 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ cm.



DIGITAL/ PHYSICAL

The index of maps in the Harold Strange Africana Library is still stored on individual cards in card cabinets, while book titles have been digitised. This means that I could physically browse through the index of maps, allowing me to understand the structure in which they had been categorised.

In order to access the book index, on the other hand, one must know what they are looking for, and ask the librarian to search for it on her computer. This is especially limiting in the Africana library because the books are all locked up behind glass cabinets, which must be opened by librarians upon specific requests. Therefore, aside from the spines of the books, browsing is not possible without prior knowledge of what you

are looking for. Furthermore, the lack of visibility of the index itself, means that the person approaching the collection is denied access to understanding the collection in its entirety, nor are they afforded the possibility of serendipitously encountering a book, or especially some pages of a book, for which they were not necessarily looking.

On the other hand, the physicality of the index of maps allowed insight into the structure of the index, which is what gave rise to the idea for the creation of the artwork: *Reproduction of the card catalogue index of maps in the Harold Strange Africana Library*. Without access to the index as a whole, I would not have been able to understand it as a time-line.

SERENDIPITY

Shireen Ally presented a paper titled *Material Remains*, at the NRF Chair in Local Histories and Present Realities Seminar, Senate House, Wits University, 16 April 2014. During her presentation, Ally explains her encounter with the archive of the former KaNgwane Bantustan authorities¹.

As a social scientist, doing research on former Bantustan ‘states’, she had been engaged in collecting oral histories from residents of this area. Through talking to people, she found out that the archives of the Bantustan state were being kept in a warehouse. The contents of which were about to be sent by local residents, to a nearby paper recycling plant.

She arrived on the scene just in time to ‘save’ the moulding heaps of paper from their fate in the pulping mills. The papers had been discarded around the time of the change of government in 1994, when the Bantustan states were ‘incorporated’ into South Africa. Having been lying in huge heaps in a damp warehouse for the past twenty years, the paper was moulding and disintegrating. She set upon the task of attempting to classify and sort through the mounds of documents.

Ally shares an anecdote, which she did not include in the paper circulated for the talk. She had recruited three men from the local village, with whom she had conducted interviews previously, to help her with the gruelling physical task of sorting through the piles of paper. One of the men helping her, an ex MK cadre happened upon the warrant for his arrest after he had conducted ‘terrorist actions’ against the Apartheid state.

1 This card, SERENDIPITY, MATERIALITY, and REMAINS/ ERASURE should be read together, as they all discuss the same case study.

The subjects of his activities in the MK and subsequent arrests were things that the man had avoided speaking about in his interviews with Ally. But upon finding this document among the detritus of the now-defunct puppet-state, the man became very emotional and finally opened up to Ally about his experiences. He asked if he could keep the document, folded it up and put it away in his pocket. He later told Ally that he now carries it around with him at all times.

The ‘special’ quality that the document took on for this man, whose name Ally did not divulge to the audience, begs a number of provocative questions regarding the politics of encounter.

Here, because the archive is not categorised or systemically stored and guarded in any conventional way, the opportunities for serendipitous encounters with state documents are higher.

On the other hand, there is far less (if any) visibility of these documents to a public, than if they would be housed in the State Archives in Pretoria, for example. Therefore, the number of people who may access the material is fewer. The probability of finding a document that one is looking for, is literally like finding a needle in a haystack.

Although the above scenario happened in real-life, if one wanted to prompt a similar affective experience for a public, one could simulate the ‘mess’ described above as a strategy for the display of an archive. Talking on this subject, Verne Harris said, “You can create the space for serendipity even with the most highly processed material”².

2 Interview with Verne Harris, 02/05/2014, at the Nelson Mandela Centre for Memory in Houghton, Johannesburg.

MATERIALITY

Shireen Ally presented a paper titled *Material Remains*, at the NRF Chair in Local Histories and Present Realities Seminar, Senate House, Wits University, 16 April 2014. During her presentation, Ally explains her encounter with the archive of the former KaNgwane Bantustan authorities¹.

She writes²:

This was the KaNgwane archive. In faded ink and fragile paper, these were the material remains of the one-time KaNgwane government. The ghastly innards of a Bantustan administration disembowelled across an abandoned warehouse floor. The official records of Bantustan rule, wasted. The fragility of the paper, the decay, the poetics of the way the papers had been left there, remainders and thus reminders of a shameful past. The archives of the Mpumalanga municipality are now kept at the National Archives so this is the only physical archive left in the place of its origin.

It was by chance that Ally found her way to the warehouse where the archive was being kept a day before the documents were meant to be transported to the sawmill down the road for recycling. Ally recounts one

man's response to questioning about why he had sold the papers to the recycling plant: 'He says he doesn't know what kind of history might be in those papers that is more valuable than the people's lives here,' the guard translated... The young man shrugged his shoulders. 'They're just rotten papers'³.

The response poses a poignant, uncomfortable question, Ally writes: 'what USE does history have in the present moment, why not pulp the remains of an unwanted past?'⁴.

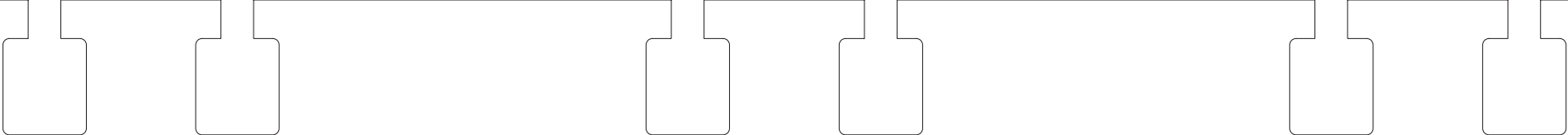
The physical materiality of the documents allowed the metaphorical aspect of a perennial question on the value of recorded history to come to the fore. The fact that the paper could be put to immediate, everyday use by the very people about which it spoke, belies an interesting proposition about different kinds of value. Practical, monetary value vs. cultural, historical value. The more abstract values of memory and history rely upon the content of the documents whereas the physical materiality of the documents contains its monetary value. Herein lies a dialectical relationship between the abstract and physical dimensions of history.

1 This card, MATERIALITY, SERENDIPITY and REMAINS/ ERASURE should be read together, as they all discuss the same case study.

2 Ally, S. 2014. *Material Remains: Artifice versus Artefact in the Archive of Bantustan Rule*. Paper presented at the NRF Chair in Local Histories and Present Realities Seminar 16 April 2014, p. 2.

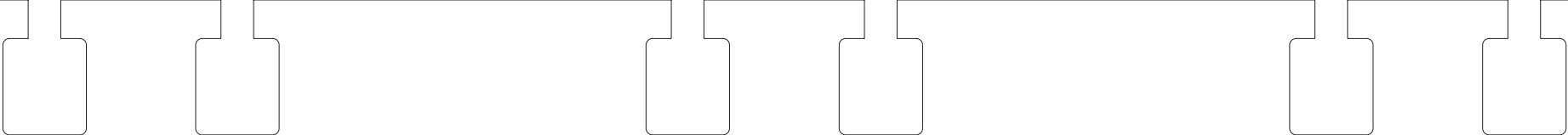
3 *ibid*, p. 18

4 *ibid*, p. 18



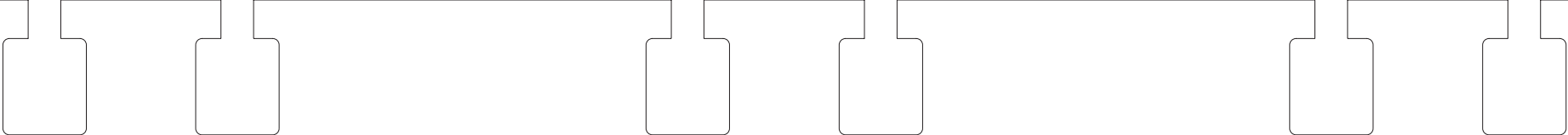
MATERIALITY

*The folders themselves all neatly bound and categorised, so even within this mess
there remained some order ●*



TOUCHING FEELING

*I assume that the line between words and things, or between linguistic or non linguistic phenomena is endlessly changing, permeable, and entirely unsusceptible to any definitive articulation.**



TOUCHING FEELING

I have used the title of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's book: *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*¹ as the heading for this page because it speaks to the relationship between materiality and affect. The physical world of material things that you can touch, and the non material world of things that you can feel are collapsed in her title. The example cited in Shireen Ally's *Material Remains*, illustrates this connection between the materiality of an archive and its affective qualities.² I show how the 'messy' materiality of the neglected archive of the former KwaNgane administration, provided the space for an emotional response.

¹ Kosofsky Sedgwick, E. 2003. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, p.6

² See MATERIALITY

REMAINS/ ERASURE

Shireen Ally presented a paper titled *Material Remains*, at the NRF Chair in Local Histories and Present Realities Seminar, Senate House, Wits University, 16 April 2014. During her presentation, Ally explains her encounter with the archive of the former KaNgwane Bantustan authorities¹.

Reflecting on the discarded archives of KwaNgwane, Ally writes²:

As their complicity in the apparent 'fraud' of the Bantustans is inscribed (literally) in its material remains, residents of the former Bantustan lay this shameful past actively to waste.

No matter how dishevelled and discarded, they were the artefacts of an official government, the ruins of a state archive. Floating in a sort of archiving limbo, they were awaiting relocation to a new provincial archive building that had yet to be built.

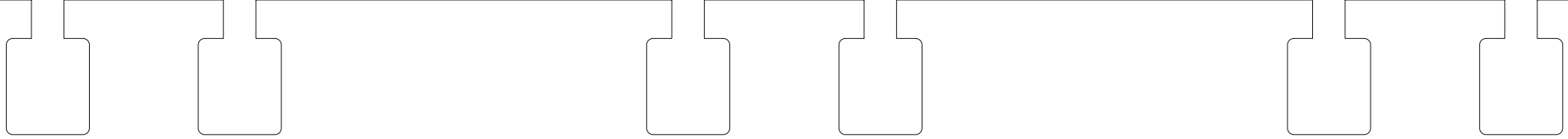
The story begs the following questions; what then, of the paper mill? What material remains? What remains? What can be deleted, what cannot be deleted? What do we do with the material remains of a shameful history?

The documents, whose content is erased, but whose physical presence remains, in the pulp, only to be turned into more paper, for more documents.

Physical erasure always leaves a trace of its presence. But when something is digitally erased it leaves no trace. The violence of digital erasure is greater than that of physical erasure. In the case of this discarded archive, the materiality of the paper does not allow for an easily discarded or forgotten past. Even when it is pulped in the paper recycling plant, the material will still exist, albeit in a different form.

1 This card, REMAINS/ ERASURE, MATERIALITY, and SERENDIPITY should be read together, as they all discuss the same case study.

2 Ally, S. 2014. *Material Remains: Artifice versus Artefact in the Archive of Bantustan Rule*. Paper presented at the NRF Chair in Local Histories and Present Realities Seminar 16 April 2014, p. 4.



The grid: Row D

Row D continues to look at the forms of mess and order, and examine their generative possibilities. I use the metaphor of sand to discuss the way in which a singular object's ontological status changes once it becomes part of a collection or group of other things.

The ontological change, from grains of sand, that become a heap is illustrated by a work I made, called *Grain upon grain, one by one, and then suddenly there's a heap, a small heap, an impossible heap*. Grains of sand are ephemeral and elusive when they are dispersed. Once they have accumulated, they become solid entities, like heaps, beaches or deserts.

The work titled the *Livingstone Door*, invokes a similar phenomenon. The work is made from thousands of sheets of A4 white paper. Together, they create huge stacks, resembling architectural ruins. As individual pieces they are light and ephemeral but as an accumulation they create a solid structure. But this structure also appears to be crumbling, peices of paper litter the floor around the stacks, creating a tension between the monumentality of the stacks and they ephemerality of the paper.

The tension that lies within solid, heavy objects, that are actually accumulations of tiny, disorderly, ephemeral objects, again speaks to the central concerns about forms of mess and order.



BORDERS



HEAPS



SAND



FORM
(LESS)



NESTING
NARRATIVES



BACK
STORIES



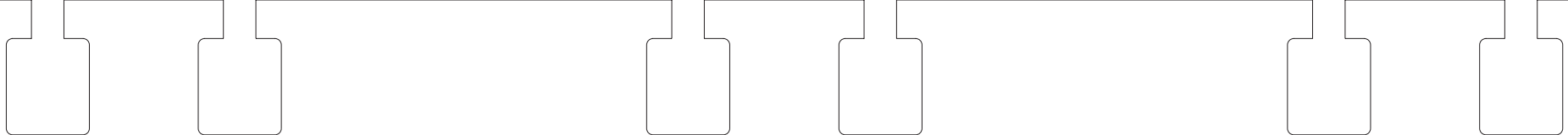
THE
LIVINGSTONE
DOOR



RUINS



REPLICAS AND
REPETITION



BORDERS

Sandbag is the title of a performance that I did in Strasbourg in October 2013. The performance was part of a residency that in which I participated, called PLAY>URBAN. I showed video documentation of the performance at the exhibition, *Ville[s] en- Jeu[x]*, at Le-Maillon Theatre de Strasbourg.¹

The site, from which the work originates, is an abandoned artificial beach on the border of France and Germany. The two countries, separated by the Rhine River are connected by a bridge that stretches from Strasbourg in France to Keln in Germany. On the German side of the bridge is an outdoor party venue on the bank of the river, fashioned on a 'island paradise' theme, complete with beach sand, wooden huts, boats and palm trees. Functional as a bar and club during the summer months, the site is left standing with all the props during the winter months. Thus, arriving at the site in October, rain soaked sand, weather washed wooden huts and bars, grey skies and dying palm trees was the scene to behold. A washed out banner, advertising Smirnoff Vodka, provided a faded sunset-coloured backdrop.

For the performance, I filled a canvas bag with sand from the 'beach' and dragged the bag from the beach, across the bridge from Germany to France. As the bag was dragged on sand, grass, gravel, paved roads and sidewalks, the heaviness of the sand caused the canvas to break down,

forming a hole at the bottom of the bag. As I walked, sand slowly poured out of the bag, creating a line of sand behind me. I walked until the sand had completely run out and the bag was almost completely disintegrated.

The only physical sign of the border is a small plaque in the centre of the bridge, one on each side of the walkway. On the plaque is written, 'Germany', on the German side, and 'France' on the French side. The only noticeable difference between one side of the bridge and the other is the language in which street signs, advertising billboards and shop front signage is written. At once, the imaginary, purely symbolic meaning of geographical borders are brought to the fore. Their physicality, of course, is much more acutely present elsewhere in the world (South African borders are an obvious case in point). Here, the political dimensions of the questions regarding order and chaos come to the fore.

The red, white and blue plaid canvas bag (referred to informally in South Africa as a 'China bag') is often associated with the baggage of migrants, or people whose livelihood relies on the frequent crossing of borders with heavy baggage in tow. In the case of my performance, the bag is filled with wet sand. It is very heavy, but what it contains could be described as 'dead weight'; it is not useful nor is it valuable. But, the trail of sand left behind alludes to the fluidity of experience that cannot be defined or regulated by borders, national or otherwise. In this performance, I was interested in the poetics of what gets left behind in the process of migration.

¹ The works: *Sandbag*, *Encyclopedia of Sand* and *Grain upon grain...* were all shown as part of one installation at this exhibition.

BORDERS



Sandbag, video stills

HEAPS

Grains of sand, as individual entities, are so small and elusive, that any attempt to count or sort through them is immediately ridiculous. But when the grains of sand coalesce, they become a solid or singular entity; a heap, a beach, a desert, a mound, a dune etc.

The title of the work: *Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly there's a heap, a little heap, an impossible heap*, is taken from the opening lines of Samuel Beckett's play, *Endgame*¹. For the piece, the text of the play was printed out and each phrase cut out separately. As the type was set at 11 points, this resulted in a collection of tiny pieces of paper, each containing a few words. These small pieces of paper were displayed in a heap on the floor, dramatically lit from above.

Rebecca Comay quotes the same lines from Beckett's *Endgame* in her introduction to *Lost in the Archive*:²

The archive, whose very name evokes the language of origins and the promise of mastery-in its double etymology arché famously signifies both "command" and "origin"-confounds every beginning and every rule. If the aporia of the "heap" turns out, in every case, to be the straw that breaks the camel's back- the camel in this case being the dream of narrative consistency, and thus the very possibility of history-writing as a sequential temporal and logical ordering (before and after, cause and effect)- this leads us to the startling conclusion that the archive, condition of possibility of remembrance, exceeds and confounds the time of history. The collection, source, and reservoir of recollection, is itself suspended in the immemorial.

¹ Beckett, S. 1957. *Endgame*. London: Royal Court Theatre

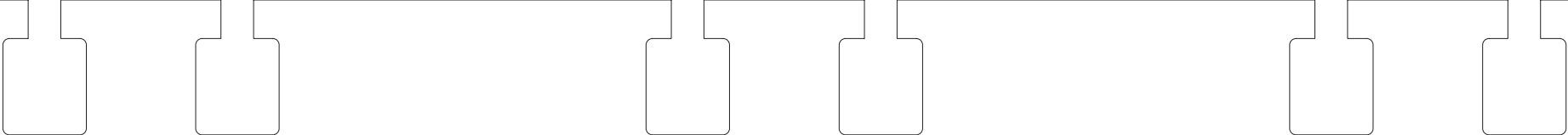
² Comay, R. 2002. 'Introduction'. In Comay, R.(ed.) *Lost in the Archive*. Toronto: Alphabet City, p. 14

Erika Balsom discusses this passage by Comay:³

Comay approaches a problem central to a theory of the archive: how precisely does one determine when a set of items becomes a collection, an archive? At which point do the grains of sand from Beckett's Endgame become a heap? The sequential ordering of the archive immediately confounds its organizer as "grains of sand" accumulate and resist recuperation into a tidy pile. Linear, historical time, when transposed to the operations of archivization, manifests itself in the form of arbitrary yet rigid classificatory systems, none of which preserves the fluidity and dynamism of meaning of that which has been archived. Despite the etymology of the word, giving the archive a mandate that is at once nomological and institutive, to localize the exact origin of the archive proves to be an insurmountable task as it becomes impossible even to distinguish whether the memory or its inscription as archive came first. The archive exists as the very possibility of remembrance, but simultaneously there must be a memory or event for the archive to take as its object of preservation.

Endgame is a play that seeks to disrupt the formal structure of language. Language is made up of singular words, each with their own meanings. When they are strung together as sentences, paragraphs, books etc, they communicate a meaning that is different from the individual meanings of the words outside of the given ordering of sentences etc. In a similar way, singular objects have a different meaning to that which can be gleaned from a collection of objects.

³ Balsom, E. 2008. *Qu'est-ce qu'une madeleine interactive?: Chris Marker's Immemory and the Possibility of a Digital Archive*, p. 1



HEAPS

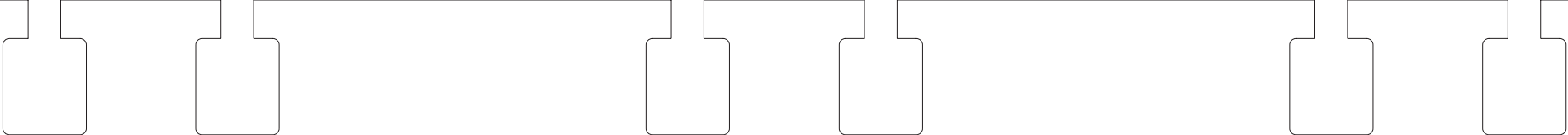
*Grain upon grain,
one by one,
and one day,
suddenly there's a heap,
a small heap,
an impossible heap.⁺*

[illegible]

Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly there's a heap, a little heap, an impossible heap. For the installation of this piece, the text of the play was printed out and each phrase cut out separately. As the type was set at 11 points, this resulted in a collection of tiny pieces of paper, each containing a few words. These small pieces of paper were displayed in a heap on the floor, dramatically lit from above. For this iteration in the Rolodex, I layered the text of the fragments of text to resemble a heap.



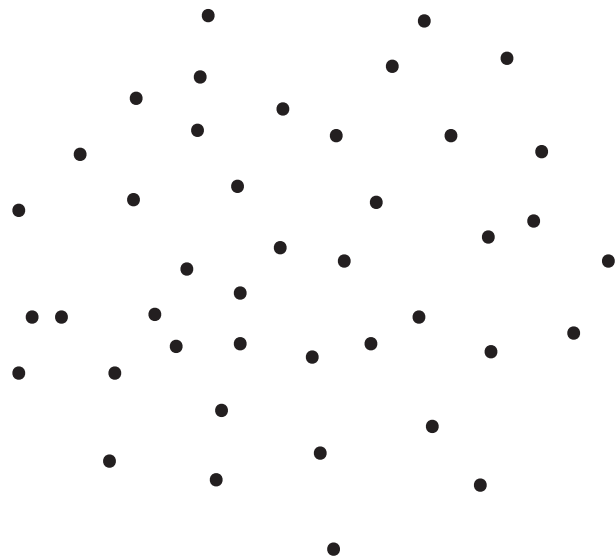
Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly there's a heap, a little heap, an impossible heap, installation shot



SAND

*Ontologies are both productive and responsive, expectant and late **

SAND



GRAINS



HEAP

The three works: *Sandbag*, *Encyclopedia of Sand* and *Grain upon grain...* all use sand as a metaphor for things that are elusive, cannot be easily recuperated, counted, or ordered. The ontological status of sand changes according to its form. When sand is dispersed, it is called 'grains of sand', when these grains coalesce they are called, heaps, beaches, deserts etc. As 'grains', sand is small, light and ephemeral, when it accumulates, it is a solid and heavy entity.

SAND

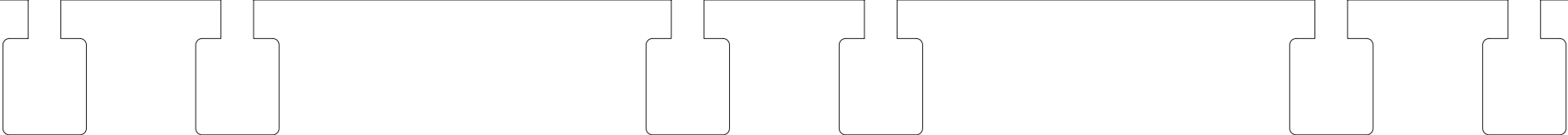


Sandbag, Encyclopedia of Sand, and Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly there's a heap, a small heap, an impossible heap, installation shot

FORM(LESS)

Beckett thinks that 'being' is constantly putting form into danger. He aspires, he said, to what he recognizes is the task of eliminating form — not just breaking it down or working against it but eliminating it. He said that an ejaculation would perhaps be the most perfect expression of being. In a sense Beckett made clear that he is anti-form, if form is considered to be order. He spoke of having come to feel the need for a disordered form, a broken form. The great task of the artist is to express being and he sees being as a collection of meaningless 'movements'.

Being is chaotic — the opposite of ordered form. He thinks in the antinomy 'being-form'. He is aware of the paradox of trying to eliminate form when language itself is form, but this viewpoint lies behind his breaking down of the traditional forms of language.✦



NESTING NARRATIVES

Nesting Narratives is the name of a group exhibition, held at the GoetheonMain, in April 2014. The proposal for the GoetheonMain open call for exhibitions submitted by Ruth Sacks and myself. The exhibition was to be a continuation, or second iteration of the *Regions A-G* artist research project, which we had been facilitating since the previous year. Thato Mogotsi assisted on the exhibition as project manager and curator.

The purpose of the exhibition, was to further the work that had been done for Regions A-G the previous year, this time, with a bit of funding to put on a show. The exhibition was held at two locations, the GoetheonMain and the Johannesburg City Library (JCL).

At the GoetheonMain, works by George Mahashe, Ruth Sacks, Ashely Mabeba, Francis Burger and myself were displayed. Vitrines were set up on the third floor exhibition space in the JCL where each of the artists displayed archival or research material generated and found through the research phase of the project.

A walkabout, held on Saturday 12 April 2014, invited an audience to meet at the JCL to begin and then walk through the city to the GoetheonMain. The two locations are on opposite sides of the city centre. The Library on the Western side and GoetheonMain in the East.

The word ‘nesting’, from title ‘Nesting Narratives’ was found on the cover of a book in the Michaelis Art Library on the second floor of the JCL. ‘Nesting dolls’ is another name for ‘babushka’ dolls, wooden Russian folk dolls that open up to reveal another, smaller doll inside, and then another...

The idea of ‘nesting’ became an important concept in thinking through approaches to the archive and the Library’s resources. Thus, nesting narratives, are stories that, rather than ‘unfolding’, can be opened up, in order to find new stories, and those can be opened up again, revealing yet another and so on.

NESTING NARRATIVES



The Newspaper Room, basement floor, JCL, c1950.
This photograph was the image that was used for all of the publicity for the exhibition

NESTING NARRATIVES



Floor plan of GoetheonMain at *Nesting Narratives*, 3 - 20 April 2014

NESTING NARRATIVES

List of works exhibited

1. George Mahashe

Etc! etc!

Video installation

In this installation, Mahashe deals with knowledge production and the process through which it comes to be communicated. The artist uses a form of story-telling as a means of conveying information. Instead of drawing out a linear narrative, his message becomes fragmented; the story becomes that of a story that never gets told. Through a series of digressions, ramblings and stuttering a new tale unfolds. The display is a response to the theatre at the Johannesburg City Library, which regularly floods.

2. Ruth Sacks

From now on in

Animation

The piece picks up on recurring tropes in dystopian literature to imagine what life might be like in a post apocalyptic Johannesburg. In the given scenario, a small group of people survive in the ruins of what was previously the CBD area around the library. The narrator reflects on the nature of the community that came before by scrutinising the remains of the city.

3. Talya Lubinsky

The Livingstone Door

A4 white 80gsm bond paper, photocopied

Details to follow

4. Ashmash Blue

Library; Rainy Day; Skat(t)er boys; The Right

Place to Skate

4 channel video

Over the past 2 months, Ashmash Blue has been going to the library to observe and document the surroundings of this historical building, stuck in a modern world. This became a weekend routine, with each day presenting unforeseen opportunities. The building itself changed roles at different times of the day and changing weather conditions. During the early mornings, it becomes a skating hub, while the interior becomes something else. The institution is not just an exterior for skating activities, but a cultural phenomenon for those skating. Importantly, the opposite also applies. The skat(t)ers are a united family, dedicated to routine. From a distance, they blend into the landscape, but close-up, they have individual untold stories within the fold of their group. As a family, they share ideas, advice, passion and skills alongside skating. Like the skaters themselves, there were days when the artist felt included in this, but was also, at times, rejected. Accordingly, the journeys depicted here are only partially told; an appropriate narrative for lives constantly in motion.

5. Francis Burger

Strange pamphlets

Various media

Strange pamphlets reproduces a selection of images from the photo albums of Mr and Mrs Carleton Jones, found during a chance detour into the Strange Pamphlet collection (of Harold Strange) in the archival storage of the Johannesburg City Library.

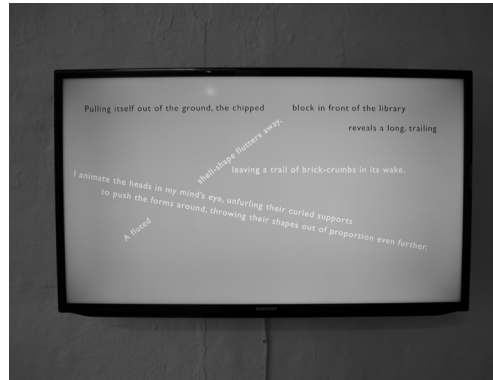
G. Carleton Jones was a mining engineer and chairman of Goldfields (then Consolidated Gold Fields of South Africa) in the 1930s. Compiled by Mrs Carleton-Jones, the albums' picture various mines around the Witwatersrand, everyday scenes from the couple's sprawling Johannesburg estate 'Dunfallandy', and wildlife photographs from trips around Southern Africa. The images are exhibited alongside reproductions from a creased copy of Scope magazine found amongst the photo albums, and 1970s news clippings from the National Party's propaganda mouthpiece, the Citizen.

The sticks against the wall hold several wire snares designed to capture passing game, recently collected by a friend in the Soutpansberg mountains (near Makhado in the Limpopo Province).

Lumps

Polystyrene, plaster, wire and steel.

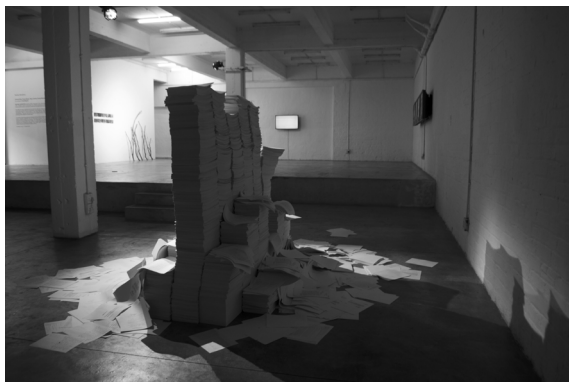
NESTING NARRATIVES



2.



5.



3.



4.



1.

Nesting Narratives, Installation shots

BACK STORIES

The work that I made for the *Nesting Narratives*¹ exhibition is called the *Livingstone Door*. It came about through an extended period of research in the MuseumAfrica archives. What is now known as MuseumAfrica (located in Newtown, Johannesburg) had previously been called the Africana Museum, housed in the JCL building. The Museum's collections had begun to be moved to the new premises in the 1970's, but only in 1994 did MuseumAfrica open with all of the collections housed within the building, that was formerly the fresh produce market in Newtown. I was interested in the connections between what the Library building represents and the kinds of collections housed in MuseumAfrica. The conceptual links between the two state institutions, geographically close to one another (about a five- ten minute walk in the inner city), proved to be fertile ground for further investigation.

While reading Sara Byala's history of MuseumAfrica, *A Place That Matters Yet*, I came across a compelling 'backstory' of one of the pieces in the Museum's collection. Byala writes²:

The term backstory derives from the world of acting and references the imagined lives designated to fictional characters before they meet the audience... Armed with the knowledge of a backstory, the theory goes, the actor is able to enact appropriate responses. Transposed into the world of archive studies, backstory has great intellectual traction.

¹ See NESTING NARRATIVES for details

² Byala, S. 2013. *A Place That Matters Yet*: John Gubbins's MuseumAfrica in the Postcolonial World. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, p. 242

The back story is interested in questions about the object before the 'moment of preservation' begins. Byala cites a number of examples from the MuseumAfrica collection where the index card for the item plainly revealed the type of the object, "Zulu beer pot" and "cigarette papers", for example.³ Interestingly, the 'backstories' of these objects were not to be found on their index cards, rather they were chronicled in acquisition meeting minutes. When a member of the acquisitions board would motivate for an item to be acquired by the Museum, they would often tell a story of where it came from, who it belonged to, what it was used for etc. The stories are recorded in the minutes of these meetings.⁴

I went to find these meeting minutes at the MuseumAfrica archives for myself, hoping to find some 'backstories' of my own. The minutes, bound in leather covers, yellowing pages falling out at the seems, are dated from 1935 (the year that the JCL building was opened) till the 1980s. After which, one assumes, they found a more efficient way of keeping records.

The minutes are typed on a typewriter, with some hand-written notes added here and there. The form of minute-taking at a bureaucratic institution speaks to the performative quality of such meetings. The meeting itself almost exists solely for the purpose of its record. The 'actual event' of the meeting is structured in such and such a way, because of the form in which minutes are taken, and not the other way around.

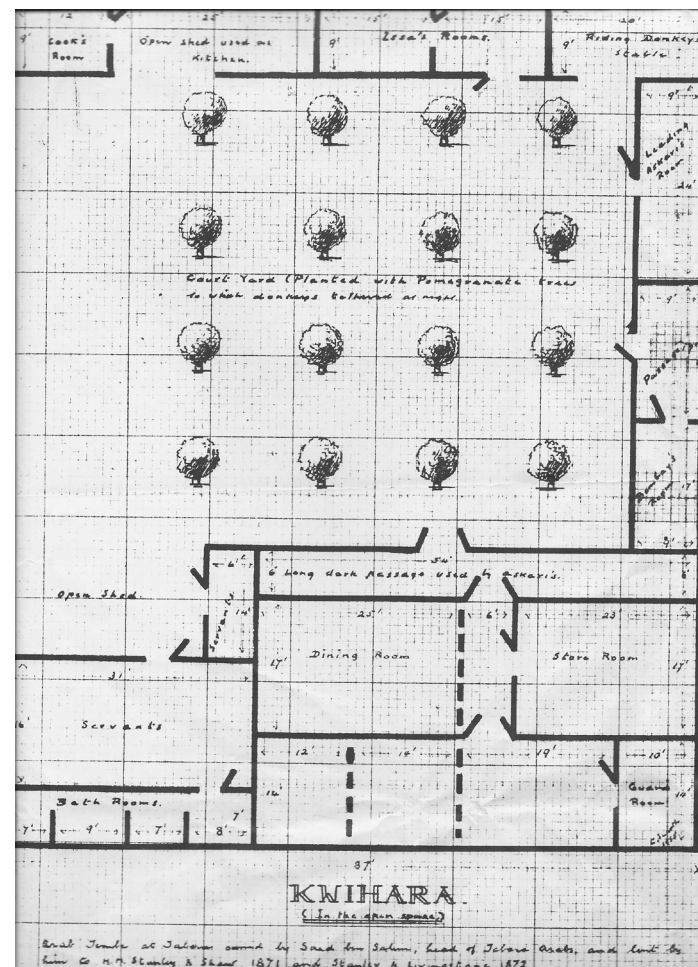
³ *ibid*, p. 242

⁴ *ibid*, p. 243

BACK STORIES



Vitrine display showing archival material for the *Livingstone Door*, part of *Nesting Narratives*, third floor, Johannesburg City Library.

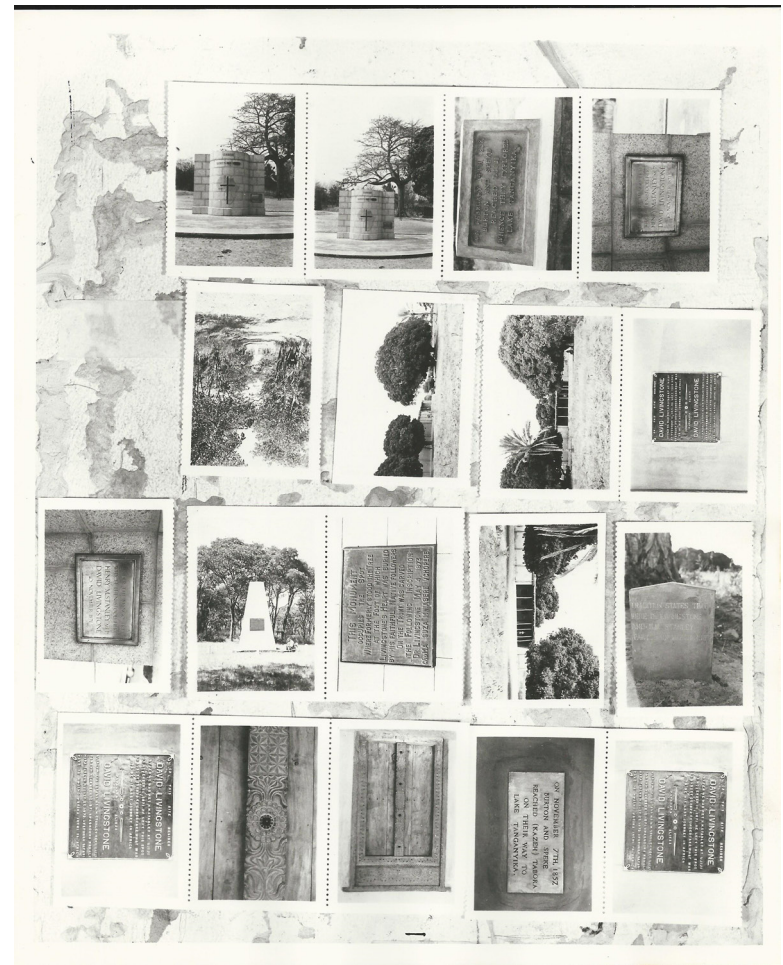


Architectural Plan of Livingstone's House in KwiHara

BACK STORIES



The Livingstone Door, c1872



Livingstone Postcards by Reynolds

BACK STORIES

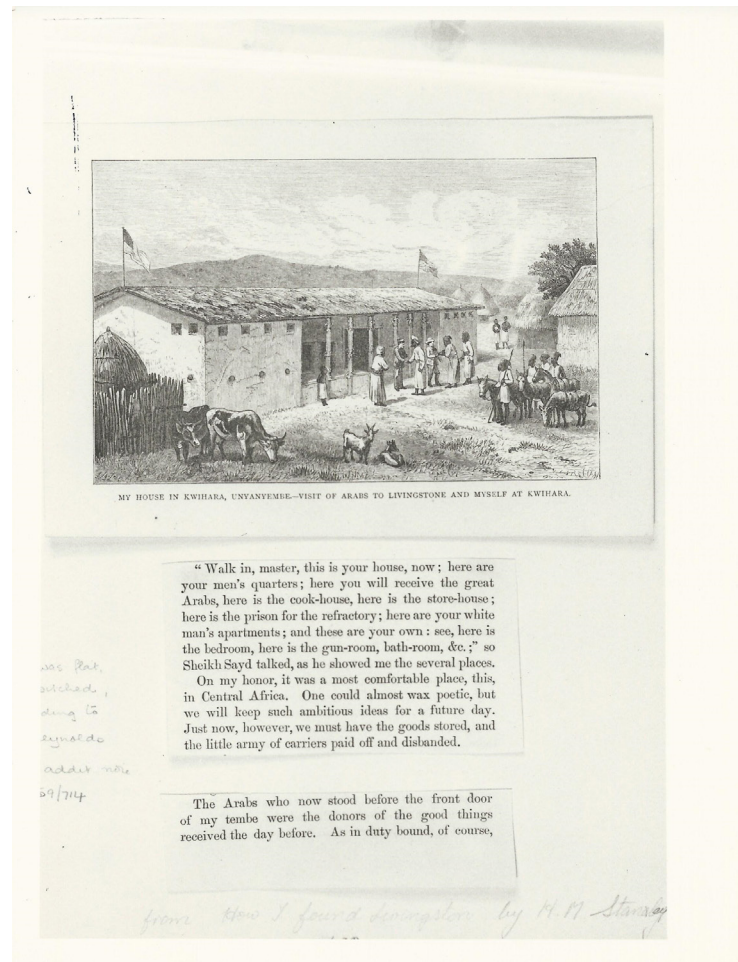
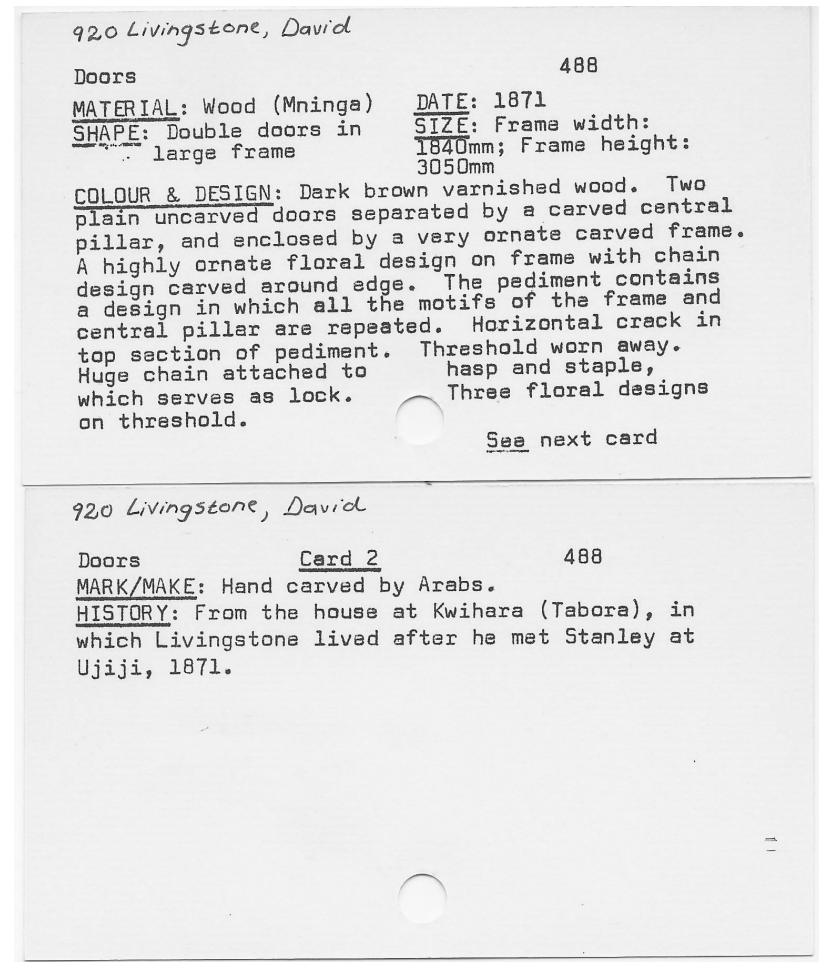


Illustration of Livingstone's House, 1871. Below is a description of Livingstone's welcome into the home by Sheikh Sayd.



Catalogue card for the Livingstone Door in MuseumAfrica

BACK STORIES

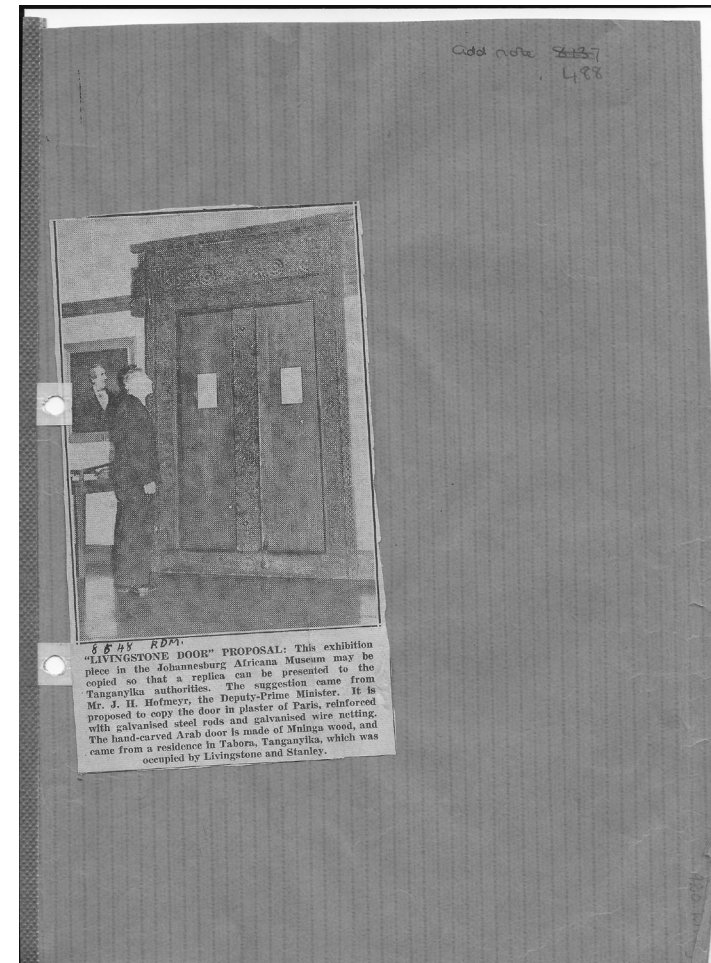
LIVINGSTONE'S DOOR.

HAND-CARVED BY ARABS FROM MNINGA WOOD, THIS WAS THE DOOR OF THE HOUSE AT KWIHARA, TABORA, TANGANYIKA, OCCUPIED BY LIVINGSTONE AND STANLEY TOGETHER FOR NEARLY A MONTH AFTER THE HISTORIC MEETING AT UJJI ON THE 10TH DECEMBER 1871. AFTER STANLEY'S DEPARTURE, LIVINGSTONE REMAINED IN THE HOUSE FOR 189 DAYS, SETTING FORTH FROM THIS DOOR ON HIS LAST JOURNEY ON THE 25TH AUGUST 1872. MEMBERS OF THE LIVINGSTONE RELIEF EXPEDITION LED BY COMMANDER CAMERON ALSO STAYED IN THE SAME HOUSE. THE DOOR, THEREFORE, IS A NOTABLE LINK WITH THE GREATEST AFRICAN EXPLORERS.

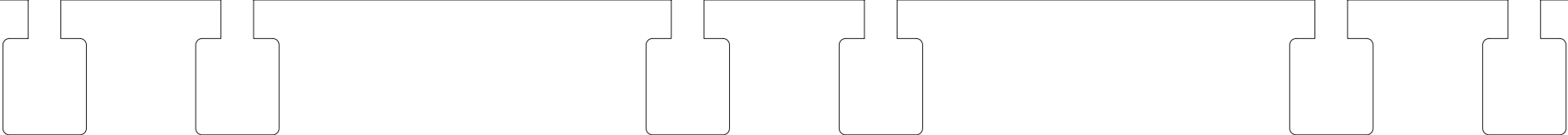
A SWORN STATEMENT VOUCHING FOR THE DOOR IS PINNED TO THE RIGHT-HAND SIDE.

SEE "TANGANYIKA NOTES AND RECORDS" NOS. 1 AND 9

Label for Livingstone Door exhibit at Africana Museum.



Clipping from Rand Daily Mail, reporting on the decision to replicate the door.



THE LIVINGSTONE DOOR

The *Livingstone Door* is made from 180 000 sheets of A4 paper, the work replicates the exact size of the carved wooden door that once graced the entrance to David Livingstone's house in Tabora, Tanzania. Controversially, the door was removed by the colonial commissioner of Tabora, Mr. Steibel, who built it into his retirement home in Durban, before selling it to the Africana Museum (now MuseumAfrica) in Johannesburg.

In correspondence from 1936 till around 1949, colonial officials from the Tanganyika Territory twice tried to have the door repatriated – first the original door, to be included in a museum being built in Dar-es-Salam, and second for a replica, to be returned to Livingstone's restored house in Tabora, which was being turned into a museum. The paper stack is

made out of photocopies of over 100 documents of correspondence about the repatriation and replication of Livingstone's door.

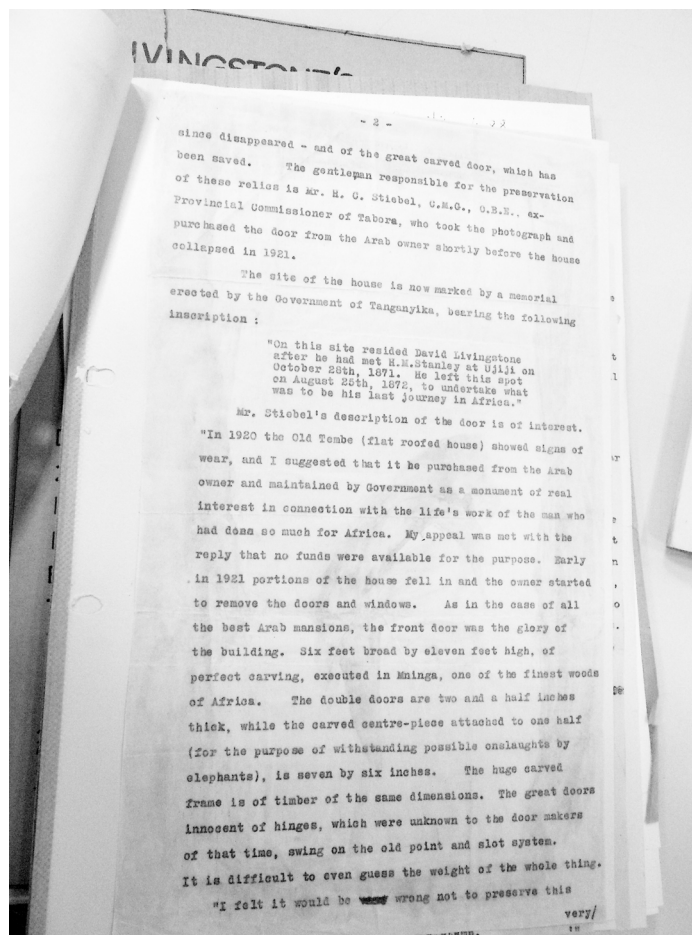
The documents track correspondence concerning the technical details of how to replicate the ornately carved wooden door. After much deliberation, a decision was made that the Africana Museum would make a mould of the door, broken up into sections, and to send it to Tabora, where the replica door would be cast and installed in Livingstone's reconstructed house. Ironically, the original door has been dismantled into panels and is now being stored in a back room of MuseumAfrica, while the replica door still standing at the entrance to the museum of Livingstone's house in Tabora.

THE LIVINGSTONE DOOR

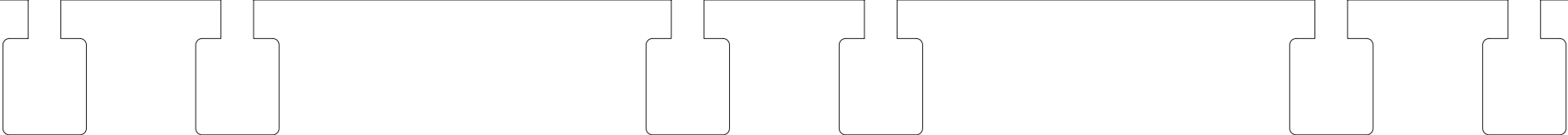


The Livingstone Door, installation shot, Nesting Narratives, GoetheonMain.

THE LIVINGSTONE DOOR



Hundreds of documents like this one were photocopied and stacked to build *The Livingstone Door*



RUINS

In order to create the Livingstone Door, a scaffolding had to be built to support the 3m high stacks of paper. Shortly before the opening of the Nesting Narratives exhibition, after having carefully and neatly stacked all 180 000 sheets of A4 paper, the scaffolding had to be removed. The monumental stack of photocopied paper collapsed almost immediately. The ‘half fallen’ stack of paper is what was shown at the exhibition.

The half fallen stacks came to resemble architectural ruins. The dramatic lighting above dramatized the shadows between tightly stacked pieces of paper, alluding to archaeological layers. The half-fallen stacks of white paper look like crumbling pillars.

The pieces of paper used to build the *Livingstone Door* are materially light and ephemeral. A single sheet can easily be blown away in the wind, and will deteriorate in a relatively short amount of time. But, accumulatively they create an imposing structure.¹

1

See SAND and HEAPS

REPLICAS AND REPETITION

REPLICAS

Simone Osthoff cites a video artwork made by Omar Fast, called *Speilberg's List* (2003).¹ The video explores the film set constructed for Spielberg's *Shindler's List* (1993), constructed in Krakow. The set is a section of a concentration camp, built for the film. Ten years after the filming, the set had fallen into disrepair, and was indistinguishable from the other concentration camps surrounding it. The set had also become part of the popular Holocaust tourism industry, as the 'historical site' of Spielberg's film. Fast's film cuts between his own footage of the site and excerpts from *Shindler's List*, which, become impossible to distinguish from one another. Fast also includes interviews with extras from Spielberg's movie, further distancing the memory of the event, and its representation, from the event itself.

The indistinguishable relationship between 'fact' and 'fiction' resonates with the status of the Livingstone Door. As it stands today, the 'real' door sits in storage in MuseumAfrica's basement, while the replica is functional as part of a museum which is an exact replication, on the exact same site, of the house to which it once belonged.

1 Osthoff, S. 2009. *Performing the Archive: The transformation of the archive in Contemporary art from repository of documents to art medium*. New York: Atropos Press, p. 49.

REPETITION

The standard white A4 sheets of 80gsm bond paper allude to the everyday, the mundane, the ordinariness of bureaucracy.²

The contents of the documents record a lengthy correspondence between South African and Tanzanian museum officials, chronicling the planning for the replication of the original Livingstone Door. Thus, the choice to replicate the documents is not an arbitrary one.

Tabora was founded in the 1850's by Arab slave traders. The central railway line passed through the town, making it an important stop on the Arab slave trade route. By the early 1890's Tanzania was under German colonial rule, and Tabora had become known as the most important administrative centre of Central German East Africa.

The proliferation of documents that accumulated around this one cultural object, come to stand in for the object itself. The door, in my piece, is not made of wood; rather, it is made of paper. Similarly, the proliferation of bureaucratic documents that accumulate in a state archive, for example, become a record of the lives of people, real life events that are recorded, materially, on all those pieces of paper.

2 See Material Remains, on SERENDIPITY, MATERIALITY and REMAINS/ERASURE

REPLICAS AND REPETITION



Dismantled original Livingstone Door,
in the storeroom of MuseumAfrica



Replica door, installed at the entrance to the museum of
Livingstone's house in Tabora