

RECYCLED LIBRARY
Altered books

Artspace Mackay

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Recycled Library: Altered books
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FOREWORD

Michael Wardell, Director, Artspace Mackay

Recycled Library: Altered books is the sixth touring exhibition developed by Artspace Mackay and the first to focus on an aspect of its collection of artists' books. The Mackay Regional Council Collection of artists' books was started by the Mackay City Library in the late 1980s and transferred to Artspace Mackay when it opened in 2003. Since then, it has grown to become the third largest collection of artists' books in Australia after the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra and the State Library of Queensland, Brisbane.

The majority of artists' books are four dimensional, with the fourth dimension being time taken to handle, open and 'read'. By creating a work of art in the form of a book, the artist is dictating the order in which we view their art and, to a certain degree, the time we take to look at it. This very personal experience between the viewer and the work of art is available, by appointment, to Artspace Mackay visitors but is obviously impractical as a touring exhibition. It could be argued that this is an essential element in defining what is an artist's book and only two works in this exhibition conform to this limited definition – Julie Gough's *A half hour hidden history reader* 2007, and David Sequeira's *Life and all its marvels* 2007. In both these cases, the works have been chosen because the artists are questioning the significance of books in general while still creating a particular book. While these works can not be handled, it is hoped that the concept of the work can, at least, be partially gleaned from the sample open page.

While the initial concept for this exhibition came out of the idea to exhibit and tour a selection of works from the collection that could be seen without leafing through the pages, it has developed into an exhibition of selected work by a number of Australian artists who have used the symbol of 'the book' as a primary signifier in their finished work. The exhibition invites the viewer to consider their own responses to the significance of 'the book' within each work and perhaps imagine a future digital world when books are viewed as no more than antique curiosities.

BOOK: alteration

Alex Selenitsch

RADI OS, by American poet Ronald Johnson, is an entire book based on the first four sections of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. To write his poem, Johnson removed letters in Milton's text, the method being made obvious in the title. In *RADI OS*, a new poem was thus released from another text through a dramatic intervention. Is a copy of *RADI OS* therefore an altered book? The answer is NO: it is an altered text, independent of typeface, paper quality and size, binding and edition.

English artist Tom Phillips did something similar to an entire book. The original book was a novel called *A Human Document*: Phillips' new version became *A Humument*. In it, the artist drew and painted over each page of the given book, picking up hints from the verbal and visual aspects of the page, and turning the text of the novel into a book of illuminated manuscripts. Is *A Humument* an altered book? The answer is, at best, a YES and NO. True, it is altered, but page size and structure, sequence and size remain the same. Perhaps it should be thought of as a collection of altered pages.

Now consider Bea Maddock's *The Divine Comedy*. In this work, a large Francis Carey/Gustave Dore edition of Dante's classic has been drawn over with graphite and chalk, blackening the first seven cantos. Simple words and phrases emerge from what seems to be a charred text. The rest of the book is made inaccessible by being bound with strips of red tape and the covers are modified by black-stained plywood boards. The object echoes our mythology of bush-fire, and indeed, the book reifies the artist's own experience of loss through such a fire. Is it an altered book? This time, YES. While

there is textual manipulation and mark-making on the pages, there is also the fact that the book/object is altered. There is the counterpoint of Maddock against Dante in the text, and Maddock against this particular book, against this particular object.

In ascending intensity over these three examples, there is also the confrontation of the artist and what might be termed **THE BOOK**. Every artist who alters a book finds this chimera standing in front of them. This monster only seems to appear when a book is marked, cut, torn, soaked, pulped or burnt: when the materiality of the object is engaged. While the actual papers, string, leather and glue of a book feel nothing, all of these actions appear to cause pain and suffering to the values held by **THE BOOK**. These values are as heterogeneous as the chimera because there is no single definition of 'book'. The book takes part in a number of functional niches, each of which sees the book differently.

The most utilitarian niche seems to be data. Once printed, books combine ease of entry, access and expansion, storage and durability. The idea that fact and truth is found in a book comes from this niche. The very opposite of this is true as well – books can easily shelter, if not outright lies, then fictions of great variety. Story-telling might be considered as this complimentary niche. Here is where literature belongs. Once oral and melodic, our myths and legends are propagated by such books. And they are propagated in the hundreds of thousands, if not millions. While recipe books, diaries and ledgers exist as unique copies, the standard book is now an identical copy, one of a print run, often an over-run. Industrialisation produces the Standard, not the Perfect or the Variant, and this idea of the Standard is the core value of the print niche.

Data, fiction and standard play into the hands of the powerful and also those who resist them. So the book has a long history of revelation, obfuscation, enlightenment, and repression through edicts, pamphlets, official editions and encyclopaedias. Somehow in all of this, the book has become a sacred messenger, not to be tampered with except for acts of cunning, tyranny, or ethical cleansing. It seems that anyone who burns books is not far from burning people, a fear that is compounded by our tendency to blur author and book into a single entity.

While THE BOOK is a platonic abstraction, the site of an artist's alteration is an actual, specific book. Strangely, the chimera is present even when it is obvious that the book to be altered is just a pile of equally sized papers glued along one edge. Often, the book is an arbitrary choice, in the sense that any book will suffice. In such cases, THE BOOK is confronted head-on through a book whose specificity is hidden or ignored. But whatever is done to a specific book, it must be noted that that book has been made by some-one else as a finished entity without any need for extra work on it. This explains the 'otherness' of artists' alterations to books. Rarely are the artist's gestures textual commentaries. Excisions, additions, coverings, distortions and so on seem to be the rule. To comment on a text is to remain in the realm of that text; to inflict some other material or substance or action onto a text, page or book, or all three, takes the book into a completely different zone.

And what is this zone? Books already exist as 2D objects through their pages, as 3D objects through their binding and 4D objects when they are unfolded page by page. They can easily move into graphics, painting, sculpture and performance, but with altered books, any shift

to these fine art categories involves a move from the virtual to the actual. In a conventional book, the text provides an imaginary world separated from its paper and ink: in an altered book, what confronts the reader/viewer/performer is a lump of matter, materials and processes which have a tactile existence. The book is noticed again, being shifted back into the real tactile world, but still connected to the virtual or imaginary world. Of course, the reader/viewer/performer takes the new object into an imaginary world of interpretation again, but this new imaginary construct is rarely, if ever, the same one that was suggested by the book in its unaltered state.

And what is the artist's role in this? Altering a book means that you can make a special book without printing. Thought and labour need not be expended to reach the datum level for the alteration to begin. Even better, an existing book can bring such criteria as colour, size, texture and weight, and maybe even a text that might suggest what can be done to it. This unpredictable aspect, of data from outside of the artist's ambit, explains why there is only a minority of artists who alter their own books. Dieter Roth – whose vast output always seems to predict every aspect of book art as it emerges – is one of this minority. His altered books turn his own mass-printed books into special objects. Sometimes they take the form of second or third thoughts on the matters being presented by the book in the first place; rarely does the alteration continue the original book's aesthetic or its materiality. This coincides with the general rule that in an altered book, there must be a perceptible difference between the original book and the artist's alterations.

The use of a given object brings the altered book to the arena of the found object, the *objet trouvé*. Typically, this is a least-altered thing

which is found (or perhaps chosen), and perceived in a new context. The most startling *objets trouvés* are those where the least has been done to the object but the most to their context or perception. But there are significant differences with altered books, in that for classic *objets trouvés*, objects come from scattered and unrelated sources. With altered books, all the given objects are books, and while these can vary, they are the one class of object. Further, the amount of alteration can be immense, with the relationship of before and after states being simultaneously present – this is certainly not the case with the classic found object, where the before and after is, in the best examples, much the same.

When altered books have a lot done to them, they are closer to assemblage. Assemblage (and its close relatives collage and montage) brings two or more heterogeneous things without blending, that is, the different things stay in their own syntax or style, and clearly show their origins while still connecting to the new and unique whole. But when too much alteration is present, which might be a state where the original book (or BOOK) is a minor element in the composition, the notion of the altered book fades away. It's difficult to think of any other type of small object that has provoked such a widespread attack by artists. Chairs have attracted artists, but mostly as the subject for a new and complete object. The closest thing is the occasional car- or plane- (or tram-) painting exercise that has come out of corporate publicity. Few of the artists involved in these initiatives seem to have taken the objects and shifted them into new contexts, as have the artists who have altered books. But, there is one kind of non-object that has been altered by artists to the same intensity and over the same time period, and that is the *room*. Installation art is about as old as the artists' book, both coming into focus in the late 1960s.

Installations alter the space they occupy and shift the neutral space of rooms towards subjects, perceptions and experiences not normally considered to be part of the room's syntax.

Rooms enclose the occupant with data, whereas the data in a book needs to be prised out of a compact lump, but the similarity here is one of principle, of the relationship of armature to what it supports. This relationship reveals a distinction between an unaltered artists book and an altered one. In a typical artists' book, the artist's vision drives the book in all of its aspects, and if THE BOOK is challenged, this happens without the conventional book being present. With an altered book, the original book is still there, and not just as a residue or starting point. It represents THE BOOK, and is part of the composition, is part of the argument. It is as much a rogue element as the artist's actions. In front of this dialectic of BOOK: *alteration*, the reader/viewer/performer can choose to be a witness, or proceed to analysis and even attempt to mediate the argument. An altered book is a theorem about books, argued through confrontation with material, with matter, from outside of the empire of the word.

Alex Selenitsch is a Melbourne-based poet and architect, and a senior lecturer in architecture at the University of Melbourne.

WORKS MENTIONED

Ronald Johnson. 1977. *RADI OS*. Berkeley, California: Sand Dollar Books

Tom Phillips. 1980, 1987. *A Humument: a treated Victorian novel*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd with edition Hansjörg Mayer

Bea Maddock. 1984-88. *The Divine Comedy*. Altered artist book: collection ANG, Canberra. See Alex Selenitsch. 2008. *Australian Artists Books*. Canberra: NGA Publishing. pp40-41, 117

Dirk Dobke, curator. 2004. *Dieter Roth: Books + Multiples: catalogue raisonné*. London: Edition

Hansjörg Mayer. See *Poesy 1, Poesy 2*, pp187-191 for alterations by Roth to his own books

RECYCLED LIBRARY

Michael Wardell

“I am unpacking my library. Yes, I am. The books are not yet on the shelves, not yet touched by the mild boredom of order. I cannot march up and down their ranks to pass them in review before a friendly audience.”

Walter Benjamin’s “Unpacking my Library: A Talk about Book Collecting.” 1931

Thinking of Walter Benjamin, I am unpacking my *Recycled Library* inspecting each work as an individual piece of art and, at the same time eagerly anticipating the idea of sorting and arranging, creating resonances and serendipitous connections that appear when works are displayed together. Each of the 17 artists in the exhibition has deliberately incorporated found/existing books in their artwork but does each artist have the same intention in using this iconic signifier? Central to our response to all altered books is our collective reverence for books themselves. We are taught from an early age not to deface books, even when they are inexpensive textbooks or second hand books sold for a few cents in a flea market. This reverence has been passed down through generations, past the period of post war austerity, past the era when only the wealthy were educated and owned books and back to the time before the printing press when all books were rare and precious objects and the majority were hand inscribed copies of religious texts.

The artists in *Recycled Library* are all playing on, and questioning, the collective response we have towards 'the book'. Since we were old enough to distinguish between fact and fiction we have been introduced to books that are presented as facts to be learnt or kept as reference material. However, history is written by the victorious and new advances in micro-technology are changing our understanding of ourselves and even our origins. The more we learn, the more we discover how little we know and that our collective accumulation of 'facts' is an evolving and ever-changing entity. Many of the works in this exhibition explore the reliance on the printed text as a vehicle for cultural migration. Some question the presumed knowledge that accompanied the first settlers to Australia about history, philosophy, science, literature and even art that predominantly derived from their Anglo-Celtic culture. Many of the artists come from vastly different cultures, bringing new histories and customs while others are spending extended periods away from Australia and coming to terms with their 'outsider' status.

What are altered books?

In 1919, Marcel Duchamp, temporarily living in Buenos Aires, sent his sister Suzanne and her new husband, Jean Crotti, a unique wedding present, *Unhappy Readymade*. He instructed her to purchase a geometry book and hang it by a string from their balcony in rue la Condamine, Paris. As he explained later "The wind had to go through the book, choose its own problems, turn and tear out the pages ... It amused me to bring the idea of happy and unhappy into readymades, and then the rain, the wind, the pages flying, it was an amusing idea."¹

¹ Pierre Cabanne Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp Thames and Hudson Ltd. London 1971 (p.61)

This, perhaps first, example of an altered book contains many of the conceptual ideas that run through the works of art in *Recycled Library*. On one level, *Unhappy Readymade* is ‘an amusing idea’, a piece of Dada absurdity that would delight a naughty schoolboy straining under the pressure of cramming for a mathematics exam. It is also a rebellion against the orthodoxy of mathematical ‘fact’ over random chance, one of the consistent themes in Duchamp’s work and reflects his rejection of other orthodoxies that have influenced our history and understanding of art. It is also a gift of an idea or concept sent by Duchamp while he was away in another country and unable to attend a customary family celebration.

In 1970, Paul Partos, temporarily living in New York, cut the pages of two found books around the edges of the text and placed each bundle of pages above the remaining book in a labelled plastic sleeve.

The first bundle was labelled:

Introduction to a book

Negation of printed pages and haphazard arrangement of these pages.

1. Book devoid of content
2. Pages devoid of structure and meaning

and the second bundle was labelled:

Reconstruction of a book

Negation of printed pages and haphazard arrangement of these pages.

1. Book devoid of content
2. Pages devoid of structure and meaning

Introduction to a book 1970, is one of Paul Partos' most conceptual works, inspired by his friends Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden who had both moved from Melbourne to New York three years earlier. By 1970 Burn and Ramsden were in the process of forming an American branch of Art & Language² with artists Joseph Kosuth and Charles Harrison. Like Art & Language, Partos is playfully commenting on contemporary art theory reflecting the move away from Minimalism which was, in itself, a reaction against Formalism. The construction of the finished work is referenced and explained within the work itself leaving us with the poetic irony of creating content, structure and meaning by depriving the original book of content, structure and meaning.

Marion Borgelt's *Cryptologist's memoir* series, 2004-7, was inspired by a newspaper article about the death of Yang Huanyi in September 2004 at the age of 98. She was the last living person fluent in Nushu, a secret women's written language in China that was over a thousand years old. It was believed to have been invented by one of the Emperor's concubines in the Hunan Province of Southern China and passed down from mother to daughter in the form of poetry and feminine advice often disguised as patterning in embroidery. During a time when women were not permitted to be educated, and unable to read or write their own thoughts and feelings, they communicated with each other through messages written on embroidered gifts.

Over the past few decades, Marion Borgelt has been developing her own visual language influenced by Karl Jung's universal archetypes and inspired by scripts and decorative motifs from many sources including ancient Celtic, Indian and Polynesian cultures. Choosing a

²The collaborative group Art & Language was first formed in Coventry, England, in 1968 with Terry Atkinson, Michael Baldwin, David Bainbridge and Harold Hurrell, although these artists had been working in close association since 1966

broad selection of books, Borgelt has carved into the pages and into the recessed areas, sculpted in beeswax two letters/symbols, one turned 180 degrees from the other, and painted in oil using her characteristic limited pallet of black, white and red. She comments that this series “is about hidden language, a language literally hidden inside books and also hidden in terms of its signs and symbols being indecipherable. Do these symbols belong to an arcane language or are they in code form needing to be deciphered? Whatever the case *Cryptologist’s memoir* hints at the challenge faced by archaeologists and cryptologists in understanding our current society in hundreds of years time from now.”³

Jánis Nedéla’s *Stigmata* and *Codex* series, 2005-6, combine the cryptographic tease of Borgelt with the process driven rigour and wit of conceptual art. As implied by the title *Stigmata*, Nedéla is sacrificing one object to make another, ‘better’ object, impaling the book and obscuring the text while at the same time playing on the aesthetic beauty of the pattern of the nails and their shadows. The nails in *Stigmata No. 2* are painted different colours and in *No. 3* they are painted white with different coloured heads, hinting in both cases to a possible relationship between the colours of the nails and specific words in the Latvian text. In *Codex No. 5*, Nedéla has made this correlation more obvious, almost completely obscuring the English text by sticking coloured pins into each letter coded so that each letter is replaced by a specific colour. The code is less obvious in *Codex Nos. 7 & 8* with different coloured pins stuck into the first or last four words of each page revealing the rhythm of printed words on typeset pages and accentuating the length of certain words in the Latvian language.

³ <http://www.marionborgelt.com/installations/26/>

In a radio interview last year, Nedéla talked about his lifelong fascination with the patterns and structures of the printed text recalling a time as a schoolboy growing up in Albany WA, when he got into trouble at school for defacing his books.⁴ In 2003 and 2006, he visited Riga, Latvia where his parents were born and discovered that the language he had learnt from his parents' books sounded old fashioned to the modern Latvian ear. His parent's culture and language had been frozen in a specific time while their country's culture and language had continued to evolve and change.

Yvonne Kendall's *Learning to read again* series, 2004, is also concerned with language and cultural communication. Participating in an art 'blind date' in 1997, Kendall was paired up with German artist Henning Eichinger for a German/Australian collaboration project. After a successful collaboration by correspondence she was invited to Germany in 2000 to give a workshop and is still there now, married to Eichinger and living with their young child in Reutlingen. At one level *Learning to read again* is a simple expression of the frustration of adjusting to a world where everyone speaks a different language. However, beyond our empathetic understanding of the artist's personal experience, we may differ in our response to the symbolism of 'the brain' and 'the book'. The brain is our centre of consciousness and represents our personal identity, thinking, learning, intellectualism and the rational as opposed to the emotional. Molded in papier-mâché it is literally made from the same substance as the book it is oozing out of. The book can be read as a symbol of the German language the artist is striving to master but could also represent German culture and society in general or even the sum of all knowledge as recorded in books.

⁴Interview by Meri Fatin, RTRFM Community Radio, Perth, 7 August 2008, with Professor David Broomfield on the publication of Broomfield's book **'Codes: The Art of Jánis Nedéla; 1982-2007 or How to make art in Perth without being easily bored'** Brown Art Consultants, Perth 2008. <http://www.rtrfm.com.au/stories/type/interviews/category/arts/800>

The problems and shortcomings of cultural migration through books is central to many of the artists in *Recycled Library*. Since his earliest work in New Zealand, Patrick Pound has been playfully commenting on the concept that in the early days of white settlement in New Zealand (and Australia), culture was imported on slow ships, primarily from England and primarily in the form of books. In countries like New Zealand and Australia, ancient cultures that have survived for thousands of years were completely supplanted by another culture from the other side of the world in a very short time, leaving subsequent generations to question their own cultural and personal identity. How much of this imported culture is relevant to us now and how do we distinguish between factual history and another country's traditions and mythologies?

Like Nedéla's Latvian language frozen in a particular era through books, our culture has grown from an Anglo-Celtic culture fixed in time at the moment of mass settlement. *Ex libris* 1998 is a collage of endpapers from old books arranged in the shape of a head. These almost blank sheets, discoloured by age and bearing the marks of past use, are perhaps a cynical record of our collective accumulated knowledge derived from books, both poetically beautiful and obsolete. Through visual puns and 'little deceits'⁵, Pound gently reminds us of the unreliability of the library. Pound's 1996 work, *Photo-book*, is essentially a collage of a photograph on a book. The photograph is of a reproduction, so out of focus that it could be an illustration from a clothing catalogue or a black and white image of an abstract painting. The image is almost completely lost by the two slanted squares cut out creating an overall composition that pays homage to the Russian

⁵ Patrick Pounds first exhibition in Australia was titled "Little deceits – art crimes" Michael Wardell Gallery, Melbourne 1992

Suprematist paintings of Kazimir Malevich (1879- 1935) or Nikolai Suetin (1897 – 1954). *Learning to fly from books II* 2001 consists of a bird book placed in an elaborate case more suited to displaying taxidermy than books, with the first page fashioned into a crude paper kite. The humorous absurdity of this work is also present in *Now* 2007, a title that suggests the present yet is visually spelt out using an old book, an old button and an old postcard of the Mount Royal Hotel, Montreal, built in 1922. The ‘W’ shaped Mount Royal Hotel was ‘then’ the largest hotel in the British Empire and, ironically, is ‘now’ almost completely demolished and absorbed into the architecture of an up-market shopping centre.

Jayne Dyer’s work comments on both the fallibility and potential power of the library. It is fallible as a free repository of all knowledge, ideas and conjectures but when restricted and available only to the few, it is a source of political and social power. The ominous black tomes in *Babel 3* 2006, and *A Reading II* 2009, are unreadable books negating the library’s potential to impart knowledge and/or wisdom and yet taunting us with the possibility of hidden facts, narratives or secrets. In 2007, Dyer was one of three artists invited to make installations in Elizabeth Bay House, Sydney, the home of the English gentleman, Alexander Macleay, who arrived in Sydney in 1826 to take up the post of Colonial Secretary of New South Wales.⁶ In the doorway of the now empty library, famous for its vast collection of Natural History books, she placed five rows of black-covered anonymous books wedged between the upright sides of the doorframe blocking the entrance but providing a tantalising glimpse into the library’s interior. While these

⁶ *Spare Room*: Installations by Jayne Dyer, Sue Pedley and Susan Andrews. Elizabeth Bay House, Sydney 14 July – 21 September 2007

works hint at the restriction of knowledge, *A Reading 3 & 4* 2008, suggest the danger of too much information. They derive from the same exhibition at Elizabeth Bay House, but here, in an upstairs room, she has filled the doorways with a vast assortment of second-hand books giving the impression that the whole blocked-off room is full of publications spilling out of the doorways. We are still unable to enter the room or open the books although we are permitted to read a few titles and the occasional open page.

For *The Ethel Cotton Course In Conversation* 2007, David Sequeira has stitched an Islamic star pattern into the covers of each of the twelve pamphlets of a 1951 edition of a conversation course, originally published in 1927. By stitching through each book, Sequeira is also making the books unreadable. As an Australian artist born in India, Sequeira has frequently presented work that combines elements of his birth culture with those of his adopted culture. The book as a work of art has featured since his first exhibitions and, as Michael Brand has written, there is a long tradition of finely crafted books in Indian cultural history. “The Western model of large-scale easel paintings set within three-dimensional frames and hung vertically against a wall was entirely alien to this Indian art of the book. The illustrated manuscripts and albums were fully portable and could be contemplated anywhere from palace pavilions and tented encampments to luxurious garden pavilions, held in the hand whilst seated on the floor.”⁷ By combining the Islamic pattern with an old-fashioned English ‘personal improvement’ course, Sequeira is not only commenting on Colonial cultural values that have infiltrated Indian life since the time of the

⁷Michael Brand ‘Looking into Tradition. The Art of the Book in North India’ David Sequeira. Canberra Contemporary Art Space 1998 (pp.22-23)

British Raj but also, with subtle humour, he is exposing the cultural clash of extreme Islamic attitudes to women's education and Western ladies learning Ethel Cotton's 'fascinating way to win praise, charm and personality.'

Altered books have become increasingly popular as a craft practice, an extension of scrapbooking, and evident in the growing number of sites on the World Wide Web and do-it-yourself publications on the market. In 1769, the Rev. James Granger published a "Biographical History of England", deliberately leaving blank pages for the reader to collect and paste in suitable illustrations. This practice, known as Grangerism, expanded in the Victorian Era as readers applied this extra-illustrating to other books. David Sequeira is playfully continuing this tradition in his book *Life and all its marvels* 2007. However, instead of adding illustrations to accompany the text, Sequeira has totally obscured the text with reproductions of portraits from throughout the history of European art and interspersed with photographic portraits of himself. 'Life and all its marvels: Plant, Animal, Human' is a single volume children's encyclopaedia, published in 1960 and illustrated with colourful graphic images rather than photographic reproductions. The illustrations are on the right hand pages and appear with no text so that, by obscuring the text on the left hand pages, the illustrations are like graphic puzzles as opposed to their intended function of complementing the text. This recalls a childhood memory, before learning to read, of looking at his father's World Book Encyclopaedia purchased shortly after arriving in Australia. The artist's own identity, expressed in the series of photo-portraits that look as if they might have

been shot for an actor's or model's casting portfolio, is positioned both within and outside the world of Western art and artists as represented by the series of painted portraits.

The notion of personal identity and cultural blending is also a central theme in the work of Simryn Gill. Born into an Indian family in Singapore, Gill divides her time between Port Dickson, Malaysia (where she grew up) and Sydney, Australia. Like Pound, Dyer and Sequeira, Gill is a collector, rearranging the 'things' that inhabit our world so that they can be viewed differently, subverting our preconceptions. All these artists have expressed their ideas through accumulated found objects, installations and photography and they all have a long-standing passion for books. For *Forest* 1996-8, Gill has collected a wide range of books including a copy of the Indian epic "Ramayana", Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" and even a manual on raising toddlers, and literally grafted them onto the vegetation around Singapore and Port Dickson. She has torn pages from the books and stuck them onto the ringed leaf scars of a palm (#4) or cut into lines of text that are stuck along the intersecting branches of a wall creeper (#13). Others are shredded to cascade from a branch resembling the aerial roots of a fig tree (#7) or wrapped around the new shoots of a mangrove (#3). In each case, the printed paper was left to decompose and eventually turn to compost feeding the host plant.

The migration of culture through books and the inherent flaws in one culture supplanting another are most evident in the works of indigenous artists Julie Gough and Archie Moore. Both artists have grown up and

been educated in a predominantly white Australian culture and only as adult artists have explored their own mixed cultural identity through their art. Tasmanian artist, Julie Gough's work *A half hour hidden history reader* 2007, was inspired by finding a second hand copy of 'The Tasmanian History Readers-4 Royal School Series' issued by the Education Department Hobart and discovering inside an abridged history of Britain. Gough whited out the greater part of each page and in her own hand wrote an alternative 'Tasmanian History' in 14 short chapters that can be read in 'a half hour'. The opening chapter "How white people came to take our isle" consists of two pages from a book "Our Isle. An outline for students" by D.A. Williams. This exert is a chapter headed 'He is gone but you are here' and consists of a horrific 'justification', based on assumptions of racial superiority, of why there are no longer any Tasmanian Aborigines. The remaining hand-written chapters recount tales from the artist's family history centred on an indigenous teenage girl who worked as a domestic servant for an early settler family and an incident when she was shot by her Master, who was supposedly aiming for a possum.

Archie Moore's *Malthesism* 2007, and *Ghost ship (HMB Malthesia)* 2008, are also concerned with the history of early white settlement from an indigenous perspective. Both works are Bibles open on the pages of the Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy. As the artist has commented, "within its text is the endorsement from God to Moses for invasion of other nations. It says that you have the right to invade, take all their resources, kill all the men (non-believers) and make no treaty with them. ... I couldn't help but think that the Christians on the first fleet must have had some of Deuteronomy's sentiments in their minds

as they landed, invaded and conquered.”⁸ From the pages of the Bible in *Maltheism*, the artist has cut out and assembled a model of one of the first missionary churches in Australia. In *Ghost ship (HMB Malthesia)*, he has placed a tiny model of a ship at the base of a circular hole carved into the book which, with the help of a mirror and a concave glass cover, appears to hover above the pages when seen from the right angle.

Alex Selenitsch's *Ghost series* 2001 – 2006, is also looking back at a moment in history and questioning its consequences. Selenitsch was born in Germany in 1946, a year after the Yalta Conference, and moved to Australia in 1949. In 1945, a few months before the final defeat of Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany, US President Theodore Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin met in Yalta, in the Crimea, to discuss the consequences of Hitler's inevitable defeat. Selenitsch's 'ghost' portraits of the four main protagonists are all found books altered so that none can be opened and read. *The ghost of Adolf Hitler* 2001 is a cut down book, probably a guide to the Hungarian National Museum, Budapest, held together by staples so that the image of the neoclassical Museum on the cover is pitted with holes. This may show the destruction of art and heritage during the war or, perhaps, the one-sided 'alliance' between Germany and Hungary. *The ghost of Winston Churchill* 2001, is a catalogue of memorial and cemetery architecture titled 'Silent Cities' sewn with cotton thread into a pattern that looks like fencing on one side and a pattern of connecting houses on the other. This, perhaps, hints at the threadbare state of war-torn England. *The ghost of Joseph Stalin* 2003 is covered in a perforated steel dust jacket that is permanently open just enough to reveal the work as a book but not enough to enable it

⁸ Archie Moore's artist's comment when *Maltheism* was first exhibited at the 23rd Telstra Awards

to be read. Stalin's 'iron curtain' is in stark contrast to the black tissue covering *The ghost of Theodore Delano Roosevelt* 2006. This tissue cover, too big for its contents, is pitted with an oval of Chicago screws, another form of book-binding, that again seal the book rendering it both anonymous and unreadable. In associating book-binding material with alliances and agreements, perhaps the Chicago screws are a colloquial reference to the compromises at the Yalta Conference or broken agreements after.

The *Schach* series, 2006, by Alex Selenitsch is more whimsical, harking back to the conceptual art of the late sixties. Three identical books are carved into, leaving a negative space outlining a section of a circle, a triangle and a square. These three basic geometric shapes suggest both the rules and dictates of ancient Greek geometry but also the well known painting, *Circle, Triangle, Square* by Japanese Zen Master Sengai Gibon (1750-1837), possibly representing the universe.⁹ The title *Schach*, German for chess or check (in chess) derived from the letters 'Scha' left on the cover of #3 (*Square*). This originally spelt out 'Schauplatz', the German word for scene, showplace or tourism site. The 'shorthand' representation of the three geometrical shapes reflects the 'shorthand' representation of characters on a chessboard or, perhaps like Duchamp, the artist is suggesting it is all just a game.

The dry humour of conceptual works by Partos and Selenitsch is also found in the altered books of Ti Parks. *Adjust your thinking – love is on the air* 2001, and *Happy days* 2001, are both paperback books altered with collage but appearing still to look like paperback books. In *Happy days*, Parks has changed the tone of Beckett's title simply

⁹ Sengai left no explanation of this enigmatic work although the circle was a traditional symbol of infinity

by adding a black and white image of a women's breasts in figure hugging 1950s lingerie. In *Adjust your thinking – love is on the air* 2001, Parks has completely altered the cover of Graham Greene's 'The Quiet American.' This classic tale of American interference in foreign affairs is now renamed *Adjust your thinking* combined with *love is on the air*, the title of a 1937 Hollywood film starring Ronald Reagan. Is it a coincidence that Parks made this book the same year the Republican George Bush Junior was elected President of the United States after two terms of Democrat President Bill Clinton?

Liz Jeneid's *Book for a journey* 2002 is about making journeys and was made for a particular journey. This large work was made for the exhibition 'Paperworks 2002 Ino' at the Ino Town Paper Museum, on the Japanese island of Shikoku. 132 pages from a Thesaurus are pasted onto six panels, each folded like a traditional Orihon style manuscript so that they can be hung like scrolls on the wall. Every page of the Thesaurus is painted in white gesso all over with the exception of a single word related to travel or travelling. The single words are read in the order each viewer chooses as they scan the painted surface creating a different haiku each time. As if it had been used as a traveller's sketch book, Jeneid has drawn rough sketches over the gesso on some pages and added quotes about travel to each panel. Tiny squares of rough gauze marked with ink suggest hurried written notes or perhaps little secrets.

Chance plays a central role in Paul Hoban's altered books. *2TS (Two teacher school)* 1995, is a by-product of the paintings that Hoban was making in the mid 90s. Using old books discarded by libraries, he

tore out strips of paper and used them as texture in his paintings. By tearing a number of pages in one go, the resulting scraps of printed paper would create a pattern sharing a seemingly arbitrary curve of the tear. The remaining book bound with electric guitar strings is presented as a reverse pattern created by chance. Our reaction to the seemingly wanton destruction of the book, aggressively torn and roughly bound, changes as we appreciate the pattern of the torn pages and the hieroglyph created by the wire. *BoP* 1999, is a 'Book of Poetry' found amongst a stack of books discarded on a London street. Again creating patterns from random actions, Hoban has pitted each page with a hole puncher (creating circular confetti that could be used in other artworks). Some of the holes were then joined using a felt marker like an intuitive doodle and this would leave small lines on the next page as the marker went over a hole. These lines would then be incorporated into the join-the-dots drawing on that page. By repeating this process throughout the book the artist has used chance to poetically transform a poetry book that had become worn and discarded.

Glen Skien also sees poetic beauty in discarded and unwanted old books, often old books whose covers have fallen off or been removed revealing the usually hidden threads of the binding. *Series of dreams (triptych)* 2005, is made up of discarded book spines combined with etching and found objects set in a folding frame like an altarpiece. Skien's most recent series *I'm coming back for my wings* 2009, was inspired by his move from regional Mackay to the inner city of Brisbane and reading the New York poems of Federico García Lorca. The dominance of collage in Skien's recent work is a direct result of

living and working in an urban environment, with its faster pace and clashing stimuli – the cultural diversity and extremes of poverty and opulence accentuated by high density housing and the constant stream of traffic. In a lecture delivered in Havana in 1930¹⁰, Lorca draws a distinction between the three supernatural forces influencing the creation of poetry, the Angel, the Muse and the Duende. The Angel and the Muse hover above while the Duende, or primal darker force that communicates directly to the subconscious, emanates from deep inside the body. In Skien's work, the Angels and Muses are depicted floating above the book while the force of the Duende is within. He has written "because I regard them as being closer to collage the content of each individual book is really not a consideration for me.. it is the very structure of the book as an object that triggers my initial creative response.. the exterior surface of the pages, the exposed edges of the spine, the interior end papers."¹¹

In Hossein Valamanesh's work *Open book* 1993, he has not altered an existing book but rather he has altered the conventional format of a book. He has created a self portrait by shaping the binding and blank pages of his book so that, when open, it forms an outline of his head. Valamanesh was born in Iran in 1949 and trained as an artist in Tehran before immigrating to Australia in 1973. The prevailing themes in his work ,of self-knowledge and the path to enlightenment, are influenced by Persian Sufism and particularly the 13th century Sufi poet, Rumi. The pages of *Open book* are blank, free of all extraneous thought and open to the potential of all knowledge. Now living in Australia, Valamanesh plays on our notion of an 'open book' as someone who is

¹⁰ "The Duende: Theory and divertissement" A translation of this lecture can be found on Jud Evan's Athenaeum Reading Room website

¹¹ Correspondence with the curator 3 August 2009

easily 'read.' In *Untitled* 1999, a bamboo ladder is suspended above an open book growing thinner and lighter in colour as it ascends. The book is again blank, representing personal potential, and the ladder is the path to knowledge/understanding and to God. However, set into circular holes in the pages of the book, two mirrors reflect the ladder suggesting an alternative potential path away from the heavens.

Kylie Stillman, born in 1975, is the youngest artist in this exhibition. Contrasting her work with the 1970 work *Introduction to a book* by Paul Partos reveals a generational shift away from the anti-craftsmanship of early conceptual art to a more issue-based conceptualism gently attracting a response through her craft skill. The anti-art of the 1960s and early 1970s was a reaction against the elitism of the art market and the notion that the idea was more important than the skill of the artisan. Wanting to speak to a wider audience, the downgrading of the importance of craftsmanship had the opposite effect, making art and ideas only accessible to the art literate few. In recent times, the tools of conceptual art have been used by artists to convey broader issues of social and political concern and artists today are acutely aware of the need to lead an audience to an appreciation of their ideas. Nothing draws a crowd better than the display of skill.

Stillman is an artist deeply concerned with the natural environment and the notion of recycling old books offsets some of the concern we might have about the destruction of trees to feed our love of books. Stillman's bird books *Scrubtit* 2002, *Buff-tailed thornbill* 2005 and *Superb glossy starling* 2008 are all depictions of birds exquisitely carved into the

pages of books. Like negative sculptures, the three-dimensionality of the birds is rendered in negative space. Our initial aesthetic response, influenced by our respect for the artist's skill, is altered by a realisation of the message. These are not images of birds, or even stuffed birds, but rather the gap left after the bird has gone. More and more species of birds are becoming extinct because of climate change and human destruction of the natural environment and perhaps future generations will only be able to see some of these species reproduced in books. The concern for the destruction of trees is more evident in the stacked books works *Mop tops* 2005 and *Black pine* 2005 where the negative 'ghosts' of trees are carved into whole sets of books. Most of Stillman's sets of books are discarded editions of law books or old sets of encyclopedias that have been superseded by regularly updated and revised editions. This environmental waste, through obsolescence, also questions our reliance on the book as an accurate record of our knowledge, laws and culture.

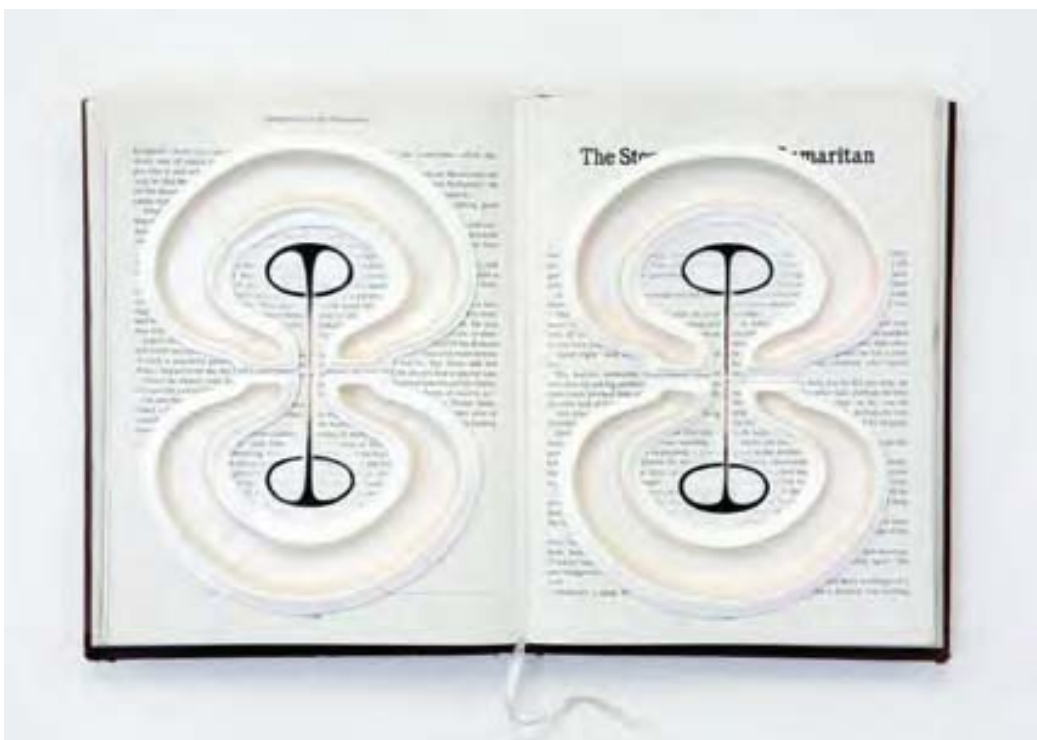
This sorting through of the *Altered Library* annotated with background information and personal interpretations, is but one of many different methods of sorting and arranging open to every visitor to the exhibition. The theme of journeys and cultural assimilation runs through much of the work reflecting the cultural diversity of the artists and of Australia. Family customs and traditions may be the most direct form of cultural migration but in the absence of family much of our cultural identity is gleaned from books. Our cultural identity may derive from somewhere different to where we are now but, like these books, it is altered by the passage of time and the influences of our environment.



Marion Borgelt *Cryptologist's memoir No.1* 2004

Book, beeswax, oil & ribbon. 31.5 x 45.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist. © Marion Borgelt/Licensed by Viscopy, 2009



Marion Borgelt *Cryptologist's memoir No.15* 2004

Book, beeswax, oil & ribbon. 38.7 x 57.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist. © Marion Borgelt/Licensed by Viscopy, 2009



Marion Borgelt *Cryptologist's memoir No.18* 2004

Book, beeswax, oil & ribbon. 38.7 x 57.5 cm

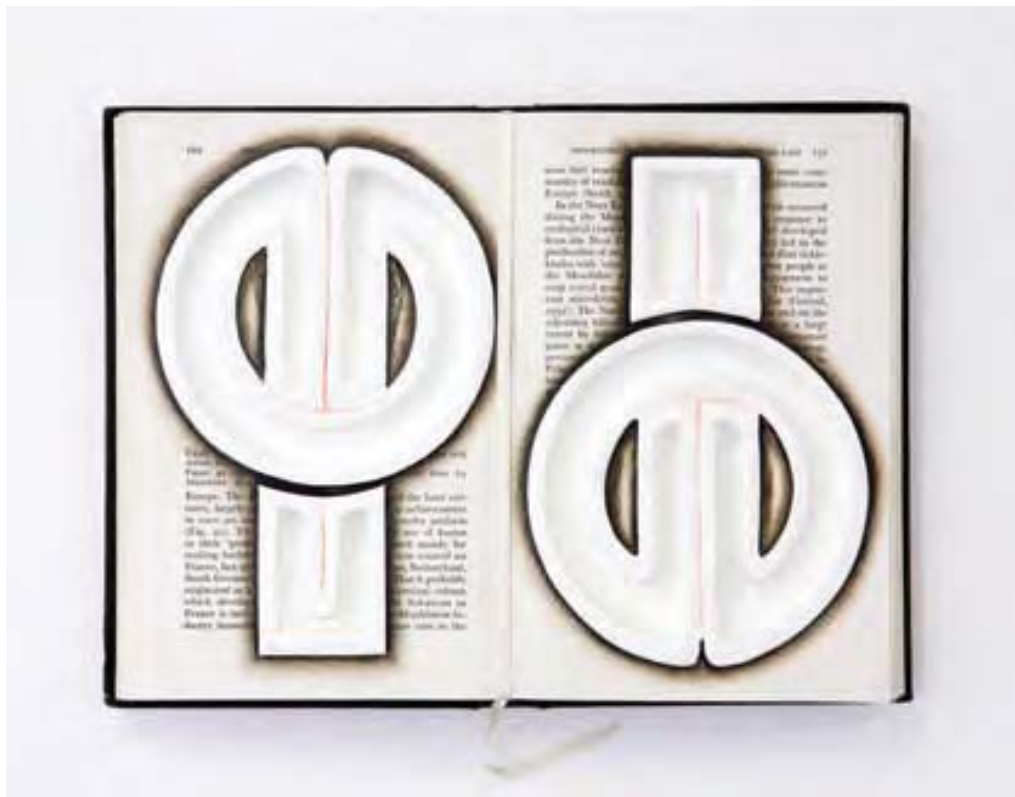
Courtesy of the artist. © Marion Borgelt/Licensed by Viscopy, 2009



Marion Borgelt *Cryptologist's memoir No.22* 2006

Book, beeswax, oil & ribbon. 30.8 x 43.8 cm

Courtesy of the artist. © Marion Borgelt/Licensed by Viscopy, 2009



Marion Borgelt *Cryptologist's memoir No.25* 2006

Book, beeswax, oil & ribbon. 30.6 x 46.6 cm

Courtesy of the artist. © Marion Borgelt/Licensed by Viscopy, 2009



Marion Borgelt *Cryptologist's memoir No.35* 2007

Book, beeswax, oil & ribbon. 30.0 x 41.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist. © Marion Borgelt/Licensed by Viscopy, 2009



Jayne Dyer *Babel 3* 2006

Books, acrylic paint & timber box. 20.0 x 37.0 x 15.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist. © Jayne Dyer/Licensed by Viscopy, 2009



Jayne Dyer *A Reading II* 2009

Books & acrylic paint. 25.5 x 24.0 x 17.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist. © Jayne Dyer/Licensed by Viscopy, 2009



Jayne Dyer *A Reading 3* 2008

Digital print on aluminium. 198.0 x 120.0 cm

Image from *The Reading Room* installation, Elizabeth Bay House Museum, Historic Houses Trust of NSW, 2007 Courtesy of the artist. © Jayne Dyer/Licensed by Viscopy, 2009



Jayne Dyer *A Reading 4* 2008

Digital print on aluminium. 198.0 x 120.0 cm

Image from *The Reading Room* installation, Elizabeth Bay House Museum, Historic Houses Trust of NSW, 2007. Courtesy of the artist. © Jayne Dyer/Licensed by Viscopy, 2009



Simryn Gill *Forest series No.2* 1996-98

Gelatin silver photograph. 120.0 x 95.0cm

Courtesy of the artist and BreenSpace, Sydney and Tracy William Ltd. NY



Simryn Gill *Forest series No.3* 1996-98

Gelatin silver photograph. 120.0 x 95.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist and BreenSpace, Sydney and Tracy William Ltd. NY



Simryn Gill *Forest series No.4* 1996-98

Gelatin silver photograph. 120.0 x 95.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist and BreenSpace, Sydney and Tracy William Ltd. NY



Simryn Gill *Forest series No.7* 1996-98

Gelatin silver photograph. 120.0 x 95.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist and BreenSpace, Sydney and Tracy William Ltd. NY



Simryn Gill *Forest series No.13* 1996-98

Gelatin silver photograph. 120.0 x 95.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist and BreenSpace, Sydney and Tracy William Ltd. NY



Simryn Gill *Forest series No.14* 1996-98

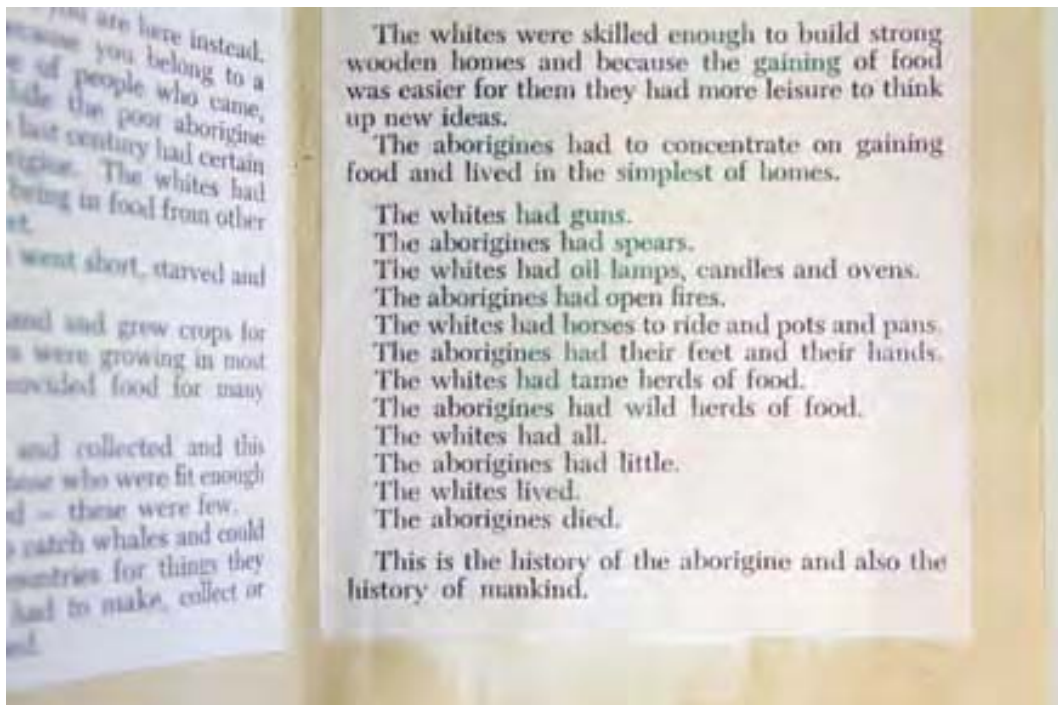
Gelatin silver photograph. 120.0 x 95.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist and BreenSpace, Sydney and Tracy William Ltd. NY



Julie Gough *A half hour hidden history reader* 2007

Collage & hand-writing on white paint over existing text. 21.3 x 15.7 x 2.0 cm
Collection, State Library of Queensland



Julie Gough *A half hour hidden history reader* (detail) 2007

Collage & hand-writing on white paint over existing text. 21.3 x 15.7 x 2.0 cm

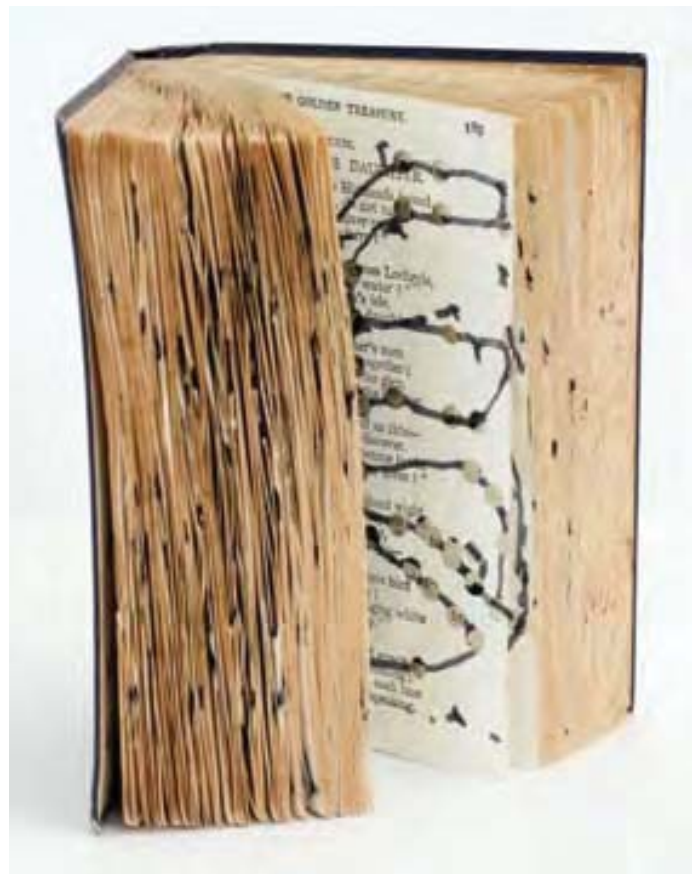
Collection, State Library of Queensland



Paul Hoban 2TS 1995

Book & electric guitar string. 21.2 x 28.2 cm

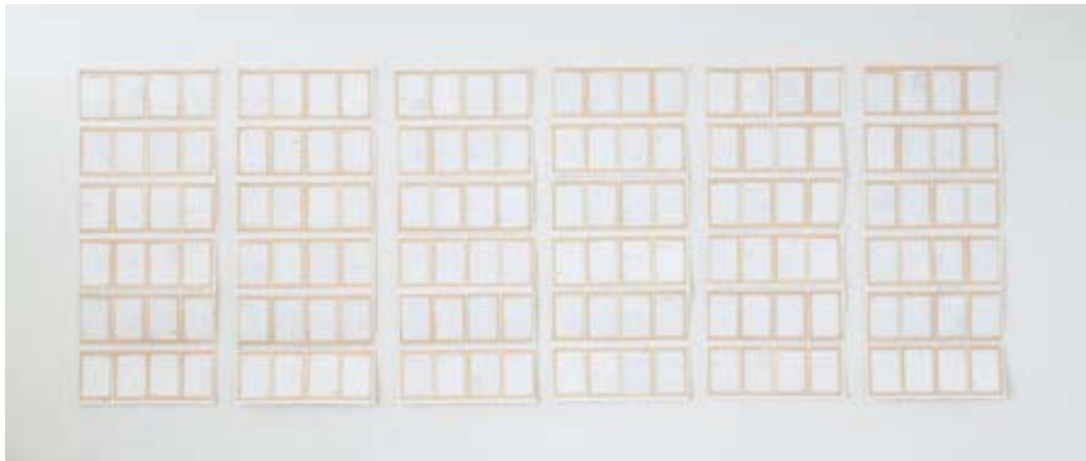
Courtesy of the artist and Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide



Paul Hoban *B.o.P* 2000

Ink on book. 15.7 x 21.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide



Liz Jeneid *Book for a journey* 2002

6 panels using recycled thesaurus pages, gesso Thai paper, ink, muslin. 138.0 x 390.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist. © Liz Jeneid /Licensed by Viscopy, 2009



Liz Jeneid *Book for a journey* (detail) 2002

6 panels using recycled thesaurus pages, gesso Thai paper, ink, muslin. 138.0 x 390.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist. © Liz Jeneid /Licensed by Viscopy, 2009



Yvonne Kendall *Learning to read again #2* 2004
Book, crepe paper, newspaper, string. 8.0 x 30.0 x 23.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Niagara Galleries, Melbourne



Yvonne Kendall *Learning to read again #5* 2004
Book, crepe paper, newspaper, string. 25.0 x 24.0 x 9.0 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council



Yvonne Kendall *Learning to read again #10* 2004
Book, crepe paper, newspaper. 21.0 x 26.0 x 10.0 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council



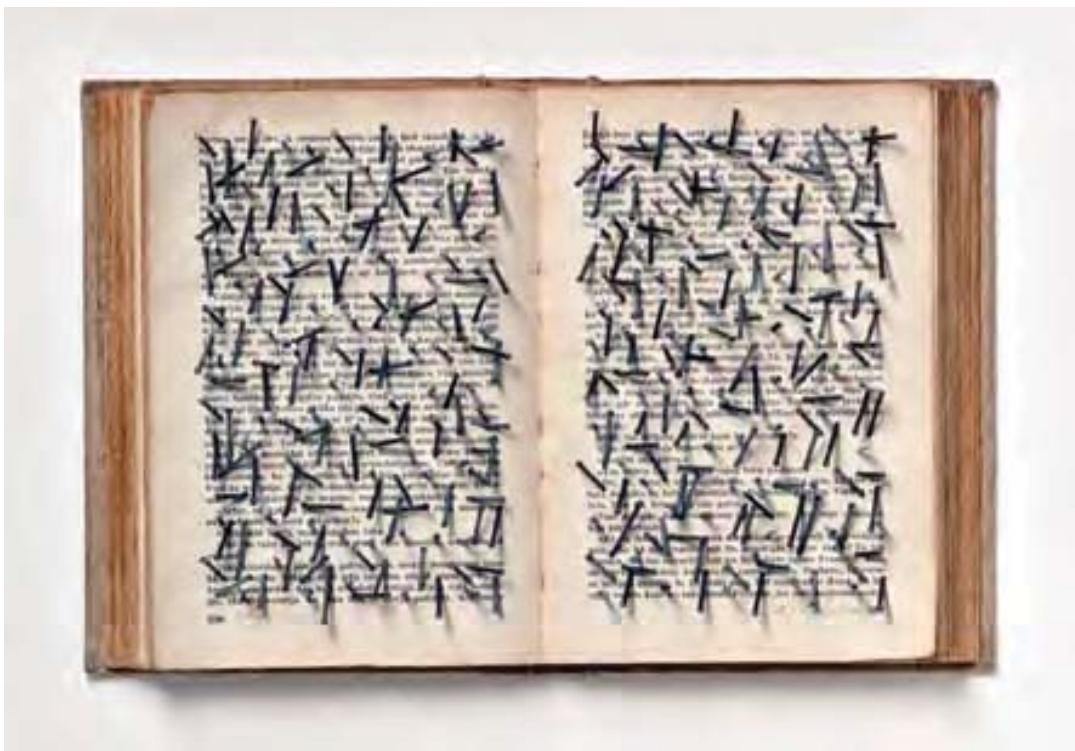
Archie Moore *Maltheism* 2007
Folded pages of Bible. 16.0 x 30.0 x 45.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Archie Moore *Ghost ship (HMB Malthesia)* 2008
Bible, mirror, sculpty/putty and wood. 6.0 x 39.0 x 27.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Archie Moore *Ghost ship (HMB Malthesia)* (detail) 2008
Bible, mirror, sculpty/putty & wood. 6.0 x 39.0 x 27.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Jánis Nedéla *Stigmata* 2005

Nails, book. 40.0 x 50.5 cm

Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council



Jánis Nedéla *Codex No.5* 2005
Nails, acrylic paint, nail varnish, book. 40.0 x 50.5 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council



Jánis Nedéla *Stigmata No.2* 2006
Nails, acrylic paint, nail varnish, book. 40.0 x 50.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Jánis Nedéla Stigmata No.3 2006
Nails, acrylic paint, nail varnish, book. 40.0 x 50.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist



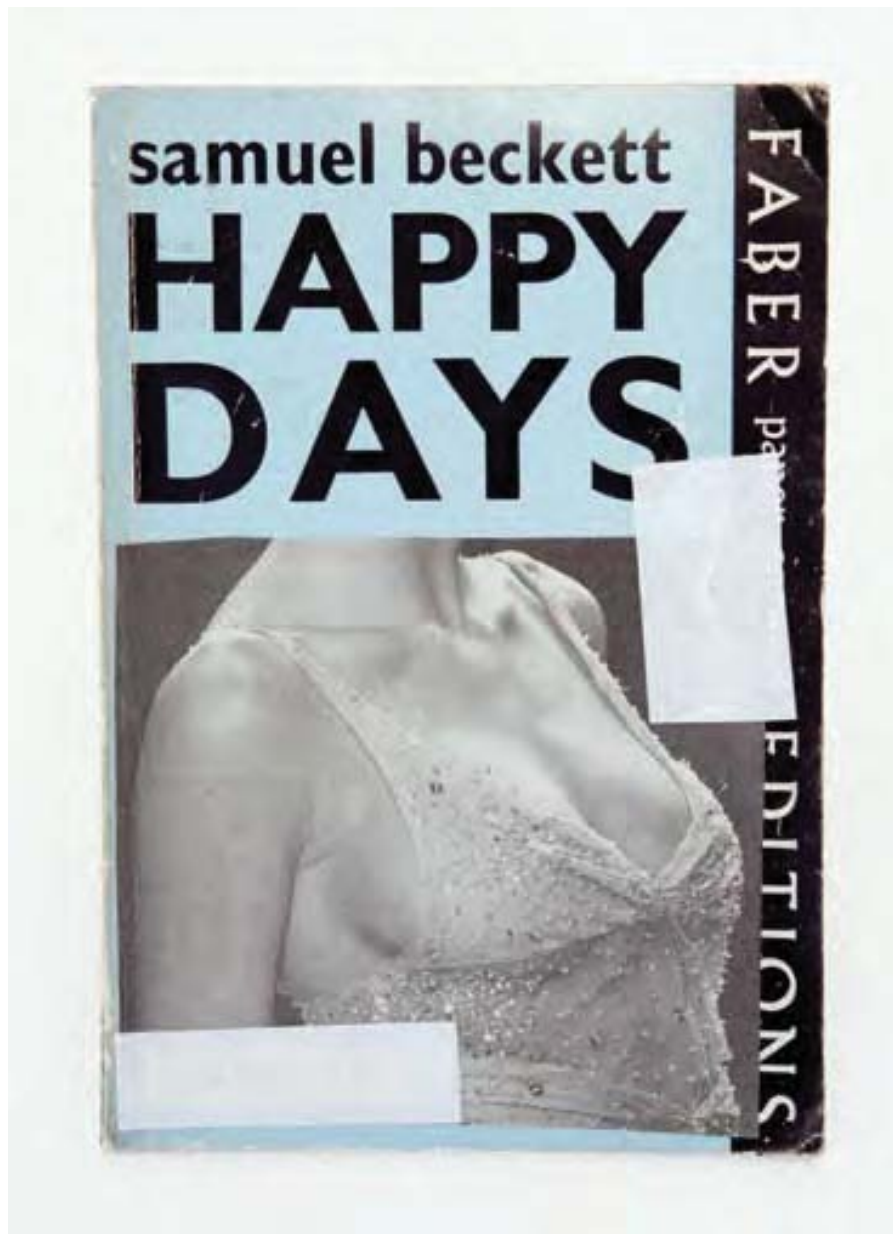
Jánis Nedéla *Codex No.7* 2006
Nails, acrylic paint, nail varnish, book. 40.0 x 50.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Jánis Nedéla *Codex No.8* 2006
Nails, acrylic paint, nail varnish, book. 40.0 x 50.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Ti Parks *Adjust your thinking – love is on the air* 2001
Book, collage cover, thread. 18.2 x 11.3 x 1.1 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council



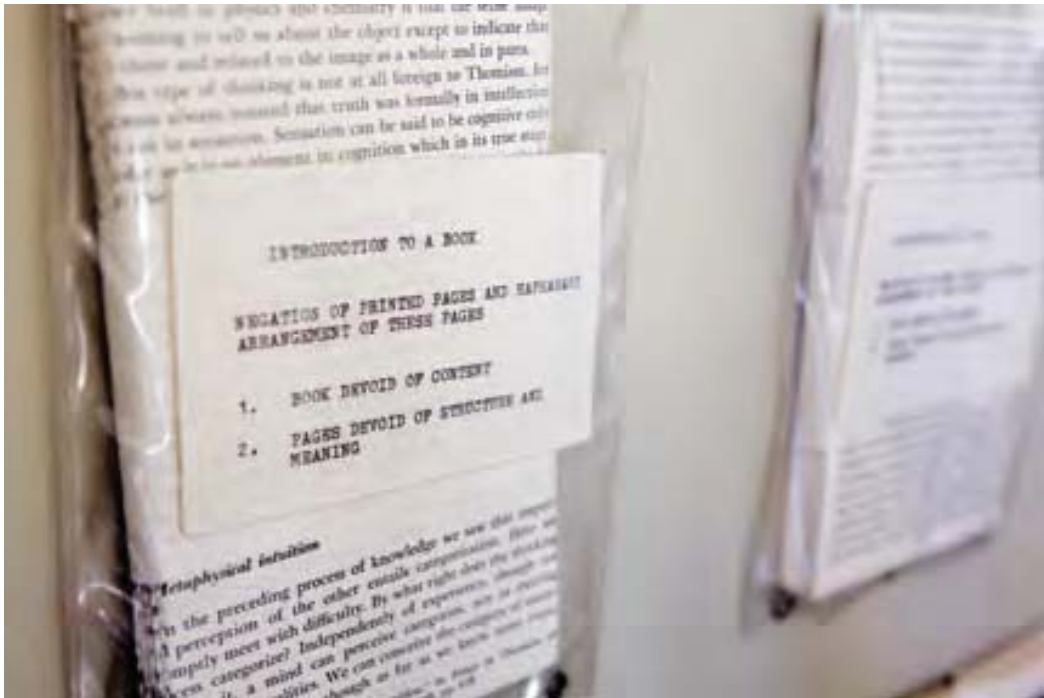
Ti Parks *Happy days* 2001
Book, collage cover, thread. 18.3 x 12.5 x 0.5 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council



Paul Partos *Introduction to a book* 1970

Books, typeset on paper & plastic sleeves. 68.0 x 69.0 cm

Courtesy of The Estate of Paul Partos. © Estate of Paul Partos /Licensed by Viscopy, 2009



Paul Partos *Introduction to a book* (detail) 1970

Books, typeset on paper & plastic sleeves. 68.0 x 69.0 cm

Courtesy of The Estate of Paul Partos. © Estate of Paul Partos /Licensed by Viscopy, 2009



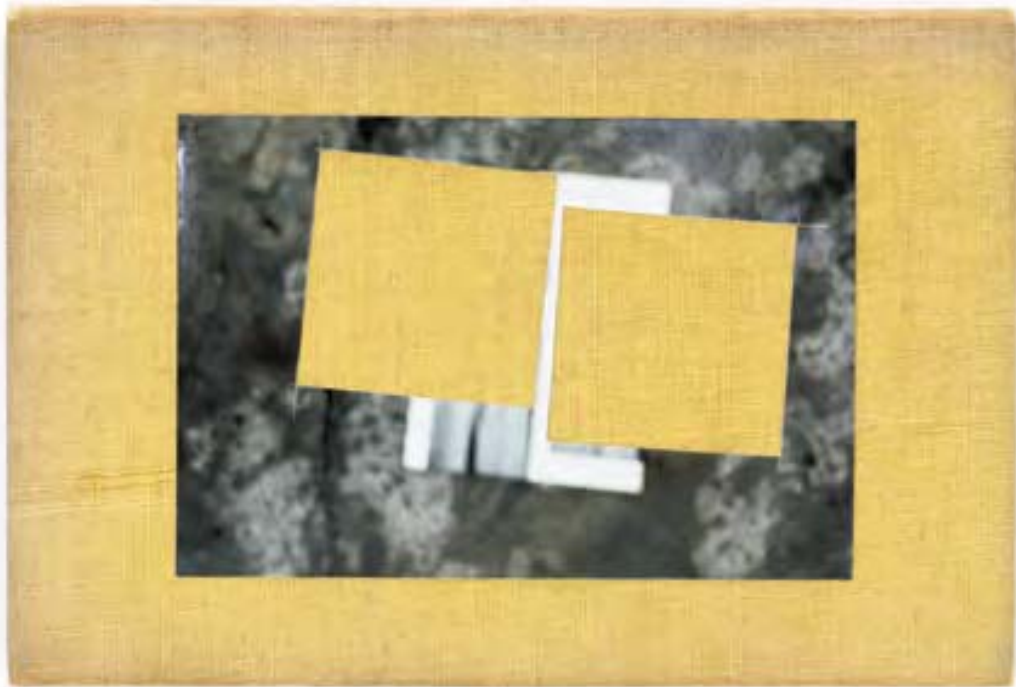
Patrick Pound *Learning to fly from books II* 2001
Books, perspex & wood. 46.0 x 28.8 x 16.8 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council



Patrick Pound *Ex libris* 1998

Collage of endpapers. 237.5 x 215.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington NZ



Patrick Pound *Photo-book* 1996
Collage on book. 32.0 x 39.0 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council



Patrick Pound *Now* 2007

Collage on book. 35.0 x 31.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and GRANTPIRRIE, Sydney



Alex Selenitsch *Schach #1 (circle) / Schach #2 (triangle) / Schach #3 (square)* 2006
Three books. Each 15.0 x 9.5 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council



Alex Selenitsch *The ghost of Adolf Hitler* 2001 (Ghost series)

71 staples through trimmed book. 10.25 x 11.5 x 0.75 cm

Courtesy of the Centre for the Artist Book, grahame galleries + editions, Brisbane



Alex Selenitsch *The ghost of Winston Churchill* 2001 (Ghost series)

Cotton thread stitching through book. 28.0 x 21.0 x 0.5 cm

Courtesy of the Centre for the Artist Book, grahame galleries + editions, Brisbane



Alex Selenitsch *The ghost of Joseph Stalin* 2003 (Ghost series)

Perforated steel dust-jacket on book. 22.0 x 15.0 x 5.5 cm

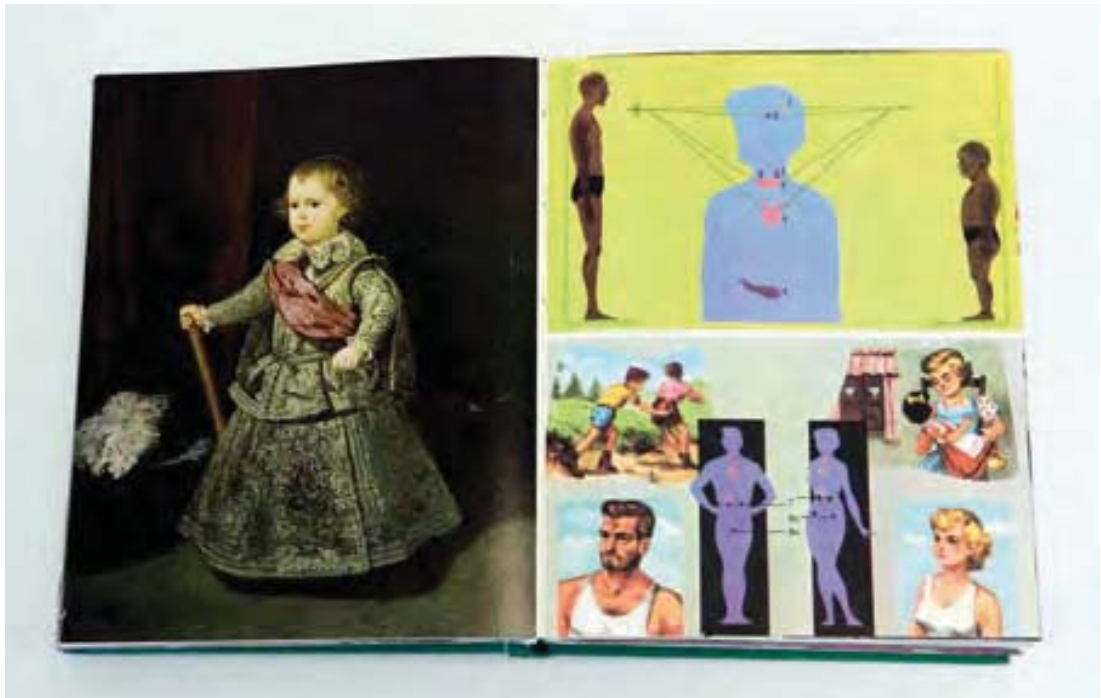
Courtesy of the Centre for the Artist Book, grahame galleries + editions, Brisbane



Alex Selenitsch *The ghost of Theodore Delano Roosevelt* 2006 (Ghost series)
52 chicago screws through tissue on drilled book. 30.0 x 25.0 x 1.0 cm
Courtesy of the Centre for the Artist Book, grahame galleries + editions, Brisbane



David Sequeira *Life and all its marvels* 2007
Book, digital prints collage. 24.5 x 39.0 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council



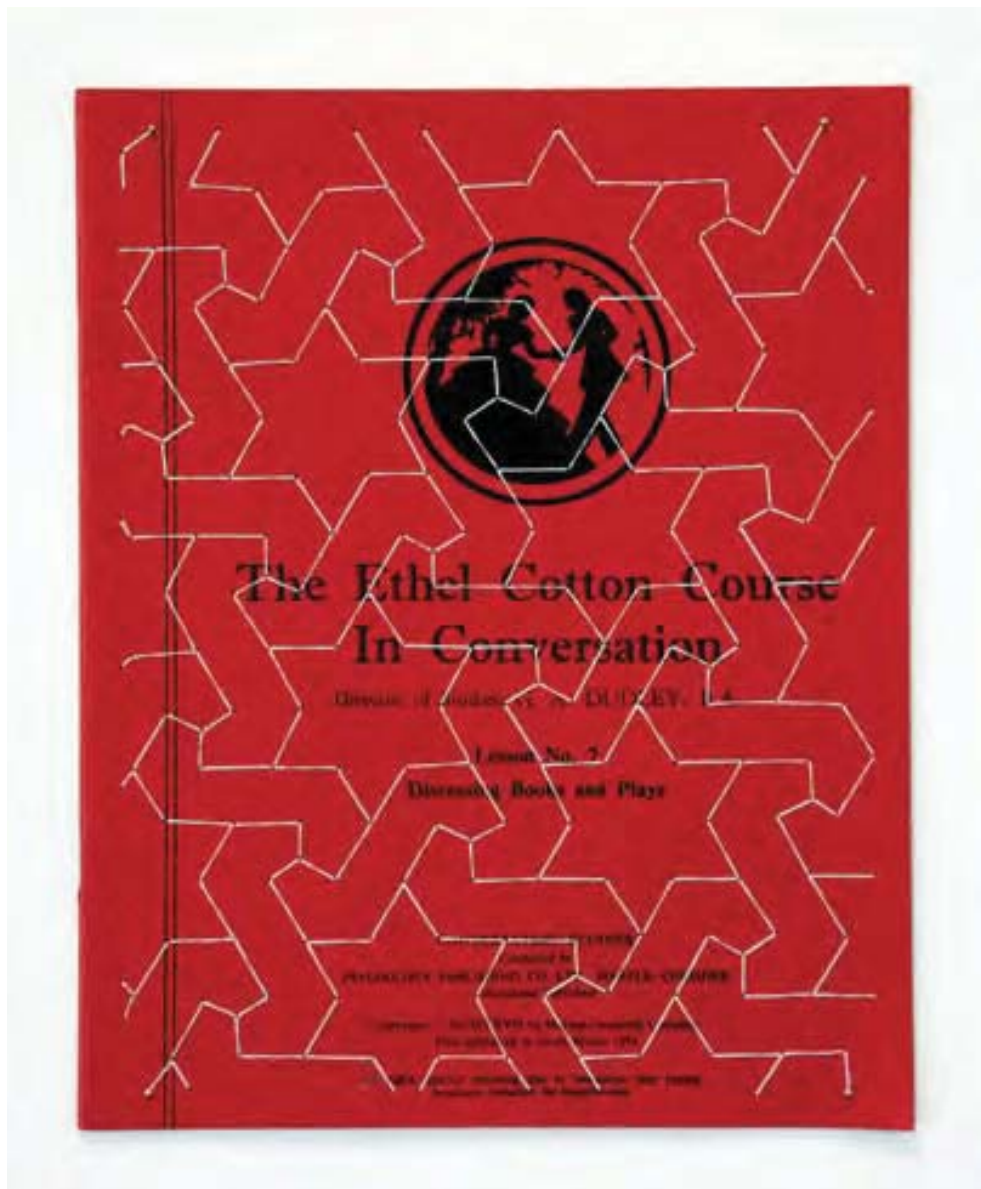
David Sequeira *Life and all its marvels* 2007

Book, digital prints collage. 24.5 x 39.0 cm

Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council



David Sequeira *The Ethel Cotton Course In Conversation* 1998
Stitched pattern on 12 books. Each 24.7 x 19.9 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council



David Sequeira *The Ethel Cotton Course In Conversation* (detail) 1998
Stitched pattern on 12 books. Each 24.7 x 19.9 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council



Glen Skien *Series of dreams (triptych)* 2005

Mixed media: etching, cotton thread, found objects, book spines, board, plastic, slide film. 25.0 x 40.0 x 4.5 cm

Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council



Glen Skien *I'm coming back for my wings I* 2009
Book & collage. 23.8 x 11.4 x 3.2 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Glen Skien *I'm coming back for my wings II* 2009
Book & collage. 21.2 x 11.0 x 3.6 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Glen Skien *I'm coming back for my wings III* 2009
Book & collage. 21.6 x 12.1 x 4.6 cm
Courtesy of the artist



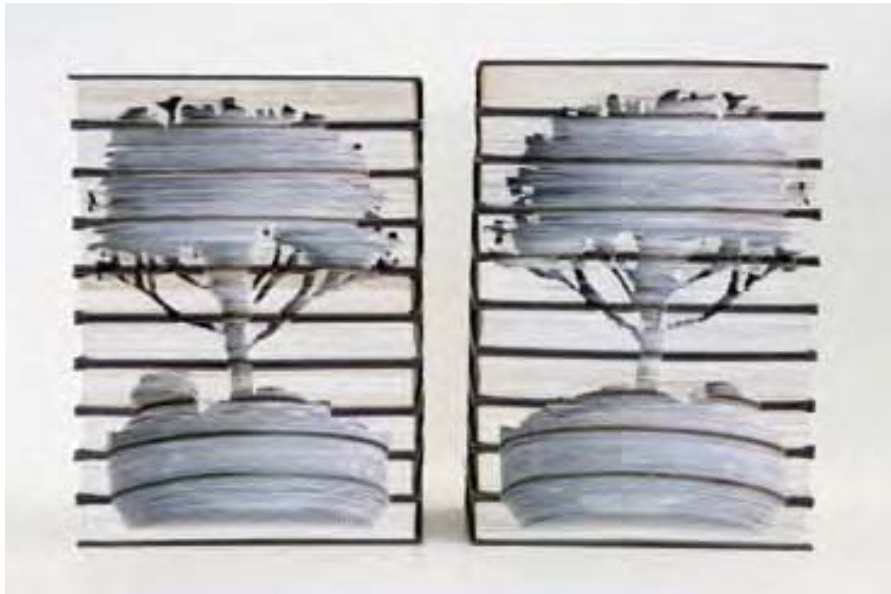
Kylie Stillman *Buff-tailed thornbill* 2005
Carved book. 43.5 x 33.5 x 6.0 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council



Kylie Stillman *Scrubit* 2002
Carved book. 43.0 x 33.0 x 6.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Utopia Art Sydney



Kylie Stillman *Superb Glossy Starling* 2008
Carved book. 42.0 x 32.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Utopia Art Sydney



Kylie Stillman *Mop tops* 2005
Carved books. 33.5 x 23.5 x 16.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Utopia Art Sydney



Kylie Stillman *Black pine* 2005
Carved books. 37.0 x 28.0 x 22.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Utopia Art Sydney



Hossein Valamanesh *Untitled* 1999

Bamboo, book & mirrors. 200.0 x 38.0 x 26.0 cm

Private Collection Sydney. Courtesy of the artist and GRANTPIRRIE.

© Hossein Valamanesh /Licensed by Viscopy, 2009



Hossein Valamanesh *Open book* 1993
Paper, binding ribbon. 48.5 x 52.0 x 12.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist. © Hossein Valamanesh /Licensed by Viscopy, 2009

MARION BORGELT

Marion Borgelt was born in Nhill, Victoria in 1954 and studied at the South Australian School of Art, Underdale College, South Australia and New York Studio School. She lived in New York in the late 1970s, and in Paris for a number of years during the 1990s. Her work has been exhibited widely in Australia, and is held in many public and private collections, both in Australia and abroad. Marion currently lives in Sydney, New South Wales.

Cryptologist's memoir No.1 2004
Book, beeswax, oil & ribbon. 31.5 x 45.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist. © Marion Borgelt/
Licensed by Viscopy, 2009

Cryptologist's memoir No.15 2004
Book, beeswax, oil & ribbon. 38.7 x 57.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist. © Marion Borgelt/
Licensed by Viscopy, 2009

Cryptologist's memoir No.18 2004
Book, beeswax, oil & ribbon. 38.7 x 57.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist. © Marion Borgelt/
Licensed by Viscopy, 2009

Cryptologist's memoir No.22 2006
Book, beeswax, oil & ribbon. 30.8 x 43.8 cm
Courtesy of the artist. © Marion Borgelt/
Licensed by Viscopy, 2009

Cryptologist's memoir No.25 2006
Book, beeswax, oil & ribbon. 30.6 x 46.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist. © Marion Borgelt/
Licensed by Viscopy, 2009

Cryptologist's memoir No.35 2007
Book, beeswax, oil & ribbon. 30.0 x 41.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist. © Marion Borgelt/
Licensed by Viscopy, 2009

JAYNE DYER

Jayne Dyer was born in Melbourne, and studied at RMIT, Melbourne, before moving to Sydney in 1995. She has exhibited widely throughout Australia and Asia and since 2008 she has been living and working in Beijing, China.

Babel 3 2006
Books, acrylic paint & timber box
20.0 x 37.0 x 15.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist. © Jayne Dyer/Licensed
by Viscopy, 2009

A Reading 11 2009
Books & acrylic paint. 25.5 x 24.0 x 17.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist. © Jayne Dyer/Licensed
by Viscopy, 2009

A Reading 3 2008
Digital print on aluminium. 198.0 x 120.0 cm
Image from The Reading Room installation,
Elizabeth Bay House Museum, Historic Houses
Trust of NSW, 2007. Courtesy of the artist.
© Jayne Dyer/Licensed by Viscopy, 2009

Reading 4 2008
Digital print on aluminium. 198.0 x 120.0 cm
Image from The Reading Room installation,
Elizabeth Bay House Museum, Historic Houses
Trust of NSW, 2007. Courtesy of the artist.
© Jayne Dyer/Licensed by Viscopy, 2009

SIMRYN GILL

Simryn Gill was born in Singapore in 1959 and currently divides her time between Port Dickson in Malaysia, and Sydney, Australia. Simryn's work has been exhibited in Australia and overseas, including in North and South America, Asia and Europe.

Forest series No.2 1996-98

Gelatin silver photograph. 120.0 x 95.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Breenspace, Sydney and Tracy William Ltd. NY

Forest series No.3 1996-98

Gelatin silver photograph. 120.0 x 95.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Breenspace, Sydney and Tracy William Ltd. NY

Forest series No.4 1996-98

Gelatin silver photograph. 120.0 x 95.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Breenspace, Sydney and Tracy William Ltd. NY

Forest series No.7 1996-98

Gelatin silver photograph. 120.0 x 95.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Breenspace, Sydney and Tracy William Ltd. NY

Forest series No.13 1996-98

Gelatin silver photograph. 120.0 x 95.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Breenspace, Sydney and Tracy William Ltd. NY

Forest series No.14 1996-98

Gelatin silver photograph. 120.0 x 95.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Breenspace, Sydney and Tracy William Ltd. NY

JULIE GOUGH

Dr. Julie Gough was born in Melbourne, Victoria, in 1965 and completed her Visual Arts degree at Curtin University, Western Australia. Julie's works have been seen in many exhibitions around Australia, and are held in significant public collections. She received her doctorate in 2001 from the University of Tasmania, Hobart, and currently resides in Hobart, Tasmania.

A half hour hidden history reader 2007

Collage & hand-writing on white paint over existing text. 21.3 x 15.7 x 2.0 cm
Collection, State Library of Queensland

Included in the exhibition at Artspace Mackay, Gladstone Regional Gallery & Museum, Grafton Regional Gallery and Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery only.

PAUL HOBAN

Paul Hoban was born in Cowra, New South Wales in 1954, and studied at the South Australian School of Art, the University of South Australia and the Royal College of Art, London. He has exhibited widely in Australia and his work is held in collections in Australia, Japan, Spain and Argentina. Paul has lived in London and currently resides in Adelaide, South Australia.

2TS 1995

Book & electric guitar string. 21.2 x 28.2 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Greenaway Art
Gallery, Adelaide

B.o.P 2000

Ink on book. 15.7 x 21.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Greenaway Art
Gallery, Adelaide

LIZ JENEID

Liz Jeneid was born in Australia in 1936. Her work has been exhibited throughout Australia and she has undertaken many residencies, including going twice to Antarctica. She is currently Honorary Fellow in the Faculty of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong, and lives in Mt Kembla, New South Wales.

Book for a journey 2002

6 panels using recycled thesaurus pages, gesso
Thai paper, ink, muslin. 138.0 x 390.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist. © Liz Jeneid /Licensed
by Viscopy, 2009

YVONNE KENDALL

Yvonne Kendall was born in Birmingham, England in 1965. She studied sculpture at the Victorian College, Prahran Campus, and completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1987. She has exhibited widely throughout Australia and Europe, and currently lives and works in Reutlingen, Germany.

Learning to read again #2 2004

Book, crepe paper, newspaper, string
8.0 x 30.0 x 23.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Niagara Galleries,
Melbourne

Learning to read again #5 2004

Book, crepe paper, newspaper, string.
25.0 x 24.0 x 9.0 cm

Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional
Council

Learning to read again #10 2004

Book, crepe paper, newspaper.
21.0 x 26.0 x 10.0 cm

Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional
Council

ARCHIE MOORE

Archie Moore was born in Toowoomba, Queensland, in 1970 and studied visual arts at Queensland University of Technology, as well as the Academy Of Fine Arts Prague, Czech Republic. His work has been exhibited around Australia and in Europe, and has won many awards, including the Anne and Gordon Samstag Scholarship in 2001. He currently resides in Brisbane, Queensland.

Maltheism 2007

Folded pages of Bible.
16.0 x 30.0 x 45.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Ghost Ship (HMB Malthesia) 2008

Folded pages of Bible, mirror, sculpty/putty &
wood. 6.0 x 39.0 x 27.0 cm

Courtesy of the artist

JÁNIS NEDÉLA

Jánis Nedéla was born in Albany, Western Australia, in 1955 and studied at Perth Technical College and Curtin University of Technology, Western Australia. He has exhibited extensively throughout Australia and overseas, including North and South America, Europe and Asia. He currently lives in Fremantle, Western Australia.

Stigmata 2005

Nails, book. 40.0 x 50.5 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council

Stigmata No.2 2006

Nails, acrylic paint, nail varnish, book.
40.0 x 50.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Stigmata No.3 2006

Nails, acrylic paint, nail varnish, book.
40.0 x 50.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Codex No.5 2005

Nails, acrylic paint, nail varnish, altered book.
40.0 x 50.5 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council

Codex No.7 2006

Nails, acrylic paint, nail varnish, book,
40.0 x 50.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Codex No.8 2006

Nails, acrylic paint, nail varnish, book.
40.0 x 50.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist

TI PARKS

Ti Parks was born in 1939, in the United Kingdom, where he studied painting and printmaking at the Bromley College of Art in Kent and at the Slade School in London. He has exhibited extensively in Australia and Europe and his works are held in many significant public and private collections, including the Tate Gallery, London, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Australian National Gallery, Canberra. Ti lived in Australia for many years until he returned to the UK, via New Zealand, where he currently resides.

Adjust your thinking – love is on the air 2001

Book, collage cover, thread.
18.2 x 11.3 x 1.1 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council

Happy days 2001

Book, collage cover, thread.
18.3 x 12.5 x 0.5 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council

PAUL PARTOS

Paul Partos was born in 1943 in Bratislava, Slovakia and migrated to Australia with his family, via France, in 1949. He studied painting at RMIT in Melbourne in the early 1960s. One of the 'Field' artists, he lived in New York for a few years in the early 1970s. His work was exhibited extensively in Australia, and is held in many significant public and private collections. Shortly before he passed away in 2002, his work was included in *Fieldwork: Australian Art 1968-2002*, at the new Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Federation Square, Melbourne.

Introduction to a book 1970

Books, typeset on paper & plastic sleeves.

68.0 x 69.0 cm

Courtesy of The Estate of Paul Partos. © Estate of Paul Partos /Licensed by Viscopy, 2009

PATRICK POUND

Patrick Pound was born in New Zealand in 1962 and currently resides in Melbourne. He is a doctoral candidate at the University of Melbourne. Patrick has exhibited widely throughout Australia, New Zealand Asia and Europe. His work is held in many public and private collections.

Learning to fly from books II 2001

Book, perspex and wood. 46.0 x 28.8 x 16.8 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council

Ex Libris 1998

Collage of endpapers. 237.5 x 215.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington NZ

Photo-book 1996

Collage on book. 32.0 x 39.0 cm.
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council

Now 2007

Collage on book. 35.0 x 31.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and GRANTPIRRIE, Sydney

ALEX SELENITSCH

Alex Selenitsch was born in Germany in 1946 and arrived in Australia in 1949. Although a qualified architect, his work has been exhibited widely throughout Australia and is held in many significant private and public collections in Australia, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. He currently lives in Melbourne, Victoria.

Schach #1 (circle) / Schach #2 (triangle) / Schach #3 (square) 2006

Three books. Each 15.0 x 9.5 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council

The ghost of Adolf Hitler (Ghost series) 2001

71 staples through trimmed found book.
10.25 x 11.5 x 0.75 cm

Courtesy of the Centre for the Artist Book,
grahame galleries + editions, Brisbane

The ghost of Winston Churchill (Ghost series)

2001
Cotton thread stitching through found book.
28.0 x 21.0 x 0.5 cm

Courtesy of the Centre for the Artist Book,
grahame galleries + editions, Brisbane

The ghost of Joseph Stalin (Ghost series) 2003

Perforated steel dust-jacket on book.
22.0 x 15.0 x 5.5 cm

Courtesy of the Centre for the Artist Book,
grahame galleries + editions, Brisbane

The ghost of Theodore Delano Roosevelt (Ghost Series) 2006

52 chicago screws through tissue on drilled found book. 30.0 x 25.0 x 1.0 cm

Courtesy of the Centre for the Artist Book,
grahame galleries + editions, Brisbane

DAVID SEQUEIRA

David Sequeira was born in New Delhi, India, in 1966. He is currently a doctoral candidate at RMIT, Melbourne. David's work has been exhibited widely in Australia and overseas, including in New Delhi, New York, Constantinople and Bandung, Indonesia. He currently lives in Canberra, Australian Capital Territory.

Life and all its marvels 2007

Book, digital prints collage. 24.5 x 39.0 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council

The Ethel Cotton Course In Conversation 1998

Stitched pattern on 12 books. Each 24.7 x 19.9 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council

GLEN SKIEN

Glen Skien was born in Nambour, Queensland, in 1959. Currently, he is a doctoral candidate at Griffith University in Brisbane. Glen's work has been exhibited widely in Queensland, throughout Australia, and in Japan. He has undertaken a number of residencies and now currently resides in Brisbane, Queensland.

Series of dreams (triptych) 2005

Mixed media: etching, cotton thread, found objects, book spines, board, plastic, slide film.
25.0 x 40.0 x 4.5 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council

I'm coming back for my wings I 2009

Books & collage. 23.8 x 11.4 x 3.2 cm
Courtesy of the artist

I'm coming back for my wings II 2009

Books & collage. 21.2 x 11.0 x 3.6 cm
Courtesy of the artist

I'm coming back for my wings III 2009

Books & collage. 21.6 x 12.1 x 4.6 cm
Courtesy of the artist

KYLIE STILLMAN

Kylie Stillman was born in Australia in 1975. She studied painting at RMIT and graduated with Honours in 1999. Since then, Kylie's work has been exhibited throughout Australia and she undertook a residency in Milan in 2006. Kylie now lives in Melbourne, Victoria.

Buff-tailed thornbill 2005
Book. 43.5 x 33.5 x 6.0 cm
Collection Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Council

Scrubtit 2002
Book. 43.0 x 33.0 x 6.5 cm
Courtesy of the Artist and Utopia Art Sydney

Superb glossy starling 2008
Book. 42.0 x 32.0 cm
Courtesy of the Artist and Utopia Art Sydney

Mop tops 2005
Book. 33.5 x 23.5 x 16.5 cm
Courtesy of the Artist and Utopia Art Sydney

Black pine 2005
Book. 37.0 x 28.0 x 22.0 cm
Courtesy of the Artist and Utopia Art Sydney

HOSSEIN VALAMANESH

Hossein Valamanesh was born in Tehran, Iran, in 1949. He emigrated to Australia after completing his degree in Fine Arts. He has exhibited extensively in Australia and abroad, including Tokyo, Berlin, Madrid, Singapore, Taipei, Bangladesh and Lahore, Pakistan. His work is held in many public and private collections. Hossein has also undertaken residencies in Asia and Europe, and he now lives in Adelaide, South Australia.

Untitled 1999
Bamboo, book & mirrors.
200.0 x 38.0 x 26.0 cm
Private Collection Sydney. Courtesy of the artist and GRANTPIRRIE. © Hossein Valamanesh/
Licensed by Viscopy, 2009

Open Book 1993
Paper, binding ribbon. 48.5 x 52.0 x 12.0 cm
Courtesy of the artist. © Hossein Valamanesh/
Licensed by Viscopy, 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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From the initial development right through to the exhibition stage, this project would not have been possible without the help and support of my colleagues at Artspace Mackay. I would particularly like to thank Anna and Alicia for organising all the loans, packing and transport. I am also extremely grateful to the artists and the galleries who represent them, for their help in formulating my ideas and selecting their work. I would especially like to thank Bill Nuttall and Gina Lee from Niagara Galleries, Melbourne, Paul Greenaway from Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide, Christopher Hodges and Lynda Eager from Utopia Art, Sydney, Bridget Pirrie and Tony Stephens from Grantpirrie, Sydney and Noreen Grahame from Grahame Galleries + Editions, Brisbane.

I wish to thank the State Library of Queensland, Mackay Regional Council, the artists and the private collectors who have so generously lent their works for the exhibition and tour. I am indebted to Helen Cole and Fe Skoufa from the State Library of Queensland, Viva Partos, Noreen Grahame and Saadia Durham. All the works in this exhibition are unique and many are extremely fragile and I am eternally grateful to all the lenders for allowing these works to tour for two years.

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Finally, a big thank you to Fiona Marshall from Museum and Gallery Services Queensland, for all her help and advice in planning the tour and for agreeing to manage it once it leaves Mackay.

Michael Wardell

Exhibition tour itinerary for RECYCLED LIBRARY: Altered books

Artspace Mackay, QLD

4 September - 25 October 2009

Gladstone Regional Gallery & Museum, QLD

18 December 2009 - 6 March 2010

Grafton Regional Gallery, NSW

17 March - 25 April 2010

Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, VIC

12 May - 27 June 2010

Western Plains Cultural Centre, Dubbo, NSW

3 July - 8 August 2010

Country Arts, (3 venues) SA

20 August - 12 February 2011

Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, NSW

1 March - 30 May 2011

Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, NSW

24 June - 7 August 2011

Noosa Regional Gallery, QLD

20 August - 2 October 2011

Hervey Bay Regional Gallery, QLD

9 October - 14 November 2011