2000

Unpacking my library: stories of how we understood the world

Shelagh Margaret Gwynne Morgan
Southern Cross University

Publication details
Morgan, SMG 2000, 'Unpacking my library: stories of how we understood the world', PhD thesis, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW.
Copyright SMG Morgan 2000
UNPACKING MY LIBRARY
-stories of how we have understood the world-

shelagh morgan

shelagh gwynne morgan

PhD

Southern Cross University

school of contemporary arts (visual arts)

august 2000
 unpacking my library
-stories of how we have understood the world

Unpacking my Library is a visual autobiography that traces my memories of growing up as a third generation expatriate child in various British colonial territories.

Through the work I look at the subtle and not so subtle ways in which a British subject was reproduced in these colonial communities.

The gap between memory and the fictions that were used to reconstruct the subject is a predominant theme throughout this body of work. I visually play with dual experience and the conflicting sites of memory, by juxtapositioning self and other, same and difference, across a series of autographic accounts. I am interested in the secondary narrative that emerges in this gap; it might be seen to trace, however lightly, the third or hybrid self of the invisible child who listens and watches in the spaces in-between.

This CD documents three sets of artist's books which form a serialised autobiography.

This Cd has been constructed using dramweaver. To open the site click on the index icon.
Contents

Synopsis .......................................................................................................................................................... 7
Abstract ....................................................................................................................................................... 7
Background to the project. .......................................................................................................................... 8
Conceptual Background ............................................................................................................................... 8
Scope of the work ...................................................................................................................................... 10
Structure of the documentation ................................................................................................................. 10
My Landscape, My Identity ......................................................................................................................... 12
An Expatriate Identity ................................................................................................................................. 21
The Journey Out (my title) ......................................................................................................................... 21

Chapter One In the description of an unmapped movement ........................................................................ 27
  Mapping the Movement ............................................................................................................................. 27
  Cutting and Pasting ................................................................................................................................ 32
  A Phrasing Device .................................................................................................................................. 33
  The bookness of books .............................................................................................................................. 34
  Not yet home. Locus - (memory places) ................................................................................................. 36
  Relative Positions .................................................................................................................................. 38
  Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................... 39

Chapter 2 ‘Unpacking My Library’ - how I write some of my books - ......................................................... 41
  Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 41
  A Theory of Process ................................................................................................................................. 41
  Not Yet Home, Blue print for a journey ................................................................................................. 41
  How I Remember ................................................................................................................................... 43
  Memory Needs Objects: Collecting ......................................................................................................... 44
  Two Suitcases and an empty grey trunk ............................................................................................... 46
  The bookness of the Books ..................................................................................................................... 47
  Aspects of The Library/ The Book as a Site ............................................................................................. 49
  Books Titles and what they account for ................................................................................................. 49
  Revealing the process ............................................................................................................................. 50
  The artifices we employ to gather the world around us - ................................................................. 51
Synopsis.
This research project was based on exploring a perceived similarity between the development of a visual language and the way in which cultural identity is developed. It analysed how a process of negotiation between self and site traces the tension between dwelling and travelling.

The project resulted in a visual autobiography that reveals the becoming space between the said and the unsaid.

Abstract
Unpacking my Library is the title for the body of artistic work discussed in this documentation. The work has been produced over a four-year period and consists of four interrelated sets of artist’s books and framed wall images that make up my library.

My aim was to create a body of work that traced the development and creation of visual objects and, by so doing map the development of a personal cultural identity. I was interested in exploring what I perceived as a correspondence between the processes developed in the studio to articulate ideas visually, and the way in which identity develops. The work was based on the principle that both the studio processes and the development of cultural identity involved instances of negotiation between self and site. It was my intention that the project would result in a visual documentation of how the development and creation of visual objects provided insights into those moments in which the process invents or reinvents the subject.

The installation of this work has been formulated around the idea of framing a moment in the performance of unpacking the library, the library being a series of books which frame the subject. What is captured in this frame is a person reviewing her memories of some of the terms and phrases used to formulate a sense of who she was in the world. These memories relate to the years between 1955 and 1972.

The work has been constructed around a series of stories that are based on these memories. In each of the four stages of the project these stories are reworked in slightly different media. This results in a sequential development of the form and content which maps the performance of cultural inculcation within the specific context of being a British expatriate. There is an undeniable sense of repetition in the work that reflects my memories of the way in which the process of reproducing cultural identity was performed.

The research approach that I have taken is based on the idea of utilising personal visual material as or like it is primary research material. Through an interdisciplinary approach I have explored the potential of the artistic process of making as a form of autobiographical extension.

The form of the project has been designed around the idea of constructing a library of artist’s books. This aspect of the work’s structure was to some extent triggered by Walter Benjamin’s essay Unpacking my Library from which I have borrowed the working title for the project.

The project design was formulated around the idea of three interrelated sets of work; this eventually became three sets of artist’s books plus a series of framed wall images and a CD version of the complete library. Each set or version represents a stage in the development of the conceptual context of the work and the image construction.

Stage one of the project was modelled loosely on an ethnographic expedition. At this point my main concern was to collect the raw data from which the subsequent work could be developed. I was also engaged at this point in working through and trialing various formal considerations in terms of how the individual images would be collated, and how I might approach the installation as a whole.
Stage two of the project was a period in which I edited the imagery and developed the conceptual headings from which to work. This was an editing process in which the imagery was developed into more synthesised and sophisticated compositions.

In stage three and four of the project I trialed and developed two completely new versions of the work. At this stage I was aware of working between the images in terms of the conceptual ideas I was working with. The image construction and compositions were becoming more complex as I moved from the hand-made through to the digital and back to the hand-made collage.

**Background to the project.**

Artistic processes have been used to manifest individual identity and broader group and cultural characteristics throughout history. My intention in the development of this body of work was to focus on the moments of transaction that occur when using repetitious examples of same and difference, self and other, which were deliberately used to re-produce the British subject. I am interested in that precise moment in which the visual re-construction of these classifications of self and other, in a specifically post-colonial context, reveals the third space created between references to a fictitious self-identity and the real experiences of the child. Through the development of a series of versions of the stories the inherited cultural identity of the subject is re-constructed and ultimately modified.

My strategy was to utilise visual material drawn directly from my family's colonialist history. This visual resource was developed artistically and poetically to articulate, investigate and ultimately describe formations of cultural identity.

I initially structured the project loosely around the idea of acting as if I was undertaking an ethnographic expedition. From this starting point I gathered raw material with the intention of it forming the basis of further work. This was a process of re-collection that involved a dual tracking between self as the subject of observation and self as observer.

During my masters project (The Science of Whereabouts, 1994/95) I became interested in looking at how the original visual transcript of an idea was altered when different applications of various studio processes were used to rework the image. I was drawn to the idea that if one were to present all of the stages of image development as a complete body of work this might disrupt the notion of fact or truth. It was possible that a single image, that depicts an idea or object, comes to stand as an iconic reference that is neither supported nor interrupted by variations to its content. Such an image or series of images might not reveal the flaws in a narrative. In particular I was thinking about the way in which my cultural identity had been constructed out of a series of fictions that had come to be signifying references that determined their users. Through a process of sequential repetition and reworking I believed that I could interrupt the notion of prescribed defining boundaries, because repetition and reworking both suggest a process of negotiation, which in turn suppresses presence.

I formulated the project Unpacking my Library around the concept of a visual journey through an idea. I felt that the evidence of a process of image development through several stages would trace the way in which a process of negotiation between self and place occurs. The mixed media approach to the work leads to a series of versions of the same stories each of which are slightly altered by the media used. If nothing else this would seem to suggest that identity, cultural or otherwise, is not a stable state but is in fact in a state of becoming.

**Conceptual Background**

The conceptual background to the project was based on my childhood memories and experiences of growing up as a fourth generation expatriate child in various British colonies. I am the product on my mother's side, of three generations of colonial civil servants who spent their lives working in India, Cyprus, Malaya, and various parts of Africa. My father's family were Welsh settlers in South Africa from about 1830. To provide a historical background to this position I have included a short version of my grandmother's journals. Members of the family in England hold the original journals. My history locates me as the product
of a colonial ideology. Through the work I look at the way cultural identity was promoted to me as a child.

I investigate the formulation of my cultural identity in a series of visual autobiographical works. My intention was to produce a visual account of the process of negotiation between self and place that is phrased within the context of post-coloniality.

It has been my experience that post-colonial discourse emphasises the displaced identities of the colonised nations. My identity is brought into question here in as much as post-coloniality does not offer an alternative to my sense of dislocation. Being the product of four generations of consistent expatriation has resulted in a displaced sense of who I am in relation to where I am. Whilst being conscious of the fact that I speak from the relatively privileged position of a white mainstream power base I am curious to find a place for that aspect of my identity that might be described as hyphenated. The discursive trend in post-colonial writing appears to be predominantly concerned with the hyphenated-subject, for example, Afro-Americans. I have not found many references to how the post-colonial subject, who might be described as British-African, fits into a post-colonial discourse. The problem seems to be that such a person cannot assume that there is any escape from the bind of ethnocentricity. In effect my race and class seems to determine where I can or cannot speak from. I find that the outline used to designate the colonial expatriate defines me in ways that do not correlate with my memories and experience. To use an analogy, the colour used to designate the area of my body in relation to the (real) post-colonial subject is not quite the right shade, although it might be pink it is not that exact tone of pink.

I was convinced that a visual account of my history and experiences would be of some significance. I wanted to map some of the ways in which my identity, as an expatriate child of British roots, had been constructed, and reveal what I saw as the fissures and or flaws in my supposedly British identity. I am inclined to think that the lessons I received on how to be an ideal expatiate British subject were based on an essentially displaced nationalism. As Homi Bhabha suggests in his essay, Reflection on Exile, ‘nationalism is an assertion of belonging in and to a place, and people and heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language and culture’.

An exploration of cultural identity through this visual art studio process, would result in a remixing of the palette that had been used to colour me in as a child. This might offer a possible insight into the ongoing process of negotiation between self and place.

Research Approach.

The research approach that I have taken is based on the idea of utilising personal visual material as or like it is primary research material. Through an interdisciplinary approach I have explored the potential of the artistic process of making as a form of autobiographical extension.

The form of the project has been designed around the idea of constructing a library of artist’s books. This aspect of the work’s structure was to some extent triggered by Walter Benjamin’s essay Unpacking my Library from which I have borrowed the working title for the project.

The project design was formulated around the idea of three interrelated sets of work; this eventually became three sets of artist’s books plus a series of framed wall images and a CD version of the complete library. Each set or version represents a stage in the development of the conceptual context of the work and the image construction.

---

Stage one of the project was modelled loosely on an ethnographic expedition. At this point my main concern was to collect the raw data from which the subsequent work could be developed. I was also engaged at this point in working through and trialing various formal considerations in terms of how the individual images would be collated, and how I might approach the installation as a whole.

Stage two of the project was a period in which I edited the imagery and developed the conceptual headings from which to work. This was an editing process in which the imagery was developed into more synthesised and sophisticated compositions.

In stage three and four of the project I trialed and developed two completely new versions of the work. At this stage I was aware of working between the images in terms of the conceptual ideas I was working with. The image construction and compositions were becoming more complex as I moved from the hand-made through to the digital and back to the hand-made collage.

**Scope of the work**

**A position**

The work's conceptual currency is situated within post-colonial discourses. Post-coloniality is by its very nature a reconstructive process and I am interested in the terms and phrases that this discourse provides which might be used to suggest a way of working.

The work is produced within the generally formal constraints of image/object construction. My expectations for the presentation of the work was initially based on it being exhibited in a reasonably conservative gallery space. However as the work progressed I felt that this was not consistent with the idea of being caught between arrival and departure. The final exhibition of the work will be in an empty house, with out any props or special lighting.

My engagement in the theoretical discourses to which I allude may seem to verge on irreverence. This may be most evident in the documentation where I have attempted to map the way in which various contemporary theories have suggested a way of working. In general I would describe my approach as having used these areas of contemporary thought as tools in a studio practice, ie. Praxis: the practical application or exercise of a branch of learning. I would describe the way that I have used the theoretical areas that I quote from in the document, as being similar to the way in which I might use collage to develop an image in the studio. I see them as objects that allude to a range of ideas, rather than as a part of critical analysis of the ideas. I find that contemporary theory suggests that precedence have been set for ways of approaching an idea or a way of thinking or working. Through the studio process I have attempted to translate this into elements of a visual art process. It is this translation of concept into practice that I have been most concerned with mapping in this documentation.

**Structure of the documentation.**

Throughout the document I discuss the development of each facet of the work as it occurred in the studio. This means that certain elements of the work's construction, for example artist's books, are discussed in two or three different places within the document. I have not grouped these together into one chapter because I wanted the document to follow, as closely as possible, the actual development of the material and conceptual components of the work. The approach that I have taken is to document a sense of how things become connected through a studio practice.

The four stages of the work are discussed as separate chapters. At the end of each of these four chapters is a catalogue or ‘invent(s) tory’ of the work discussed in that section. I have applied a more creative approached to the ‘invent(s) tory’ section of the document. Each of the four ‘invent(s) tories’ are removable sections which consist of selected images from the work and two sets of written information.
Firstly I have provided a short story or description of the work and why I made it. This story is not written in a consistent style or tense. For example, sometimes it is my voice and sometimes it is another narrator, sometimes they consist of a sentence and at other times they are longer. Because the basic story line is the same across all four sets of work the texts in the ‘invent (s) tories’ might appear repetitive. However, each one is worded differently and reflects the subtle changes in focus that emerge as the work develops, and perhaps the ambiguities to be found in oral histories.

Secondly I include a quotation. The quotations in this section are used in the same way that I use material in the creation of the images themselves, that is, as a part of a collage process. The quotations have not been used to describe the image but as an indication of the peripheral activities that are intrinsic to the production of a body of work. This is also an allusion to the noise of commentary that occurs quite literally, in the margins of the main body of the work. When I was making my M.A. work I inserted photocopies of comments written in the margins of my documentation as a way of revealing the background noise that occurred whilst making the work. This grew to include words printed over images such as ‘somewhere a dog is barking’, which I took from the subtitles of the movie Dead Calm. This particular subtitle occurred at a time in the movie when there was not a dog to be seen; I was struck by the way in which this kind of commentary on the peripheral environment in which a certain event was taking place layered one’s understanding of the events. I have developed this strategy to a point where information might appear as if it had just fallen from sky. In fact, it is a considered approach that is determined by the inter-relationship of things and the meanings and significance that have developed through the production of the work.
Landscaping In Australia.

Pictures of the landscape are tangible objects specific to place, objects which can be possessed and which symbolise a cultural possession of the land. What then are artists in Australia painting when they paint the landscape? Over the past two centuries the landscape has been invented and reinvented many times, in the context of serving different cultural, social and political needs.

It has been well documented that the search for an explicitly Australian identity has traditionally been explored through constant revisions of how we see, respond to or live with and in the Australian landscape and that this has been a consistent theme throughout the history of Australian art. This history documents a long list of artists who have attempted to define a unique essence of Australia, its landscape and people.

Texts such as: Island in the Stream: Myths of Place in Australian Culture, edited by Paul Foss, 1988, Living in a New Country by Paul Carter, 1992, and Women and the Bush by Kay Schaffer, 1988, to mention a few, all provide accounts of how the landscape has been used in one way or another in an attempt to identify and represented a specifically Australian identity.

My Landscape, My Identity.

My own engagement in this discourse has been fundamental to the development of my work. The following overview of my previous work will serve the dual purpose of placing Unpacking My Library into an historical context and grounding my practice in an ongoing visual dialogue.

\textit{genii loci.}

1987

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{landscape.png}
\caption{A landscape without a face; a still life.}{1}
\end{figure}

2: P. Foss, Island in the Stream, Myths Of Place In Australian Culture, Pluto Press, 1988, p.3.
I have chosen this body of work as the starting point because it was, for me, the beginning of an ongoing engagement with the notion of place and identity that has resulted in a visual process of negotiation between self and place.

genii loci was a group exhibition formulated around ‘International year of the Homeless’. The exhibition was initiated by myself and two other artists from the Northern Rivers Region of N.S.W. The project received funding from the Australia Council for a catalogue and travelled to a number of regional galleries in N.S.W. The three of us approached the theme of the exhibition from very specific perspectives.

My artist statement for the catalogue read:

Although these paintings have developed through a relationship with the landscape, they are not intended to be seen as a description of a specific place but rather hold the essence of the time, space, and place. There is also a strong link/resemblance to the artefacts I grew up with from both Africa and the Pacific Islands. The non-specific landscape becomes an object of meaning and brings in a ritualistic sense, the ‘place’ to one.3

My contribution to this exhibition was essentially a non-specific response to the Australian landscape. I was working from my accumulated impressions of the landscape that had been formulated against a backdrop of differences. My experience of the landscape had been gathered from living and travelling in a fairly limited area around South East Queensland and Northern N.S.W. The reference points that I used to judge my present location were based on my experience of the tropical landscape of the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. I found this new landscape to be dry, and scratchy, and lit by a harsh light that cast deep shadows.

I approached homelessness in this work from the perspective of alienation and displaced aesthetic sensibilities. Through the work, I developed a specific visual language in response to the landscape I was living in. This didn’t result in a sense of easy tenure or connection but a sense of taking the landscape and making it into a visual artefact of experience, or a still life of found objects that represented a ground to which titles could be attached. The titles suggested place as a found object to be named rather than a named place into which one might comfortably slip and find home. For example; ‘A place to die’; ‘A place to nowhere’; and ‘Foot Note / a fine place to sink a footing’. The clear distancing of self from the domestic reality of living in this landscape, demonstrates an early recognition of being an ambivalent dweller who could be, in fact anywhere if not here.

From a historical perspective this work was made during a time when consistent re-workings of the Australian landscape as a way of suggesting ‘a sense of place’ or a specific local identity were being subjected to a range of critical theoretical debates. These debates were in no small way generated by the approaching bicentennial year that brought many questions of cultural identity to the surface. For example in ‘The Australian Scapegoat. Towards an Antipodean Aesthetic’, Peter Fuller includes in the appendix an essay by the late Jill Bradshaw, in which she writes:

A preoccupation with the landscape has not ceased to be one of the characteristic features of Australian art. The earliest painters tried to domesticate the strangeness of this unfamiliar land by clothing it with forests of oak and by re-ordering its vistas into a vision of bucolic peace. Nolan, in turn, tried to reverse the process of domestication by depicting the alien-ness of the desert void but he also, as Juan Davila suggests in speaking of the West-Australian landscape, only parsitised this landscape, projecting upon it his own anxiety in a negative form of the ‘pathetic fallacy’: ‘The long-standing anxiety of Australians confronting the landscape indicates a problem of identity. The void of the land is forced to signify, ignoring the suture that it offers.'
Recent landscape art in Australia can be criticised as being narcissistic and solipsistic, revealing little to the viewer other than the paranoia of the artist and his refusal to accept a meaningless landscape. One can even characterise landscape art in Australia as the visual rendering of the manifest inability of the European tradition to cope with, or become integrated with, the Australian landscape which represents the ultimate insult: it is neither hostile nor even indifferent to man’s presence, but totally oblivious.  

She goes on to say that, ‘Landscape art can thus be seen as a form of ‘escapism’, epitomising the abdication of the artist and his ability to accept his own cultural insertion into the social and political structures which determine his own existence’.  

One could say that at this point a shadow fell across representations of the landscape in general, but more specifically across my landscape. It was the shadow that as Christopher Allen puts it in ‘Art in Australia, From Colonisation to Postmodernism’  

...put an end to dreams of escaping the geographical-historical construction called ‘Australia’ and soaring towards the pure ether of an absolute art history. But it has also produced a systematic suspicion of all those myths that used to be regarded as the peculiar achievement of Australian art in adapting itself to its foreign environment. Not only the honest selector, but even his shadow, the bushranger, have been disqualified, or so relativised as to no longer be living presences in the contemporary imagination.  

My next body of work was influenced by this shadow.

5: ibid. p.66.
......but there is rarely an absolutely necessary sense of relation to place. The post-modern experience of Australia is of a homelessness without angst.  

In review Genii loci had been an excursion into the landscape that was taken in the third person, meaning that my presence in the landscape was not accounted for within the image. In theoretical terms I thought that the images could be read as a series of colonising acts. This was perhaps an attitude that resulted in works that stood as metaphors for the way in which the landscape was claimed and named without any due regard for the effect of a foreign presence here.

I approached my next body of work tilted Mute Space from the critical perspective of creating an insertion point in the visual text. This insertion point interrupted the previously cohesive landscape view with indicators that traced the stain, mark or scar of a human (my) presence in the landscape.

What developed from this was the insertion of my shadow on/into the landscape. This space within or on the ground contained historical and personal references that ruptured the previously cohesive surfaces I had been making. Structurally this shadow figure on the ground replaced the artefact of landscape bits and became a frame of reference for my experience of the landscape.
In all these narratives, the land is endowed with unquestionable truth, it becomes a final resting place of meaning - its character is declared as evident, the problem being that of observers needing to remove the scales from their eyes in order to see the land fully revealed. Nature is posited as culture, when in fact nature itself is a cultural construction and the history of Australian landscape painting is not one of progressive discovery, the building up of an ever more accurate picture, but a series of changing conceptualisations, in which one cultural construction plays off another, in ever more complex webs of invention and in which the picturing of the local intersects with other, including imported, aesthetic and cultural agendas.

The work I produced for Out of Site/Out of mind extended the themes developed in Mute Space, namely the implications and effect of human presence in the landscape. The shadow, my shadow, is introduced as a scar that indelibly marks the landscape, and creates enclosures within which culture becomes a part of the construction of a landscape view.

The fragmentation of the surface reflects a disintegrating primary or original landscape and documents the layers of human intervention into a finely balanced eco-system. At the same time this fragmentation of the picture surface reflects my steady retreat from an aesthetic that was appeased by visual harmonies based on the construction of well managed views in the pastoral sense. My work became increasingly more informational than pictorial during this period.

Fig. 4. S.Morgan, surveyor, mixed media on paper 1990.
From 1989 to 91 I was a tutor with the Australian Flying Art School and travelled to centres in South-East Queensland three times a year. During these trips, I noticed how each area represented itself to the visitor through its tourist magazines and advertisements. The thing that struck me was that almost without exception each place promoted its history as dating back to approximately 1840. This seemed to completely deny any prior history or Aboriginal presence before European arrival.⁹

In the subsequent work that I made I attempted to reveal a more transparent story in which fragments of Aboriginal history surfaced amongst the opaque European stories of place.

This body of work was an important stage in the development of my present position. It brought to the surface questions such as, “how do I call my place home?”: “Is it from merely owning land and building on it”?, or “is it from extended occupation of a place or an ideological decision that may end in me becoming an Australian citizen”.

When I exhibited this work it was demonstrated to me quite clearly how deep the rift between acceptance and non-acceptance runs. An example of the sleeping dog within our communities is the local person who wanted to buy one of these works, because it related to a place he had been brought up in, but he would only buy it if I was prepared to cut off the bottom section of the work, (the part that referenced Aboriginal culture and presence in this site) because, as he put it, he had lived there long enough to know the Aboriginal and did not need reminding. This encounter crystallised some of the attitudes that I had found so prevalent in my South East Queensland journeys and the ease with which some communities thought they could just do away with references of any kind to the deeper history that the landscape is steeped in.

Fig. 5.S.Morgan, exclusions, mixed media on ply panels and paper, 1991.
At this time there was also a more general question of an artist’s right to use Aboriginal motifs of any kind in the work. Although these elements of the work were not direct visual quotes of existing Aboriginal work, the mere presence of a series of dots in the work seemed to signal that a line had been crossed. It was suggested to me that I was quoting a culture that I had no cultural or racial right to. In a very general sense, this attitude can been seen to have grown out of questions that had been raised in and around 1988. During the Australian bicentenary there was a general awareness that the history of Australian art and how this might signify cultural identity had in the past, maintained a certain European opacity.

It seemed that this was just another foreign country and I was camping here as an expatriate who could not claim a sense of place or home, especially if this referenced aspects of a cultural heritage that I was in no way qualified to quote.

It becomes more than evident that there was no easy way to approach the geographic setting of my residency. If, at this point, the landscape and how one occupies it might still be a way of determining identity, then this landscape was not mine to use and as such I would need to find another way to approach it.

Views and References
1992

How do we begin to ‘recognise’ this self that informs the portion of territory which each of us inhabits in this land?  

The work produced for Views and references was an exploration of my immediate geographic location. Through this work I was investigating the terms and references that I might use to determined ‘home’ as opposed to elsewhere.

The work was made up of a seven 3x4 foot box frames. The images were placed behind an acrylic sheet that created a space between the tactile surface of the image and the viewer. These closed spaces appeared like specimen cases that contained fragments of experience and systems for locating oneself in any given

---

10: P. Foss, op.cit., p.3.
Fig.6. S. Morgan, Views and References, mixed media on ply and acrylic. 1992.
geographic location.

Generated by a sense of disassociation the work relied on a sense of classification to pin down or locate a reference point for the present. In this work I was not attempting to suggest a ‘sense of place’, but to alluded to the growing realisation that there is no substance to the idea of place.

In the work I incorporated peripheral sights and sounds as a way of obscuring the central, mono-focused view that is generally predominant in vistas of the landscape. For example in the work titled Site #4.92, white egrets are resting at a dam, this is an image caught out of the corner of my eye on my daily drive to town. In the work titled Site #6.92, I have made reference to the sound of crickets on a hot summer day that provides a peripheral frame to the endless view from my studio. I became conscious of the space between what is known about a place in terms of its concrete physical presence, and what is brought to this knowledge from more abstract sets of knowledge or sense which collect environmental information that might not be physically present. The way in which these sets of knowledge and information come together resulted in the development of using perspex surfaces as a component of the work for the first time. The perspex carried layers of information, such as historical information or grids which interrupted ones view of the more personal attention to place. As a result of using box frames with perspex I became aware of the space between as a signifying element in the work. In the catalogue that accompanied this exhibition I have included a short phrase that identifies some aspect of this space in the work. For example:

Site #4.92: sometimes the sun is too hot, the dam should be cool but it is muddy. The egrets are very white. I see this place everyday, I don’t remember dams before. I hate snakes, ticks, and leeches. The gaps in between hold the essence of the memory.

Site #1.92: discovery: intangible journeys: I had thought that my body was solid, but when I looked back there was no evidence of my passage, just dry grass. In the gaps in between is where the tones and textures are completed.
The Science of Whereabouts extended the question of how I would recognise home. In this series of works I used maps, their language and uses in determining a sense of whereabouts. In a way this work was another way of saying that Western traditions lay opaquely across individual experiences of place, and that these ‘official’ accounts did not include individual experiences of place. The original experiences of individual places that the cartographer might have noted in journal entries were, over a period of time, edited out of the official language of maps.

In the development of The Science of Whereabouts I responded to what I perceived as a gap in the ‘official’ story told by maps by inserting personal experiences and memories of place into my map of whereabouts.

The work developed from an objective account of place that was based primarily on the visual language and structure of maps, such as grid lines and their abstract reference to Greenwich, and the development of the compass, from a fairly arbitrary fixing of positions, to the geomagnetic field used in the modern compass. The final set in this series moved toward a more subjective collection of personal narratives of place which were the forerunners to Unpacking my Library.

I think it becomes clear in this overview that the historical and theoretical context of my work is one which has progressively engaged in the dialogue of cultural identity in an Australian context.
The work documents a steady retreat from a ‘sense of place’ towards the present work in which I am conscious of identity being like a dictionary of words
terms and phrases that can be strung together in a variety of sequences to reconstruct a version of cultural identity.

Where does nostalgia begin? And isn’t it precisely this, a desire for beginnings. For lost origins? Where does a subjectivity that refuses the unity of origins
situate or invent its first moments in memory.12

The work that I have produced over the last twelve years has moved from a reasonably objective position to a conscious subjectivity. This could be described as
a shift from approaching the subject from a supposedly universal reference point, to using self to approach the determining forces of such reference points. And
so the invention of the first moment in memory starts here with the beginning of Unpacking my Library.

**An Expatriate Identity.**

My family history has a large part to play in the formulation of this body of work. How I got to this particular cultural and geographical site is a consequence of
this history. As a way of putting this in context I shall reproduce in this section a short history of the family.

The following extract is from my grandmothers’ journal. Other than removing personal, identifying information, I have not reworded, corrected, added or
subtracted any of the information, deciding instead that I wanted to include it here in her own words.

**The Journey Out (my title)**

H.B. senior was born in Berkshire in 1871. He was the 8th child of a solicitor.

H.B. wanted to go into the Royal Navy but failed because of his eye sight. Accordingly, he worked his passage over to Canada and there became a lumberjack
amongst other occupations. Finally he managed to get into the Colonial Audit Dept. and served in Sierra Leone and British East Africa.

These were the pioneer days for Kenya Colony. The Kenya Uganda Railway and harbours were being constructed by labour imported from India.

H.B moved up country with the railway stage by stage from Mombassa to what was to become Nairobi. Nairobi became the capital and seat of Government but
the Audit safaris of those days took the officials out into the bush (on foot with porters) for several weeks at a time and in H.B’s case, resulted in a huge bag of
every species of game. The licensing law was not strict at that time when game was plentiful and it was easy to claim that one had killed in self-defence.

Whilst on leave in the Isle of Wight in 1899 H.B eloped with Anna, known as Kitty, who was the youngest daughter of a yacht builder who was of Irish and
Huguenot descent. H.B took Kitty out to Kenya but she was not happy there: the loneliness and fear of the snakes and the natives during the Kikuyu rebellion
got her down. In 1905 Kitty produced a live but frail and underweight baby after several miscarriages. Three months later the family sailed for England on leave
and Kitty decided never to return to Africa. She saw her husband at infrequent intervals when he was home on leave. At 45 Kitty succumbed to the Spanish Flu
and died. Kitty had a very kind and soft nature and also supported the suffragette movement! Her body was taken back to Samdown. H.B senior retired in 1923
and built a home on the Isle of Wight.

12 Ibid. p.35.
H.B junior, following in his father’s footsteps, returned to Mombassa, where he had been born, also with the audit dept. He arrived in Kenya 23 years to the day after he had left the colony as a baby. He enjoyed a free bachelor’s life before meeting his wife to be aboard ship on his way back to Kenya after a leave in England.

J.B’s parents were both born in Sanawar, India (now Pakistan) in fact they were cousins. J.B was born in Secunderabad British India 1911. The family consisting of J.B’s parents and their three surviving children (two had died in infancy) returned to England in 1914. They rejoined their father in Poona after the war in 1920. J.B attended school in England and a finishing school in Brussels before returning to India for a short period were she met her fiancee, who was her brother in law’s brother. In 1931 whilst sailing out to Tanganyika to get married J.B met H.B junior and they were married six months later in Nairobi, Kenya.

We were married in 1931. After an idyllic honeymoon in the police camp across the creek from Mombassa, we set up house in a modern railway bungalow in Nairobi. It was the time of the depression so we could not afford to remain members of the Nairobi Club, for Government officials and joined instead the civil service club which was for junior officials. H.B. bought a 2 seater Renault which he promptly crashed sustaining a minor injury to his knee which became septic, as this was long before the days of penicillin it was quite serious.

H.B and I made railway safaris together lasting anything from 10 days to 3 weeks. (taking their servants and food with them) We occupied a coach which was attached each night too a goods train. The days were spent in the railway stations. One such station was Tsavo, scene of the man-eating lions’ depravations and now a national park.

In 1932 our first child was born in Nairobi, Kenya Colony

In 1938 H.B received a promotion and transfer to Sierra Leone. This was a bigger step than he had at first thought, for West Africa was very different from East Africa. Its reputation of being the ‘white man's grave’ meant that there were no Europeans settlers there - only Government officials, army business men and missionaries. It was also not considered suitable for children and only grudgingly for white women. The Government would not even take responsibility for the health of the former if taken there, and would certainly not have paid their passages.

All this changed after the war, and schools were provided for young children. This was 1938, however, and so we had to steal themselves to leave our two daughters aged five and four in a nursery school in England, and not see them again for two years. Many wives chose the alternative of staying with their children, but this I was not prepared to do.

We did not find much that we liked about Freetown especially as we arrived there at the beginning of the wet season when 200 inches of rain could fall in the space of 5 months (beginning and ending with a month of tornadoes with almost incessant rain over the other three months. Clothes, shoes etc. went mouldy unless put out in the fleeting bursts of sunshine or kept dry by a heater in the wardrobe. Though it was very hot one had bottles in the beds to dry the sheets.

War broke out in Europe and in February 1940. We went on leave on separate ships in case they were torpedoed for England.

H.B set sail alone for Freetown in July but the ship he was sailing on was torpedoed 400 miles north west of Ireland, loosing his farther’s car and all the family silver and personal possessions. He finally set sail again in September and spent 2 years there before returning again to England on leave.
H.B was transferred to Cyprus. The children and myself did not join him there for two and a half years. Finally in 1944 we were all together again and spent 2 years living a relatively normal family life before H.B was ordered on leave prior to another transfer this time to Malaya. He and the family again travelled on different ships arriving in Malaya 6 weeks later. In Kuala Lumpur we occupied a big double storied house on the outskirts of town. We had a staff of 4 servants (which would have been considered minute pre-war days) costing 7 times the African equivalent (but the Chinese were more reliable and hardworking than any East African or West African ‘boys’) and about 3 times the cost of the excellent female staff they’d had in Cyprus. With half the family at an English boarding school and having to go to holiday homes, economies had to be made somewhere - such as sitting downstairs with the Chinese for $1 at the cinema instead of upstairs with the elite for $2 each. The main recreation for us at this time was walking or driving until we could afford to join a club (most people belonged to three) where there was swimming squash tennis and dancing.

The war was not long over and there were still Japanese prisoners to be seen and Japanese money in the streets. It was amazing to meet Europeans who had been interred at Changi returning to the country with harrowing tales but ready to start again in a very different set-up.

The second year in Kuala Lumpur was spoilt by a polio epidemic and the beginning of the war against the Chinese terrorists. It was dangerous to go outside the town as all roads were liable to be ambushed. Indeed the Governor was killed in one of these ambushes. It was quite a relief to get another transfer, this time to Nyasaland in East Africa. The family left in June 1949 travelling to Singapore on an armoured train. In October the whole family embarked on the journey back to Africa on board the Natal line TSS ‘Umtali’. arriving in Beira, Portuguese Mozambique. From there we travelled by train to Limbe in Nyasaland, crossing the Shire River by paddle steamer as the bridge had been swept away by huge floods earlier in the year.

We returned to England in 1959 on leave, this was H.B’s final leave pending retirement, and the end of an era. H.B would never return to Africa and after all the happy years there, he must have felt a sense of loss. Later in the year it was discovered that H.B had lung cancer he died in 1962

J.B, (eldest daughter of H.B & J.B) return to Africa with her parents and the rest of her family in 1949. She turned 17 in the December of that year. A year later she married I.M aged 22 in Zomba and went to live on the Kilburnie tea estate Cholo that he managed. Their first house was a wattle-and-daub hut on the estate. In 1953 I.M joined ‘Her Majesty’s Overseas Civil Service as a police officer in Nyasaland were they lived until 1963 when it became impossible to remain due to what was to be termed ‘the emergency’ leading up to Nyasaland independence. I.M was transferred to the British Solomon Islands where he and his wife lived until 1976. In 1976 they immigrated to Australia. I.M died in Brisbane in 1986.

The other journey out- An Expatriate history #2

The following is an extract from a document recently sent to me by a cousin in South Africa. The modern family this section documents are descendants of my great grandfathers brother (on my father’s side). As I do not have any written documentation of my fathers direct family I have included it here as an indication of the family’s history in general. As with the previous extract, with the exception of removing personal identifying information, I have not made any alterations to the original document sent to me,

The Morgans of Wales & South Africa.

The Morgan’s appear to come from the Llanrhymney area in South Wales.
W.M. was born in Fishguard West Wales in 1800. Fishguard was an old Viking settlement (the old name being Visgard or Fisghtrap in Norse), and had a population of about 2500. It was also quite an important ferry port to Ireland. He immigrated to South Africa, in the early 1820’s. This was the time of the 1820 Settlers, when over 4000 British settlers were settled in the East Cape, as a buffer zone between the settled Cape Colony and the Xhosa Transkei area, which was continually under threat from depredations from the Xhosa natives.

W.M married J.H in Commemoration Church Grahamstown in 1825. Her family were farming people at Kariega River, C.H having been a gardener at Hampton Court Palace, before emigrating as a joint stock partner of the Mills party group, with his Wife and kids, and the family were the only family of their party, to remain on the settler land, as the other families soon left.

The family at this stage were firmly ensconced in the Eastern Cape, and would remain there for over 60 years. Many of their friendships and marriages were in amongst the other 1820 Settler people, and this strand would continue for well over a century, even after they had left the Eastern Cape.

W.M died, early in life on 14 March 1839 when only 39 years old, and they had probably sold the farm, though his inventory did show two houses, and carpentry tools, indicating he may have turned to an earlier trade in Grahamstown.

His son, C.M. began farming on Waqu farm, Queenstown/Whittlesea district, Ciskei. This area is good beef farming area, although they would have been plagued by the continual Frontier wars with the Xhosa, which would have resulted in much cattle thieving.

At this stage some of the sons of C.M had been spending time in the riding of transport, as the diamond discoveries had been made, and they had seen the good lands in the East Free State.

Unfortunately C.M lost his farm in the mid 1880’s probably due to the calling in of a surety, and he died at about the same time, on 3 June 1885 in Cradock.

His widow, then set out with her very large family by ox wagon, her elder sons on horseback- the eldest was 26 years old, as well as servants, and all the accoutrements of the trek, down to fowl, dog, sheep and cattle. The area they were travelling to had recovered to an extent from the murderous depredation’s of Chaka and Mosilikatze, 50 years ago, but was still very wild. In fact cannibalism was practiced in the Basuto mountains still.

They reached the Highveld in 1886, the clear bracing high altitude of the East Free State, with its’ hot summers and bracing winters, and settled close to the old Methodist Mission started by Rev Dugmore in the early 1800’s, at Thaba nChu, where the local tribe the Barolong (an offshoot of the Basuto) were known to be friendly. However this was still wild Africa, and as the wagon crossed the drift at Thana nChu two lions attacked and made off with an ox.

E.M then traded the wagon and two spans of oxen with Chief Sepinure Maroka, the local Chief, for 1500 morgen of land. From these small beginnings the family began to prosper. It was, in hindsight, fortunate for E.M to have such a large family as there were kraals to be built from stone (against the serious threats of the Jackals on the mountain), basic rondavels to be built, and farming operations to be started, as well as the construction of a dam, and planting of fruit and ornamental trees.

As the family prospered, with ready markets on the mining fields, the sons went off to boarding school in Grahamstown, but only after their first basic education by their Mother! C.M her fifth child, started in the native trade with his brother, on the farm Glamorgan, called Spes Bona, and this trading store, as well as
the farming operations were by dint of hard work so successful, that soon the sons, and even some of the daughters, could expand their farming operations considerably.

This period of growth was then upset by the Boer War. The family felt neutral in the whole conflict, and in anticipation the two sons took their sheep and cattle across the Border of Basutoland to a chief near Maseru, who agreed to look after the herds for one half of the increase, on the basis of a verbal agreement. This bargain the Chief kept to scrupulously, and at the end of the war all the stock could be accounted for. The family then left the war area for the duration, spending most of their time in the Dordrecht area back in the East Cape. Fortunately when the war ended and the family returned to their farms, they were pleasantly surprised to find everything in surprisingly good order, as the British had encouraged a policy of farm burning to keep the Boer Guerillas at bay. However it is also true to say that there was a large encampment of British Soldiers around Thaba nChu, and as such the farmhouse and property was probably not a threat to them. After the War many British soldiers, especially of Scots descent settled nearby in the Westminster and Tweespruit areas.

However the family had done well in their farming, trading, cattle dealing and transporting businesses, and had expanded their farming activities considerably. It must also be said that the family traits of eccentricity were not absent. There was the cousin up from the East Cape for three months, who stayed for 20 yeas. There was the unmarried Cousin, who farmed for her own account on Khaba Nyama, who was a little of the grand dame, taking in all sorts of guests and hangers on, and extremely religious.

At this stage C.M was well established on Nooitgedacht, staying with his sister to whom he lent the farm, but with half a dozen other farms, and 320 head oxen for ploughing, being 20 spans. In his middle age, and free of debt he decided marriage was a good thing and married his much younger ( by 20 years ) cousin. The happy new couple moved to Eureka farm, and P.M was plunged into farm life, after having been a music teacher with the London Liscentiate, having to make sausage, attending to the needs of all the people on the farm, and enjoying the large extended family and jovial relationships of the area. C.M soon purchased a car, one of the first in the OFS, but was continually driving it off the road, as he thought it knew its own way like a horse - even to the extent of crying “whoa” and pulling on the steering wheel to make it stop.

My Insertion point

My grandfather, was born in Transkie South Africa. There is not much known about his early life or that of his parents. In 1917 he was working for the army and was transferred to Nyasaland. On his discharge from the army he joined the staff of the transcontinental telegraph company where he worked until his retirement. He died in 1959 in Limbe, Nyasaland. His wife continued to live in Africa until about 1981 when she immigrated to Australia to live with her second son in South Australia. She died in 1989 in Adelaide South Australia.

My grandmother, was born in Scotland in 1894. As WWI broke out she travelled to Canada as a nurse, later she travelled out to Africa and worked as a nurse in Nyasaland where she met her husband. They were married in Blantyre, Nyasaland in 1926. Their first son, (my father ) was born in Blantyre, Nyasaland in 1928.
A personal Account.

What becomes clear to me is that the family’s links to South Africa, which were already 100 years old by the time I was born, are beyond a doubt strong ones. What I have found most interesting is that the sense of home land that my father held for Africa was not a part of my cultural education. I have not, until quite recently, realised that that side of my family in fact still resides in South Africa and therefore the place I might theoretically call home, in terms of a genealogical history may well be South Africa. None the less I have as little knowledge of this place as I do of England or Wales, the point being that there were never any references to this aspect of the family history that I remember. This might then be an investigation of how a child’s sense of who she is, is revealed as a complete fiction based on the impossible desire to be British even though the family history suggests otherwise.

This is the point at which ‘Unpacking my Library - stories of how we have understood the world-’ begins.
Chapter One

In the description of an unmapped movement

Introduction

In this chapter I have outlined the four key components that have been integral to the development of ‘Unpacking my Library’.

They are:

• Studio practice.
• The material composition of the work.
• The form of the work.
• The conceptual background to the work.

Mapping the Movement...........

During my undergraduate training, I majored in print making with an emphasis on intaglio and relief print making techniques. My studio practice and the media that I work with have developed from this training. A significant turning point in my attitude to image construction came about when I was introduced to chine colle in 1986. This technique is quite simply the inclusion of another material such as a different paper, onto the surface to be printed on. Having to that point understood print making as a medium with purest tendencies I found the idea of interrupting the surface something of a revelation. This was, in retrospect, a significant turning point in the development of my visual language. (4)
It was also at about this time than I began to use my etching plates and wood blocks as a resource rather than as an end product in themselves. These plates became surfaces from which to take rubbings (frottage), which are then included as a texture or visual elements in other work.

The keystone to the development and creation of images is the way in which I inhabit my studio. To describe this I have borrowed an analogy from new biology, in particular I liked the idea of a process which Varela calls ‘material drift’:

....putting the emphasis on the way autonomous units transform. Transformation means that material drift becomes possible due to the plasticity of the unit’s structure. In this drift, adaptation is an invariant. Many paths of change are potentially possible, and which one is selected is an expression of the particular kind of structural coherence the unit has, in a continuous tinkering. (6)

Of all the ways of paraphrasing the way my studio practice works, this seems to be the closest. ‘Material drift’ in this context is, the way in which the materials I use find their way into the designated space of the studio; and how they come together at different times in different ways. The principle behind this is that one must allow the drift to happen. What may appear to be a rationalised and conscious image making process is, at its inception, an act of faith and trust in the unconscious decisions taken.

Varela describes a middle road between logical opposites as the co-emergence of units in their world: ‘In this middle way view what we do is what we know, and ours is but one of many possible worlds. It is not a mirroring of the world, but a laying down of a world, with no warfare between self and other. (7)

7  Ibid, p.62.
I will quote a passage from the same poem Varela used here:

*You lay down a path in*
walking.
*In walking you lay down a*
Path. (8)

My studio is a site within which various pieces of imagery or fragments of ‘stuff’ take on meaning or significance by rubbing up against each other, or contact. For example, the implied meaning and significance of a piece of woven pandanus is influenced by being placed in close proximity to a piece of old lino or an image of a chair. What emerges from this is a series of propositional visual phrases.

Another way of describing this may be by the term grammatological (a mode of production that writes itself).

The underlying principle that I was working with in this project was fragmentation, the fragmented subject being the result of changing circumstances that defies the agencies of unity. In a sense I was using the studio practice to organise and process aspects of my experience, history, and memories that have shaped my identity.

What might appear to be a chaotic process is clarified at that moment in the process when the parts form a visual phrase that suggests something that was not there or apparent before. The resulting image will contain or suggest more information than the information of just itself. For example a cut out piece of plastic from an old wash bag may have no significance or apparent meaning until it is placed in a relationship with some other fragment of information, for example an image of an African landscape. The two images or pieces of information create a third space within which they suggest more than they did before.

The various media that I employ are based on traditional techniques such as drawing, painting and print making, in combination with photography and more recently computer generated images. My practice would best be summarised by the term mixed media, which is to say that I utilise a variety of methods and materials in the production of my work.

The logic for using one media over another in any given circumstance is motivated or determined by the relationship that I create between content and media. Certain types of information have currency in one media which would be altered or appear differently in another. For example, if I want to speak with authority I would not necessarily draw the image but might use a photographic medium such as a digitally generated print (not that this assures truth by any stretch of the imagination). On the other hand, if I wanted to claim a certain personal attachment or sense of personal experience I would most likely include material which is hand-made like a drawn or painted image. These two types of images are described as a) a dialectical image which fuses fragments together such as a photo or digital image; and b) a discursive image which creates fissures or interruptions such as a collage. (9)

The sense of what the image making process emits or evokes might be characterised by the differences in value or authority given, for example between a weather prediction and a card reading of one’s future. As Harrison proposes in Disappearing Through The Skylight, the public might accept a technologically produced weather prediction, readily accepting the ability of technology to accurately predict a weather chart. However a fortune-teller’s credibility relies on the element of mystery and aura of the ritual, these being aspects of the process which are lost in the technological process. (10)

---

8 Ibid, p.63, Varela quoting Poem by A. Machado, from Proverbios y Cantres, 1930.
The process of construction entails trialing different arrangements, editing them and then re-evaluating what is emitted by the emerging relationships between the parts. It is a process of searching for an aesthetic balance, and the meaning or relationships that suggest an idea.

The relationship between phrasing an idea and the elements of an aesthetic balance are contingent upon each other. They must operate simultaneously within the same frame and across the work. In claiming that I find an aesthetic balance in the work I do not presume that every viewer shares my conviction. To some extent, this is a purely subjective observation that is inherently a reflection of my experience. In fact a few years ago I was installing an exhibition of my work in Sydney when a peer commented that the work seemed to be “written in a foreign language”, which might infer that she did not recognise the intended aesthetic. I find that there is a recurrent artefactual quality to the way that I construct images. In many instances, the work appears to float in a cut off space rather than being constructed as a visual field, as if there is always a certain built in distance between the image and me. I use the term ‘visual phrasing’ to describe how I develop my work.

The meanings that are created by the relationships between the parts of the image are not intrinsic; they too come from the way I read the work and the connection that I make. Any reading of this work is then subject to personal taste and experience through which the viewer may or may not recognise the elements of my visual dialect. This might then produce a moment in which the viewers, as Bhabha suggests, catch a glimpse of themselves:

*It may be in those moments of process that are produced in the articulation of cultural difference, that one might catch a glimpse of self.*  

The moment when a decision is made, is the moment perhaps when one catches a sense of that potential space in which meaning might leave a trace.

The narrative that is built within each work and across the works grows out of the process of maintaining the work in a state of flux. I do not actually fix any of the fragments until I have exhausted all possible arrangement. Thus the studio becomes full of works loosely arranged in a constant state of becoming. What occurs in this process is a realisation that, as Druckery suggests, *No single image or arrangement is sufficient to serve as a record of an event but, rather, that events are themselves complex configurations of experience, intention, and interpretation.*

It is my feeling that the images are not in themselves saturated with meaning but that this is built into the viewers experience through the sequential development of the image across several versions. Even then it may not be so much that the image is imbued with meaning so much as that it is implied in the spaces created by the bookends of what is known or made evident by the image.

In this sense the images suggest transitions not resolutions.

---

These three images are an example of the progressive development of an image through three stages or transitions. The first image is a digital copy of the original photo, the second is a mixed media version using mono printing and collage and the last image is made up of a series of digital prints.

The result of the way in which I construct the work is that the pieces of visual information become embedded in the process of recollection and reconstruction. They are transformed from self-referencing and isolated scraps of visual material into linked parts of a narrative that infer something about the subject rather than being merely a collection of framed fragments.

In this sense I am using collage as a viable language, that is, to say something about the subject it is exploring rather than just making aesthetic judgements about what looks good together. This results in a dialogic relationship being built between the various pieces of information. The relationships built into the work trace the construction of meaning across multiple versions of each image.

The next two images are also an example of how the process of development transforms the original object or image from a purely artefactual object into an element of the visual phrase. The first image (Fig.14) is a digital reproduction of two soft toys that have been in the family since about 1950. The authenticity of the objects as collectable items is removed in the subsequent work that I made (fig 5). This work is made up a slip caste ceramic copy of one of the dolls, and an image from the book ‘Little Black Sambo’ that I have engraved onto the acrylic surface. I use these two elements in the work as a reference to the representations of other, which are set against an image of a child holding a generic doll.

In its final form the work is a matrix of crossed-referenced keys that unfold through a process of reading. There is a definite distinction here between producing singular, visually whole compositions that exist as isolated frames of an idea, and a body of imagery that has been constructed as if it were text and therefore to be read. As Ian Burn states, the contemporary or postmodern tendency of the 90’s was to read pictures rather than look at them. This trend has influenced the way in which I have constructed this work.

Cutting and Pasting

Collage is essentially a medium in which two or more pieces of material are brought together into a designated space.

As a process, collage suits the postmodern / post-colonial narrative very well, accommodating as it does, the notions of the fragmented subject and the rupture of previously seamless representations. There is an obvious link here to self-identity in as much as identity may be seen as being constructed in parts, not as a continuous narrative. From a post-colonial perspective the subject is constructed through a process that might be described as splicing together fragments of experience and history:

In many ways, the entire twentieth century has been grappling with the rupture of continuity initiated in its first decade. From physics to the development of gene splicing, the logic of totalising narratives has been eroded. (14)

Paul Carter proposes that collage is a state of being that is almost unavoidable in a post-colonial world. He suggests that the difference between post-colonial and modernist collage is that a ‘post-colonial collage does not attempt to rationalise the gap between its parts in a movement towards homogenisation, but emphasises the fragmentation, mapping the gaps, and giving the space in between equal weight in the order of things. (15)

In general collage maintains difference because it does not conceal the fissures or edges of any two pieces of data. Rather than disguising the point of connection, collage reveals the intersection and alludes to a space within which a trace of something new might emerge.

The notion of a ‘space-between’ is a recurrent theme in post-colonial discourse. As Homi Bhabha suggests in ‘The Location of Culture,’
Encounters with identity occur outside of the frame, ie. beyond and between the images but leaves a resistant trace, a stain of subject. (16)
I have attempted to construct the work in a way that would physically reveal if not emphasise the idea of the ‘space-between’. This is a site within which, potentially, one might apprehend identity and self. In this work I use the process of image or object construction in order to activate the in-between space.

14 T.Druckery, op.cit., p.4.
16 H. Bhabha, op.cit., p.49.
For example I have used this pair of images in various forms throughout the work. They are a reference to the duality of personal experience. The self, who is a combination of both of the experiences, is located somewhere between the two. I learnt both ballet and traditional pacific island dance as a child, however one was seen as a necessary part of a girls education, supposedly teaching her grace and poise, whereas the other was viewed perhaps more as an artefact, or an amusing story to tell.

**A Phrasing Device.**

In the manipulation of image, media, form, I use the language of conceptual areas of discourse such as post-colonialism to suggest methods of construction such as:

- correspondence, displacement, evocation, emergence, fissure, inscription, intervention, interruption, negotiation, overlay, partial, rupture, spoor, trace, transition, translation.

The words, which may be said in the description of a social discourse, can be re-enacted as a studio process. The studio process is not illustrating these words or the social phenomena but is a practical application that employs the textual body of knowledge, or in other words, praxis.

In the first set of work I was using these concepts in a fairly literal way. The collaged elements of the images suggested fissures, overlays and ruptures. For example the images in this book are made up of traced patterns on drafting film over images that are a combination of digital prints and photographs. In Fig.7, a transition between ideology and practice occurs between the overlayed pattern for making a crepe rose, and the photographic image of a rose against the patterning on a Solomon Island house. In this work I use the pattern for a rose as an analogy for the way in which the application of a colonial ideology in a specific geographic site, becomes an incongruous figure against the patterning on a Solomon island cultural structure.

In the second and third series of work my use of these terms was directed more towards the form of the work and the structure of its composition.

For example in series two I use box frames with acrylic overlays to suggest, intervention, interruption, spoor, trace, transition, and translation. In the third series the grided pages of the books imply partial memory, trace and correspondence.
In the third series the grided pages of the books imply partial memory, trace and correspondence

The bookness of books.

To open up a book and start reading is at once to travel beyond the single object of desire, in so far as every text opens onto the horizonless prospect of textuality at large. As an object, the book is blatantly a semiophore - Krzysztof Pomian’s term for an object in which meaning has been invested - that it cannot conceal its participation in that universal discourse, that collection of collections, we call literature. (19)

I feel that there is something indeterminable about being in possession of hundreds of books. The book is offered like a gift from the person who created it. The presence of books suggests a multitude of untapped potentials for discovery, a journey that is taken in a certain kind of solitude.

My relationship to the book as part of a library that I had made myself was to some extent triggered by reading Walter Benjamin’s essay Unpacking My Library, a talk about book collecting.

*Of all the ways of acquiring books, writing them oneself is regarded as the most praiseworthy method.* (20)

I saw the value in the idea of creating a library of books into which I could collect a range of signifying elements. I had needed to formulate a structural framework for this collection of material; this framework needed to be able to accommodate the diversity of the material I was working with. The idea of books satisfied what I saw as the spatial and contextual needs of work.

The conventions of the book form would bring to the project supplementary meaning informing the conceptual side of the work. At a basic level I am utilising the conventions of bookness as an iconic reference point that would contextualise the work. The Western classical conventions of bookness are a spine off which pages are hinged, a front and back cover and a left to right sequential reading of the pages.

In A Thousand Plateaus Deleuze and Guattari use the metaphor of the tree and its roots, as analogous to centrality and power bases, to describe a cultural book.

*How can the book find an adequate outside with which to assemble it heterogeneity, rather than a world to reproduce. The cultural book is necessarily a tracing; already a tracing of other books however different they may be, an endless tracing of established concepts and words, a tracing of the world present, past, and future. Even the anticultural book may still be burdened by too heavy a cultural load: but it will use it actively, for forgetting instead of remembering, for underdevelopment instead of progress towards development, in nomadism rather than sedentarity, to make a map instead of a tracing.* (21)

20 W. Benjamin, op. cit., p.63.
I found this useful in formulating an approach to how I might use the book as a format. If the covers of the book and the spine suggested centrality and established concepts, if it was almost impossible to escape this aspect of the book, I would use the book’s exterior form as a quote to all that it might imply. The inside space would, in Deleuze and Guattari’s words, be based on the idea of the rhizome, of mapping not tracing, of being nomadic not sedentary.

In terms of my project I found that the form of the book offered a way of acknowledging the power base of the centre as a site into which I inserted my personal account of cultural identity.

I always judge a book by its cover and I have made some really bad decisions because of it. Even so, I have lots of books the covers of which I enjoy. A book, prior to it being opened, is an object in its own right regardless of the content. In fact, the book need never be opened; it can be enjoyed purely for its exterior objectness. In the first series of work I used the cover of the books to signal content, either through titles that I had borrowed from bibliographies or as surfaces to which I attached imagery. In the third and fourth series of work I decided not to give the sets of books any distinguishing external features. This was a decision based on the desire to moderate the visual volume of the work. This exterior visual silence results in a slight feeling of disorientation when looking through the books. You don’t know which one you have just looked at nor can you make choices based on a preference for one title or cover image over another.

In the essay Unpacking my Library (22) Benjamin establishes the subject (I) as an active participant in a process of review, as he unpacks his books and revisits the moment of their acquisition. Memories have attached themselves to books to be added to and remembered in each new setting. The process of unpacking and engaging in a bit of reverie positions the subject as an observer or reader of her or his own life, or as Susan Stewart put it, ‘a tourist in her own life’. (23) To some extent this might appear as a passive act if one were to ignore the observer observing the observed. Throughout this work I am both the observed and the observer, and as in multiple personalities the voice of the two interchanges almost without warning. So to be a tourist in my own life is at once to be both the observed and observer or passive and active, simultaneously.

The setting that Benjamin describes, of himself surrounded by opened boxes of books half unpacked and in a state of disorder, suggested to me an in-between space, a space between coming and going, in which one has the opportunity to re-evaluate some of the baggage that has been brought along. I drew a parallel between the act of unpacking the library and reviewing both its physical and associative contents, and how my studio practice unfolds. Firstly the books, like the fragments of material I was working with, become sites of memory: each book is associated with a series of imagined possibilities. Secondly the space of a library, as a site within which to collect, is never a completed project. The contents and arrangement of the books on the shelves do not present fixed relationships. In this sense, the library, as a collection, is open to rearrangement and editing in much the same way as the processes I use in my studio and by extension the process of becoming associated with identity.

The central motif of this project is the book as a repository for a catalogue of identity, with a particular emphasis on cultural identity. The books that I construct serve the dual purpose of suggesting an intermediary space between leaving and arriving, and the metaphorical state of unpacking my cultural baggage and re-defining the way in which this collection of parts that make up self are arranged within the library.

22 W. Benjamin, op cit., p.61.
Not yet home. Locus - (memory places)

In this section I will give a brief introduction to the conceptual background that has informed this work.

The conceptual context of the work is based on a family history that documents four generations of continued expatriation to various British Colonial Territories. This history is an almost perfect specimen of the colonial subject whose tours abroad were licensed by a particular British ideology. My colonial lineage, which dates back to 1820, is an almost unbroken account of British Colonial Civil servants living as expatriates in a series of British Territories.

The history that I have inherited presents certain ambiguities for me in terms of cultural identity. My ‘official’ cultural identity was wholly constructed in terms of being British, and therefore somehow uncontaminated. However my experiences, observations and memories of the ‘local,’ form a supplement to this official cultural identity. I use the word ‘local’ here to refer to that which is indigenous or culturally and geographically particular to place. The ambiguity arises on the cusp of this dual experience.

The debates as to who belongs to the nation in its new manifestation, were framed by the empire, for it was impossible to think of the ‘mother country’ with its specificities without thinking of the colonies. The colonies provided the benchmarks that allowed the English to determine what they did not want to be and who they thought they were. (25)

I find that post-colonial discourse asks one to consider the possibility of permeable boundaries, disjuncture, and an ‘exploration of the space outside the sentence’. (26) The enactment of this discourse in a studio based project calls for the questioning of frames of reference, such as inherited histories that attempt to fix identity.

This belief in the transparency of truth and the power of origins to define the finality of our passage is dispersed by this perpetual movement of transmutation and transformation. History is harvested and collected, to be reassembled, made to speak, re-membered, re-read and rewritten, and language comes alive in transit, in interpretation. (27)

The post-colonial subject is, broadly speaking, one who is, for one reason or another, distanced from the ground or place of racial or cultural origin. My engagement in this discourse is from the perspective of a third generation expatriate who seems to become, in a technical sense, increasingly homeless. I find that there is not, and perhaps never was, a place that resembles home in the traditional and perhaps cultural understanding of what going home might mean.

26 H, Bhabha, op.cit., p.49.
As a child I had two understandings of home. The first was where I lived, the place in which my memories resided. The second was that almost fictitious place that my parents referred to, and to which we periodically returned for a holiday. As a child I remember my parents referring to ‘the Home Office’. This was the controlling institution that directed amongst other things our expatriate travel itinerary. Every leave included a visit to this edifice in London.

As a young adult, home was the place I was living in at the time, no more no less. It was not prefigured by a ‘from whence’. I don’t really think I ever felt any great sense of loss or nostalgia for lost places. It just was the way every one that I knew lived. But, having now raised three children in the same house for 16 years I begin to see, through them, what a sense of home might be. Whenever we field the idea of moving somewhere else there is an outcry. For them there is a rootedness built by memory and experience that resides in this spot. It is made up of things such as their childhood construction of myths, like ‘snake valley’ and the tree under which the witches live. It is there in the buried time capsule (which they only retrieved recently), and it is in the ground where they buried rabbits, birds and their dog; and now, as young adults, it is the place they come back to when they need renewal.

At the moment I still travel on a British Passport. Mine is not an anguished displacement. It is not exactly a displacement caused by being torn in one direction whilst desiring another or of being forced across borders in flight and fear. I have not crossed barriers of language or even cultural norms really, residing as I do, on the albeit fading and steadily retreating, pink segments of the world map. I have never immigrated or consciously became a settler; the journey has been made up of a series of transit stops. I am only able to return to the two places I have called home as a tourist. Up until January 1999, my rights of return to Australia, where I own a house and have given birth to and raised three Australian children, was determined by a permanent residency visa which, theoretically at least, could be revoked at anytime if I left the country. From a purely genealogical point of view, I am a mixture of Welsh, Scottish and Southern English ancestry. My mother has always expressed her pride in our Welsh and Scottish bloodline, and took time to explain why the authenticity of this heritage was so significant. I have never set foot in either Scotland or Wales. I look Gaelic, I have dark hair, fair skin and blue eyes, and it sounds Gaelic to have Shelagh Gwynne Morgan for a name, but really that is where it ends. If one reads the fine print confirming birth place and place of death on the genealogy charts that my mother continually updates, one finds that the family remains dispersed across the map of what was the British empire and her colonies and protectorates.

The empire was intrinsic to my upbringing. It served as the lens through which our life as expatriates was framed. It provided neat sets of ideas about what it meant to be British ie. A civilised class of people whose life must always be acted out as an exemplary example of civilisation.
From a pragmatic point of view the question of my citizenship has emerged out of the political push towards Australia becoming a Republic, and for those expatriates living in Australia as permanent residents to finally make a commitment to citizenship. This in itself does not change the cultural baggage but it does force an ideological issue. I have always resisted the final enactment of placedness, due, not from a desire to maintain my links to the fading empire, but because I felt uncomfortable about claiming a right of citizenship in what must be seen as yet another colonised country. Despite these issues I became an Australian citizen in January 1999. This was a purely practical decision.

In terms of where I might fit my practice into the theoretical discourse of post-coloniality, it might be useful to position myself as an expatriate (who is also then a foreigner) artist. This could be defined as a person who is resident in this place either by choice or accident. The expatriate artist might not be a person who is working under any pressure or urgency to forge new cultural links simply because there is no anxious past. Perhaps the expatriate artist is more quizzical than critical in her or his exploration of difference. This may be a difference experienced with a tint of nostalgia for things not present, but certainly not any anxiety over what has been obliterated due to impossible returns. Perhaps the expatriate artist carries a nomadic theme over onto new territories.

Relative Positions

Have I, as Rey Chow asks in, Diaspora, Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies, 29 ‘created surplus value by juxtaposing a me and a them?’ ‘Do I draw on difference-as-aura-of-original and valorise one over the other?’ Do I use the native as a ‘non duped’ subject? As Chow suggests, it seems unavoidable that white discourse is a process of othering. I do not think that I can escape this. I am very conscious of the possibility that in using images of native culture as the compendium to my Anglo colonial history I might appear to be simply engaging in racialist analogy or of reinstating the native as difference in opposition. It might also be said that I have not kept a ‘proper distance’. On the other hand, to leave this axiom of the autographic account blank could be equally problematic. My intention was fairly simple here: post-colonial texts in general are based on the diasporic subject being a culturally hyphenated subject e.g. British-Indian, American-Chinese or Australian-Italian. In this work I wanted to foreground being a British expatriate who has for one reason or another failed to become exactly English. There is a subtle difference between being British and considering oneself English. The former expresses a different sense of identity to the latter. Is there a word that would fall on the other side of the hyphen to define this history? I am not able to exchange my history but I think perhaps that this body of work has re-phrased it.

In answer to the questions raised by Rey Chow I might stress that I had no desire to use the native as truth, or Rousseau’s noble savage. I was not trying to claim something to go back to, as an escape from what is. I was not looking for an authentic origin in which or through which to deny I was, in Chow’s words, duped by my history, or to reinstate the imperial narratives of them and us as an othering process. Nor am I attempting to claim the other as a part of self, or name self as other to discredit my history. In juxtaposing my experiences it may, however, seem as if this is what I am doing, and it may be unavoidably read in that way. My intention was to try to create or, in Chow’s words, ‘invent a dimension beyond the deadlock between native and coloniser’ (30).

I suggest that the dimension that Chow alludes to could be constructed in the in-between spaces, between what is history and what is read. I have a deep affection for that aspect of my identity that has been constructed in the interstitial spaces. It was never my intention to valorise one over the other, but perhaps if it is read that way, this indicates what Chow suggests is the ‘inescapability of all of our histories’. (31)

30 ibid, p.44.
31 ibid, p.44
As a visual strategy I have used the figure of a child in the work to allude to the cultural and geographic sites that the child has experienced. I have used the two directions of the gaze, ie. looking into the picture and out from it, to suggest the familiar or known territory of the home ground and the unfamiliar or unknown territory of ‘not home’. By providing these clues to my sense of place within the story, I am able to construct a sub text to the narrative of I and other. I do this through the subtle overlay of self as subject and self as interrogator or surveyor of that which is not familiar.

I felt that the repetitive appearance of these two figures throughout the work qualified the inclusion of the images to which they were attached. As they alternate between the critical and non-critical, the viewed and the viewer, they become a critical visual link between the act of telling stories and the conceptual and theoretical background to the work.

The way in which I have constructed the work visually reflects the dualities of experience and reflects the tensions of the fragmented subject. The work is physically disjunctive, erasing and rephrasing itself and the subject through successive layers of re-writing and re-reading. What has been omitted? The work carries the scars of omission and exclusion; these are spaces of absence within each visual rephrasing of the stories.

The analogy of a patch work quilt might encompasses the telling of my story. The making of a quilt is an investment in the material processes that patch together the fragments of a story to be passed on. Patches cover or draw together flaws, rips, tears, and worn out or missing parts in the fabric. They are also used to construct something that was not there before by re-using fragments.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have introduced a general background to the ideas and processes that I have used in the development of ‘Unpacking my Library’. In the following chapters I will discuss how these aspects of the work developed throughout the four stages of the project.
Chapter 2

‘Unpacking My Library’
- how I write some of my books -

The product, self of cultural practice could be seen as a series of translations. The outcome of which is not automatic or given but dependant on what occurs in the gaps between practice and outcome.\(^{48}\)

**Introduction**

In this chapter I will discuss the development of the first stage of ‘Unpacking My Library’. The work consists of 20 artist’s books that were exhibited at the Queensland College of Art Gallery and The Southern Cross University Art Museum in early 1996.

**A Theory of Process**

~ Not Yet Home, Blue print for a journey.

At this early stage in the production of ‘Unpacking My Library’ I was mainly concerned with finding a conceptual position for myself in relation to post-coloniality and current ideas regarding the nature of the expatriate, emigrant and exiles experience. Previously I had come to a conclusion that my status as an expatriate had resulted in the feeling that there was ‘No place like home’. By this I meant that there was not a place that I could return to or call home, or there was no place that resembled home in the generally understood meaning of motherland or home-ground. My previous body of work, left the question of who are you (am I) in relation to this (foreign) landscape, quite open. It was at this point that I began to look at terms like exile or expatriate, and to utilise some of the contextual ideas fielded in discourses surrounding the idea of cultural identity as a basis for the material formulation of the work.

To give some indication of where I find myself to be in a post-colonial context I will paraphrase some of the distinctions that Edward Said outlines in his essay, Reflections on Exile.\(^{49}\) Said defines the ‘exile’ as one who suffers a ‘terminal loss’, a complete loss of home in the traditionally accepted sense of the word. The word ‘exile’, comes from ‘banishment’ and has become, as Said suggests, a potent motif of modern culture. ‘Nationalism’, is an assertion of belonging in and to a place, people and heritage. The ‘expatriate’ is someone who voluntarily lives in an alien country. It is possible that they are to some extent estranged, but they are not totally cut off from the possibility of returning to their true home. The emigré is a more ambiguous state. Theoretically it refers to any one who emigrates to a new country but there is an inherent choice in this. Said suggests that colonial officials may be considered to have lived in some kind of exile but that this was not the exile of banishment.

\(^{47}\) Fig.23. S. Morgan, A selection of books from, - how I write some of my books - 1996.


Texts such as The Location of Culture by Homi Bhabha or Writing Culture edited by James Clifford, offered phrases in the description of cultural identity or the post-colonial subject which suggested a way for me to approach making work that would investigate my inherited history and cultural identity. Some examples of texts that suggested a methodology are:

Différance is the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the spacing by means of which elements are related to each other.\(^{(50)}\)

Each element acquires meaning only through a play of différence. \(^{(51)}\)

.....constituted only by the traces within it of the other bits in the chain or system. There are no independent meanings but traces of traces. \(^{(52)}\)

Passages such as these suggested to me a method of production. For example, in the first quote the phrase ‘systematic play of difference’, reiterates the idea of a working process which encouraged playing with my collection of images and fragments of material. This process is one which at its heart is based on collage. I could see a way to use the materials I had collected without there having to be something substantial attached to their existence in the first place. The process of bringing together a range of visual material from different sources and times, and playing with their arrangement, resulted in a chain of traces that ‘acquire meaning through a play of difference.’ For example, in the image titled translations (fig. 24)

I have placed a digital image of Wedgwood dinner plates over an image of a woman selling coconut crab at a market in Vanuatu. In fig. 25, titled a system of difference,
I have combined an image of a campsite with a stove and a village garden. The individual components of these two images do not, in themselves, hold any significant meaning. I believe that this comes about in the gap between the fairly obvious difference that is suggested by the two ways of presenting food. This image was triggered by a memory of our houseboy, Seth. He lived in a two-room house that was supplied by the government for domestic staff. This house, which was only five steps from our kitchen door, came with no stove, so Seth and his family cooked over an open fire or gas ring on the ground. I did not intend that an image like this be read as a narrative on self and other. It was my intention that they be seen as collection of facts about the way we lived. By providing sets of images based on my memories of difference I hoped to trace my memories of the space between the two.

The idea of ‘a trace-of-a-trace-of-meaning’ suggested a work in process that did not have conclusive end points. A trace suggested to me that there was not a heavy burden of constructed meaning in place but a suggestion. This implied a process of working between the edges of the fragments that I put together, and that it was in these gaps that the ‘traces-of-traces’ occurred.

**How I Remember-**

*Memory itself may be constructed as a landscape not only for a ‘making and remaking’ of the self but of our social understanding of the past.*  

Memory and remembering are a form of collecting that I have used as the starting point for this work. I am interested in how memory seems to be without a defined story line or boundary. I found that in the process of remembering there was always a sense of perpetual reconstruction taking place due to the way memories fall on each other like a series of transparent kaleidoscopes. As Ben Xu suggests in his essay Memory and the Ethnic Self, memory is not made up of a series of static pictures but also of stories and narratives that shape and convey our sense of self. He suggests that memory is not merely a narrative but ‘an experiential relation between the past and the present, projecting the future’  

Thus through remembering identity is revised.

Remembering and collecting visual evidence of memory was the starting point to this work. Remembering in this case might be more aptly described in terms of the oral history of the individual rather than being based solely on the collective memory of the community. In her essay, The Knife’s Edge, Paula Hamilton discusses the currency of memory in relation to history and the shifting boundaries between types of memory and how they effect each other in particular collective memory and the oral histories of the individual. As she says the distinction comes down to a ‘public/private divide’. In this essay she outlines the significance of the oral histories of the individual and collective remembering on a national scale, especially in relation to the formulation and study of cultural identity.

*A renewed interest in memory in the late twentieth Century can be seen to run parallel to a critique of representation and the grand narratives of modernism. As Hamilton says this has resulted in a desire to ‘participate in the recovery of memory- to facilitate the production of more and more inclusive histories- and to bring into the public domain the many conflicting interpretations of the past.*

---

56. Ibid. p. 266
58. Ibid. p.9.
My decision to use childhood memories as the basis for this work was, to some extent, validated by this passage and my reading of Memory, Narrative, and Identity. In the introduction to this book it is suggested that memory can be used to ‘interrupt linear, conventional narratives’ and ‘make room for multiple voices and perspective’s’, and that through story telling, ‘personal memory is legitimised’ 59. The suggestion that memory and story telling might be used to undermine the ‘hegemonic construction of history and culture’ 60 relates to similar themes in feminist writing and autobiography that I discuss in chapter three.

Remembering for me started with trying to find a reference point from which to remember. I found that I could remember the position of my bed in relation to East in all of the places that I had lived. This provided a series of geographical references for each place. Finding East had a certain poetic curve to it as East is not a place one can actually arrive at but merely a direction in which one can travel.

Memory must be the beginning of this project, the memories of experience that I then found visual images for.

**Memory Needs Objects: Collecting.**

*And once they are attached to you, marked by your possession, the objects no longer seem to be there by chance, they assume meaning as elements of a discourse, like a memory composed of signals and elements.* 61

My initial thoughts on this work were based loosely on the idea that objects, such as my Royal Dalton Bunnykins bowl from 1956, or two soft toys from Africa would provide some kind of indication of an identity, that is, something intrinsic that attended to a slight feeling of disjuncture. I was hoping to use the object or images as a lens through which to look at cultural identity, or, as Clifford suggests in On Collecting Art and Culture, a strategy through which to develop a version of self identity. 62
In her book On Longing, Susan Stewart puts forward the idea that the collection serialises the moments of individual consciousness. She also outlines three categories of collection:

1. The souvenir which carries the past to the present and maintains its historical identity;
2. The systematic, which is a collecting process that represents ideology; and
3. The fetishistic, in which the object is removed from historical and cultural contexts and redefined.

The texts that I have referenced have all had some effect on the way my ideas developed. In particular, I was interested in the ways in which a collection might operate culturally and socially, and how I could use the collection as a construction and presentation format.

I liked Clifford’s notion of the collection as a telling ground, the objects in it telling stories about the owner or author of the collection in ways that would be otherwise impossible.

In the home we surround ourselves with objects, both decorative and utilitarian. How we arrange or live with these objects could be read as a series of insights into whom we think we may be. The presence of objects within the orb of our lives involves many moments of conscious and unconscious choices that reflect stories we might tell about ourselves. In a sense we write an autobiography through the collection and arrangement of objects, some of which become intrinsic reference points to memory and experience.

This aspect of the collection, its ability to offer an insight into a person’s history and, by extension, a community’s idea of itself, is a basic point of agreement that I have used as the starting point for this work. All of the texts mentioned above go on to classify the forms and functions of the object and the collection, such as the difference between a collectable and a souvenir. My starting point is the personal collection of material. I view this initial material as falling into the category of souvenir, ie. something which authenticates personal experience and memory.

In its sequential evolution, the collection encodes an intimate narrative, tracing what Proust calls ‘le fil des heures, l’ordre des années et des mondes’ - the continuous thread through which selfhood is sewn into the unfolding fabric.

The unfolding fabric here might be seen as the conceptual background to the work into which I stitch selfhood. A part of the process was the collection of quotes, terms and phrases.

63 S. Stewart, op. cit., p.134.
64 J. Clifford, op. cit., p 142.
65 R. Cardinal, op. cit., p.68.
The initial collection of ‘stuff’ contained a range of different objects, imagined in a number of forms. In some instances the images and objects were fabricated, for example I made slip caste copies of an eggcup, a stuffed toy from Africa and a set of ‘Johnson’ teacups. These objects stood in for the real thing, authenticating my memories on the one hand whilst also revealing the fictions that I found to be an inherent part of a description of identity. I also collected a range of other material such as photos, drawings and found objects, all of which, in some way or another, provided a locus for memory. At this point in the project I was reconstructing, if not fabricating a collection of souvenirs and artefacts which made visible the history which had previously been invisible.

Although this stage was a significant point in the re-collection process, the objects I made did not work in the context of the library. This was due mainly to the inconsistencies of form, surface, material body, and, poetically, the spacing created between things.

This led me to consider a different format for the work. As I have previously said Benjamin’s essay (Unpacking My Library, a talk about book collecting) was significant at this stage as it suggested an outline within which to work. The enclosure or boundary that the library offered determined the collection. The books in the library became the objects that were being collected

**Two Suitcases and an empty grey trunk**

Here I just need to take a step backwards for a moment to another significant moment in the development of this project.  

When looking for objects in my home which might offer that window into a sense of who I was, I found that there was very little which might reveal this aspect of myself. In fact there was very little that might serve as an indicator of my history.

When I arrived in Australia I came with a suitcase, (maybe two), the contents of which were non-descript. Years later, a trunk, which had been stored in England, arrived, empty except for a T-shirt and some parts of a school uniform. Everything else had been removed. The result of this might be seen as a certain kind of poverty, with no physical links in the form of souvenirs, artefacts or objects of any kind that might serve as anchors to the past. In a way it is like having a form of amnesia. For me, the past, before the day I arrived, did not exist in any physical form. I realised that the artefacts of my memory had been left behind somewhere, or lost. Perhaps they never existed except as images that I remember.

67 Fig.29. S. Morgan, in transit 1, digital print from mixed media image, 8x8cm, 1997.
20 years later I listened to an ABC radio interview with Salmund Rushdie on the nature of exile. The comment which I remember most clearly and which in many ways has had an effect on this work was that,

_You could always tell an exile by her/his furniture as it all looked like it had been bought in the same shop on the same day._  

As I looked around our house I realised just how true this comment was. I was surrounded by furniture that had, quite literally been bought in the same shop on the same day. It occurred to me that the stories and histories of the family members were invisible, and that there were few if any objects which might indicate a past. My immediate response to this was to ring the local second hand dealer and have them take all the pine furniture away directly.

After this I settled on a project of reinventing the home with second hand furniture bought in different shops on different days. Home making became a project that intrinsically linked the studio project of constructing cultural identity, and the domestic-hearth project of constructing the interior space of the home, so that it no longer appeared as if I was an exile.

The home-hearth project is certainly a fabrication, the excessive clutter that I collected was, for the most part artefacts of other people’s lives. I might describe it as a way of avoiding the silence of a sterile space. It is significant that at about this time the distinction between studio and living space became progressively fainter as the work drew on the home and the home drew on the work.

**The bookness of the Books.**

_To open up a book and start reading is at once to travel beyond the single object of desire, in so far as every text opens onto the horizonless prospect of textuality at large. As an object, the book is blatantly a semiophore - Krzysztof Pomian’s term for an object in which meaning has been invested - that it cannot conceal its participation in that universal discourse, that collection of collections, we call literature._

As I have already outlined I used the book in a fairly classical form in this work. I was not intent on playing with the way in which books might be read or viewed or how they might occupy space. I wanted to make use of the inherent (Western) understanding of the bookness of a book, its value, meaning and uses. I intended that the viewer would come to the work with a pre-given understanding of what a book is; what it stands for; what it can do; what it ought to be and how it should be read.

The first stage of the library was made up of books that were either hand-made or purchased in second hand shops. With the second hand books I inserted my images into the existing pages and then glued the rest of the book shut. The previous content of the book was erased in this process so that the book became purely a container or vessel for my ideas. Fig.30,
is an example of a book purchased in a second hand shop into which I have pasted images that relate in one way or another to the book's content. The book is titled ‘The Girls World’ and was published in 1950. The page shown here is titled ‘some women who did not stay at home’. It shows an expatriate couple from a colonial territory, and a digitally reproduced image of Truganini taken from a stamp. The meaning of the word home, and the reasons why they did not stay at home are quite different, but one is implicated by the other.

There are a couple of books in this series which I have included unaltered, because they offer a view or environment which is compatible with the ideas I was working with. In particular are two books my mother gave me: A Household Book For Tropical Colonies 70 and Mothercraft in the Tropics. 71 These two books illustrate the attitudes of the expatriate community as I remember it, especially the attitudes to the indigenous population.

The library at this point alluded to that part of Benjamin’s essay in which he is surrounded by crates of books half unpacked, not yet ordered on the shelves. This stage of the work was based on the idea of unpacking the baggage of my history (and remembering, albeit jaggedly). I formulated an installation design that included untidy stacks of books that I had glued together and painted black. I felt that these columns of black books suggested a void or negative space, like books waiting to be written, or sleeping memories not yet remembered. 72

70 E. Bradley, A Household Book For The Tropics, Oxford University Press: Cumberlege, 1948
71 K. Macpherson, Mothercraft in the Tropics.
Fig.30. S. Morgan, some women who didn’t stay at home, from artist’s book titled, speaking of gender, mixed media. 1996/97.
72 Fig.31. S. Morgan, Stack of second hand books that have been glued together and painted black. 1996/97
Aspects of The Library/ The Book as a Site.

I chose to make a library for a number of reasons that I will list:

1. I saw the book as being able to accommodate the diverse conceptual and material components that I was working with.
2. I found the structure of the book encouraged some ordering of the fragments whilst not offering whole views of any given part.
3. The pattern of pages allowed for discrete versions within versions and created in-between spaces.
4. The single book within a collection of books allowed for disjointed accounts, which were linked but not necessarily part of a perfectly mapped articulation of an idea.
5. The book, as an object carried conceptual levels of meaning and structure with it, to which I could append my work; for example the sequencing and ritual of turning pages.
6. The book configures, occupies and measures a particular space and time.
7. The Library could be seen as the embodiment of a Western collection into which knowledge is collected or written, classified and disseminated. It is a site from which the viewer may expect to extract something.
8. The form of the book accommodated the journal, the diary the story and the reference book.

I liked the way the pages of the book reflected an intimate relationship to the surface of each image and that this intimacy was automatically a part of the viewing process. This seemed to be more in keeping with an autobiographical content.

Books Titles and what they account for.

In naming the books I chose to give each one a title which I had borrowed from various bibliographies of books I was reading at the time. I saw this as a sort of classificatory system that suggests various textual backgrounds to the work. However I have used these titles purely for what they might evoke, rather than as concrete textual references. I have chosen these titles because as phrases they seemed to either contextualise my ideas or fit conceptually with my general meaning. This aspect of the work was also suggested by Benjamin’s essay in which he describes the School Master Kurzt who set about writing the books he would most like to own. 73 An example of such a title is, The Past is a Foreign Country, 74 I use this title because it alludes to the geographic and cultural displacement of my memories.

A secondary effect of this system of naming might be that one has to question ‘who writes whom’. I am conscious throughout the gathering and collation of this work of being both the observed and the observer. It might be that by using titles from books, I write or colour myself in through the textual implications of those titles. This aspect of the work really depends on whether or not the viewer is familiar with the specific book or has a more general knowledge of the writer and her or his genre. It seems fairly obvious that if the title in question is from a book with which the viewer is familiar, this will shift their understanding of the work that it is attached to, but if they are not familiar with it then a more literal relationship will be made.

73 W. Benjamin, op. cit., p 61
Revealing the process

The first set of books were constructed around the idea of an ethnographer’s journal or working diaries that had been written in the field. I particularly liked this description of a journal by Paul Carter in his book, Road to Botany Bay.

The open form of the journal, unlike the carefully balanced moral fable or the hierarchical structure of the essay, travelled light: it was responsive to every turn in the road (of fortune). It travelled without a map; it did not imagine itself at the end of the journey looking back. Unlike Johnson, it spoke in short sentences—it might be nothing more than a bare word or two (‘Weather: Fair again’); and, like Boswell’s writing, it followed the line of the journey for its own sake, dotting the world with islands rather than weighty, putative interiors.  

My ideas about the process being a visible and intrinsic part of the end product were also reinforced by reading Writing Culture, edited by James Clifford, and The Unspeakable by Stephen Tyler. Clifford for example has stated that:

*Ethnography decodes and recodes, telling grounds of collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion. It describes processes of innovation and structuration, and is itself part of these processes.*  

In the opening chapter to Writing Culture, Clifford describes a photo which, he suggests, could be interpreted as signalling not the end product of an ethnographic excursion, that is the writing up of the research, but the starting point, which he suggests is the actual act of writing. The photo he describes is of the ethnographer Malinowski who is seated at a table, writing. He is observed by a member of that tribal group which he is in the process, no doubt, of writing about. What Clifford suggests is that this image reveals the self-consciousness of being the observer being observed.

Clifford further suggests that ethnographers can no longer expect or should be expected to speak from a position of unquestioned authority. Rather, they might speak from what they know, without attempting to determine truth. In the 60’s ethnographers began to write about their field experiences in ways that disturbed the prevailing subjective/objective balance. The writing practice which Clifford is describing was useful in formulating a strategy for the making of the work, i.e. maintaining the process of development as a visible component of the work.

In The Unspeakable, Tyler describes post-modern ethnography as:

*A co-operatively evolved text consisting of fragments of discourse intended to evoke in the minds of both reader and writer an emergent fantasy of a possible world of common-sense reality.*

Tyler suggests that this process is not one which is written from two distinct sites of the observer and observed but as a movement between the two sites: ‘A mutual dialogic production of a discourse, a set of stories which in its ideal form would result in a polyphonic text’.

77 ibid, p.2.
79 ibid, p.132
As Clifford states, these breaks with traditional forms of ethnographic writing were not occurring exclusively in ethnographic practice but across most areas of research. In particular feminist discourses which, ‘questions the separation of subjective and objective, emphasising processual modes of knowledge, which closely connect personal, political, and representational processes’.  

I have used these ideas extensively in this work, in particular the idea of shuttling between observed and observer and evoking a sense of accumulated experience and memory by not erasing the preliminary sketches of the composition.

**The artifices we employ to gather the world around us -**

It was my intention that this initial body of work would reflect the expatriate in transit, caught between leaving and arriving, embarking on a journey to re-collect the artefacts of memory and experience as a way of re-negotiating cultural identity.  

Each of the books in the library contains original material that I have gathered. An authentic claim to ownership of all the material was a basic criteria for anything that I included in these books. The methods and form of construction that I used included mixed media and / or collage and artist’s books, all of which provide the gaps or spaces between or within themselves into which I could collect self.

The sets of images that I have put together established visual reference points to memory and experience. They roughly set the parameters of the subsequent work by cataloguing the sets of stories I will tell. These sets are based on concepts such as cultural and racial origins, and how the British subject was reconstructed in a colonial setting. The stories are told in more detail in the ‘invent(s)toy’ sections of this document.

The following section is the first of four ‘invent(s)tories’. The ‘invent (s)toy contains selected images from each of the books that made up the first stage of the project. A quote and an artist’s statement or story accompanies each selection of images.

80 J. Clifford:op.cit., p.13
81 Fig. 32. A selection of images that I have used in various forms throughout the development of this project.
In search of the becoming threshold

The gap between memory and the fictions that were used to reconstruct the subject is a predominant theme throughout this work. I visually play with dual experience and the conflicting sites of memory, by juxtapositioning self and other, same and difference, across a series of autographic accounts. I am interested in the secondary narrative that emerges in this gap; it might be seen to trace, however lightly, the third or hybrid self of the invisible child who listens and watches in the spaces in-between.

At one level all of these images can be seen as merely reflections on a childhood spent in different countries, exotic or otherwise. At another level each story identifies the way in which identity was constructed in the careful phrasing of all contacts with self and other, same and difference.

I have visually mapped this process through four versions of the stories that make up this body of work. Each version can be viewed as complete in itself or viewed in a progression as a series of re-workings of the original memories and experiences that the stories are based on. In the process of constructing this work I have been able to review some aspects of my cultural identity; old borders and protocols of distance have shifted, as I visually articulate the terms and
site specific phrases that were used to colour in my world as a child.

I have positioned myself as both the observer and the observed, that is, a dual tracking between the subject I am looking at, and the subject I, who is aware of being observed and of observing. The space between observer and observed becomes the critical ground within which clues to my sense of place and identity are found.

**An Impossible Homecoming**

The imaginary landscape of inquiry is not without value, even if it is without rigor. It restores what was earlier called ‘popular culture’, but it does so in order to transform what was represented as the matrix-force of history into a mobile infinity of tactics. It thus keeps before our eyes the structure of a social imagination in which the problem constantly takes different forms and begins anew. It also wards off the effects of an analysis which necessarily grasps these practices only on the margins of a technical apparatus, at the point where they alter or defeat its instruments. It is the study itself which is marginal with respect to the phenomena studied.

I. Chambers quoting Michel de Certeay, in Migrancy, Culture, Identity.
The homes that I remember were all in places that ultimately sought to be no longer part of Britain and her colonies. Our tenure was determined by the process of these countries becoming independent nations. My father, as a police officer was directly involved in controlling the potential blood bath that the tension of this process created, especially in Africa. On rare occasions he would speak of his great sense of sadness at having to control rioting crowds with the armed forces that he commanded. The ideology of the institution to which he was attached did not sit well with him. In doing what was required of him he eventually was forced to leave the country that he considered home, and leaving for him was a generic form of exile.
the past is a foreign country

home was an island

This is a slim book, made up of fragments of images that isolate memory as islands of experience. The connections between them are contingent upon the space within which they are viewed.

Every voyage could be said to involve a re-siting of boundaries. The travelling self is here both the self that moves physically from one place to another, following 'public routes and beaten tracks' within a mapped movement, and the self that embarks on an undetermined journeying practice, having constantly to negotiate between home and abroad, native culture and adopted culture, or more creatively speaking, between a here and a there, and an elsewhere.

T. T. Minh-ha. ‘Other than Myself, My Other Self,’ in, Travellers Tales.
maps of meaning: an introduction to cultural geography

The memory of ice cream in cardboard, the smell of it mingles with diesel fumes. I am seasick again as I look at the shipping labels used in this work

I retrieved these labels from a rusting trunk in the family garage. The book is housed in a small suitcase like a child would have. It represents the baggage of memories to unpack, sort though, and arrange.

Coincidentally I was looking through a woman’s magazine from the late 40’s and found a full page advertisement for the Union Castle shipping line that we sailed to and from Africa on.

These provide tangible evidence of a childhood spent in transit and authenticate my memories.

_Earning the collection simply involves waiting, creating the pauses that articulate the biography of the collector._

_S. Stewart, On Longing_
The past is a foreign country

The past is a foreign country

The stamp collection suggests the multiple journeys of someone. They catalogue the expatriate’s residencies. In combination they might be seen as the artefacts of an official story, or a map that chronologically demonstrates the opacity of the imperial project. The ‘other’ subject of this residency is concealed under the heavy phrasing of these objects.

I have overlayed a transparent page of text which quotes significant events from given years. These quotes were borrowed from ‘A History of the Twentieth Century’. Neither the stamps nor the quotes reflect the memories of the child. They are official accounts, each serving a particular agenda. They document a certain representation of the history of each of the countries that I lived in, through colonial rule to independence.

In an age in which anthropology increasingly turns into autobiography, the observer, seeking to capture, to enframe, an elsewhere is now caught in the net of critical observation. The I/eye joins the exile of language. For the journey outwards towards other worlds today also reveals an uncertain journey inwards: an expedition that exposes tears in the maps and a stammer in the language that we in the west have been accustomed to employ.

I.Chambers. ‘Leaky Habits and Broken Grammar’. in Travellers Tales
out of which past

out of which past is a book that contains a textual inventory of the objects that I have collected along the way. This representation of the collection as frottage images removes all links to context, tracing instead, the surfaces as if they were brail.

It becomes difficult to distinguish the difference between the surface decoration on a piece of Wedgwood and an African carving, or the front cover of a book and a Pacific Island artefact. This, theoretically at least, suggests a move from the collection as a reference to cultural specificity, to a collection as a reflection of the uneven textural surface of self-identity. The objects can no longer be seen to claim geographic or cultural origins, or be caught in a nostalgic time warp. They become a sort of text that traces a journey without identifying precise moments or stops along the way. The accumulation of the ‘stuff’ is viewed against a series of digital prints that have been inserted at intervals throughout the book. These prints depict parts of a landscape and act as an anchor for the borderless collection of textured surfaces.

*We all live as historians by inscribing and depositing the artefacts of our own historical cultures. That remembering that making of histories, need not be that which we aim to capture, to preserve, to make present or supersede; it can be part of the performance of remembering, of enacting history.*

_Australian Popular Culture_
The world of the child was made and remade, coloured in, invented and explained through stories told in a low yellow glow of a pressure lamp. Stories such as the ones written by Beatrix Potter of civilised animal characters taking tea.

For the child, the stories being told did not necessarily reflect the experiences of the physical place she listened to them from. Because, as Beatrix Potter’s civilised characters prepared to take tea, there is heard, close by, the low rumble of a Lion stalking its prey, and then the scream as it is caught.

The child shuttles between the abstract site of the stories, which word upon word, are supposed to construct a affection for a landscape and its manners, and tangible environment in which they are told. These conflicting points of experience become, over time, one memory so that it is difficult to separate the inside and the outside spaces by which these things had been held apart.

*Travel, in both its metaphorical and physical reaches, can no longer be considered as something that confirms the premises of our initial departure, and thus concludes in a confirmation, a domestication of the difference and the detour, a homecoming. It is caught up in a wider itinerary that poses the perspective of an indeterminable movement, and with it questions connected to a lack of being placed, to the proposal of perpetual displacement.*

I.Chambers, ‘Leaky Habits and Broken Grammar’, in Travellers Tales
speaking of gender

An ordinary childhood - She remembers clearly that her colour and her gender defined her. The ready reference to ‘other’ was always a part of the engendering process.

“Don’t giggle like an African”

In this work I have cut and pasted images into ‘A girls own guide’ which gives endless suggestions on how to occupy idle time. Throughout this book I have highlighted some of the social constructs that are woven into the text through which one becomes a culturally gendered subject. The ideology that informs these images might also be seen as the basis of inherited taste and reflex that informs choice and judgement.

There is something indefinably different between being brought up a girl, and being brought up a white expatriate girl. It involved a constant sense of self-awareness that was based on a clearly defined model.

This history is not the historian’s history; rather, it is the intersection in the memory of events collectively significant but personally interpreted and reconstructed.

A.Hamilton. ‘Skeletons of an Empire’, in Memory and History.
the gift: forms and functions of exchange

This book serialises a process of negotiation and exchange that takes place between two women over a shell.

The initial idea for this work came from a Solomon Island stamp on which there is an image of a shell and on the right of this a cameo of Queen Elizabeth II. The relationship of the shell to the head was similar to the relationship between the two women in the photo I was working from, and by extension, I saw the relative power bases of negotiation and exchange in the two images as similar.

The shell that I have used in this work undergoes a series of transformations until it becomes visually embedded in text.

I felt that this process, which resulted in the shell becoming text, alluded to the way in which representations can be used to redefine the subject to conform to a set of prescriptive relationships, ie. the shell as native and the crown as imperial narrative.

Identity is largely constituted through the process of othering. What can a return to the original be, indeed, when the original is always already somewhere other than where it is thought to be; when staying at home also means reaching out; and native cultures themselves are constantly subject to intrinsic forms of translation? Here, third is not merely derivative of first and second. It is a space of its own. Such a space allows for the emergence of new subjectivities that resist letting themselves be settled in the movement across first and second. Third is thus formed by the process of hybridisation which, rather than simply adding a here to a there, gives rise to an elsewhere- within-here-there that appears both recognisable and impossible to contain.

Trinh T. Minh-ha ‘Other than My self/ my other self’, in Travellers Tales
Third is thus formed by the process of hybridisation which, rather than simply adding a here to a there, gives rise to an elsewhere- within-here-there that appears both recognisable and impossible to contain.

Trinh T. Minh-ha ‘Other than My self/ my other self’, in Travellers Tales
local knowledge

Between leaving Africa and going to the Solomon Islands, I remember going with my mother to Woolworths to buy plastic roses. She had been told that flowers did not grow well in the volcanic / lime soils of the Solomon Islands.

The dozen plastic roses sat in their bronze vase on the Government Issue sideboard, dusted and washed in warm soapy water weekly by Seth the houseboy.

That they stand in for the real thing goes without saying. For me they represent the elsewhere of everywhere. These roses keep place at bay, they signalled origin and desire. These plastic roses represent the essence of an imagined origin, an imagined home. They signal the transplantation of a culture that never appeared to be touched by the accumulation of local knowledge.

A rigorous campaign of isolating and shooting segments of the ‘view’, of using the mechanisms of representation to secure identity and point of view, is one way of restoring subjectivity through a process of objectification. The excessive and sometimes obsessive activity may be regarded as a compensation for the relative powerlessness of verbal language which is habitually used to assimilate and process experience.

B. Curtis & C. Pajaczkowska. ‘Getting there’: travel, time and narrative.
The gestures framed in this series of images become the mirror in which her reflection is caught.

As she focuses her attention on the way the hands are held, a process of othering is transacted, through which she recognises her difference.

To collect and thus categorise she acknowledges the frames of reference that have formulated her identity.

*As white women ignore their built-in privilege of whiteness and define women in terms of their own experience alone, women of colour become ‘other’, the outsider who’s experience and traditions are too alien to comprehend.*

*Cartographies*
a diary in the strictest sense of the word

This book traces my journey into a specific site through visual images. Each series of images is, in a sense, a collection. A collection of the visible world that holds the invisible. It is a diary that documents the various methods of visual articulation that I have used in an attempt to negotiate place, or capture a reflection of self in place. I don’t think one is able to concretely determine a physical representation of this moment of recognition. It may be as transient as my shadow cast upon the ground.

For an exile, habits of life, expression or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment. Thus both the new and the old environment are vivid actual, occurring together contrapuntally. There is a unique pleasure in this sort of apprehension, especially if the exile is conscious of other contrapuntal juxtapositions that diminish orthodox judgement and elevate appreciative sympathy. There is also a particular sense of achievement in acting as if one were at home wherever one happened to be.

E.Said, Reflections on Exile.
Introduction.

-a tale to be told- represents the second stage of ‘Unpacking My Library’ and consisted of seventy-two 20 x 20 cm framed works. This body of work was exhibited at the Southern Cross University Art Museum, Lismore, in October 1996, and Legge Gallery, Sydney in May 1997.

This body of work extended and developed the ideas that I had assembled in the first series of books. The emphasis in the construction of these images was on visually describing the space in-between, and developing a visual autobiography.

In this chapter I will discuss how these aspects of the work were developed and how -a tale to be told- fits into the idea of a library of books.

In-between (a bi-focal experience)

The experience of my readers shall be between the phrases, in the silences, communicated by the intervals, not the terms, of the statement.\(^2\)

My use of the ‘space-in-between’ as an element of construction has been, in one form or another, an aspect of my work since 1989. The image at right titled, Y equals east, is an example of an earlier work using an acrylic front panel to obscure, and/or cast a shadow on, the image behind it.

All the work in this series was constructed using two surfaces held together in a box frame. The two parts consisted of a clear acrylic panel and a plywood panel, which were held apart by strips of foam core inside a shallow box frame.

I use the space-in-between as an element of construction which has been conceptually informed by reading texts such as (but certainly not exclusive to) Continental Philosophy II, Derrida and deconstruction edited by H. Silverman and The Location of Culture by Homi K. Bhaba.

Below are some of the phrases and quotes that I found useful in formulating a conceptual basis for the construction of the space between.

...No single end but a play between two sites at the same time.

...Designs which can never be reduced to one alone since the happiness or unhappiness of the one that oscillates between the two resides in the ‘between’.

These first two quoted passages suggested to me that the effect of the play between the different layers in the work engaged a sense of seriality. This occurs because the third image, the one created by the visual overlay and the physical effect of light that produces a shadow, can not be tied down but remains always as a proposition.

The text does not write itself on either side. It strikes between two. The place that would have pre-occupied the clapper, namely the ‘colpos’. I write myself on the beam (la hune) between them.

Différance is the systematic play of difference, of the traces of differences, of the spacing by means of which elements are related to each other. This spacing is the simultaneously active and passive (the a of différance indicates this indecision as concerns activity and passivity...) production of the intervals without...
which the ‘full’ term would not signify....It is also the becoming-space of the spoken chain - which has been called temporal or linear; a becoming-space which makes possible both writing and every correspondence between speech and writing, every passage from one to the other. 85

These two passages clarified the idea of creating the spacings between what can be said so as to suggest an awareness of the becoming-space in which a propositional identity might be suggested. The imagery that I use in this work is made up of the existing visual evidence of my memories. This material is the said, already written on the lines so to speak. What I am interested in is the not said, but the absent that is made visible by the presence of the visual evidence, or that moment of transit or as Homi K. Bhabha suggests, ‘the indeterminate temporality of the in-betweens’. 86

The image in fig. 35, titled same and difference, is an example of how I have used the space between the front acrylic sheet and the back of the box frame to suggest the becoming-space that is created between the fixed sites of what can be said by the images. In this work I have used an image from the children’s story book Epaminondas and his Auntie. This book was first published in 1910; the copy I have was published in 1939. The image of Epaminondas and his Auntie has been mono printed onto the acrylic sheet. Behind this is a mono printed image taken from A Girl’s world which was printed at about the same time. The theme of the two images is similar, ie. instructing the child through example.

In Travellers Tale: Narratives of Home and Displacement I found a common thread through out the essays. This thread seems to be the use of the ‘space between’ or the here and there, a space to write into.

85 ibid, p.192.
Fig.35. S. Morgan, same and difference, constructing the subject. Mixed media on paper and acrylic sheet, 20x20cm. 1999.
86 H. Bha Bha, op cit., p.227
For example, in the essay Other than myself/my other self, Trinh T. Minh-ha, writes:

...here, third is not merely derivative of First and second. It is a space of its own. Such a space allows for the emergence of new subjectivities that resist letting themselves be settled in the movement across first and second. Third is thus formed by the process of hybridisation which, rather than simply adding a here to a there, gives rise to an elsewhere-within-here/-there that appears both too recognisable and impossible to contain. 87

I saw the space as an imperative aspect of the work because it created a physical space within which the potential for something new might be apprehended. The notion of the space between, the becoming space, between here-there- and an else-where is, as can be seen by the preceding quotes, a ready reference in contemporary social theory, especially in relation to post-colonialism.

I employ gaps in the work to draw attention to the falling together of experience; a visual collage which is never absolutely fixed but remains as a flicker; a whisper of something that was there but is not there. In Camera Lucinda, Barthes88 suggests that a body which does not cast a shadow is a sterile body, a body which is then inactive. Hopi Indians, I was once told, think that the camera catches shadows and that once the shadow is caught the subject dies. In this sense, I felt that by physically attaching the information in these works to the same surface, a sort of sterilisation would occur; a sense of play would be lost. It might then appear as if conclusions had already been drawn or the ability of the subject to move forward had been cancelled. the voice of things,

Fig.36 S. Morgan, The voice of things, mixed media on paper and acrylic sheet, 21x21cm. 1997.
(fig. 36) is an image that attempts to make visible an invisible moment. In this work I have overlayed an image of my hands over an image of a Solomon Island woman smoking a pipe. My hands are caught in a gesture associated with talking or explaining something, this image casts a shadow over the more ambivalent pose of the woman in the background image.

Ian Burn made a work in 1967 titled Looking Through A Piece Of Glass. In this work Burn was dealing with the way perception works. He states for example that, ‘You cannot read and look at the same time, but that in the process of reading you become aware of the fact that you are looking’. 89

In my work I believe that the audience becomes equally aware of viewing or reading the work. This is due to visual interruptions to the viewing process such as having to look through either a clear acrylic sheet into a recessed space or through an image on the clear acrylic sheet to see the image behind. In addition the information on the acrylic sheet casts a shadow onto the image behind. The shadow, which can only occur if there is a space between things, further interrupts the image’s surface. Where there is no image on the acrylic sheet the looking process is interrupted by the reflection of the viewer.

This aspect of the work signified for me the way in which identity is constructed. For example, the layering of one image over another reconstructs the way in which memories fall together and are recollected in transparent layers; and secondly, the effect caused by the acrylic overlay makes the tension of dual experience apparent. I found that looking into the recessed box frame was conceptually similar in nature to peering into one’s history and retrieving memories.


Fig.37. S. Morgan. same and difference ii, constructing the subject. Mixed media, 21x21cm. 1997.
Fig. 37. Titled same and difference II, is constructed out of white chiffon material and the crumbling flowers of my wedding bouquet. Over this is an image of two Ni Vanuatu women. This image is taken from a photo of a traditional wedding which I took in about 1980 at the Vanuatu Cultural festival.

It is interesting that when photographing this work it has been difficult, if not impossible, to capture the effect of the shadow. It would seem that the third space that the shadow suggests, can be alluded to, but not made present in a fixed sense.

The Surface of Things

All of the images in this series of work are made up of combinations of media, eg. Intaglio prints, computer generated images, photographs and slip caste objects, drawing, painting and found objects.

For example Fig. 38 includes a puzzle piece, a fragment of lino, and a section of a photograph. There is an image of a figure inscribed onto the surface of the acrylic sheet that casts a shadow over the collaged ground.

The fragmented self is made evident by the obvious construction of each surface. This reminds me of speech, speech that is lilting, uneven, stammering and at times repetitive or forgetful. I saw this as contrasting with the grid as a perfect model of equal, monotone spacings. At this time I had been reading Sarah Kofman’s discussion of Derrida’s text Glas, and found that this was not dissimilar to what I was trying to achieve in the work. In particular the statement that ‘First in Glas there is never a single end, but, like fetishism, a play between at least two sites at the same time.’
The structure of Derrida’s text Glas, which is in two columns, creates the possibility of two readings:

The text does not write itself on either side. It strikes between the two. The relationship between the texts is not one of example and copy, but a relationship of quotation, plagiarism, infatuation, translation, transference, re-editing.  

These are ideas that I allude to in the making of the work, ideas such as the doubling which occurs at the edges of things brought almost together but still held apart. One of the ways that I hold the parts of the story apart is to employ different media within the image. As I have previously said I use different media in terms of how these media might be employed to say something about their subject. For example I find that a drawn object might suggest a personal attachment. An intaglio print might be read more readily as a device for representing. A slip cast object might seem more like an original rather than a drawn representation of the original and therefore perhaps not be read as a nostalgic attempt to recoup that which is lost; and a computer image may be read as information, removed from the sphere of subjective rendering. This is not to say that in every instance these methods affect the content in the same way, but that in this particular work I found this to be how I used them in a general way.

For example in the set titled reflections on exile, I have, in one of the images, used a piece of plastic wash bag with pictures of roses on it as the background. I have then glued a watercolour of tropical flowers (hibiscus and frangipani) to the acrylic sheet in front of this. I used the water colour image because it suggested a strong personal attachment to the object represented, whereas the roses on the plastic wash bag fragment did not in itself suggest the same personal attachment. I had intended the inclusion of this fragment of plastic to suggest the absence of any personal experience of the roses printed on it.

An invisible aspect in the construction of this body of work was a list of words that I had compiled from texts I was reading at the time. These words formed a sort of palette of doing-words from which to work (a lexical field), words such as: displace, rupture and impose. An example of how I employ these words in the construction of the images can be seen in the set titled rewriting the self: history, memory, narrative. This set of works consists of four painted landscapes. These landscapes employ to some extent the aesthetics necessary to produce a pleasing scenic view of a given landscape. This view is interrupted in each image with an offset relief print of a lounge suite that is imposed squarely in the middle of each image on the acrylic sheet.
A critical question raised by this practice might be: should I have integrated the two images in such a way that the viewing process was not actually interrupted and the viewer did not have to negotiate the disruption to the surface? I do not believe so, because in this particular series of works I was quoting cultural impositions on foreign landscapes.

I felt that the tension that was apparent in viewing these works correlated to the dualities of experience that I remember. The effect of these experiences manifests themselves as fragmented surfaces rather than as a harmonious whole.

**Choosing an outline.**

At this stage in the project I was concerned with developing the work’s autobiographical outline. More than a narrative, autobiography is, by its very nature, an account of personal experience. I found the following two quotes quite useful as starting points in the formulation of my ideas. Both passages quite clearly encourage the use of subjective material in the development of an account of identity

> Autobiography reflects on experience in order to develop an account of self identity which adds to the mainstream theories.  

> Counter memory looks to the past for the hidden histories excluded from dominant narratives. But unlike myths that seek to detach events and actions from the fabric of any larger history, counter memory forces revision of existing histories by supplying new perspectives about the past.

I was interested in pursuing the idea of a visual autobiography because I felt that this could contribute to mainstream theory and practice in a concrete way. One of the reasons for this came from an experience I had during the exhibition of The Science of Whereabouts. It was suggested to me by one of Australia’s more prominent cultural theorists that some of the images in the exhibition seemed to be too obviously based on personal experience. In effect, I understood this to mean that I should attempt to mask the content. I found this comment curious considering that the subject matter for the work was similar to this project, ie. Personal identity. I concluded that this was perhaps an example of why it was important to be clear about one’s relative position to mainstream theories,
especially if one happens to be a female. In Feminisms and the Self. 95 Griffiths suggests that there is a tendency in women’s writing to begin by writing in the third person, as if deferring “I” to an ambiguous other self. This strategy might be used as a way of avoiding a presence of self or revealing the “I” in the work. It seemed to me that what was being suggested by the comment I refer to, was that the presence of “I” be removed, and that I should refer to my experience from the position of ‘we’, or worse still a vague someone. I think that ‘I’ as a term of reference avoids a presumption of community agreement. I believe that this is important because I am not suggesting that the subject of this work is one whom we all recognise or even agree with, so to phrase myself as us would be to assume a status that I think would be inaccurate. I felt that by using primary material, which had not been subjected to the sieve of objectivity, I might contribute to the idea that in telling stories that are personal in nature, one is forced to look beyond the dominant form that history takes and experience culture as an uneven and incomplete production of meaning. 96

**My aim in this set of work was to develop the sets of stories that I had roughly outlined in the previous stage. I was looking for a sense of the story telling in process that in turn would suggest the presence of the narrator. In effect, I did not want the images to appear cut off from their source.**

**In My Own Voice - A Story To Be Told**

At about this time I was reading several books on feminist writing and autobiography. These books formalised my reaction to the audience response I referred to previously and gave me a position from which to approach “ I ” as an element of “ we “ and perhaps even be brave about it.

I shall include here a series of quotes that help to formulate a background to the overtly autobiographical nature of -a tale to be old- and the subsequent construction and content.

In, Writing Selves: Contemporary Feminist Autography. Jeanne Perreault writes:

“ I “ and “ we “ are the most important words in the writing(s) of contemporary feminism, continuously transformed and re-enacted as feminists claim the rights of self definition.97

*The central questions for feminists are these: Who will construct the categories into which “ I “ and “ we “ fit ourselves. Whose words will we attend to? Whose texts will we honour? Audre Lorde declares, ‘if we don’t name ourselves we are nothing (interview 19) 98

Like all writing, feminist self writing is informed by experiences of the everyday, of the body of the sites, of contact with and isolation from the read-about and lived-in worlds. 99

Feminist writing invites consideration of relations of difference as self and community embody (each and both) difference from and difference within. 100

97 J. Perreault, Writing Selves, Contemporary Feminist Autography, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1995, p.1
98 ibid, p.4.
99 ibid, p.7.
100 ibid, p.10.
In, Feminisms and The Self: The Web of Identity. Morwenna Griffiths writes, if the need to:

...use the subjective experience of women to question the abstractions assumed by mainstream philosophy of mind, by which I mean as found in philosophy developed by white middle class males from the West. To use ‘personal experience’ - or ‘subject position’ - to question philosophy is to do something which in itself questions the knowledge base which underlies the (various) mainstream understandings of self identity. It draws into question philosophy’s own understanding of itself as universal: unbounded by political considerations such as gender, which enter ‘personal experience’ and which contribute to ‘subject position’. 101

Critical autobiography, in contrast, makes use of individual experience, theory, and a process of reflection and re-thinking, which includes attention to politically situated perspectives. 102

My reason for quoting from these texts was to give a contextual background to the strategy of utilising personal experience in the form of a visual autobiography, as a means of looking at the cultural factors that contribute to the construction of my identity. What is obvious is that these six quotes all foreground the subjective, a project which I found useful in the development of this work.

In her introduction to Writing Selves, Perrault quotes Catherine Belsey;

In the fact that the subject is a process lies the possibility of transformation. 103

The basis of my approach to this project is that in dovetailing the processes involved in the development of the work and the construction of identity, the concept of the subject as a process can be translated directly into a working studio process. This is based on the idea that identity is a process of negotiating. What is this process? For me it is the activities associated with the production of visual art through which I become the subject of the process that in turn enacts transformations producing a becoming self. Perrault describes ‘autography’ as a process through which the act of writing is the moment in which selfhood is experienced. This also reflects the way in which I have previously described my studio practice in the preceding chapter.

A similar theme is also evident in contemporary social analysis such as post-colonialism. Here the uneven ground of history is revealed through collections of individual essays and experiences that give a multi layered view of the agencies and affects of colonialism. An example of such a book might be Travellers’ Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement, in which there are sixteen independent essays by writers such as Trinh T. Minh-ha, Madan Sarup and Griselda Pollock; or Out There, marginalisation and contemporary cultures, in which there are twenty nine essays. In the forward to this book Marcia Tucker writes;

There are many voices, many points of view, and no single answer is offered. Through a variety of theoretical, critical and expository writings, we hope to begin to break down the Western binary frame. 104

My engagement in these texts is through the visual process of constructing the work; particularly its content and form, and the development of an autographical outline from which I could candidly reflect on personal experience.

101 M. Griffiths, op.cit., p.55.
102 ibid, p.70.
103 J. Perrault. op.cit., p.15.
Fig. 41, titled Constructing the subject, reflections on the empire, is made up of signifying images which suggest a structure through which to understand the background to my history. The central image is of my father as a small boy dressing up as a local police officer; he is supported on either side by two cut out figures of European origin. Below this is a transparent overlay of an image of me as a child. I look as if I am saluting, in fact the original photo that this image was taken from is of me holding up a fish I had just caught.

In conjunction with the development of the narrative I was also developing methods of constructing the work that would result in a visible and working interconnection between idea, process, object and installation. The structural and compositional devices that I employed were:

- A grid,
- The in-between space
- Collage or mixed media

I will discuss each of these elements of the work to show how they work together as a visual language that has grown out of a constantly developing studio practice.

Having decided that I would transfer the work from the book to the wall - from intimacy to public, and still maintain ‘I’ as the subject, I developed a plan for the form of the work. I envisaged that this work would be like pages of a book organised into sets that would be installed in such a way as to encourage the work to be read as a narrative.

To some extent my decision to make work for the walls was a response to the apparent inability of the audience to access the work in the library. Ian Burn suggests in Dialogue, that there was a need to recognise: *'the different layers or regimes of vision involved in forming our perceptions’*. 105 I developed work for

Fig.41. S. Morgan, constructing the subject, reflections on the empire, mixed media, 21x21cm. 1997. 
105 I. Burn, op. cit., p.193.
the wall as a way of accommodating those viewers whose ‘vision literacy’ is as Burn suggests, ‘predominantly a capacity to see a picture pictorially, as a whole and at a glance’.  

These works were constructed as sets of 20 x 20cm book images. I felt that this size fitted within the feel of a book page and retained the intimacy of a book even though they were presented outside of the confines of a book’s formal constraints. The installation of the work was based on the sets of images conforming to a Western system of left to right reading which also suggests a chronological unfolding of the stories.

I may describe the construction of this work in the more poetic terms of seventy-two speech acts, or, fragments of a story falling upon seventy-two surfaces

The idea of an autographic account was emphasised by the series and the sets of images which were quite obviously held together by common stories that established and maintained a visual commitment to the subject as ‘I’.

For example fig.42 shows a partial view of the work when installed, in this installation the images were arranged in sets of stories as if on a page, the gaps and pauses between the blocks of images suggesting pauses in the telling.

As an extension to the idea of tales being told I included a series of images of my hands caught in gestural poses. I used these gestures to suggest story telling in process. I saw the hands as an aspect of telling which occurs or falls outside of the framed moment.

Whilst the hands suggest those ineffable moments in a speech act, I was also using them as punctuation marks in the telling. In the installation they created pauses within the stream of imagery. The combination of the images swings between a visual reference to oral story telling and written stories that are being communicated visually.

106 ibid, p.193.
In this work I have treated each individual image as a word or phrase in a sentence. The narrative comes about through reading a series of linked phrases. Each individual image is like a compartment in a collector’s cabinet, which contains an artefact or souvenir that carries with it a link to some other time, place or context. As with any collection, the arrangement of these independent parts into sets can effect the way information is ordered and knowledge about the subject constructed. The contextualisation is quite evidently a subjective experience that is motivated by personal experience.

What seems to be most apparent through this is that my stories or parts of them can and will be reworked by the viewer. The identity that I construct and which is fixed in the moment, caught in and between the images, does not remain. It really is as transient as the light that activates its shadows in these works, and totally open to being rethought and reinterpreted.

The three images above form part of the first set of works in the series titled: pattern of residency. This was the first sequence that I used to present the work at the SCU Art Museum. In the following arrangement I have rearranged the sequence and replaced the central image, by doing this I believe that there is a shift in the way that the sequence of images are read. The first series suggests to me that the figure of the child is caught between two points. In the second arrangement below, the third image suggests an historical seriality to the first two images.

The potential to rearrange the work and thus manipulate the sequence of memory which in turn creates slightly different meanings, is not unlike Healy’s description of sampling in contemporary music, where the different ways in information is read produces something different depending on the sequence and arrangements. 107

The Grid Of Reference.

In the construction and installation of this work I was quite consciously working with the grid as a structural component of the work. This includes:

- A structure or frame work within which to collect the fragments of self.
- A device that might encourage a certain reading of the work.
- A metaphorical reference to mapping, in this case the mapping of a mental journey.
- A visual reference to the concept that all knowledge is mediated. The grid in this case signifying the layers of constructed knowledge through which a personal story is told.

I developed the idea of a series of works which would make up a large grid after considering pulling the books apart and framing them, so that the pages would be more accessible to a public which seemed dubious about becoming actively engaged in looking through books. In the process of developing the grid form of the work, it became apparent that several layers of signification, which I will outline below, would be brought into play.

Firstly I saw the grid as a structural framework which would hold the diversity of images together. As a compositional device the grid can work like a skeleton off which to hang visual imagery, not dissimilar to the way a spine performs in the construction of a book.

The grid forms a strong visual structure that I found afforded certain leeway in terms of secondary compositional choices. It can be thought of as a form of visual syntax and grammar in that the grid might be used to ‘provide a mechanism for generating all sentences possible in that language.’

The term ‘frames of reference’ also suggested a grid made up of a number of small works. The grid in this sense acted as a referencing system which operated in two directions. The first involves the internal narratives which are linked by the formality of the grid of frames all of the same size. The grid becomes a repeated pattern that brings a sense of order to an otherwise disordered site. Secondly the grid acts as a reference to the outside space, ie. The public site of the gallery and more abstractly the public site of shared language and knowledge. This could be described as a mediating grid through which the personal, internal space must be read.

My initial plan was to make up to ninety individually framed images, all of which were part of a story. The regularity of the square frames and the grid that they would form when installed would establish a meter for the reading of the work.

I felt that the grid, like the book, came with an established conceptual agenda that I could draw on to suggest a position from which to view the work. The most obvious of these being the idea of the grid as a mediating device through which one’s experience of things is sieved, the result of which is that nothing comes to one uncontaminated by the mediation of the grid. This aspect of the grid, that is, as a conceptual metaphor for the way in which knowledge is transmitted and received, operates totally independently of me. By physically employing a grid in the work I quote as well as employ all that a grid might imply.

I also used the grid to make reference to the way in which maps have come to be constructed. In cartography the grid has been employed as a way of representing the uneven surface of the globe as a flat readable text. The grid in this instance helps to construct an abstract view of real phenomena. By extension this could be described as a grid of language through which we read the world and by which we are to one extent or another constructed.

108 Readers Digest, Universal Dictionary.
The grid also operates as a lens through which bites of information are framed. Thus the images might be viewed as sections of a larger narrative. A similarity to photography could be drawn here, as Varilio suggest in, The Vision Machine, the viewer has learnt to read photos as small sections of a larger image, and in so doing mentally fills in the gaps or spaces of what has been excluded by the frame.

The size of the work was based on the following four considerations:

It was a proportional reduction to the frame size of the preceding body of work that I completed in 1992 for my M.A. This meant that 3 of these 20 x 20cm works would be equal to the width of one of the pervious works. I settled on this size as I had initially intended to include, at intervals, a series of 60 x 60cm framed works. This size frame also corresponded to the compartment dimensions of a collector’s cabinet that I had seen.

The work, when installed, needed to form a grid that could be installed in a range of ways. For example: all the works on one wall or as a line around a wall. I wanted to be able to play with the way in which the work was installed, whilst maintaining the idea of blocks or lines of text. Size was important here as I had roughly calculated the number of pieces per set as 3 or 6 plus spaces between sets. Larger frame sizes would not have allowed me the flexibility I needed in the installation of the work.

I was using the frame to delineate the public site within which the personal was spoken. I saw the grid, which was constructed by the frame, and their spacing once installed, as an acknowledgment of a certain objectivity associated with a public space. One of the best decisions I made in the construction of this work was to have all seventy-four frames pre made and ready for me to assemble. Being able to frame and then hang the images as soon as they were ready enabled me to respond directly to the way the images effected each other.

The Installation.

Illuminating one and other suddenly and unexpectedly.

The installation of the work was based on the idea of the viewer reading the work rather than looking at a series of discreet and unrelated pictures. In both installations I attempt to encourage reading, as opposed to merely looking, by the way I arranged the work.

Installation # 1

When I installed the work in the Southern Cross University Art Museum I was able to play with the arrangements. The work was best hung flush to the wall on pins rather than hung from a picture hanging system which tilted the work out from the top.

In the SCU Gallery I grided up a wall with map pins, each pin representing the possible position of a work. This first installation was based on the lay-up of a page of text. The wall became an enlarged page upon which I was able to arrange the sets of works as sentences. I left the pins in the wall in the empty spaces so as to acknowledge the space as a part of the installation.

I was then able to put the images up, rearranging the order and groupings as well as playing with the spaces between as a part of the total look of the work. These spaces had been considered right through the construction of the work as spaces that might suggest pauses or gaps in the telling. The gaps were for me, representative of the intangible that I can only describe as the sensation of having a word on the tip of your tongue, but totally out of reach.

110 R. Chow, op. cit., p.34.
On the last day of the exhibition I invited 2nd year SCU visual arts student to come to the gallery and rearrange the work. I was interested in seeing how their reading of the work would inform their decisions. It became apparent that they did not deal with the individual imagery so much as the form of the work, perhaps like a series of building blocks with which they could make shapes on the wall. They isolated three works from the 74 and hung them on a separate wall - for no apparent reason other than they did not fit into the pyramid shape they had constructed.

**Installation # 2**

When the work was installed in Legge Gallery in Sydney I hung it in a line around the wall. This format was based on reading a ribbon of text rather than a block, so the viewer was encouraged to move around the space and was not able to take in a whole view of the work as had been the case in the previous installation.

I was unable to hang it flush to the wall which I felt detracted somewhat from the visual formality of the meter suggested by the spacing and size of the work. However in this installation the distinct sets within the series were more evident. This, I felt, meant that the work was read more like a line of visual text than when it had been installed as a block in the S.C.U. Gallery.

**Moments of displacement.**

In making - a tale to be told- I found that the process of negotiation that occurred between me and the fragments of material with which I was working was crucial. This negotiation took place through a series of trials, such as shuffling bits and pieces of material, laying ideas down on the acrylic sheet and then testing them over other images, watching them on the wall, and then reworking or editing them. The work grew as I responded to the images that I had already completed and also shrunk as earlier work was discarded through more recent synthesising of ideas.

I believe that the work begins to map those moments in the process when self and identity are caught for just a second, or as Bhabha suggests in The Location of Culture:

*The individuation of the agent occurs in a moment of displacement. It is a pulsational incident, the split-second movement when the process of the subject’s designation - its fixity - opens up beside it, uncannily absent, a supplementary space of contingency.*  

111

Playing with the installation of this work suggested how I might proceed with the third stage of the project. Essentially, I thought that the next stage in the project might work as an extended catalogue of the ideas and stories that the framed works suggested. I also decided to make the work in a different media and to approach the idea of a visual autobiography, the space in-between and the representation of the subject in a different manner. This was a re-thinking, if you like, of the way in which the images activated the moment in which the subject’s ‘fixity- opens up beside it’, and potentially provides a ‘supplementary space of contingency’.

The next section contains the second ‘invent (s) tory’ which is made up of selected images from the work discussed in this chapter.

111 H. Bhabha, op. cit., p.185.
**Introduction**

The sets of work reproduced in this section represent the body of work that I completed in 1997. The work reconstructs my childhood memories and experiences with particular focus on the spaces between two cultural sites. The work was constructed using acrylic panels held in place over mixed media images by a shallow box frame. All images are 20 x20 cm.

The construction of the work was developed to visually recreate the way in which dual experiences fall together, creating, visually, a third possibility. The acrylic sheets were, in some cases, inscribed with images which caste shadows on the mixed media background. The result is a third image that does not exist in a physical sense but is an effect of light and the correct spacing or distance between two fixed elements. ‘Keeping a correct distance’ is a term that is also applicable to notions of contact with different cultures. The third image alludes to the notion of a hybrid or grafted species that cannot reproduce itself exactly.

*To Drift Across The Page.*

*To begin with these marks on the page, the movement of calligraphy: for to write is , of course, to travel. It is to enter a space, a zone, a territory, sometimes sign- post by generic indicators (travel writing, autobiography, anthropology, history...), but everywhere characterised by movement: the passage of words, the caravan of thought, the flux of the imaginary, the slippage of the metaphor, ‘the drift across the page...the wandering eyes’. Here, to write (and read)*
does not necessarily involve a project intent on ‘penetrating’ the real, to double it and re-cite it, but rather entails an attempt to extend, disrupt and rework it. Although allegorical, always speaking of an other, of an elsewhere, and therefore condemned to be dissonant, writing opens up a space that invites movement, migration, a journey. It involves putting a certain distance between ourselves and the contexts that define our identity. To write, therefore, although seemingly an imperialist gesture, for it is engaged in an attempt to establish a path, a trajectory, a, however limited and transitory, territory and dominion of perception, power and knowledge, can also involve a repudiation of domination and be invoked as a transitory trace, the gesture of an offer: a gift, the enigmatic present of language that attempts to reveal an opening in ourselves and the world we inhabit.

I. Chambers. 'Migrancy, Culture, Identity
The expatriate is a particular breed who is never really at home again. Although feeling more at home abroad than anywhere else, they cannot call abroad home and at the same time seem to lose the defining key that connects them back to the ancestral land.

I noticed that there was always a restlessness about them when they had to make the return journey, an anxiety perhaps. Ultimately there was no answer to the feeling of dislocation that he felt.

*Here, identity is a product of articulation. It lies at the intersection of dwelling and travelling and is a claim of continuity within discontinuity (and vice-versa). A politics rather than an inherited marking, its articulation and rearticulation grows out of the very tension raised between two constructs: one based on socio-cultural determinants; the other, on biological ones.*

Trinh T.Minh-ha. ‘Other than myself my other self’, in Travellers Tales.
Harold undertook the ‘journey out’ to Africa in approx. 1846. Upon his retirement from the Colonial Audit Dept. he returned to the Isle of Wight and named his house ‘Naishiva’ after a place in which he had lived in Kenya.

Harold, the younger, also undertook the ‘journey out’ and worked in various territories until his retirement in approx. 1961.

The four colonial portraits in this set document a series of ‘Journey’s out’ which were licensed by the dominant ideology of the time.

This set of images records a series of expatriations, a sequence of journeys, which like rubber stamping, classifies the landscapes to which they are attached.

*He was one of us......* is the specifically colonial address of the narrative aporia contained in the ambivalent, obsessive repetition of the phrase ‘He was one of us’ as the major trope of social and psychic identification throughout the text. The repetition of ‘He was one of us’ reveals the fragile margins of the concepts of Western civility and cultural community put under colonial stress; Jim is reclaimed at the moment when he is in danger of being cast out, or made outcast, manifestly ‘not one of us’.

*Homi k. Bhabha. The Location of Culture*
They read books written by other people and enjoyed the stories that mapped their own lives. They never wrote a single word that might give anyone an insight into their own experiences.

They arrived as expatriates armed against the local with instructions on how to act and recreate some semblance of home in a foreign outpost. This seemed to make it impossible to step beyond the space constructed for them by. They were consistently aware of the protocols of how to be a white expatriate, the social order depended on rigorous attention to these guidelines. To step beyond this mental and physical compound and perchance meet, learn and become familiar with anything local, was to slip over to the other side. You simply would be banished from the group for transgressing the line.

And so, there is nothing in the family archive that might suggest that they were aware or even particularly interested in the world they occupied. The details of lives spent somewhere else are hidden behind assumed disinterest.

The traveller as imitator may perform the tasks of a faithful reproducer of meaning, but to become a (good) translator, he would have ‘to expand and deepen his language by means of the foreign language’. To travel can consist in operating a profoundly unsettling inversion of one’s identity: I become me via an other. Depending on who is looking, the exotic is the other, or is it me. For the one who is off and outside culture is not the one over there, whose familiar culture I am still a part of, or whose unfamiliar culture I come to learn from. I am the one making the detour with myself, having left upon my departure from over here not only a place but also one of my selves. The itinerary displaces the foundation, the background of my identity, and what it incessantly unfolds is the very encounter of self with the other-other than myself and, my other self.

Trinh.T.Minh-ha. ‘Other than myself my other self’, in Travellers Tales
The child looks out from the familiar landscape. The child looks into a large museum-like space, this is the unfamiliar territory of brief visits to the ‘mother country’.

I remember these three yearly excursions as islands of experience and interruptions to the pattern of life. Whilst on leave it was apparently important to catch up on the significant cultural sights and institutions such as the Queen Victoria museum. The thing that strikes me now is that a reciprocal cultural tour that might have illuminated the culture and history of the places we lived in was not part of the essential education of a white expatriate child.

Between a childhood that was dominated by communities which worked very hard at reproducing the British cultural codes of practice, and an ‘other’ which I observed. Is a series of images that document the polarities of experience.

These works don’t attempt to confirm or deny identities, they merely state the points between two observed references, one promoted as civilised the other as uncivilised. If experience is a part of the process of being written, then it would be undeniable that rubbing up against other cultures must leave some trace of, even if this trace is almost invisible. In these works it is perhaps not what is visible which is the effect so much as what is not visible but suggested by the collision of two distinct categories of experience.

*This revision of the history of critical theory rests, as I have said, on the notion of cultural difference, not cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is an epistemological object - culture as an object of empirical knowledge - whereas cultural difference is the process of the enunciation of culture as ‘knowledgeable’ authoritative, adequate to the construction of the systems of cultural identification.*

*Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture.*
in transit / spaces-between / i rememeber where i was before
This series of images is a reflection on the way in which the expatriate family translocated the domestic site of the home to each new foreign territory. Residency in a different country did not effect the way we arranged ourselves in or on it, not did it alter the way the view was seen. Each relocation was performed with barely a hint of disruption to the arrangement and function of the domestic space.

Afternoon Tea was a ritual that was closely adhered to. It always took pace in the sitting room and was served on the trolley by the houseboy. Afternoon tea was not about quenching thirst or hunger, it was a cultural practise that took place at a specific time of day. It was that space in the day when sort of ritual reaffirmation took place. I associate the cup with acts of speech.

Home for the exile and the migrant can hardly be more than a transitional or circumstantial place, since the ‘original’ home cannot be recaptured, nor can its presence/absence be entirely banished in the ‘remade’ home. Thus, figuratively but also literally speaking, travelling back and forth between home and abroad becomes a mode of dwelling. Every movement between here and there bears with it a movement within a here and a movement within a there. In other words, the return is also a journey into the layer of ‘future memory’ (Jelloun). The to-and-fro motion between the source and the activity of life is a motion within source itself, which makes all activities of life possible.

Trinh.T.Minh-ha. ‘Other than myself my other self’. in Travellers Tales.
the essential features of home were ..... 

The home-maker constructs a fiction in the narrative that unfolds through her arrangement of the interior spaces.

One such fiction were the plastic roses placed on the sideboard in front of a window through which the vibrant colours of rows of Hibiscus bushes could be seen.

I think the plastic roses signalled an expatriate who never actually left ‘home’. In this work they become an example of the expatriates desire to recreate the artifices of ‘home’ regardless of geographic location. The fact that there has never been found any fossil remains of the rose in the Southern Hemisphere stands in contrast to my memories of an African garden and suggests displaced cultural markers.

The roses signify, amongst other things, exclusion. My memories suggest that it was through systematic exclusion that the project of being a model subject of the British empire was enacted.

_The intervention of the Third space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code. Such intervention quite properly challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenising, unifying force, authenticated by the originary past, kept live in the national tradition of the people._

_Homi.K..Bhabha, The Location of Culture._
memories of an african childhood

narrative that sought to exclude the real

The landscape will swallow you up, the wild life will kill you, these are the familiar themes I remember being told about foreign landscapes. The narratives create distinctions between home and abroad that serve to construct identities.

An affection for place seemed to be based not on where one was living but on a fictitious place in which one could wander at will.

The child grows up somewhere in between the fictions of Beatrix Potters domesticated landscape and the threatening realities of an African garden.

Quotation thereby leads us to a set of terms bound up in this double process of restoration and dissolution: the images, the reflection, without this two-in-the-place-of-one, the one cannot come to be, for it is only by means of difference that identity can be articulated. All fictions, both oral and written, lend lyric structure to our experience, but the convergence of fictivness and print is particularly conducive to an experience of simultaneity and metaphorical existence that is both substitutive and predicative. Whereas speech unfolds in time, writing unfolds in space, and print’s formation by process of mechanical reproduction gives the book both material existence through time and abstract existence across a community of readers.

S. Stewart. On Longing, Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, The Collection.
styles of distancing.... self and other

Styles Of Distancing references the way self and other were held apart by the all the agencies of the white community within which the child was raised.

The childrens books from which these images were taken reflected the representation of the subject in clearly defines terms.
questioning the frame

The person who takes the photo of the child edits out that which is not desirable, sanitising the experience. The result is that there are no photos that confirm my memories of the nannies, house boys, gardeners and their families. The child who looks for records against which to reference memory, finds that it is missing and wonders why the people who coloured the days are not a part of the photographic documentation of their lives.

The photo suggests truth, an actual event. You don’t see what has been excluded, this was a process of selective framing which was a defined attitude.

No one remembers this person’s name even though she was my nanny for about a year. What is remembered is that she had to cover her head because of a skin complaint.

....photographs are a way of preserving memories and are powerful and pleasurable stimuli for reawakening forgotten experiences. But over and above this innocent desire to secure ephemeral experience for retrieval in an uncertain future, there is the act of photographing as a form of behaviour in itself. Taking photographs can be a way of maintaining a relationship of controlled proximity and distance to a lived environment.

The difference here is only something that comes to be when someone reads the images. That someone’s own history will create the gaps between same and difference. All of the elements used in these works capture a moment in time in which I was a participant. The initial reasons for collecting these moments separates them into categories of experience, but the categories are not fixed, it depends on who is looking

An African proverb says, ‘A thing is always itself and more than itself.’ Tale-telling brings the impossible within reach. With it, I am who It is, whom I am seen to be, yet I can only feel myself there where I am not, vis-à-vis an elsewhere I do not dwell in. The tale, which belongs to all countries, is a site where the extraordinary takes shape from the reality of daily life.

Trinh T. Minh-ha. ‘Other than myself my other self’, in Travellers Tales.
constructing the subject 1

Dia-, di- prefix. Indicates; 1. Through or throughout. 2. Across or by transmission. 3. Over, across or at right angles. 4. In opposite directions. 5. Between, as in diapause. 6. From one to another, as in dialogue.

Aren’t all definitions of self managed through a mirroring of self and other? The selections made by me here can be seen to be a process of constructing the mirror, of making choices about what to include and what not to include, and so the story is never complete. It is never categorically correct or true. The effect of these dual sites of meaning might be likened to collecting artefacts which, depending on how they are displayed, can tell different stories about the identity of the collector.

This is a process or re-collecting artefacts that resemble something remembered. They, the images and their component parts, are not in themselves the memory. The images become part of the texture of the body of memory, a memory that is always reforming to accommodate the fabrication of itself in a dialogic process.
**constructing the subject II**

The missionaries encouraged every woman to wear a generic ‘moo moo’, which is a shapeless dress that was sold in every store.

Motivated by an overdeveloped sense of morality the body became a primary figure in the phrasing of civilised and uncivilised, heathen and Christian. Their dress code, or lack of it depending on where you came from, was used to define our sense of moral righteousness.

These were the lessons taught to the child, but each overlay was transparent, and the child’s knowledge and tools for negotiating self in site develops in the spaces between model and experience.
the voice of things.

The inscribed surface of the acrylic sheet carries a hand that casts a shadow on the image over which it has been placed. There is a visually dual tracking here between self and site and site and self, both able to effect the other.

The point between the two images is the moment when difference becomes a third state, neither one nor the other.

Art and culture emerged after 1800 as mutually reinforcing domains of human value, strategies for gathering, marking off, and protecting the best and most interesting creations of “man”. In the twentieth century the categories underwent a series of further developments. The plural, anthropological definition of culture (lower-case c with the possibility of a final s) emerged as a liberal alternative to racist classifications of human diversity. It was a sensitive means for understanding different and dispersed “whole ways of life” in a high colonial context of unprecedented global interconnection.

J. Clifford, The Predicament of Culture.
memory needs objects

Two suitcases and an empty grey trunk. This is the entire list of my personal effects on arrival in Australia. When looking for objects in my home that might offer that window into a sense of who I am, I found that there was very little which might serve as an indicator of my history.

The images in this series reconstruct and to some extent authenticate my memories. They provide a reference to the texture of memory and the process of negotiation between self and place in the present.

The reason a cultural text or system of meaning cannot be sufficient unto itself is that the act of cultural enunciation - the place of utterance - is crossed by difference of writing. This has less to do with what anthropologists might describe as varying attitudes to symbolic systems within different cultures than with the structure of symbolic representation itself - not the content of the symbol or its social function, but the structure of symbolisation. It is this difference in the process of language that is crucial to the production of meaning and ensures, at the same time, that meaning is never simply mimetic and transparent.

Homi K. Bhabha. The Location of Culture,
What was the value of this shell? Two different exchange economies are at work here. Each player is intent on gaining the maximum benefit from the exchange and yet the base line for value is not a shared point of negotiation. The collection that this shell is now a part of is quite a valuable one, earned from years of careful negotiation. Every shell was bought or found as a live specimen that was subsequently cleaned to a prescribed formula.

The process of collecting shells became the contact zone even though in every transaction a certain distance was maintained between the two participants. The child in this story observes the terms of the contact, anticipates the moment in which the contact will be broken and a more ambivalent attitude assumed. The child can tell from the tone of voice used that there is never a mutual sense of equality in these transactions.

For the collector the shell becomes part of a system of value based on western desire. The context within which the shell is placed defines it in terms of the protocols of the collection.

To conclude, I want to suggest that identity is a construction, a consequence of a process of interaction between people, institutions and practices. Moreover, because the range of human behaviour is so wide, groups maintain boundaries to limit the type of behaviour within defined cultural territory. Boundaries are an important point of reference for those participating in any system. Boundaries may refer to, or consist of, geographic areas, political or religious viewpoints, occupational categories, linguistic and cultural traditions.

M. Sarup. 'Home and Identity', in Travellers Tales.
three way imperfection

Where am I in relation to where I was? What claim to belonging is there that does not involve negotiations between self and place.

The classification of my citizenship is imperfect, it is a fiction of belonging that serves a purpose without resolving the tensions caused by dualities.

This work documents the enactment of a pragmatic conclusion to an abstract idea, but there is a qualifying clause in the image. I use a landsat image of Ayers Rock (Uluru) as an emblem that has become a ready reference to anybody’s Australia. The figure of the girl hangs over the apparently empty landscape attached only by the strip of paper that declares her a citizen of Australia.

The question of identity has been approached principally in terms of origins, as something that is given, as something native, as something inherent in place or ancestry, territorially or genetically, or else indirectly, through tradition or assignment. In this view, identity, if not plainly given, is at best discovered or acknowledged. Set against this is one that sees identity as more problematic - in the context of travel or mobility, for instance, identity has been viewed as the expression of a trajectory, as accumulated through space and over time. It can be seen as displaced, diasporic, nomadic, multiple or hybrid. But this approach too is one that locates identity in a historically given experience - this time, the given of social and/or geographic mobility or mixing. However, even diaspora can be accommodated to essentialist views through the concept of exile and a subsequent sense of loss of origin, leading to the need to recover a homeland or an identity. Roots revivalism is one obvious form of this retracing of origin, but it can take more subtle forms, forms reminiscent of Freud’s ‘family romance’ - the search for an imaginary identity which has its basis in disavowal or denial. Sometimes it seems as if there are two types of identity: one for those who stay at home, and another for those who move around. In this sense, diasporism can seem simply a sophisticated form of the same thing, identity based on becoming rather than being, biographical (or historical) experience rather than the fatality of origin, derived from something more like a curriculum vitae than a birth certificate.

Peter Wollen, The cosmopolitan ideal in the arts’, in Travellers Tales.
Chapter 4
-stories of how we have understood the world-

Introduction

-stories of how we have understood the world- consists of four large scale, loose leaf, artists’ books that contain digitally generated images set into an embossed grid on magnami paper. Each page has been embossed with 30 8x8cm squares. The dimension of each book is 75 x 55 cm. They were exhibited at the ACUADS conference Melbourne in September 1998 and the Lismore Regional Art Gallery in April of the same year.

In this set of books I have used digital technology to rework the sets of images and stories that I have developed in the preceding two sets of work. All of the images in these books have been produced through digital means using Adobe Photoshop and printed using an Apple Mac. Colour Style Writer Pro. Issues such as the archival permanency of the image are real concerns. The extent to which I have been able to guarantee the stability of the work has been a factor in the production of this set of books. A second consideration has been how digital imagery fits into preconceived notions of what a fine art practice might be. Traditionally a definition of such a practice might have been oil paint on canvas. It was actually once suggested to me that works on paper could only ever be conceived of as working drawings that would lead into the production of the ‘real thing’, the real thing being a work on canvas (linen to be exact) and preferably in oil paint. New media have always questioned this apparent dogma. The advent of the printing press and photography are two examples. Digital media combines some of the attributes of these two processes of image production and also makes possible relatively inexpensive multiple copies that far exceed the accessibility of the intaglio, screen print, or lithographic processes. Not every household has an etching press but there is a growing market for home based digital imaging devices, which is unprecedented in history.

The initial stage of development for this part of the project involved a number of media trials before I settled on the final form of the books. These included:

* Page and image qualities such as media used and method of fixing image to page.
* The arrangement of images on the page and sequence of pages.

I will discuss the work in terms of these considerations.
The book.

The four books that make up -stories of how we have understood the world- are evidence of the sequential development of the original ideas I had about the library. In this section I return to a discussion of the book’s form and function specifically in relation to this set of books. I will discuss the reasons why I chose to construct the work in the way in which I have, and outline how my books fit within the genre of artists’ books.

My decision to make a set of large scale artists’ books was informed by viewing a range of artists’ books at the 1996 Brisbane artists’ book fair, curated by Noreen Graham of Graham Galleries in Brisbane. This exhibition was a valuable opportunity to witness first hand the way the viewing public attended to or read artists’ books, and to speak with a range of people about their responses. It was my impression that scale played a part in the way people might approached a book. The two main areas that seemed problematic in this public situation were difficulty in accessing the book, ie. too much wrapping, boxing and other devices for the presentation and housing of the work that intervened in the process of looking for no apparent reason; and how the book itself worked, particularly the ease with which the pages could be turned.

I also noticed how most books were opened and often only the first two or three pages really looked at before being passed over. The exceptions were one or two quite large works. The pages of these two books could be opened with a sense of space and boldness that suggested that the book could be handled with confidence.

These considerations had a decisive effect on the style and form of the books I was to make.

As I have previously stated, my interest in the mechanisms of the book was not about upsetting the traditional concept of a book. I was not looking for ingenuity of design or perplexed spatial contortions but a simple design that was easy to read and occupied its space with a formal strength of purpose.

The second consideration was the content of the work. The personal nature of the images and the fact that they are autobiographical strongly suggested the relative intimacy of a book rather than the public space of the wall.

Before continuing to describe the work I wish to situate the books within the framework of artists’ books. I will use, as my reference Johanna Drucker’s book The Century Of Artists Books. In this book Drucker categorises types of artists’ books by their style and function. For example she lists in the index ten headings under which she will discuss the nature of books. These areas are: The democratic multiple, the rare and auratic object, codex, self-reflexive, visual form, verbal exploration, narrative and non-narrative, agent of social change, conceptual space, and document.

To adequately position my set of books within the tradition of the artists’ book, I will paraphrase some of Druckers’ more relevant descriptions of book types.

**Democratic Multiple**

The distinguishing characteristic of a democratic multiple is that the work bypasses the restraints on precious objects.

The rare and auratic work

This would be a unique work, most probably a highly limited or inconsistent edition. It would be a work that expressed aesthetic ideas in book form. An auratic object would be a work or series of works that seemed to bear their meaning purely through being, their appearance, and their form through iconography and materials.

Within this category is the sub category of book as private archive. This is a distinct area in which the work documents projects or archives raw or personal material of personal memory and experience.

Codex

Codex refers to a book’s highly complex organisation of material and conceptual elements and is the most frequently used form. The definition of a codex might be that it is a set of bound leaves or pages in a very restrained form. The codex form relies on conventions such as the hierarchical organisation of information.

The self-reflexive book

The self-reflexive book has as its basis a philosophical interrogation of a book’s identity. A self-reflexive book would disturb the conventions of reading by calling attention to these structures.

The book as visual form

This is a book which maximises its visual potential, given that all books are visual and have a visual presence and are tactile and spatial. A book that is intended to be about its visual form would take advantage of a book’s complex and multivalent visual potential. Such a book would take advantage of images, colour, sequencing, juxtapositioning and or narrative.

Narrative and Non-Narrative

The two fundamental elements of a book are finitude and sequence. A basic narrative would probably rely on the Western tradition of left to right reading unless there was some element included which disrupted this expectation. Sequence can function outside of narrative, relying on relationships to be forged page by page. This sequencing would build the meaning through juxtapositioning and movement, and would work as a framework through which a series of images are read and relationships constructed.

The artists’ book as an agent of social change.

In this category books could be said to function by revealing or commenting upon existing situations in a way that offers a critical reading. They are often narrative, descriptive and embedded in personal experiences of individuals. A sub category of this section is the album, which might contain segments of memory and lived experience as sequences of private visual souvenirs.

Conceptual space

The book is able to function as a conceptual space. This can be achieved by presenting a conceptual piece or by using the book in a conceptual way to duplicate a function normally served by a real space of performance or exhibition. Using the book as a conceptual space, returns the reader to the book as an object and space of potential rather than a vehicle for limited exposition, or particular representation.
The book as document

In this section Drucker demonstrates the capacity of artists’ books to serve as documents, either reproducing a record of experience and information or serving as the document itself. As a document the book becomes a space of information.

Of all the books that Drucker mentions in this book Sol Lewitt’s ‘Autobiography of 1980’ \(^{114}\) which falls into the ‘book as document’ category, is most certainly the closest in resemblance and function to the work which I made. Lewitt’s book catalogues his personal possessions that are presented as small photographs on a grided page. Lewitt has used the book to ‘reveal and document personal identity’, but at the same time gives no intimate information. In comparing this work to my own it becomes evident that the major departure point is that I do not conceal the personal information. Drucker points out that Lewitt’s work does not index a voice, manner or character. The work that I have made is very much an index of these things due largely to the hand-made quality of the work and the imagery I have worked with.

The four books that make up -stories of how we have understood the world- do not fit neatly into any one particular category of artists’ book. For example, they make use of cheap printing technology that makes it quite simple to create multiple copies of the images. The images themselves, in Drucker’s words, ‘bypass the restraints of precious objects’ \(^{115}\). However, the pages of the book, whilst reproducible, are in each case unique if only because each image must be hand cut and glued in place. This leads to a definite aura of the unique in the work, as well as a feeling of aesthetic expression in the quality of the paper and the page handling.

The books that I have made use the restrained form of the codex but are also self-reflexive in as much as there is a tension between looking and reading the sequences of images. The interleaving glassine pages interrupt the sequence of looking/reading by visually reiterating the storyteller each time the page is turned.

The book’s visual form is expressed through the materials and narrative structure. That is, I have used each page as an element in a visual journey that has a tactile quality that to some extent overrides the material poverty of the digitally produced images. For example, if I had not inserted these images into an embossed grid, the work would have seemed like a cutting and pasting exercise much like a scrap book, which might have led to a reading of each image on the page as an isolated island of information. By embedding the images into the surface of the page; and thereby concealing the cut edge the viewer does not register the cut and paste aspect of each image but rather a physically linked composite image. \(^{116}\)

When arranging the images on the pages I initially arranged them in a left to right sequence. However I found that the final arrangements also began to work in much the same way as a cryptic cross word in as much as certain clues are provided with which to fill in the blank spaces in various directions on the page.

\(^{114}\) ibid, p 335.
\(^{115}\) Ibid, 336.
As a category of book ‘the album’ is probably most appropriate for this work, Drucker suggests that the album is a book into which segments of memory and lived experience are collected as private visual souvenirs. The idea of a book as document is also relevant to my work in as much as the imagery is a record of experience.

For example Fig.48, titled: territories are maps, is made up of various images that relate to my memories of living in the Solomon Islands. The page’s design was based on 16th Century map designs in which information about cultural aspects of the region were included as a frieze around the outside of the map.

When it came to binding the pages I used brass Chicago screws to fasten the spine. I found the loose-leaf album style of binding most appropriate. This form of binding was initially determined by the fact that I was working on separate sheets of paper that I intended to put into a sequence later. What I liked about this form of binding was that it did not set the internal politics of the book in concrete, but retained a slightly fragile edge between a finished product and a work in process.
Grids of reference.

The idea of the grid as a structural format for each page has developed from a conceptualised sketch in the mock up pages to an aesthetic component in the embossed, windowed page. My initial trials for this format were firstly a page of images that I had intended to have printed by a bureau. The plan proved to be far too costly. From that point I began to play with the idea of cutting a series of windows into the page. My plan was to laminate three sheets of paper together, two being the grided windows which formed an envelope around a sheet of images. I was intending to have a die caste made to cut the grided pages. I chose not to do this in the end because I felt that the combinations of paper were going to be too bulky and cumbersome, in addition the glue would adversely effect the paper and water-soluble inks of the digital prints.

The embossed grid system, which followed this, developed into a structure that defined the materiality of the page and designated the spaces in which the said and the unsaid might operate. I found that embossing the paper embodied each previously blank page with an aesthetic surface. The paper was no longer a neutral surface but became a site or object which suggested an immense space within itself.

The embossed grid worked in a totally different way to the original idea of a physically cut out window. The cut window suggested to me a series of isolated floating spaces. Each window seemed to occupy a distinct space that was cut off from the adjoining spaces on the page. The embossed page actually seemed to draw these isolations together so that they could be read as occurring within the same physical space.

The development of the pages in this series of books has resulted in a more sophisticated design than my original concept. This has occurred through the manipulation and design of the page, specifically the embossing, paper quality and the cutting of each of the images.

What's in a grid-

The fundamental function of the grid format in this work was to create a consistent structure to each page. I initially used the grid to play with the idea that the same set of images could be arranged differently on a series of pages and that each arrangement would tell a slightly different story.

The construction of the pages of these books was an extension of the previous work. The grid is a reference to the concept that all experience and knowledge is mediated and therefore can only be read through a grid of prior knowledge, experience and mediation. This metaphoric grid of knowledge can, at different times be said to exclude, diminish, and exaggerate its terms of reference. The grid is then a device used to encourage a particular reading.

I also used the regularity of the embossed grid to suggest a cabinet into which the fragments of memory and experience are collected. The grid then becomes a tool used in the pattern of systematic remembering, a tool which encourages arrangements that are based on correspondences and resemblances.
Sequencing the Stories.

The arrangement and sequencing of the images on the pages was somewhat similar in its development to the way in which I had hung the previous work. Within the bound space of the embossed grid I was able to move the images around and in so doing subtly manipulate the way in which the story was developed on each page.

Although there were several considerations in relation to the size of the images one of the more pragmatic ones was the capabilities of my ink jet printer and the computer’s memory. At the time I was working on an Apple Mac. LCIII so it was necessary to produce images which my computer’s memory could handle with some efficiency. The size I finally decided on (8cm square) meant that I could print six images at a time on a sheet of A4 paper.
The placement of the images on the page came about through a process that I have previously described as autographic, meaning that it writes itself. This process was informed by the sequences of inferred relationships, and, to a much lesser degree, compositional criteria such as colour and design. Each page is made up of a series of images that form a visual narrative about some aspect of the story I am telling. I did not construct each page as a composition that results in a picture. The term ‘a picture’ suggests to me that what one looks at is complete in its composition. I constructed each page as if I was writing lines of text. The grammar and syntax of the page is developed by not filling every square with imagery. My idea was that an understanding of the story would be built up through a layered sequence of encounters with the visual phrases that made up each page.

The blank page is the nothingness - the silence - on which the words enact their epic journey, which is both a quest for meaning and a creation of meaning. Because of this the standard relationship between figure and ground is displaced. The white space is an expressive part of the message rather than a neutral field. 121

The way in which I have designed the pages does, I think, use the blank spaces as an expressive part of the message. The embossed grid encourages a reading of the whole page rather than of just the images on a blank background, which in turn helps to develop a sense of the journey and in which meaning may be sought and created simultaneously. The grid identifies the blank page as an active component of the image. This in turn leads to the possibility that the reader might begin to question what has been included and what had been left out of each story, and perhaps even fill the blank spaces with their own memories.

121 O.B. Harrison, op. cit., p. 164.
These two images are an example of the way in which the pages were arranged. In the first example certain parts of the original image have been removed or left out of the composition. The relationship of the photographer on the right to the figures in the central image is suggested by the spacing left between them. The status of the photographer on the right is also implied by it relationship to the image of a Solomon Island stamp above it. The space left around the central image encourages the idea that the central motive of this composition is that there is an observer and an observed.

In the second image I have left the figure relatively intact within a block that is surrounded by space. My intention here was to suggest that this person lived within a compound, mentally and physically. By creating a large blank area to the left of this image it might appear as if the figure in the image was conducting his life in a sort of white isolation, whilst also appearing to take notes or preside over the space he faces.
Cutting the attachments.

Having established the formal components of the design of the pages and the books as a whole, I was then able to experiment with different ways of making the images for each page. This involved a series of trials in which I experimented with several different methods and processes. These trials included intaglio prints, solar intaglio prints, mono prints and drawing.
An example of some of the media trials can be seen in the three examples above. The first image was constructed using mono-printing and hand colouring, the second image is from a solar intaglio print, the third is a digital image.

Having trialed these various methods of image construction I eventually decided to use only digital prints. One of my reasons for this was that the digital images rendered the diversity of the images I was working with in a cohesive style. The inherent hierarchy of the image produced in a mixed media format was replaced by a consistent surface that might be said to have democratised the images.

In these books I have used digital media in a fairly rudimentary manner. That is, I have not used filters, cut and pasting options, or recoloured the images to any great extent. I was employing the machine as a collection device. The computer became a virtual collector’s cabinet, into which I could import innumerable series and sets of images, that I could then catalogue, categorise, and cross-reference. In a way this became a process of remembering to forget, because, once the images were in the system, I became less attached to them as indicators of self. The nostalgic moment became mere information. I found that the sheer volume of this image bank tended to dilute the concentrated essence of affection previously attached to individual images.

The technology makes possible the production of any number of versions, copies and sets of an image that certainly allows for an extended elaboration on the stories being told. This would have been time-consuming, if not impossible, without the application of digital imaging. Through this process I might suggest that the self becomes immersed in her own information which, in the end, de-sensitises the subject. It is not so much the existence of any one of the images that is of significance, as the existence of the volumes themselves that house a catalogue of the self.

The way in which the images were imported into Adobe PhotoShop has given the images in these books a fairly distinctive signature. The images are all quite low resolution having been imported using either a video or a Photovix, both of which could only be read by the software at 75 dpi. The Tamron Photovix is a fixed video head that was developed to transfer slides and negatives to video. Using the Photovix I was able to import slides, negatives and positive images on a paper support provided they were not too opaque. The image also could not be any larger than a slide. In those instances when they were larger, I imported them in sections and patched them together digitally.

One of the things I liked about these original prints is the dissolving surface of their grainy texture. I feel that this aspect of the image surface does not mask the fact that they are reproductions and copies. As it happens, the apparent reproducability of this work is brought into question by the fact that the Apple Style Writer Pro that I printed them with no longer works. The new printer (an Epson Stylus 740) does not produce the same grainy texture but in fact may, in some people’s eyes, produce a better printed image.

Colouring my self in.

When formatting this imagery to be printed I did not control or manipulate the overall colour of each of the images. I was not interested in controlling the colour or tonal balance of the pages, as I felt that this would lead to a conformity that belied the way in which these experiences and stories were remembered.

In the fourth book in this set I reproduced a selection of pages in black and white and provided a colour chart down the left-hand side of the page. This chart might be read as a legend to the map or a catalogue of colours with which to colour one’s self in. By removing the colour from the actual images I found that some of the relationships between images altered and could be perceived differently. It seemed that instead of being aware of looking at a reproduction, and therefore aware that there was an original source or an element of the real in the image, the black and white images appeared to have had this link back to source removed, and by inference, a reworking became potentially possible. The inclusion of the colour chart down the side of these pages inferred the racial politics that are at work throughout the books in a more direct and yet abstract manner.
The in-betweens.

The in-between spaces of the book, being those spaces between the pages, carries a glassine page with a series of hands printed on in white ink. I captured my hands using a regular 35 mm camera, a video camera and a digital camera. These images were imported into the computer and modified so that they were suitable for making photosensitive etching plates. The images seen here are actually relief-rolled plates rather than intaglio prints.

The interleaving pages in these four books took quite some time to resolve. Their function in these books is a cross between the printmaking practice of separating prints with acid free tissue paper and my use of perspex in the previous body of work.

The criteria I was working with was that the hands should appear to float in this space rather than be attached to the boxed grid in the same way that the digital images were. The effect of white ink on the glassine paper achieved a sense of the image becoming evident and clearly seen for a brief moment as the page is turned. I was looking for a sense of the narrator who was not tied down, a sense of being there but also of being not there. I wanted this page to activate the ‘space between’, which, in this instance, is the space between the viewer and the work, and between the turning of the page. These spaces allude to the notion that it is within the gaps that the potential lies for new stories to emerge.

The gestures that I have assumed here are not based on sign language, but are frozen moments in the narration of my story. They act as supplements to the telling through gestures that I would use in the description of words such as ‘emerge’.
My trials with this aspect of the work began with trying out photocopied hands on drafting film (see example). The major problem I had with this method was that neither the photocopied images nor the surface had the soft or fragile presence that I was aiming for. The photocopied images carried a machine-edged quality and sameness which I was trying to overcome in the work. I was feeling at this stage that I wanted something a little more hand-made inserted into the work.

My second series of trials encompassed trying out materials such as iron-on transfers that were printed on the ink jet printer. However, once again, the actual surface of these images did not work. I also considered printing the hands onto fabric but the difference in weights between the two materials caused too much of an interruption to the reading process.

The hands that I was using on these interleaving sheets were originally going to be printed into the spaces on the page over which they were laid. My intention was that they would suggest an emergent space in which the stories operated. When I printed the white water-based ink onto the glassine, (which has a green tinge to it) I found that the images did not work well over the white spaces on the page, but that they were quite interesting over the printed areas. I found that the effect of the hands broke up the image creating a suggestion of the third space within the work, in much the same way as the perspex sheets did in the previous work. As the page is turned the images of the hands are, for a brief moment, much clearer and whiter, but this appears as some sort of trick or hovering image that is not quite captured. The two images above are an example of how the interleaving pages worked. In the first image the glassine page is laying over the image, and in the second image the interleaving page has been turned back to reveal the image.
Soliciting responses

Over the course of making this work I have asked various people to look at the work as a way of testing how it is read and what is read. The observations by these itinerant viewers have been useful in judging the way the pages were working as I developed them. The responses ranged from a desire to have text included to narrate the story being told, to a desire for filling in all the spaces so that the pages would appear more finished. Some viewers thought that the pages seemed unfinished due to the spaces I had left. They were looking for the wholeness, completeness and balance that one might associate with one single image or picture.

Others found that they followed the spaces between images. By creating this little well in the page the eye cannot help but fall into it, they suggest themselves as a repository for something. This may occur because of a repeated pattern, in this case a white square that the eye follows. It might be that the white squares offered a less complicated way to travel through the work. The images themselves could be likened to a page of text that has been constructed using a combination of font styles and sizes which create a certain confusion or deconstruction of the unity of the page rather than succinct clarity.

Still other visiting viewers felt quite strongly that each page had a filmic quality that suggested viewing an irregular pattern of stills or details from a moving picture. This indicated a narrative reading of the pages that captured the idea of jumping between fragments of remembering.

The impossible conclusion.

From the perspective of a collection and its value as determined by sets, originals, copies, and unique objects, this series of work can be seen to step away from the desire for authentic examples of the archive. Notions of truth and fiction bleed into each other here. Neither one confirmed or denied by their material presence. Every image has the same material presence, which could be seen as an example of how digital imaging renders all experience the same. From this point on there need not be any generational loss of information: it is stored in the computer’s memory. This might be contraindicative of the post-colonial project which is that change in relation to fixed sites of representation is what is interesting and useful in the face of nostalgic returns to past sites. On the other hand the ability to change any of these images at any time, and the loss of Benjamin’s aura of the original, could be seen to answer the problematic state of nostalgia. By removing all handmade marks from this work, the democracy of the image, even when it is familial in content, suggests a move towards other potentialities.

Fig.46. S. Morgan, installation view of one of the artists’ books from -stories of how we have understood the world- 1997.
Fig. 47 S. Morgan, constructing the subject -atto- a page from artists’ book titled - stories of how we have understood the world - 1998/99.
Fig.48. S. Morgan, From artists’ book titled -stories of how we have understood the world- digital prints on magnami paper. 1997.
Fig. 49. Digitally reproduced example of embossed paper.
Fig. 50. Example of page composition.
Fig.51. S. Morgan, Example of page layout.
Introduction.

In this set of work I took the original images that I have been working with and translated them into digital prints, each one was printed out as an 8x8cm square that was pasted onto a 70x60cm page. These pages had been previously embossed with a grid of thirty 8x8cm squares. I approached the arranged of the individual details on each page as if they were blocks of text. The spacings which created pauses in the narrative, or spaces between details that marked absences. What is not said remains as the unconfirmed subject.

This invent(s)tory is broken into three sections or books; these correspond with the three books that are being documented. Each page of the books has been reproduced on a small scale in this section.

In general these books are based on my memories and experiences of the years from 1958 to 1969, in a sense these were the formative years of my childhood. The years after 1970 I would classify as a different set of experiences that I have not generally used in this work. The work uses the family history pre- 1958 to contextualise my stories.

The recurrent theme throughout this work is the repetitive distinctions drawn between them and us, us being the white expatriates and they being the indigenous population of the territories we lived in.
The figure of the small girl which reoccurs through the books, either facing into the page or out of the page is a reference to the subject of the work, I. She reads the narrative, as if removed from it; she looks into the page, as if coming from somewhere, or too something; and she looks out of the page as if coming from somewhere, engaging the viewer in her gaze. She alternates between these positions depending on the relationship to the story or the story’s content. It is her hands that narrate the story throughout, an uneasy motion, which carries the suggestion of telling.

‘For, in breaking into my own body of speech, opening up the gaps and listening to the silences in my own inheritance, I perhaps learn to tread lightly along the limits of where I am speaking from. I begin to comprehend that where there are limits there also exists other voices, bodies, worlds, on the other side, beyond my particular boundaries. In the pursuit of my desire to cross such frontiers I am paradoxically forced to face my confines, together with that excess that seeks to sustain the dialogues across them. Transported some way into this border country, I look into a potentially further space: the possibility of another place, another world, another future’.

I. Chambers. Migrancy, Culture, Identity
A Taxonomy of illocutionary acts  
- the said and the unsaid-

Whilst my grandmother documented the family history, my grandfather responded to place by serialising his experiences in cartoons and obscure stories. His sense of the world was not as the explorer but perhaps as the travelling raconteur, a Brit. who saw the same reflection in every mirror. I suspect that my sense of disappointment might spring from a desire to capture that which is absent and seems to have been so completely left out of any documentation of our history. Perhaps these omissions the absences of recollections or insights, was due to the way in which this class of person occupied these places. That is, they were not there to learn anything, but to act as civilising agents. It is quite possible that they did not think that there was anything worth recording.
the said and the unsaid
It comes to mind that Beatrix Potter’s stories were used, perhaps unconsciously, to construct, word upon word an affection for a landscape and its manners that I had never experienced, but which was always referred to as home. This series of images is another example of the dual, and at times quite incompatible experiences that informed my childhood memories.
principles of categorisation
interpretation
territories of desire
acting as if one were at home

detail
This page is really an encapsulation of the life of a colonial civil servant who arrives somewhere with a certain amount of baggage - the rose here is used as an analogy for the indiscriminate supplanting of this baggage on a series of different geographic locations, regardless or despite the local. The transit box is a motif that has strong implications in terms of cultural reproduction. It comes from a memory I have of arriving in a humid unfamiliar foreign outpost, and, upon entering the assigned temporary accommodation, noticing that in this empty house there is this one box in the middle of the kitchen. This box contained the bare essentials in terms of kitchen equipment that one would need until such time as our crates arrived from Africa. I use the transit box here to suggest a box of cultural essentials ie. the rose to tide one over until a reinvention is complete.
The Category Of Person
- Domiciled -

My nationality, place of birth, and place or residency have always been at odds with each other. As a child and young adult these aspects of identity effected many facets of my life and seemed to be the taproot of the tongue - the accent of words spoken when determining futures. For my parents it was unthinkable that Britain would refuse their children citizenship on the grounds of non-residency by my father’s family. Perhaps this was why I was told not to discuss where my extended family lived with anyone.

This image implies the imperfection of being thus placed culturally and geographically. I think this image consolidates the disjuncture that has occurred in the naming of my subject-hood. The stamp is significant as it carries a map of the country of birth implying quite clearly a geographical elsewhere.
The identity suggested by the tartan and the image of sheila na gig is what I would describe as an unfelt knowledge. The Campbell of Calder tartan and the sheila na gig (an Irish Goddess) are vague markers that may well determine no more than the colouring of the hair, skin and eyes. These cultural artefacts certainly have little in common with were I was born. The cultural lessons we received were on how to be British. It seems that being British is distinctly different from being English. One can be black and British but one cannot be black and be English. There was a heavy emphasis placed on the Scottish and Celtic ‘blood in the veins’. It appeared that it was very important to be able to claim a tribal heritage, an authentic and tangible history that belied the country of birth. The framework of the family tree seems to lock one into a history that may appear to determine you, and yet beyond these names of people there is a lived experience that has no motto, no heraldic banner or tribal cloth: it exists only in memory.
Reading the Past.

The images on this page are set out like a catalogue that lists the agenda of the expatriate’s residency. The stamps signal the ground upon which this residency was inscribed. In combination they might be seen as the artefacts of an official story, or a map that chronologically demonstrates the opacity of the imperial force. The ‘other’ subject of this residency is concealed under the heavy phrasing of these objects. In combination these images suggest the sites of agency and control that determined the past and future identities of the subjects that were caught in the geographical sites these images refer to.
maps are territories
Arrival Scenes
-residing only on the pink bits-

Memory seems to be concentrated in those moments of departure and arrival. What is certain is that we always occupied the pink bits on the map. Between each place was a transit space, a watery no place. The ritual at each point of embarkation and disembarkation was to count the baggage, each piece was numbered and carried a label which signalled point of departure, destination and travelling class. In an odd sort of way these are the recorded moments in an otherwise non-existent past. The place that was departed from and the place arrived at, cannot be used to fix origins; there is no home from which to have departed and therefore no home to return to, so place becomes an unnamed port of call.
My memory of mothering was based on two experiences. The first and most tangible, as I remember it, was fairly demonstrative, the second relatively cool, born of rules and protocols. It was all a part of learning the structure of the differences between them and us. It produced, in some cases, a flawed duplication of cultural identity.
Intersecting memories

This page documents a series of parallels that the child learnt to adjust to.
This is not a thesis on the body nor a researched document on gender relations. What I wanted to examine was my memories of being a white female child in the tropics.

In simple terms the whole process took place at the very line drawn between self and other. This line was re-drawn at every opportunity: it was an inescapable and constant reminder of the responsibility of all white women to set standards and live by example.

There was white gender and then there was black gender, and then there was how to be a white gendered subject in a black world, and then there was how to make little girls into good wives. The first lesson was ‘you are different’, the second lesson was ‘they are not like us’, and the third lesson was ‘don’t act like them’, and so it went on.

I believe that in the most general sense the root of many of the attitudes I have revealed here were a result of the originally very real fear of disease for which there were not then cures, especially not when my grandmother was a young married woman. This developed into a more general series of distinctions, which ultimately had no real basis, except that such discrimination was just how it was. It is perhaps then not surprising that, in my experience, it was the women of the family who were the main perpetrators of discrimination because they were the ones who took responsibility for the health of the family.

In general African women were promoted as, unclean and lacking discipline; and yet we all had nannies. How to deal with the problems of differing standards was plainly spelt out in books such as ‘Mothercraft In The Tropics’
constructing the subject II
-emboss-

The images in this series of works deal in most cases with the gap between two versions of a similar cultural ritual. In some cases my memory is of the absurdity of transplanting some very Western rituals onto foreign sites. There is a consistent duality between that which I remember and that which I was taught to think. In other words, the construction of the British subject which took place in foreign lands leads to experience and memories which were not reflected in the model image of the British Subject. The slippage between inside and outside or between them and us is merged through the language in which identity is taught. This results in what I would call a grafted cultural consciousness, which is to say that what springs from the root is a hybrid specimen that cannot reproduce itself.
My experience of Solomon Island custom dancing was indeed first hand and palpably real. Even so I have no claim to this image except as a photo that, like a souvenir, simply signals that I was there.

The image of my ballet shoe and the glove also act as souvenirs, or vague cultural markers.

The significance of these juxtaposed images is that; what they stand for, the shadow of them, fell on the same body simultaneously, not on the body of a tourist catching glimpses of the exotic, but as part of a day to day lived experience.
grafted species
-chimera-

chi-me-ra, chim-mae-ra (ki-meer-e, ki-) n. 1. Capital C. Greek Mythology. A fire-breathing she-monster usually represented as a composite of a lion, a goat, and a serpent. 2. A creation of the imagination; an impossible and foolish fancy. 3. Biology, a. An organism, especially a cultivated plant, containing tissues from at least two distinct genetic types, often because of grafting. b. An animal or plant produced by genetic engineering, in which DNA from two distinct parent species is artificially combined to produce an individual with a double chromosome complement. (Latin chimaer, from Greek Khimaira, chimera, “she-goat”) produced by genetic


As a conclusion these two images depict, metaphorically the effect of grafting. The first image is of a Solomon Island fish (shark) god, a cloned image made up of a human form, with shark like attributes. The second image on the page is an illustration taken for a child’s colouring in book that depicts a Chimera. This mythological animal has been grafted from a Lion, goat and snake.

I have placed the two images face to face as if in negotiation. This composition arrangement suggests the hyphenated subject who is made up of a series of grafted species
The character of gesture one emphatic and one more poetic are remembered as occupying the space between us. The underlying texture of this gestural dialogue is not readily defined.
Chapter 5
-another way of telling it -

-another way of telling it- is a fourth set of twenty artists’ books. Each book is 20x20cm and contains mixed media images.

I intended that this set of books would complete the process of unpacking. I found that the four sets of work correlated with the four stages that Benjamin uses in the construction of his essay Unpacking my Library.

These were:

a) The site of re-membering, which is the first set of books titled -how I write some of my books-
b) The site of reflection. This I developed as the framed wall images titled - a tale to be told -
c) The site of re-collection which is made up of the four large books, titled - stories of how we have understood the world -
d) The site of order as suggested by the set of identical books titled - another way of telling it-.

Revising the originals

After completing the previous series of books, in which I had used only digitised imagery, I found myself almost inevitably returning to the scraps of material that were still left around my studio. These fragments seemed to hold a potent indescribable essence that I found difficult to dismiss, ignore or dispose of. This was in no small way a reaction to having just spent a considerable amount of time translating much of this material into digitised prints. In review I found myself wanting to reinstate a physical trace of the human hand that had been diminished in the translation to digital imagery.

Fig.61. S.Morgan, an example of page construction of artists' books in the series tilted -another way of telling it-
I did not want the four large books to stand as the final concluding statement in this project, because, from a conceptual point of the view, this might suggest that the personal narrative had become, through the digitising of the images, purely information. I did not feel that this would be an appropriate end to an autobiographical account of personal experience.

Digitalising the images seemed to me to be like using full stops in that it signalled a point in the process when something was deemed complete. To resist closure I decided to return to the physical construction of images that did not employ any intermediary technological tools in their production.

The bookshelves that are included in the installation of this edition of the library were not made specifically for the project. I found them at a dumpsite. It was by pure chance that they correspond to the dimensions and grided format that I have used throughout this work. The compartments are left empty in the shelves and duplicate the blank spaces on the pages of the preceding work. I painted the shelves Chroma Key Blue. This is a manufactured paint colour that is used specifically for blank backdrops in movies where the background is to be inserted later. Chroma Key blue drops out or does not effect the colours of an image superimposed over it. I liked the idea that this colour was like an insertion point or a blank space waiting to be filled with information.
Units of subdivision.

In reviewing my response to the effect technology has on the image making process, I am not suggesting that I find it to have failed as a studio tool. I would say that the use of various different forms of image making processes might be described as a poly-dialectal approach to the production of visual images. In this approach the inherent aspects of the visual language of the particular media is used for the way in which expressions of thought are transmitted. I use the phrase poly-dialectal to draw a distinction between how I use a range of image making techniques, and the less formal description of multi-media that is generally applied to work constructed out of various different media. The term mixed media might suggest a more haptic approach to the way decisions regarding image construction come about. In a poly-dialectal approach it might be said that each media is used specifically for the way in which it operates as a vehicle for the content.

When I made the fourth set of books I was responding to several aspects of digital image making technology that I found to overwrite the images I was working with. One of these was that the digitising process resulted in images that I felt, had no body and appeared disconnected from their source. The hand-made pages appear to occupy the same physical space as the viewer, this results in a tactile visual experience of the body of the imagery. The digital image on the other hand does not carry with it the same tactile connection back to the hand. The technological process removes the traces of the hand-made and replaces them with a particular sort of consistency. This has the effect of positioning the image behind a screen, beyond the orb of the viewer’s physical experience. The screen that the digital process pulls down over the image stabilises the composition of hand-made marks to the extent that the inherent inconsistencies of the hand-made are translated into a consistent surface made up of coloured dots.

I also found that the images produced using digital means appeared to seal off or enclose experience. This is not dissimilar to the way in which a frame works around an image. A frame appears to position the image in a different space to itself, creating a view of something rather than a direct physical experience of it.

In essence one can not escape from the mechanics of a digital image’s production. The underlying structure of a digital image is based on translating or subdividing the image into a finite Cartesian grid of pixel’s. The intermediate process in the image construction is central to its production and results in seamless combinations. The end product foregrounds content. At the same time the tactile body of the image created by techniques such as collage or painting can only be simulated by the soft ware used to create the images and are no longer a part of the experience of the viewer.

Diary of a process:

Each book in this series relates to a page or in some cases a series of pages in the preceding four books (- stories of how we have understood the world -). Much of the material I used in these works were recycled media trials from the previous sets of work. In terms of the process it becomes evident that these books would not have been possible to make prior to the other sets, the material having been generated through the process.

On the inside flysheet of each book is an intaglio print of a page of words which I collated. The words are in a general sense a list of terms used in contemporary cultural discourse. In each book a different word or series of words is circled in red. They might be read as the book’s title, or an index to some of the ideas that I have been playing with in the making of the work.

Each page of the books has been over-printed with a band of hands printed in white. These images run through the middle of the collaged compositions. In some instances this has the effect of obscuring the images and foregrounding the narrator, in others it created a sense of transparency. I saw this as a way of sublimating the rawness of the autobiographical account of memory and experiences. I also used the over-printing to cancel the images in as much as I could not continue to rework them now that they were practically erased by the image of hands. Another effect of the over-printing might be that it suggests that stories becomes contaminated with too much telling, the hands standing for language that erases the original with its own image. This was one of those processes that I had to follow through, regardless of the different effects and results it would have. The band of hands would not have suggested a continuous monologue if I had been more choosy about which images I over printed and which ones I didn’t. The result is that some images are almost obliterated by the printed hands. 124

I have also included coloured strips of paper in various places on each page. These relate to the content in as much as the are like details which highlight the tension between the two sites of experience. These are details within details which as Hassan suggests:

...can manifest both presence and absence, it can act as a marker or operate as a trace of a trace. The detail does not simply authenticate, it can also negate, marking absence not presence. Marking the loss of things which are negated through the production of presence. 125

As the work has progressed through the four stages, certain elements have become signifying, such as the figure of the child, the hands and the bars of colour. The recurrence of these images reasserts the theme of a child’s memory, of the way in which the world was coloured in, and how she perceived it to be.

Fig. 63.Inside front cover of artists' book from third series, showing intaglio printed page of words.
124 Fig.64 Example of overprinted hands on book pages.
In this case the specific selection of tonal ranges pinpoints the instances of dislocation experienced within a culturally and racially dualistic environment.

The images have returned to a more artefact like composition that runs like a frieze through the middle of each page. Each page is made up of fragments that suggest phrases in the description of experience rather than carefully phrased syntactically flawless compositions made up of a beginning middle and an end.

In Review

I found that the material surfaces of the pages of these books, with their tensions and skew alignments, lent a sense of play or discovery to the images that was not so apparent in the digital images. The collaged images appear to engage one in the instant of discovery, whereas the digital images suggest the documentation of experience, experience being something you gain after the fact.

One of the things I like about these books is the tension between the collage or scrap-book quality of the interior space and the seemingly ordered conformity of the exterior of the books. The book’s covers are all exactly the same with no individual identifying mark. The effect of this might be described as a series of forgettings. Once you close the book and return it to the pile, there is no easy way to remember which one you were just holding or what was inside it. The signifiers that we tend to rely on to identify one thing from another have been removed. This set of books assumes the disguise of order, social order, community order, the order of things. It would seem as if the process of assimilation had been successfully completed. But the interior matrix of memory and experience denies both order and total assimilation. To not be culturally assimilated suggests one is not totally of a culture, and that there is still an active connection to a from-whence that supplements the present.

It is clear, as Madan Sarups proposes, ‘that identity is changed by the journey’. How or in what form these changes have occurred here at the end of this journey defies being written. This may be the ‘becoming threshold’.

Yes but what about the aura....

The rationalisation for the CD to be included as a component within the library is as an acknowledgment of the way in which C. Healy suggests history and memory may be collected in the future. As Healy points out, digital archives have become a key component of collections which in turn leads to a shift in the way in which things are collected, even perhaps in what is collected, how it is disseminated and how it is received. In the broader context of an institutionalised collection, the focus of the collection is subject to change as the rapidly developing technology offers ever-newer potential both in terms of how things are stored and how they are disseminated.

In the context of this body of work, the books in the library, when viewed in conjunction with a digitised version, might signal the remnants of a desire for restoration and preservation.

From an extremely pragmatic point of view the CD offers an answer to a question once asked of me: ‘What do you do with all this work after the exhibition is over’. Instead of storing in under the bed, I can now compress the idea of it, if not the actual body of it, into a slim disk where it will remain as evidence of a road travelled.

127 B. Lichtenberg-Ettinger, Matrixial Borderlines, ibid. p.44
The CD provides a stable environment that is both accessible and democratic. It does not require the edifice of a museum-like institution to be viewed. The technology makes it possible to cross cultural and geographic borders and insert the work into the everyday lives of people in a wide range of settings.

As a comma in the process the CD could be used to open up new possibilities that to some extent break free of the eternal returns that I associate with the use of original (analogue) material. By producing an edition of the CDs (the only reproduced section of the library) I cut the strings of attachment back to the original and cease to be in control of how or in what context the body of work is used. The CD also offers me easy access to a potentially much larger audience than I could possibly imagine for the original work.

The CD version of the library is a translation that shifts the focus of the library away from the presence of objects. The result of translating the work into a purely digital format is a collection of what appear to be fairly ambivalent visual statements.

I think it would be true to say that the autobiographical narrative emerged more strongly in this version of the work. The attendant materiality of paper and covers, of the space of turning the pages and holding the book open, of finding a surface on which to put the books, juggling covers and internal sequences, have all been removed. The gaps created by the physical reality of looking through a book that interfere, to some extent, with the sequence of the images and their relationship to each other and the other books in the series, are removed. These aspects of the physical body of the work become a peripheral quote but not a physical experience. In this sense the digital library acts like a sieve.

Once again I am comfortable with the contradictions that the inclusion of this fifth translation inserts, so long as it is seen in the company of the rest of library. I think that it is an apt inclusion but I would not suggest that it supersedes the other books. It works in its own way but definitely in relation to the other elements of the library. It has a place in the library, but not pride of place.

128 B. Lichtenberg-Ettinger, ibid, p.45.
The whisper of something apprehended in the moments between things.

This fourth version of the work was produced as a set of identical handmade artists’ books. Each book is 20x20cm. In this series of books I have taken the stories told previously and reworked them. In a sense I return to the beginning, but in an altered state, a little more composed, a little more self-conscious. ‘Unpacking my Library’, does not present the subject as an accomplished fact but provides a map that traces a series of states or stages of becoming.
Where am I in relation to where I was, does it even matter. Ports of call along the way, the places most travelled, the smell and the sounds, are all carried as experience which becomes the background to new experience, weaving themselves into categories and similarities, to be used as a way of negotiating the future.
arrival scenes
The category of person

Taking on citizenship is then a transaction. Nationalism comes from a sense of belonging; citizenship is about having certain legal rights and obligations. The two are distinct and not contingent upon each other.

The word Home suggests that returns are possible. My sense of home is flawed. It might be said that, from an ideological point of view, I have no right to return or claim as home that place which I most feel is home. Citizenship does not clarify this sense of disassociation.

The sense of who one is, is carried in the memory. The memory of the space between self and the shadow of self on the ground. This is a becoming space.
grafted species

Who are you in relation to where you have been and where you are now?
I was not an Australian until I returned to England 20 years later for a brief visit, and found that I was less British than I had been.
I was not British until I returned to Australia, and then I found I was less Australian than I had thought I had become.
The communities within which I have lived have never quite fitted like the proverbial glove.
And so we come to a grafted species that cannot reproduce itself.
he was one of us

The significance is in who an us might be. With my immediate family there were two quite distinct definitions of us. There was the expatriate crown agent, and the settler. At some point in the family history, the politics of place changed the place he called home, but at the same time he longed to go back home.
the-past-is-a-foriegn-country
travel writing.

Is it not perhaps to their credit that they did not treat the native as a collectable object? The distance that they maintained seems to be consistent with the idea of not transgressing cultural boundaries, which might now seem to have been commendable.

If one was to forget the known attitudes that caused them to maintained their distance, which certainly weren’t, in my experience, born out of respect, (quite the opposite in fact), we could phrase it differently. We could suggest that they were thinking beyond their fears and suspicion, beyond their typically colonialist attitudes, and use this absence of the artefacts of their travel as an indication of a thoroughly ethical position.
The collection is a jumble of fragmented visual phrases. The story is made up of singular objects that do not form consistent habits of collecting.

It might be seen as a rather haptic approach to phrasing self. There is not an obsession with the thing but with how these things can be rearranged. This leads me to consider the impossibility of explaining, of being succinct. They, that is all the objects in the collection, become analogies because the dead centre essence cannot be generated out of this or any other language.

At this point I consider what it would be like to clear the domestic space of all the ‘stuff’ that has gathered in it over the last 10 years and purchase the clean lines of contemporary household effects. This might be like inserting a space in the otherwise unspaced jumble of excessive unpacking.
fiction-and-memory
Constructing the subject
-tattoo -

The body as a site, in and through which the eurocentric communities marked the boundaries of difference, and onto which cultural attitudes are written.

My instructions were simple: black on white is a transgression. Avert your gaze with absolute indifference. Speak in tones that do not suggest familiarity. Do not take a black lover or husband, half-caste children are undesirable.

The implications of difference were like an invisible tattoo, from which there was no escape.
the form and function of exchange

Telling the story becomes a pattern of black and white, translations that begin as an experiential memory. Even still, there is the fluid space of memory that remains beyond the reach of language. The shell in this work takes on the guise of written language, pretending it can be read, but it does not communicate more than the pattern of a
-sampling-the-collection
The essential features of home were...

...and even then I came to the moment when I too wanted some roses in my garden. They, along with all the other indiscriminate things, can signal something about who we think we might be and the place we occupy or just be the evidence of an insouciant filling in of blank spaces.
constructing the subject

Emboss - is a space marked by a raised or lowered section that is only visible in certain lights. Embossing does not exactly rupture the consistency of the surface but imposes an element into the surface.

My sense of identity is like an embossed sheet of paper. For all intents and purposes this sheet of paper is the same as all other like sheets of paper, but seen in certain lights one notices the marks and inscription that have been embossed into the surface.

My sense of identity is made up of combinations of those things that I have known, unrepeatable, and particular, they define me differently in certain lights.
finding-common-ground

de the voice of things

Sometimes when the language of it escaped me I/they looked to my/their hands
Conclusion

Preface to a Conclusion...........Still an open book

Conclusion (s)

- how I got to be who I am -

- versions of fragmentation -

- and then becoming-

‘Unpacking my Library’ has involved taking a journey. The aim of the journey was to produce a visual account of the process of negotiation that takes place between self and place. The work has resulted in a series of propositional stages of development, that visually reconstruct some of the social and cultural elements that have contributed to my identity, with a particular accent on cultural identity.

The process itself seemed simple enough but, in trying to reconstruct it textually, what is made apparent is a complex matrix of cross-referenced interpretations, translations, approximations, correspondences, inequalities, returns, and re-phrasings. The sites of meaning shift between the bookends of committed statements that appear to classify my experience.

In order to investigate and rephrase my experiences and memories, I have used the construction of a library of books that I wrote myself as the format within which to investigate the way in which studio processes enacted transformations and translations. The result of this is a series of versions, all of which are performed using slightly different visual accents.

-1 x 3 +1= to be not complete-

In the following section I will review the outcomes of each stage of the work. This I have done in a series of discreet steps that focus on a particular aspect of the work’s formulation.

1. The development of four interrelated sets of work that provide a visual account of the process of negotiation between self and place.

2. The process of construction and how this was related to the notion of a becoming self or selves.

3. The visual strategies I used to allude to the abstract third space or in-between space in which meaning might be found to accumulate, or the moment in which something is apprehended.
Visual evidence of a propositional self. -construct I-

- how I wrote some of my books -

‘Ours is not a mirroring of the world but one of many possible worlds’.129

The process of negotiation between self and place in this first set of work occurs primarily in the collection of visual material that makes present what was not there before. These books provide the terms of reference for the process of negotiation.

The first stage was essentially based on recovering primary material that I could use to interpret my history. I was not concerned so much with the concinnity of these preliminary works as in creating a reference point (library) for the following work. From these rough drafts of my ideas, I was then able to engage in a series of work that offered me a space within which to question and re-think the narratives that have constructed my sense of (cultural) identity.

I have been tempted to remake these books so that, as objects, they conform to a more developed aesthetics of bookness. However, I feel that if these books were tidied up or rebound into neat sets, the work would change. What might then occur is a sense of starting at the end, as if there had been no negotiation or struggle; there would be no evidence of the process of reconstruction, merely a series of succinct endings. So the awkwardness of this first set of work is, conceptually at least, an important aspect of the work as they create a discord or disruption to the visual meter of the work.

Visual manifestation of the layers of experience. - construct II-

- a tale to be told -

In the second series of work the process of negotiation between self and place is articulated within the physical space created by shallow box frames. The physical space created by the frames provides a site within which to play with a visual interpretation of the space in-between. This has the effect of suggesting a more conscious decision-making process in relation to the relative points of conceptual tension in the work. The effect of this layering is significant, as it adds a complexity to the image surface that does not offer an easy mono-layered viewing experience.

The form of this work allowed me to physically layer the images. This results in a visual recreation of the way in which things fall together. The effect of this strategy is a visual quote of the conceptual third or hybrid state, which is neither one nor the other but a propositional third. The propositional third or hybrid is a contemporary term used to describe what is given off in the space between two sets of signifying elements.130 The value of this stage in the work’s development was the way in which the format created a sense of fluidity within the structure of the work and in the way the work could be installed. This was most relevant in relation to the idea that any given combination of images would in effect be an act of translation. This is significant in as much as it identifies the way in which the subject can be re-constructed by individual rearrangements of the elements of the story.

129 F. Varela, op.cit., p.62
130 A general theory of hybridity can be found throughout post colonial texts for example in the location of culture by H.K. Bhabha.
Visual image as information -centring -construct III

- stories of how we have understood the world -

In the third set of work the process of negotiation between self and place occurs in the space between the object and the viewer.

The work is made up of sequences of digitally transcribed images that read like a set of visual statements or phrases. Where before I have used original material to create a sense of authenticity, here I have replaced that with digital simulations of photographic qualities to suggest some foundation in truth which, in turn, suggests the authenticity of the subject.

The stories documented in this set of books are not concise renderings of significant moments, but a serialised process of constructing a visual narrative. The process of negotiation is embedded in the structure of the books, and secondly in the viewer’s experience of the work and how the images are read. Although this will be different for each person, I think that in general it would be true to say that there is a difference between looking at a picture, and visually negotiating the pages of books.

This work could almost be described as an autopsy, (seeing for oneself). Autopsy in this sense might be described as a process of conceptual reconstruction through the dissection of the elements that make up the whole. What is revealed are the inner connections that make up the outer shape.

The Silence of an exterior void. - construct IV

- another way of telling it -

In the fourth series of works the process of negotiation between self and place is again played out within the confines of the book. The tensions created between pieces of visual information defies the seamlessness associated with harmonious compositions.

Each book in this series has an identical exterior. This aspect of the work might suggest that the chaos of the unpacking process had to some extent resulted in a semblance of order, but this exterior order is like a turtle’s shell in that it houses the body that moves slowly forward.

The significance of this last set of books is in the way in which it completes a cycle of the hand-made, through the digital and back to the handmade. This is a process in which identity has been negotiated and articulated in successively more sophisticated ways. This series of works returns me to the beginning, but in an altered state, a little more composed, a little more self-conscious.

Overview

In combination, then, these versions of the telling provide an insight into how the process works and the way in which different accents in the development of the images can alter and reconstruct the telling. It becomes evident that the process of construction is not just a proposition. The work does not present the subject as an accomplished fact but reads more like a map that traces a series of stages of becoming.

It is possible that at the end of the viewing process, the experience of the reader is in what is given off by the sum total of the work, rather than by individual images or sets of work. If one were to look for the essence of the thing, or individual examples of what is meant by any one image, then I think the viewer
would become frustrated, lost and tired. This I would call a laboured act of looking, in which something is expressly sought. I believe that the moment in which the viewer apprehends a sense of something, occurs through the process of looking or reading which leads to an experience. This experience is accumulative and cannot be pinned down. I believe that it occurs in the spaces between what is said and what is not said, or in the gap between my experience and that of the viewer.

The concept of a process of negotiation between self and place which has been a key element in the design and creation of the work in turn generates a sense of the in-between space. In the next section I will review the way in which I have attempted to actively engage in this in-between space in the construction of the work.

**The whisper of something apprehended in the moments between things.**

*how I write some of my books*

In gathering.

In the first series of books this moment that I refer to, that is the moment in which something is apprehended if only for a second, occurred in the gaps between thinking, collecting and tinkering with the arrangements. These gaps were made up of pauses between remembering and committing memory to the fixed site of the book pages. In a sense, in this first set of work I was creating a vehicle within which remembering could occur. Self is caught out of the corner of the eye but not arrested in flight like a butterfly pinned to the collectors’ board. When you look back to seek confirmation there is a new sense of what might be known.

* -a tale to be told -

In the spaces between

The second series of work employed a physical expression of the ephemeral between-space. The shadows, that are an effect of light passing through the disturbed surface of the smooth acrylic screen, create a sense of the shifting ground upon which an emergent self might be traced. In this work the moment of apprehension is contingent on a source of illumination. This might be used as an analogy for the way in which meaning and knowledge are constructed out of stray fragments of memory and experience.

*stories of how we have understood the world -

In turning pages

Truly a whisper, the whisper of a turning page and the momentary glimpse of images caught in a transformation. In this work there is a precise moment in which the self-conscious turning of the pages, the self awareness of looking, is punctuated by a moment in which something shoots out and catches you unaware. This is created by the interleaving sheets of glassine paper that I have printed a series of white hands on. The effect of the prints on this particular paper is of fleeting moments of something unsayable.
-another way of telling it -

In-between covers momentarily

In the fourth set of work the moment between opening the cover and engaging in the first image is one in which expectancy is experienced. This expectancy is either realised or disappointed by what is then found to be inside. This is an indefinable space between not knowing and knowing, that is created by the lack of any real exterior signifying characteristics that might lead one into the book. I get the feeling that these books might result in a feeling of being duped, perhaps even irritated. These responses might be relative to the gap between expectation and disclosure. What might be apprehended here is one’s personal desire for something that is not satisfied.

The pauses in the telling, whether created by me or by the way in which the work is experienced by a viewer, contributes to the sense of a becoming space. This is an abstract space that may only ever be alluded to. I believe that an experience of this concept is made possible through the way in which I have constructed and presented this work.

**The Library as a Project.**

The concept of a library has been the primary structure through out this project. In particular I have used the idea, as suggested by Benjamin essay, of a library made up of books written by myself. My library, is arrested mid way between leaving and arriving, (as was Benjamin’s). Remembering is apprehended in the pauses created between unpacking and putting the books away in neatly ordered sets on the shelves.

Even though I have been tempted to present the work on tables or some other elevated surface, if for no other reason than to make the process of looking at the work easier, in the end I found that this lead to a contradiction. So the books are presented in stacks on the floor.

In the installation the visual conclusion to the notion of the library is a small writing box in which there are slips of paper with titles to books written on them. These remain as the unread, the not yet unpacked, the forgotten, or not yet remembered. They are reminders of a library that is in the process of being unpacked, but is not yet a complete project.

The expectation that a library might signal neatly ordered sets of knowledge, that are shelved in concisely catalogued arrangements to provide quick and easy access to specific areas of interest, is not an aspect of this work. The half-unpacked library signals a subject in transit. The site of unpacking occurs instead in a non-disclosed space that remains an open-ended possibility.

This aspect of the work relates to what I find to be in essence true in the development of this work, which is that identity cannot be a confirmed state, nor an object which can be neatly collected and investigated in the same way that an ant could be. I have likened it to attempting to reach East, which is marked on all maps as a direction in relation to North. I can follow this compass bearing but can never reach a place that is a physical entity called East. In moving toward East, the experiences of the journey are constantly reworking a sense of who I am in relation to where I am. Every step is a part of the process of becoming.

It is this process of becoming which is a significant aspect of the work. I have not sought to present the final edition as something that stands alone, attesting to an arrival scene.
The body of work that makes up this library creates an environment of constant change and development. The library, as a vehicle through which to reflect, re-think, draft and re-draft cultural identity, serves well in as much as libraries expand as knowledge expands, and are themselves always in a state of becoming through the acquisition of new material.

It’s in the pauses....

It could be said that the work documents itself through the four stages of its development. This format may then provide insights into those moments in which the processes invented and reinvented the subject, or the moment in which the material language of my studio practice translates the original material

What then is the precise moment in which the visual material compositions effect or reconstruct the original, the subject and identity? In each set of work this moment is different depending on the way in which the work is constructed and on the materials used. I have built the idea of being in transit, that is, caught between two sites, into the work in layers or levels of signification. These I have discussed in each chapter of this document as they relate to the specific stages of the work’s development.

The idea that materials are received differently or give different information about their subject almost goes without saying. In this work, though, the significance of this is that I have presented the work in all its stages so that the processes and shifts can be experienced as a part of the work. I think this lends to a sense of emergence as the facets of the fragmented self are revealed.

Suspending self-consciousness.

‘Unpacking my Library’ when installed, discloses the materiality of its construction and the way in which the process of developed has occurred. The physical body of the work, that is a composition of visual elements, when read together or in parts demonstrates the way in which ‘the getting of (cultural) identity’ could be seen to be a process that corresponds to the processes involved in the construction of visual objects. A principal moment in this process is that instant when one experiences an accumulation of meaning in the interplay between idea, performance and visual articulation.

As I have said in the previous section, I identify in each set of work the development of a space in the work in which the viewer might be surprised by something. This might be an instant when the principle of looking and reading is, for a moment at least, suspended. The experience occurs outside of the conscious act of looking or reading. It might be in that precise moment, which is heavily phrased on all sides by excess baggage, that something in the space between is apprehended. These moments of surprise are an effect of the volume of imagery that is included in this installation. It is almost as if the viewing experience is one in which we become desensitised by the excess of visual phrasing, and that this creates an environment in which surprise can be experienced. If, for example, I only exhibited the four large books, I do not think that the moment of surprise would be as strong. Perhaps surprise should read as relief, because in review I find that these moments stand out from their dense background as moments of lightness, or moments of silence in the noise of the attendant imagery.

So through a process of elimination I come to that almost indiscernible moment in which a thing becomes more than what it was before, however briefly.
Supplementary Conclusion

Some invisibles....

The starting point that I chose for the documentation of ‘Unpacking my Library’ was based on how I found the performance of the term negotiation to be applicable in both my studio practice and in a description of how cultural identity is constructed.

I felt that the term negotiation was a key word in the description of how I develop images and that this process is similar in nature to the way in which I felt cultural identity was constructed. In both of these processes I found that I was engaged in an ongoing process of negotiation between self and site that result in a constantly changing work in progress.

This led me to consider how the one would or could inform and or effect the other. I was interested in investigating how the process of negotiation in a studio setting might become a performance of an idea through which I could trace and or map the way in which my cultural identity had been constructed. At the same time the work documents the way in which the ideas are developed at the intersection between process and concept. The outcome of this interplay between the two points of negotiation is a visual performance of the ‘becoming-space’ that is a key term used in post-colonial writing.

In this documentation I have given an account of how the project took shape and the points along the way in which certain decisions were made. In effect it might be seen as an expedition journal that maps the path taken.

In the end I have found that there is a point at which it is impossible to describe the process in a way that is not burdened with too much language. I found that the words used in the development of an explanation tended to translate the way I thought in a manner that I could not control. This led me to consider a supplementary conclusion to this document that, from my perspective (dyslexic or otherwise), I find to be a more succinct overall description of the process and conclusion rolled into one.

I developed the diagrammatic model that follows as a way of visualising the process of development and the way in which I find things become connected through a process of negotiation in a studio setting. At first the diagram might appear complex but in dissecting it layer by layer it becomes quite clear that each element of the process is developed in relation to the other elements in the process which are built upon a foundation of pre-existing knowledge and ideas.
Bibliography

- Allen, C. Art in Australia, From Colonization to Postmodernism, Thames and Hudson: London, 1997.
- Bennett, D., Cultural Studies: Pluralism & Theory, University of Melbourne, 1993.
• Edquist, H. Stamps: a miniature aesthetic, Art & Australia, Vol. 34 #1, Spring 1996.


• Thomas, N. From Phillip to Phillip St., Art and Australia Vol. 33 #1, Spring 1995, p.38-39


• Turnbull, D. Maps are Territories: Science in the Arts, Deakin University, Geelong, 1989.


• Waterlow, N. The Aura of the Original, Art and Australia Vol.33 # Autumn 1996


CV

Shelagh Morgan

Born 1955, Malawi (Nyasaland), Africa

Studies

1995-2000 PhD, Southern Cross University. Unpacking my Library - stories of how we have understood the world.

Professional Experience

1991- Assoc. Lecturer/Tutor Southern Cross University.
1989-93 Director SCU University Art Museum
1989-91 Painting/drawing Tutor Australian Flying Arts School

Individual Exhibitions

2004 place, placement & what place meant 04.2 gallery 482, Brisbane
2003 …this thinking….Legge Gallery, Sydney
2002 place, placement & what place meant. Legge Gallery, Sydney
2001 two nomadic stories.. Legge Gallery, Sydney.
1999 Invisibles. Lismore Regional Art Gallery
1998 Past times - Colouring in by numbers. Legge Gallery Sydney
Stories of how we have understood the world. Lismore Regional Art Gallery
1996 Unpacking My Library # 2.96. Legge Gallery, Sydney
1995 Unpacking My Library # 1.95 Southern Cross University Art Museum.
1994 The Science of Whereabouts # 2.94. Legge Gallery, Sydney
1993 The Science of Whereabouts # 1.93 Michael Milburn Gallery, Brisbane.
1991 Exclusions Legge Gallery, Sydney
1989 Mute Space. Roz McCallum Gallery, Brisbane

Selected Group Shows

2002 Melbourne Art Fair
Jacaranda Aquisitive Drawing Award. Grafton Regional Gallery.
Touring to a number of regional galleries.
2000 Melbourne Art Fair
1998 Future Perfect. Swinburn. Melbourne
1996 Scan. Lismore Regional Art Gallery
1994 Place In Context. X Contemporary Art Space, Lismore. funded by the Australia Council.
Melbourne Art Fair.
1992 The South Stradbroke Project. Gold Coast City Art Gallery.
New Art Six Launching, MoCa. Roz McCallum Gallery
1989 Inside the green House. Tin Sheds Gallery, Sydney
Private Views/Public Spaces. Plaza 1, Brisbane. Curated by Queensland Art Gallery.
1987 Genii loci, 4 person exhibition, funded by the VACB,
touring Regional Galleries of NSW and Roz McCallum Gallery Brisbane.
Collections

Art Bank, Sydney
Allied Queensland Coal Fields Collection, Ipswich
Australian National Gallery.
Byron Shire Council Collection
Gold Coast City Collection.
Grafton City Collection
Griffith Art Works, Griffith University.
James Hardie Special Collection, Queensland State Library.
Logan City Collection
Lismore Regional Art Gallery.
Queensland Art Gallery.
Stanthorpe City Collection.
Sydney University Council Of Unions Collection, Sir Herman Black Gallery, Sydney University.
University of South East Queensland

Various Private Collections

Publications

1999 Invisibles. Exhibition catalogue, Lismore Regional Art Gallery
1996 Unpacking My Library 2.96. Exhibition documentation
1995 Unpacking My Library 1.95. Exhibition Documentation
The Science of Whereabouts. Exhibition Catalogue.
Regional Gum. Periphery issue no 9. 1992
Bibliography

South Stradbroke Project. Gold Coast City Art Gallery.
1991 Out Lying and Far Reaching. Umbrella Studios, Townsville,
exhibition catalogue.
1990 P. Hoffie, Mute Space., Eyeline #12 winter 1990.