

# **ANCESTRAL JOURNEYS**

**A PERSONAL REINTERPRETATION OF IDENTITY  
THROUGH THE VISUAL DISPLAY OF PAPER THEATRE  
CABINETS AND BOOKS.**

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WORK PRESENTED FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ART AT THE  
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## PREFACE

My father died when I was fourteen. He was a passenger on the ill-fated Heilderberg plane, which crashed outside Mauritius. Travelling from Taipei to Johannesburg, he never completed that journey. Following the extensive press coverage of the disaster, strangers with the same surname kept calling our home curious to know whether they might be distant relatives. My unsure mother questioned my grandmother who was adamant, without explanation, that there was no possibility of any distant relatives. This enquiry eventually led to the truth being exposed that my grandfather, once Raphael Gonsalves, had changed his name in London before journeying through Africa. It was revealed that of my many forebearers a large portion of my heritage was Portuguese and specifically Madeiran. Together with many other South Africans I share a complex and varied identity.

Some years later while backpacking around Asia I came into contact with local people and travellers from all parts of the world. One question I was repeatedly asked was how my family had arrived in South Africa. The truth was I wasn't sure. Having always thought of myself as a South African, the perception of others was that as a white person I must also have some other cultural identity. Since then I have become curious to know more about my ancestors and their origins and how this has shaped my own identity. This process of shaping how I know myself and the search for the threads of my family and the countries in which they lived is the focus of this body of work.

## INTRODUCTION

In this project my intention has been to produce a body of work which serves as a personal exploration of the construction of an individual identity. Comprised of a selection of narratives recreated in paper, the art pieces tell the stories of my forebears. Housed in wooden enclosed cabinets these three dimensional assemblages have become secret cases and reliquaries for my family's history. The gathering, collecting and cultural layering are focal to my concerns, as an expression of passage and journey, turning points and life cycles. By assembling, reproducing and inserting family ephemera in the cabinets I have attempted to trace the threads of my own history and individual make-up.

My interpretations are subjective and selective, my choices have been based on the charm, curiosity or strangeness of the narratives. The stories have become my stories in a present context but at the same time my interpretation has stayed true to the original narrative or facts. The result is the performance of a personal narrative created through the gathering, summarising and extracting of oral history and documents from family archives to animate the individuals portrayed. To satisfy my own curiosity I have chosen to reveal the 'unusual', the 'private' and in some cases the 'reticent'.

I have drawn from the sixteenth century 'age of curiosity' as a period in which the 'museum' originated. The state of the psychological enquiry of curiosity created by the discovery of the exotic and unknown territories led to the huge collections of the early modern era. I chose to draw on those periods in history when travel, exploration, collecting and the marvellous were at their height. This work is historically located within the period of early sea travel. My research was not intended to establish the bare facts of my ancestor's journeys but rather to weave together a story from their incomplete narratives within a broader context of the 'journey' as a popular theme in literature and poetry.

The narratives I selected are those specifically relating to journeys undertaken by my ancestors. Their voyages are traced back as far as is recorded in the family archive and were motivated by wars, religion, health, occupation, or the search for a better life. The tradition that my family members followed was part of the shaping of their identities and my own. In this paper I discuss the construction of identity influenced by nation, place, family and individual collections.

The art works that have resulted from this process of recovery take the form of a collection of printed paper ephemera housed in cabinets reminiscent of the sixteenth century curiosity cabinets. These cabinets were produced in an epoch which celebrated collecting and hence seemed an appropriate format in which to portray or display a collection of family stories. I have also drawn on the much later formal qualities of the nineteenth century tradition of the paper theatres as a model on which to construct my cabinets. The idea of a performance of the narratives was important to the way in which I wanted the works to be viewed. It became an appropriate platform on which to play out the narratives of my progenitors.

The art objects take the form of two kinds of books. While the conventional structure of the book is applied to the four interactive codexes, the paper theatre cabinets or wall pieces can also be defined as books. The book depends on progressive revelation. My reference apart from the use of paper and print is the performance as a book. The performance is also progressive, each new scene or set of the theatre is a different page - hence the form of the paper theatre. Each of these cabinets relies on the traditional techniques of bookmaking, printmaking, playing cards and mapping which are present in the art works and are subjects of enquiry relevant to the understanding of this study.

The central symbol of these performed books is the journey of the ship. This paper explores some of the various meanings and symbolism surrounding the ship. The significance of the role played by the ship, not only as a means of transport but as a crucial role as a container of cultures, is explored. The ship can be seen as an important contribution to the development of the museum and in many ways as functioning as a mobile museum.

Symbolising both the journey and the passage, the ship also signifies life and its courses. In Christianity, the ship is a symbol of the church. Ancient Egyptian mythology reveals the importance of the ship in the burial and transcendence of the dead to the afterlife. The notion of the *Ship of Fools* is similarly applicable to this study, as is the significance of the ship as archaeological evidence.

University of Cape Town

**SECTION 1**

**THE SHIP AS THEME**

"Brothels and colonies are two extreme types of heterotopia, and if we think that the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that from port to port, brothel to brothel, it goes as far as colonies in search of treasures, you will understand that the boat has not only been (for our civilisation) from the sixteenth century until the present, the greatest instrument of economic development ... but has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination. The ship is the *heterotopia par excellence*. In civilisation without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates."

(Foucault in Ceasare:1994)

The ship was a container of cultural identities. It carried explorers, religious iconography, weaponry and the European imagination to unknown lands and returned with exotic objects, plants, animals and wondrous stories of the unfamiliar. As a symbol of a contained but infinitely shifting identity the ship as a theme and an object has acted as an appropriate symbol through which to speak of a personal identity. Of the many symbolic interpretations that the ship is open to – as adventure, mapping of geography, passage, the womb, confinement, containment and as foolishness are relevant and explored in this section.

#### A. Ship as identity

My identity is defined, in part, by my class, gender, race and nationality and, in part, by the circumstances in which I was brought up. My South African-born parents contributed to shaping my identity by the genes they passed on to me and by the environment that they created for me. Recalling my memory of my early years I realise how sheltered I was from the majority of South Africans. Living in a quiet Johannesburg suburb surrounded by English speaking white South Africans it has hard to believe that I was part of a minority group. At the same time my European ancestral heritage was not prominent either.

Woodward said "Our identities are shaped by social structures but we also participate in forming our own identities" (Woodward 2000: 11). I understand that initially our own role is an unconscious one. As we grow older, however, we have the agency to change not

only ourselves but also the way we perceive ourselves in the context of our own environment.

My grandfather hid his Portuguese heritage and implied that he was British. When asked where he was born, he replied that he 'came' from England when in fact he was born in British Guiana. Changes through migration, organisation of domestic and family life, constrain people and shape their identities. Our identities are in constant flux and we are constantly forging new identities (Woodward 2000:4). This body of work and this paper are thus not complete or conclusive.

Identity is constructed through the ways in which individuals acknowledge the role of history in their destiny. Through the discovery of my own ancestry, I have come to redefine my identity. This paper is concerned with the formation of a personal identity through the investigation of nationality and ancestral origins.

Being at sea, being adrift, being grounded

Although identities are in constant flux I would argue that some nations in the present show evidence of transformation to a larger degree. The majority of South Africans come from a varied heritage and the South African nation is still searching for its identity. The South African nation is 'adrift at sea' whereas the people of Europe have a longer history in forming their identities (through their literature, art, history, place names etc) and a more certain sense of nationhood and could thus be said to be 'grounded'.

The importance of identity in the present is evident in the number of textbooks written about the subject (Woodward 2000:23). Could current concerns about identity be a reflection of broad social and cultural uncertainties produced by rapid social change? "Social changes taking place at global and personal levels can produce uncertainties in relation to who we are and our place in the world. Change is characterised by uncertainties and insecurities as well as by diversity and opportunities for the formation of new identities" (Woodward 2000:23).

Identity is also constructed through race classification. The search for identity is said to occur more frequently in times of crisis or change. Since the events of 1994, the identity of both white and black South Africans has been radically destabilised. Settled meanings that had informed identities throughout the 1970s and 1980s became again subject to change during the events culminating in 1994 (Coetzee & Nuttall 1998: 225).

### i. Ship of state

The notion of the *ship of state* refers to the ship as a microscopic world or a contained territory where the ship's captain assumes the role as leader of those aboard, comparable to a country's president or king. In both instances a hierarchy exists and a certain code of conduct is expected of all the ship's passengers and crew and nation's populace.

Nation is important in the construction of identity. National identity is defined by communities of people who feel they possess the same identity by virtue of shared cultures, histories, languages and geography (Coetzee & Nuttall 1998: 125).

Symbols and national identity are produced and reinforced through images, stories, flags, style of dress, uniforms and all the different components of a community's culture and traditions. Symbols and rituals are key factors in the construction of national identity. They establish the boundaries between those who belong and those who don't belong to a group (Coetzee & Nuttall 1998: 137).

The passport is symbolic of identity and illustrates ways in which identities are institutionally constructed, i.e. through legislation, which plays a powerful part in defining the identities of citizens. Symbols of representations are important in the production of identities.

My inquiry into reconstructing my own identity and has resulted in a shift in identity. I have characterised my family members as courageous explorers, venturing out into the unknown, travelling to exotic lands. This interpretation is, perhaps, how I choose to construct my own identity or how I romantically conceive my ancestor's lives to have been. I act as the play-writer in the narrative by filling in the imaginary where the cold facts seem mundane.

### ii. Family identity

My paternal aunt Mary grew up unaware of her father's Portuguese origins. It was only when she heard her parents argue and Thora (her mother) call Raphael (her father) 'Portuguese' in a derogatory manner, that she became suspicious of his roots. Letters addressed to Raphael Gonsalves would arrive in the post and Thora would collect them

and scratch out the G on to keep Raphael's Portuguese identity concealed. Evidence of this act was discovered while clearing out the Sales home thus enriching my understanding of the family's identity. In the formation of this body of work the family archive has provided me with much of my source material such as letters, diaries, family bibles, bills, financial ledgers, appointment calendars, birth certificates, licenses, and insurance policies as evidence in the construction of a personal identity. Objects such as furniture, tools, jewellery, books, samplers and quilts have been studied and utilised in the formation of the self and this project. These objects and documents create a 'sense of family', a set of common elements that bind each member to the others.

The study of family history has as its result the forming or reforming of a personal identity. Family histories require a journey through time as we rescue our ancestors from oblivion and ourselves from isolation. Tracking family history is a journey of discovery, the discovery is a part of one's own heritage and a part of a collective heritage shared by all human beings.

Philippe Aries addresses identity and the evolution of family life in his "Social history of family life" (Aries in Lichtman: 1978). In the Middle Ages there was not a distinct family unit separated from others in the society. Children mingled freely with adults, and family members with the rest of society. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the family turned inward and recognised the need for educating children, sheltering them and preparing them for adult life. Families were separated from the broader society and became a central institution for maintaining order and discipline. Many scholars have argued that industrialisation led to the dissolution of the extended family and the rise of the nuclear family (Lichtman 1978:35).

### iii. Individual identity

Since only selected documents were preserved in our family archive the process of reconstructing a family history has relied on oral testimony to complete and add piquancy to the documented narratives of my forefathers lives. Where written documents and objects serve as vital objective evidence in the construction process, the oral history translation is subjective and the storyteller capable of selectivity in terms of what they wish to divulge. Interviews set up with my mother, grandmother and aunt revealed the importance of this form of gathering information as a subjective form of pertinence in the formation of my identity.

Oral history can be used to change the focus of history and open up new areas of inquiry and in the case of my own experience it can break down barriers between generations. Oral history is a powerful tool for discovering and evaluating the nature of the process of historical memory—how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present and how people used it to interpret their lives and the world around them (Perks & Thomson 1998: 22). The psychological importance of the study of oral family history is in the ability of such a study to provide an individual with a sense of a much longer personal life span, which will even survive their own death.

#### iv. Collecting an identity

The act of collecting is useful in the formation of identity. Thora, my paternal grandmother collected angels. She was a devout Catholic who never missed a mass and was actively involved in the church. Displayed all around her home, Thora's collection of angels were a symbol of the Christian faith and important devotional objects portraying her identity as a follower of the Catholic Church. Other collections reflecting her faith were religious statues, holy cards, rosaries and crucifixes.

May, my maternal grandmother, kept her collection of family trophies and cups spotlessly polished in a glass cabinet. She was of a family who involved themselves in many different sporting activities and this displayed collection was a projection of their goals and achievements. May had a collection of silver which she passed on to my mother who has subsequently contributed considerably to it. Silver cigarette cases, calling card boxes, corset lace tools and perfume bottles clutter our lounge side tables and perhaps in some way are an assertion of my mother's social status and identity.

Ruth Formanek looks at the psychoanalytical motivation of collectors. "The motivation to collect partly arises out of the impulse to explore and seek contact with others as well as representing a later development of early needs for close relationships with others" (Formanek in Pearse 1994:327). In her essay *Why they collect* Formanek refers to William James who discussed the concept of 'self' and applied it to collecting. He concluded that possessions are extensions of the self (Pearse 1994: 329). Completing a collection completes in a sense the individual. A whole collection creates a whole self and therefore one can say that collecting is a means of achieving and expressing identity.

Muensterberger speaks of collecting in the age of discovery as "being bound up with an inner need for ever new supplies for the enhancement of the self" (Muensterberger 1994: 203), revealing that even encyclopaedic collections are representations of their owner's individual approach and slant. James Clifford brings collecting and display into view as crucial processes of western identity formation. He discusses the idea that all collections embody hierarchies of value, exclusions and territories of the self (Clifford in Pearse 1994: 260). "The notion that the idea that identity is a kind of wealth of objects, knowledge, memories and experience is present in western collections and that collecting has been a strategy for the development of a possessive self, culture and authenticity" (Pearse 1994: 260).

#### v. Woman as collector

Within my own research it was evident that the women were the primary preservers of the family archive in the form of collected documents, letters, photographs etc. The woman remembered more information, which were recovered in oral interviews. However, what they remembered or perhaps valued as important were the stories of the men. Conceivably the reason here is that the men travelled more frequently than the women. My area of focus being 'the journey' allows for the narratives of my male ancestors to be portrayed. Women who were believed to bring bad luck on board a ship, did travel but it was the men who would bravely seek out new places before sending for the woman and children. Men had an obligation to fight in wars and for this reason had more opportunity to travel and perhaps reason for their journeys being valued more than that of the women's. Women are still present in all the art pieces and function as the vital collectors of the evidence available to me. Therefore I have constructed an identity acknowledging in equal fervour the archive collected by woman portraying the men's narratives.

## B. The Ship of Fools /the ship of madness

The *Ship of Fools* poem by Sebastian Brant was completed in 1494. Located in the age of exploration and discovery of the New World the *Ship of Fools* reveals the earliest reference to the discovery of America by the explorer Columbus and is thus of importance to this project.

The *Ship of Fools* expresses the idea of sailing as an end in itself, as opposed to the true sense of sailing, which is transition, evolution and salvation. The poem forms a singularly instructive document for the intellectual and moral history of the period. Brant satirises follies and weaknesses of humankind especially clergymen and reveals how the priesthood had forfeited popular respect (Pompen 1925:1).

The allegory of the ship becomes prominent only in the prologue and the second half of the *Ship of Fools* or *The Narrenschiff*. Some early critics believe that Brant derived this allegorical idea of the ship from the word carnival. "The critics relying upon what is no doubt a false etymology of the word carnival, which they would derive from car and naval (a cart-ship), link the fools ship with the floats used during carnival time" (Zeydel 1944: 10).

These floats (vessels, wagons) were laden with various types of comical or fantastic characters and was a practice from pagan tradition and cults, of the worship of Isis and Neithus, goddess of spring, who brought peace and fertility to earth and humankind. These divinities were impersonated by masked figures, represented at first by priests and then by the populace (Zeydel 1944: 12).

The idea of placing drinkers (careless people etc) on a ship was widespread from Holland to Austria before Brant's time. This notion is the basis of a poem entitled *Das Schiff der flust 1360* by Heinrich Teichner an Austrian (Zeydel 1944:12). Directly linked to Brant was a humorous academic oration by Jodocus Gailus delivered from a platform in the shape of a ship in Heidelberg in 1480 (Zeydel 1944:12). The woodcut accompanying the work shows a ship laden with passengers sailing through the air. The idea of the ship of fools was not Brant's but was seen in a sermon by an anonymous preacher who spoke of the allegorical interpretations of St Ursula's ship describing the story that Christ follows the ship of fools and tries to convince the fools to board his ship. The notion of a fool's aimless life is comparable to a fool's sea voyage, undertaken without rudder or compass

The purpose of the ship has been interpreted variously as deportation, a trip to a fool's utopia, a journey to a madhouse or to a Heraclian Anticyra. Murner believed that Brant meant to colonise the world with fools. The starting point Narbonne and the destination of the voyage of all the fools, the land of Narragonia (imaginary country meant to suggest Aragon and the German word Narr) are inventions of Brant (Zeydel 1944:65).

### C. Ship as passage, spirituality, transience

Although the journey of the Heilderberg aeroplane or 'air ship' ended shortly before its arrival on the Island of Mauritius, the passengers and crew embarked on a spiritual journey from this world to the next. The ship frequently symbolises the transition from the realm of the living to the realm of the dead, or *visa versa*. The ship is a symbol of journey and passage and thus of life and its courses. Early burial of the dead in ships occurred among the Vikings as well as in Oceania and ship-shaped megaliths during the Bronze Age in northern Europe. Ship shaped buildings, such as on the Balearics were based on the idea of a journey into the hereafter (Cirlot 1978:295).

Images of the preserved *Royal Ship* discovered in Egypt in 1954 inside a sealed pit beneath the Pyramid of Giza have been used in some of the cabinets and the inclusion is symbolic of the Heilderberg air ship buried at the bottom of the ocean (Jenkins 1980:46). Whereas the hot desert sands preserved the *Royal ship* the sea acts as preserver of past wrecks.

Dating back to the middle of the third millennium BC. The *Royal Ship* is believed to have been one of the oldest boats in the world and perhaps floated on the Nile in a festival. Its discovery serves as an important source of information about the ancient origins of shipbuilding (Jenkins 1980:8).

Some Egyptologists have called the ship a 'solar barque', a boat to carry the dead king of Egypt, resurrected and floating with the sun God, on his eternal round across the sky. It is believed to have served as a funerary barge, to carry the king's embalmed body down river. Still others believe that it was a pilgrimage boat used in the king's lifetime to visit holy places of Egypt, or for his other worldly pilgrimages in his afterlife (Jenkins 1980:14).

Boats appear as an important motif in Egyptian pottery and are interpreted by archaeologists as serving some kind of ritual or religious function; the little reed huts that

are their cabins are seen as shrines, with a sacred couple and their child (Jenkins 1980:19). *The Wreck* is discussed in depth later but serves as a sacred underwater shrine in the form of a ship in memory of those who died in the Heilderberg. An Egyptian myth describes the Sun God who travelled the sky in a boat. Sometimes the boat crossed the daytime sky a perilous journey beneath the world through the hours of darkness where Apopis serpent lay in wait to swallow the sun. It was believed that night-time boats existed equipped with special offerings and magic charms to ward off the dangers and evils of the underworld. For those that could afford them, boats were buried with them, others had models of boats placed in their tombs (Jenkins 1980:150).

The burial of the Sutton Hoo ship was thought to have taken place around AD 640 in England. Now excavated from the earth the preserved ship is displayed in the British Museum. It was intended for a dead person's journey to the next world and contained all the necessities needed there i.e. money, weapons and armour, utensils, personal symbols and ornaments. A collection of antiquities (such as gold, jewellery, silver plate, weapons, bowls, cauldrons, buckets, dishes, textiles, leather, cups and drinking horns uncovered in the burial chamber) were preserved in the funerary treasure of one of the Saxon royalties of the island. This was the richest treasure ever dug in British soil, and one of the most important historical artefacts yet found in Europe for the era of the migrations of the Teutonic peoples. The burial process was reminiscent of the Viking ship burial of Norway. The idea of the ship as museum (discussed later) is reinforced in the ship burial of Sutton Hoo.

#### D. The ship of the church /ship as mother

The ship is a feminine symbol of containment and confinement. The bringing of female names to ships was symbolic of the womb giving birth to an individual. In Christianity, the ship is a symbol of the church steering a safe course through the waves of worldly dangers. The architectonic shape of the church was compared with the ship, suggested by the term's middle aisle, and transept. St. Ambrose in his writing compared the ship to the church and cross to the ships mast (Cirlot 1978:294). The symbolic boat in Christianity represents the cosmos. In Medieval and Renaissance pictures, Christ is sometimes centred in a bowl like boat that represents the cosmos with Christ as the axial pole. (The ancient Middle Eastern cosmos either floated upon water or was a 'tent' immersed in water.) In one such example, the virgin and the child sit in the middle of a little boat, their outstretched arms suggesting comprehensive love, blessing all, the cross, the boats mast, and the cosmic axis (Lowrey 1982:173). The picture suggests the ancient cosmic egg and

the earth-disc-deity at the central axis, floating on the primal sea. In another example, Christ is nailed to the boat's mast. At the top of the mast perches the spirit-bird or Holy Ghost. The crucified Christ is shown here as the axial pole for the spiritual cosmos. The boat approaches the heavenly Jerusalem, angels at the bow and St Peters (the church) enthroned in the stern. God is revealed as the watchful head of the cosmic centre represented by the boat (Lowrey 1982:174). Other saints and symbols of the ship include St Julian and St Christopher who were patron saints of travel. A wax model of the Lamb of God was kept by the ships owner as protection against stormy seas and possible shipwreck (Cirlot 1978:296).

The story of the flood, in Genesis, suggests the human need for assurance that the cosmic order will last. After 40 days cooped up in the Ark, a miniature cosmos, Noah came forth onto the solid earth (Lowrey 1982:174). The ark is symbolic of the notion of *the ship as museum* in that it housed and preserved a comprehensive collection of all plants and animals.

#### E. The ship as museum

Not only did the ship function as a means of transport it played a crucial role as a container of cultures. The ship carried religious iconography and Christian teachings to mission stations across the globe, returning with unique and unusual objects, images of the unknown and stories of the encounters. The ship can be seen as an important contribution to the development of the museum and in many ways functioned as a *mobile museum*. The great predecessor of collecting was Noah who used his ark to house his collection of all the beasts of the earth. John Tradescant, a sixteenth century collector of the strange and unusual, had a popular display at his home in Lambeth which was called *The Ark*. The interior of the display room, housing the collection, was built as Tradescant imagined Noah's Ark to have looked (Kynseth 1991:88).

Between the sixteenth and eighteenth century shipbuilding encountered unprecedented change and innovation and the technological developments had far-reaching effects. The structural design of the ships was improved to secure their safety on the seas. Changes were also made to house their contents carefully. During the transportation of animals and plants (both living and dead) special materials were provided to secure conditions for preservation (Diel 1995).

Around the end of 1780 William Bligh and Lieutenant Rieu set out on two separate voyages of scientific discovery upon the *Bounty* and the *Guardian*. The main social space

My grandmother Flora was a compulsive collector of a variety of objects and paper matter. Some collections she ordered, for instance her collection of angels and Dresden dolls. Other collections were strewn across her home, such as her stamp collection. Some valuable stamps some not, could be found in envelopes in just about any draw of the house. Other collections ranged from embroidered handkerchiefs, gloves and hats. When she moved into an old age home my task, was to clear out her home, and to try to create order by grouping her collections together. The bathroom was covered from wall to wall in postcards sent to her over the fifty years that she occupied the house and was aptly named the "Tup Room". Of the more unusual collections were the locks of hair, first

leath, my grandfather's false teeth and her deceased baby's grave soil. Every cupboard

in the ship as well for

(One of the great voyages of all time was the voyage of Darwin's *Beagle*, which set out in 1831 on a world trip including South America, Africa, Australia and Mauritius. Discovering, documenting and collecting Darwin returned to England in 1836 with a ship filled of museum objects. "Darwin was busy in his cabin, that had become a little history museum, every cranny was stuffed with snakes, insects in jars, the skins of birds and other creatures and he sat at his table, pretty much for the rest of his life, with his microscope, his dissecting instruments and his notebook before him" (Moorehead 1969:24).

exchange for the breadfruit (Denig 1992:66)

pounds of white, red and blue glass beads, stained glass earrings drops, and his currency in Tahitian requirements. It also took shirts, three penny and six penny glasses, giltly 1992:19). The Bounty carried adzes and ironware implements to the West Indies meeting deck below. Plants were shaded on the quarterdeck underneath a tarpaulin cover (Denig The floor was conserved with lead and carried the surplus water into the storage on the skylights were set in the deck above, with scuttles for air in the side and a stove for heat, like cucumbers in February, require a constant attendance" (Nash 1990:14). Two Bounty's great cabin, which housed 750 pots of breadfruit trees, "Plants on board a ship, species for the new gardens at Kew in England. A plant nursery was conserved in the subsistence food for slaves. Bligh was also instructed to collect exotic new botanical contents. Breadfruit trees from Tahiti were transported to the West Indies as cheap was specifically designed to house a nursery and ensure the safe journey of its plant home with new plant species for patron Joseph Banks and the Kew gardens. The Bounty of the ships were subordinated to their botanical function. Their mission was to return

The cabinet of the world is worth mentioning here as a suitable form to appropriate in the context of the world's collection of material objects, arranged in sequence where classification and naming is applied in order to identify. My curiosity cabinets attempt to identify origins, document lives and journeys of my forefathers simultaneously with the journeys undertaken by the great explorers. Framed full of images collected from my family archives, the cabinets also make reference to the journeys of the ship as it is illustrated and documented in history. The curiosity cabinet also functioned to display the material so as to convey a tale and moral for a stuffed pelican is seen opening its

The cabinet of the world was developed at the beginning of the seventeenth century as an example of a material encyclopaedia. The cabinet presented physical things where ideologies, fables and myths could be articulated and interpreted according to their visible surface-appearance (Hooper Greenhalgh 1992:102).

Through history, people have been interested in objects or phenomena that have the power to create wonder or astonishment. This was especially true of the Europeans during the late-Renaissance and Baroque periods. Nature's wonders and the wonders of the new world emphasised the efforts of cartographers, natural scientists and artists to represent and document celestial and geographic discoveries, anthropological and zoological wonders, and extraordinary and unusual species from the beyond world. The curious and unknown were collected, documented and shipped back to Europe on return voyages for further examination and display. As the realms of empirical data arrived in the form of facts, figures, maps, charts, technical presentations and objects, the public urge to collect and gather souvenirs came about. The museums of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries aspired to contain a microcosm of all rare things. The exceptional and not the commonplace were worthy of display. By studying nature's errors, the truth would reveal itself. Many of the marvels collected were chosen for their mysterious or unfamiliar quality. Museums became sites for those to investigate the distant New World's discoveries (Greenhalgh 1991: 71).

and draw was packed with carefully cut out and collected newspaper articles, holy cards, silver and gold cigarette and sweet papers. Those collections may have seemed like waste to those who had to sift through them but to her they were precious collections carefully gathered over the fifty-five years of her life. Through her salvaged collection which I have retained she continues to exist. My grandmother was not unlike the men that travelled to new places and collected the objects that they found.

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The 'cabinet of the world' was developed at the beginning of the seventeenth century as an example of a material encyclopaedia. The cabinet presented physical things where identities, links and connections could be articulated and interpreted according to their visible surface signatures (Hooper Greenhill 1992: 102).

The 'cabinet of the world' is worth mentioning here as a suitable form to appropriate in the construction and interpretation of my own identity. Both my cabinets and the original cabinet of the world consist of a collection of material objects, arranged in sequence where classification and naming is applied in order to identify. My curiosity cabinets attempt to identify origins, document lives and journeys of my forefathers simultaneously with the journeys undertaken by the great explorers. Crammed full of images collected from my family archives, the cabinets also make reference to the journey of the ship as it is illustrated and documented in history. The curiosity cabinet also functioned to display the material so as to convey a fable and moral i.e. a stuffed pelican is seen opening its

breast in order to resuscitate its dead young with its own blood as a material representation of the symbol of human redemption through Christ's blood (Hooper-Greenhill 1992: 126).

The collector wished to represent the world. However in each case these representations also constituted specific subjective positions, in that the scholar/physician made the cabinet but equally the cabinet made the scholar/physician. As in my own cabinets the collection represents both my own construction of my identity, and my identity as it has been constructed by others.

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## SECTION 2

PERFORMANCE AS THEME / THEATRE AS FORM

## Introduction

My formal choices are inspired by and modelled around the sixteenth century curiosity cabinet and the nineteenth century English paper theatre (Haldwin 1992:11). The idea of a performance of family narratives initially motivated the form of the art works taking the shape of a traditional paper theatre. The stage is a platform, which functions to present and display and resonates with the curiosity cabinet which performs in a similar manner as an enclosed exhibition space for viewer spectatorship and contemplation of a presentation. My intention to stage a set of narratives thus fits in comfortably within the performance genre of which the display format of the paper theatre and the curiosity cabinet are appropriate. These two forms have thus been significant in the development of the body of work as a whole.

My art works also take the form of the book. Essentially a tactile object containing information, the book is valued for its role in communication and education and a significant record of cultures. As an object of beauty, the book may encompass skills of printers, artists, designers, illustrators, typographers and bookbinders. The history of the book is rich and varied and closely linked with technology and culture and, similar to the theatre, it is a mirror of society and its history. Its interactive potential allows for it to be read and contemplated in privacy.

I have constructed the book not only as a codex, but also as a three-dimensional object, conferring on its significance as interactive sculpture. Language in a book is text and has a mutable form, spatial dimension and a concrete image. The text is read as important information as well as a visual expression.

The traditional book in familiar and unfamiliar forms is explored in my work. The *Album*, the *Research book*, the *Curiosity book* and the *Private book* are discussed in detail in the next section. The concertina and scroll form of books have been used within the cabinets while the cabinets, too, are defined within the book genre.

## A. Curiosity cabinets

"The collection presents a hermetic world: to have a representative collection is to have both the minimum and the complete number of elements for an autonomous world" (Greenblatt 1991:185).

The curiosity cabinets of the sixteenth century served to mirror a perfect world. Displayed objects were staged in cabinets of curiosity, a mirror of the newly discovered world in miniature form. This idea is particularly relevant to my own selection of what I imagine as an ideal representation of the threads of my own identity. I have applied the same formula within my own work by portraying the journey of the ship as an idealistic voyage. The mysterious romantic journeys that have influenced and shaped my being are played out in the ancestry cabinets. The structure of the curiosity cabinet functions appropriately as a container housing and displaying my collection of both oral history and written facts in the form of letters, documents and images of my ancestors revealing a microscopic world of my family's existence through the ages.

At the end of the sixteenth century efforts were made to collect and assemble the world to represent the entirety of nature, to picture the world through an arrangement of natural and artificial material. The objective of collectors was to produce a cabinet, a model of the universe made private. The 'cabinet of curiosity' or 'wunderkammer' were understood as a discovered jumble of objects (Hooper-Greenhill 1992:79).

The term curiosity cabinet refers to both a piece of furniture housing objects as well as to a room containing objects. During the sixteenth century Renaissance the term 'theatre' referred to a compilation or compendium. The "Memory Theatre" created by Giulio Camillo in Italy around 1559, was a small curiosity cabinet /theatre structure large enough for two people to enter (Hooper-Greenhill 1992: 91). It functioned to reveal the secret of the universe, which could be apprehended, understood, synthesised and memorised. Images and text of the cosmology were inscribed in the theatre, which was full of little boxes containing objects. Based on the number seven the theatre cabinet made reference to the planets. It was a vision of the world and of nature of things seen from a height of the stars and was a structure where ideas were explained and demonstrated (Hooper-Greenhill 1992: 92).

My book titled *Curiosity* is based on a curiosity cabinet designed by Philip Hainhofer made between 1625-1631. The symmetrical cabinet has doors, which open and reveal further doors similar to the effect that my book aims to achieve. The viewer peels away layers to view the objects collected and the treasure revealed at the end.

## B. Paper theatres

The form of the nineteenth century paper theatre has also motivated the form of my art works. My fascination with the paper theatre began during my fourth year as an undergraduate student. On a journey to Paris I was introduced to the paper theatre in its form as a wall piece and as a constructible pop-up and theatre book. I adopted the idea of the cut out assembled miniature theatre and created my own circus ring paper theatre. My interest in the paper theatre has progressed and evolved into this MFA project.

The theatre is a powerful metaphor. Its power over actuality derives from its fictionality and its imaginative reach (Wilshire 1992). The theatre is a microscopic world where ideas are dramatically played out and conveyed to an audience. The theatrical environment creates agency for artistic license where visually expressed ideas may be an exaggeration of everyday life. The theatre is significant in terms of a reflection of the social life of the middle-classes during the last century and thus an appropriate tool in which to reflect the narratives of my ancestors of whom some were part of that audience.

The paper theatre was a reflection of the society, which created a demand for the productions that they wished to view. "The theatre is an integrated part of society, an expression of it and capable of guiding it. It functions to express social values and to determine them" (Mayer 1974:240). In the 1700s the English stage provided traditional verse drama for a limited wealthy audience but with the onset of the Industrial Revolution a new audience arose. Not interested in the old eloquent dialogue the new audience demanded action, adventure and historical battle episodes. Early paper theatre publishers flourished.

Journeys of exploration and exotic lands were often subjects played out in the form of the paper theatre *Japanese garden and Temple of Isis*. The adventurous journey *Pegasus Theatre* and encounters with the unknown such as *Shells* depicted themes of the marvellous (Baldwin 1992:19). Originating in England the paper theatre emerged in the form of a theatrical souvenir picturing costume actors from a current play. While not originally published as cut-outs, the idea of cutting the figures out was soon conceived and with the aid of printing a new paper toy product emerged. By the nineteenth century the paper theatres were printed as copper plate engravings, colour was added by hand and

later with stencils. The paper theatre was a creative domestic occupation in the family and a collectable to the adult. Its importance today lies in the records of production in the human theatre of the nineteenth century period that otherwise would have vanished unrecorded. These paper drama sheets have left an almost complete pictorial record of the first half of the nineteenth century stage actors, costume and scenery (Baldwin 1992:20-25).

My purpose is story telling and the paper theatre functions as a capable format or suitable platform on which to convey narratives and re-enact the roles played by my ancestors in an imaginative manner. The final stories are my interpretation of the collected facts and the theatre an instrument allowing agency for creative licence.

### C. Playing cards

Printing evolved to a large extent out of the increased popularity and demand for playing cards, which required a new form of reproduction (McMurtrie 1943:101). Originally laboriously hand drawn and painted, playing cards were of Chinese origin dating back to 969 AD. Woodblock printing increased the potential for mass production and thus exposed the playing cards to a wider audience. Printmaking played an important role in disseminating information through that which was represented on the cards. Religious iconography served as propaganda for the faith, and education, nationality, political satire, geography and astronomy were themes represented, rapidly circulated through the invention of printmaking. Sea voyages played an important part in introducing playing cards to the west from the east through the journeys undertaken by conquering soldiers, seafaring men and gypsies.

My own interest in playing cards derives from both their agency in the development of print and from a particular family interest in cards. My grandmother May, a regular bridge player, had acquired many packs of playing cards, which served as entertainment on weekend visits. Runny, solitaire and the construction of a house of cards were games first encountered and which I identify with my maternal grandparents. Having been fascinated with the playing cards, their history as early printed matter I created a personal pack representing family members. I applied the traditional printing technique of etching, which was used in the production of early playing cards.

## D. Maps

Early maps represented trace routes of important voyages and showed some of the astonishing wonders encountered by explorers. Maps gave a sense of vastness of the world and enabled exploring nations to comprehend the extent of their power. While many of the early maps were for navigational purposes, some were for decorative purposes and designed for collectors. Maps of the sixteenth and seventeenth century were valued for their record of unidentified flora and fauna and the locations of their existence. Cartographers charted the heavens as well as the earth. Never before or since has cartographic material been so richly embellished as in the age of the marvellous (Kenseth 1991:105).

Maps also enable the past to become part of the present. They promote the resemblance of the culture that created them (Wood 1993:1). Maps embody their authors' prejudices, biases and partialities (Wood 1993:24). Knowledge of a map is knowledge of the world that produced that map.

Maps became a universal metaphor for European authority in the New World (Wood 1993:2). Native Americans for example, were not included in maps made by Europeans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries demonstrating the power cartographers had over what they wished to represent. The early cartographic imagery allowed the unknown seem familiar. Foreign territories were portrayed in European terms. Terrain and architecture in remote countries often looked European. Details such as these reflect an underlying effort to not only document but to control these distant lands (Wood 1993:2).

My use of maps refers to the richly decorated, hand coloured collectable maps of the age of the marvellous. Maps are useful in the construction of an identity and in my practical work they refer not only to countries of origin and geographical placement on the globe but also to the routes and journeys undertaken to the various destinations. Maps have been utilised to delineate the various nationalities of my diverse heritage. They serve as powerful sources in the construction of my identity. The process of selecting, enlarging and overlapping sections of maps the areas relevant to my origin are highlighted. By appropriating existing maps I have superimposed other maps and created a personal map reflecting the authority I have in constructing my own identity.

## i. Monsters

Monsters were first depicted on maps in the areas of unexplored territory and their reference in my work is interpreted as that which is unknown and unfamiliar in terms of the physical journeys undertaken by my ancestors into foreign territory. Maps of Iceland, for example include one of the most fantastic collections of sea monsters such as "Theatrum Orbis Terrarum" (1595) and judging by Ortelius's description of them were still accepted as fact (Kenseth 1991:228). The Icelandic waters were fairly unexplored thus revealing how imagination takes over when the unknown is encountered. Monsters represented on early maps are symbols of chaos and represent the unknown, expanded by the human imagination. They tend to be enlarged composites of the familiar, often peculiar or are in some way unnatural (multiple eyes, heads, etc). The harpy, for example a sea monster, combines a man's head, woman's breasts and torso, bat's wings, eagle's claws and a serpents tail (Lowrey 1982:178).

In my work I have appropriated monsters from the exotic lands depicted on early maps as well as the lands which my great grandfathers journeyed to. One of these lands is Guiana where my paternal great grandfather travelled. Here it was believed that the rivers and forests contained some of the most ferocious and grotesque animals. Explorers, hunters and collectors agreed that the predicament was not too find the wildlife but to avoid being eaten by it. Among the Guiana freaks was the Pingo a savage pig weighing more than 60 pounds that travelled in a pack of 200 and the Matamala turtle, a grotesque looking animal resembling a clump of debris which would kill its prey by sucking it with a powerful vacuum device in its throat. The Black caiman crocodile, which flourished in the rain forests of Guiana, apparently would growl, bark, snort and roar thunderously. The Bushmaster, a twelve foot long venomous snake with extra long fangs and the Capybara water pig, the largest rodent of the world weighing up to one hundred and twenty pounds. My maternal great grandfather journeyed to China where the dragon exists as a powerful part of the Chinese imagery and in the imaginations of the nation. Dragons have long been revered as representing water in all in the form of storms, the sea, winding rivers- the thing that sets all life in motion (Lowrey 1982:189).

## E. The book

"We have begun to look again at archaic book forms as a source of inspiration and of reinvention, a counter argument to using the book purely as a reading machine" (Doggett 1989:9).

This section is concerned with the manuscript and codex as an influence in my work. The various forms that a codex book assumes is discussed with reference to book artists and specifically those who explore the book as a journey. The non-codex book forms are presented such as the scroll and the wall piece. The limited edition books produced for this project attempt to recapture the excitement of handling and reading books through an unfamiliar format. My cabinets may be classified as books in terms of their function as narratives to be read. They contain text and illustrative images and consist of layers of paper bound to a spine in the form of the wooden structure of the box.

The manuscript is one of the early book forms which has inspired and shaped elements within my work. Originally decorated by monks who painted their own manuscripts they were later bought and commissioned by private individuals. The illuminated manuscripts survive as important sources of knowledge of the history and development of European painting. Similar to my cabinets, handpainted manuscripts were not reproduced as multiples and are read as a narrative containing text richly decorated with gold and colours (Rothenberg & Guss 1996:10).

An example of a manuscript from the New World is one from Mexico dating back to the fourteenth century which was used as a teaching tool. History and myth were displayed in a form that could be internally visualised. Their purpose was to make the reader remember what was being conveyed, through the use of brilliant and simple colours, crystalline clarity of images and vibrant compositions perfectly suited to its function. Myths, histories, genealogies, and prayers were unbedded in the text and on certain occasions these books were mounted on walls (Rothenberg & Guss 1996:11).

The mechanical book was documented as far back as seven hundred years ago as artists, philosophers, scientists and book designers tried to challenge the book's bibliographic boundaries. Catalan mystic and poet Ramon Llull of Majorca produced the earliest known recorded mechanical book in the thirteenth century (Drucker 1995:153). His use of a revolving disc was to illustrate his theories and throughout the centuries, Volvelles have been used in teaching anatomy, making astronomical predictions, creating secret code, and telling fortunes.

In the twentieth century the book has progressed from a container of information to an adaptable art medium. The hand-bound book has increased in popularity particularly among artists as a vehicle for visual and artistic expression. Its form is portable, flexible, and susceptible to interdisciplinary collaboration, and open to multiple and mass production. Some would argue that there is a continuing intellectual and practical interest in the role of the book in this age of internet and computer technology. But whether the

book will become obsolete in the electronically advancing future, the artist will continue to find in the book format an object of infinite possibilities in which to express ideas.

Books may occur in different forms from palm size to tablet size, wall pieces, as spatial works of very large dimensions, big enough to wear, walk through, and perform in (Drucker 1995:152). The definition of a book does not necessarily need to be restricted to the codex form. It can include scrolls, tablets, decks of cards or wall pieces. These are only a few aspects of a book's definition and it is difficult to make a single, simple statement about what constitutes an artist's book. The codex is the dominant book form however there are various shapes that artist's books can take – such as polygons and fold up works, boxes and accordion folds, scrolls, pop-up structures. Other works, which go beyond the scroll form or codex, include box books or archives of documents and works, which have a geometric form such as my eab nets.

The scroll is a non-codex book form – its text can be spread over space without becoming a book. Scrolls have their own interesting qualities in their physicality and their unique continuity. Book artist Liliane Carrier terms her hand painted scroll an "Adventure in reading, a slow journey between the lines plunging between pages as the pattern is unrolled" (Drucker 1995:153).

The idea of the journey is also present in the books of Dick Higgins. His *A Book* compares the journey of a ship and a book. "Like a ship moving towards a horizon, that horizon always recedes, no matter in what direction one moves. The horizon is always in motion and the text that is a work of art brings its horizon to us. The horizons intersect and interpenetrate" (Röthenberg and Guss 1996:102). Book artist Emmett Williams also explores the book as a ship's journey in her book *Voy Age* in which a short phrase sequence displays and describes a sea voyage in humorous language. The words are laid out on the page like the image of the sea with a horizon indicated by shrinked typeface. The ship of language moves through the pages and as the work progresses the ship disappears into the distance (Drucker 1995:174).

Unconventional forms which the book can take are present in the work of Karl Young a book-artist who tries to produce new book forms or introduce new material into the spine bound format that dominates most contemporary western book design. The books he produces are bound along a spine but sheets of metal printing plates, dollar bills, wood, concrete blocks are used as alternatives for paper. A book worn as an earring in the shape of a cylinder is another novel example where the book can be worn as an accessory. *Fifth Series: Pornography* is a book made of pornographic magazines, bound and closed on

three sides allowing access of two fingers into the centre of the book (Rothenberg & Guss 1996 :53).

In my books the act of denying access is symbolic of the private and is present in the cabinet *Raphael's journey* as well as the *Private book* on my father (discussed in detail later). My books fall into the category of mechanical books, which are defined as having revolving circles and movable layers on a page. The idea of the journey is focal within my codex and non-codex book forms.

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**SECTION 3.**

**TECHNICAL CHOICES**

## Introduction

My *Circus Ring* was completed during my fourth year study for a Bachelor of Fine Art degree. The body of work drew on the tradition of English printed paper theatres of the nineteenth century. Each piece consisted of colour etchings produced for the purpose of being cut out and assembled into a paper theatre. Each three-plate colour etching was adhered to board for rigidity, carefully cut out with a sharp knife before edges were painted for a sense of solidity and three dimensionality. Portions of the circus theatre were reproduced and constructed into three smaller sections. The printmaking process allowed for these multiples and thus the reason for using the technique. The cabinets constructed for this Masters in Fine Art body of work are not multiples and therefore their mode of production has changed. Whereas the same playing cards are used in several boxes and in the books their mode of production required a printing technique which produced multiples. Similarly the Jumping Jack dolls are used numerous times and therefore also require a printing method of multiple reproduction. The remaining contents of the cabinets were either hand painted with water colours, drawn with pastels or transferred from photocopies. Finished drawings were scanned into the computer where they were manipulated. Text, maps and images were superimposed over the drawings further altering them. Finally these were printed on Fabriano paper to create a similar appearance and quality as the etching.

### A. Collage

My work has been constructed around a collection of documents, letters, medals, photographs and other memorabilia. Although this work falls into many categories of art making, one is the medium of collage. Layered papers of different degrees of transparency and opacity are collaged and enhanced by light. In a sense my collages are an extension of the familiar printing process. The intaglio process of colour etching is a layering of one colour image upon another. Similarly the art of bookmaking is here paralleled with collage. Books are made up of layers of paper adhered, sewn, and ultimately bound together. At the same time the pages of my books function as individual collages.

Collage comes from the word *coller* – to stick and is defined by the technique of cutting and adhering layers of paper together. It describes an image that has been created from a combination of sources such as painted and drawn or found images, printed ephemera and three-dimensional objects. The tradition of art combining cut-out shapes and papers originated in Japan dating back to a thousand years ago, when calligraphers made collaged poems embellished with delicate cut-out shapes. Japanese calligraphers copied poems onto delicate papers and then cut them into shapes to form landscape scenes, patterns of flowers, birds, animals and stars. The art reached its pinnacle in the fifteenth and sixteenth century after which it shifted to a tradition of paper cutting. Collage followed the trade routes of paper and the eastern influences moving west. In the west, cut-out emblematic devices and coats of arms were pasted into books of heraldry and genealogy from the 1600s. This technique became popular in the eighteenth century family albums and pictorial collage within the context of the private book continues today in the folk art montage of the family scrapbook (Digby 1985:9).

In the twentieth century the use of collage has been associated with the Futurists, Dadaists, Russian avant-garde artists, Surrealists and Pop artists. Picasso's collage, *Glass and bottle of Suze* (1912) is a work revealing bits of paper and a used theatre ticket. This piece layers into several levels of meaning: the original identity of the object or fragment and the history it brings with it, the new meaning created in association with other objects and the meaning it acquires as the result of the metamorphosis. Essentially collage consists of layering, which is present in my work and is intended to provoke multiple interpretations on different levels.

"Collage proposes a dislocation in time and place" (Waldman 1992:11). Works by collage artists such as Joseph Cornell, Buster Cleveland and Ray Johnson reveal that there is a link between collage and collecting. Joseph Cornell's boxes are a fusion of collage and surrealist objects. The influence of Gerard de Nerval, Lautreamont and Baudelaire permanently conditioned his sensitivity to images of the voyage and the chance encounter. He built palaces, habitats for exotic birds, archaic charts and maps of the stars. He never travelled but in his soap bubbles and shifting sandboxes he found his way into a magical world in which he lived. Joseph Cornell made collages instead of journeying, the collage served as the artist's journey. His figures, dolls, angels are time-travellers through all the lost ages between the Renaissance and the present. They are allegories of innocence that speak of childhood memories, the darker side of life, loss and longing. Cleveland depicts collected maps of his voyages, which he sends abroad like clues to a buried treasure. Johnson collects found objects and paper ephemera while travelling which are later used in collages and serve as souvenirs of the journey (Waldman 1992:11).

I have constructed my own collages, drawing on the original use of collage. My work is inspired by the tradition of the Japanese cut out collage and text ornamentation. My work is a layering of two dimensional layers of paper in a three dimensional form to produce a space. Transparent printed papers are layered one upon another creating a multiple image. The layering of the narrative of my family's journey's, over those of the journey's of the ship, the great explorers and described in literature and poetry are presented simultaneously to form a kind of collage.

## B. Paper

Paper is the major substrate for my work. The use of layered paper serves as an extension of the print process. The paper layering is similar to the layering of coloured etching plates upon one another. I chose to confine myself to the use of paper in the construction of the contents of my cabinets. This act proved to simplify my variety of materials used and to exploit the qualities of paper as a simple material to construct three dimensional form. Its qualities as a material varying in texture, opacity and rigidity were also realised and explored.

Paper originated in the Orient and was regarded as sacred (Williams 1995:7). It has played a crucial role in the preservation of history in terms of its ability to retain information. The way in which paper ages and often discolours suggests emotive and nostalgic connotations as it records a sense of the passage of time and enhances the artwork with a particular mood. For this reason the paper used in the art pieces were treated and aged before printing on the surface. Tissue paper was chosen for its unique translucency, which enhanced the printed surface when backlit and at the same time allowed the muted surface underneath it to be subtly revealed. After printing was completed on the tissue paper, shellac was applied for strengthening.

For stronger opaque paper, Fabriano Umbrio, a handmade rag paper was chosen and dyed with tea before being printed on. Watercolour paints were used and refer to the tradition of hand colouring prints, maps and botanical illustrations. Muted colours were chosen to enhance the aged authentic quality of the printed image. Some sheets were torn to create a deckled edge while others were scratched and scored. Paper was pierced and illuminated with lights behind the punched holes. Light and shadow as well as paint and print were used to animate the surface. Besides functioning as a medium on which to print, tear and punch holes, paper was also used for its three-dimensional qualities. A series of flat planes were glued or suspended with thin transparent line to create a three

dimensional environment. Selected papers were glued to cardboard for rigidity. Triplex board was used for building the solid structures such as the ships.

## C. Techniques

### i. Printing

The copper plate etching technique was applied to the images that were used as multiples such as the playing cards and jumping jack dolls. The cards were printed in colour which involved a three plate etching process. The same image was etched onto three different copper plates of equal size and inked up in red, yellow or blue to achieve a wide spectrum of colours and tones. Monochrome etchings were hand coloured following printing. Subsequently photocopied images were overlaid upon the coloured etching and a transfer solvent printing technique employed. The quality achieved through this technique resembles that of a printed etching. This transfer solvent technique was applied to those images where one reproduction was required. The computer printer was used to print out images previously drawn in pastels and painted in watercolours. Scanned in drawings and constructed jumping jack dolls were manipulated in Adobe Photoshop. Maps letters and medals were also scanned in and overlaid in this program. Colours and opacity levels were manipulated before images were printed out. On occasions the paper size was not large enough and the printed images were tiled together.

### ii. Lights

Lighting was selected for subtle illumination. Rope lighting, fairy lights and conventional light bulbs were chosen for their varied effects. Always positioned behind layers of paper, the lights enhanced the printed area on the papers. Different textured papers were selected to create varied effects when back-lit. The use of lighting refers to the dramatically lit traditional theatre, which created an atmosphere, illuminated certain areas on stage and ultimately animated the stage performance.

### iii. Cabinets

The cabinets were constructed using twelve millimetre pine ply. Inspired by the curiosity cabinets (discussed earlier on in the paper) my cabinets serve as structures to contain the

layers of paper and lights. The cabinet form and specifically the 'roofs' correspond to the country portrayed within each particular piece.

The triptych was very popular between the fifth and sixteenth centuries (Weitzmann 1986). Particularly a suitable form for holy images, the centre panel was usually covered by the side wings and only opened for private worship. Small triptychs were easily transportable, their central panel being properly protected. My use of the triptych functions in much the same way. The centre panel or stage contains a theatrical narrative displayed and the side wings serve as scrolls containing the facts.

#### iv. Colour

The subtle muted colours selected for colouring the paper refer to the tradition of hand coloured maps, paper theatres and botanical illustrations. The cabinets representing India and China reveal a more confident use of colour as those countries are characterised by their use of vibrant colours. Tea, watercolours and shellac were used to age the papers to suggest records of the past.

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**SECTION 4**

**INDIVIDUAL INTERPRETATION**

## THE CABINETS

### *A. Departures*

The first piece completed is concerned with my forebearer's departures from their countries of origin. In the case of my personal history Portugal, British Guiana, Ireland, England, Scotland and Holland are represented. To refer to the identity of each of these countries I have used distinguishing maps, flags, stamps, heraldry coins and various descriptions of national character. Theatrical style jumping jack dolls were created using traditional costume out of traditional cloth from the relevant countries. Further, documents, letters, medals were superimposed over dolls to furnish them with a personal identity of the actors/ancestors. The use of playing cards serves to identify the individual ancestors who originated in the different countries.

The far-left box depicts Portugal, Madeira and British Guiana simultaneously. My Gonsalves forefathers originated in Portugal but moved to the Island of Madeira and then emigrated to British Guiana in South America. The figures reflect my progenitors as brave conquerors, farmers and explorers in traditional Portuguese attire. Situated in a jungle like forest of British Guiana with Madeira behind in the distance, the opaque forest foliage displays mapped areas relevant to the journeys they took. Below this scene are two pillars covered with letters (written in Spanish) selected from the family archive. My paternal grandfather Raphael, great grandfather Manuel and great grandmother Maria are identified in the playing cards.

The upper central box identifies Scotland and Ireland. The Dohertys were paternal relatives and the Macdonalds from my mother's family. Scotland is identified as the castle on the right and Ireland on the left. The botanical illustrations of plants identify those indigenous to the areas of their origin. The Scottish drummer has information (retrieved from letters) transferred onto his chest which identifies his position in my personal heritage. The section below represents Great Britain with a theatrical rendering of the Battle of Waterloo taking place in the background. The Wilsons and the Keys were of British heritage and are represented as fisherman and bakers.

The far right cabinet introduces Holland. My paternal great great grandmother was Ludolphina Van Der Hoven of Dutch parents Jacobus and Johanna. She is represented together with my aunt, my brother and her grandson John in the playing cards at the top of the cabinet. The scene below describes the departures and the arrivals of my Dutch

ancestor/explores. Departing with food, navigational equipment, European objects for trade and religious iconography they returned with new plant species, exotic animals such as monkeys and other curiosities for the wunderkammers and curiosity cabinets. The Dutch canal houses were drawn in pastel before being scanned into the computer and manipulated in Adobe Photoshop.

### B. *The ship museum*

The ancestral narrative of *The ship museum* is identified as the journey from the island of Madeira near Portugal to British Guiana by Manuel Gonsalves supported by images of family portraits and maps of the journey. Manuel Rodrigues Gonsalves was born in 1870 in Madeira. At the age of three his parents immigrated to British Guiana. He grew up in Georgetown and later met Maria Matilda who he married and with whom he had ten children.

A photographic portrait of Manuel and his son Julio, and playing cards of Manuel and Maria are revealed on the front ship sail. On the sail behind to the left is a portrait of the whole Gonsalves family. The boat is constructed with text from letters written by Manuel to his family after they left British Guiana.

The British Guiana stamps were collected from Thomas stamp collection and are symbolic of the Gonsalves' new national identity. The journey is stitched into a map on a paper scroll beneath the ship. On either side of the scroll are playing cards with images of Georgetown superimposed over images of the individual's concerned.

Other influences include Umberto Eco's fantasy novel entitled *The Island of the Day Before* in which an unoccupied ship is encountered by a shipwrecked sailor. The interior is described in detail as a kind of ark where plants and animals are stored. My work resonates with this idea of an ark identifying the ship with the ark of Noah as a microscopic world and as a container of cultures, in the form of artefacts. Similarly the *Bounty* and the *Guardian* were existing ships, which functioned as carriers of plants, animals, and exotic artefacts and their decks were designed to facilitate this duty.

Reference is made to the history of collecting and documenting in the use of images of exotic sea creatures as well as in the flora and fauna of the ships contents. The images of

plants and animals were borrowed from *The model book of calligraphy* of Rudolf II and computer manipulated before being printed onto Fabriano paper and hand coloured with watercolours. Botanical illustrations, Durer's monsters, wondrous carnival floats are used as references to the age of the marvellous. Clocks are symbolic of time and the movement of planets in space and as well referring to mechanical toys and theatre boxes. In the original cabinets of the sixteenth century, clocks and compasses symbolised desire of humankind to dominate nature. The circle on which the astronomy star chart occurs is symbolic of the generations of the Gonzalves family and also refers to the significance of the skies for the purpose of navigation and is associated with the ocean currents.

Another source was Joris Hoefnagel who was commissioned in the 1590s by Emperor Rudolf II to illustrate the calligraphy by Georg Boeskey. His illuminations present a world of flowers, insects, nuts, shells, fruit and small animals which were considered rarities having only recently been imported from the New world, Andalusia and elsewhere (Getty Museum publication 1997:5). This notion of collecting and classifying all of nature's products, dominated sixteenth century natural history. Rudolf and his father Maximilian II were among the principal centres of sixteenth century botany. They built gardens in which to cultivate botanical rarities. The *kunstkammer* at the court was intended to represent the entire world and the collections consisted of natural specimens, bones, scientific instruments and illustrated manuscripts.

### C. *The wreck*

*The wreck* is a cabinet depicting the ancestral journey of three great uncles – Carlos, Luiz and Julio Gonzalves. Julio's journey is revealed as the small ship found in the upper right hand corner of the cabinet. In February 1927, at age twenty two, Julio travelled from British Guiana stopping at Demanara, Grenada, St Lucia, Barbados, Cuba and finally Salamanca in Spain where he joined a Jesuit seminary and was three years later ordained a priest on his deathbed. The concertina shaped book contains reproduced letters that Julio wrote during this journey. Safely restored and collected these letters were selected from my grandmother's letter archive. These letters were a kind of diary which reveal detailed information about Julio's journey. Luiz and Carlos also left British Guiana on a journey to Cuba and their lives and families are subtly reflected in the transparent photograph portraits situated above the concertina/accordion fold book.

Besides the journey undertaken by Julio the main focus of *the wreck* is the idea of the journey as a movement from points a to b where c, the wreck site, is not always

anticipated but exists as a possible outcome of any journey. This depiction stems from the fateful incomplete journey undertaken by my father. Most of the aeroplane's wreckage, its cargo and passengers were not recovered and so *The wreck* also suggests an underwater shrine in memory of the incident. *The wreck* also makes reference to the importance of the wreck site within a historical context as a container of artefacts/preserved history revealing important information about the artefacts chosen for collection, food and storage facilities, ship building and navigational equipment. This piece explores the spiritual journey of those who died on the Heilderberg. Inspired by Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* which contemplates the idea that the destination is not of primary concern but rather the journey undertaken.

Source material for the sea life in this cabinet was borrowed from German biologist and philosopher Ernest Heinrich Haeckel (1834-1919) who made drawings of organisms he studied throughout his life particularly the deep sea and microscopic life that he discovered. The incredibly varied, fascinating and unfamiliar lithographic produced shapes have been used in this cabinet as symbolic of the unknown sea creatures of the deep and also by association the unknown outcome of any journey. Haeckel's work reflects the culture and practice of classifying, naming of animals and plants and collecting the unfamiliar/rare and is thus important source material for this piece (Haeckel 1974:1).

#### D. Raphael's journey

My grandfather Raphael Gonsalves was born in Georgetown, British Guiana in 1902 of Portuguese parents Manuel and Maria. In 1920 at the age of 18 he journeyed to Great Britain where he began his studies in a strict seminary with the aim of becoming an ordained Jesuit priest. *Raphael's journey* is a narrative of this journey in the physical and spiritual sense. After thirteen years of study in this rigid environment Raphael left his calling. A nervous breakdown is believed to have forced Raphael to leave the seminary and after applying to a further twenty one Jesuit monasteries and being rejected from each one he changed his name and began a journey to Africa. Raphael Gonsalves became Raphael Gon Sales and a representative for Encyclopaedia Britannica, he travelled from North Africa to Johannesburg on his way to Australia. In South Africa he met Thora and decided this would be his new home. Changing his line in the family name forever and starting anew he cut himself off from his family, ancestral name and Portuguese identity. His transformed identity and his involvement with the Jesuits were never revealed to any one in our family but Thora.

The form that the cabinet takes was designed to reflect Raphael's involvement with the Catholic church. The shape of the cabinet takes the form of a church structure and is also comparable to the sacred tabernacle. The cabinet also resembles the confessional, an appropriate structure in which to construct Raphael's secret past. Inspired by the peep-show theatre principle of cut-out scenes aligned one behind the other to give a three dimensional effect, this piece is concerned with the idea of the 'closet skeletons' or the past not revealed and thus the reason for denying access to the theatrical scene within the box. Reference is made to the book as an important artefact of information.

Raphael was a teacher of French and mathematics during his years with the Jesuits. Later as representative for Encyclopædia Britannica, Raphael was a disseminator of books of knowledge. Likewise his role as preacher/teacher of the Christian teachings are paralleled here and thus the occasion for book iconography.

The Catholic doctrine revealed in the religious iconography of the holy cards, statues and religious paintings collected in Thora's house are reproduced for this piece. Her collection of angels can be seen subtly laid over images throughout the cabinet.

On a broader level this work is concerned with the religious crusade undertaken by the Jesuits by ship as well as the importance of the ship as a vessel identified as a symbol of the church. The holy cards are a product of the religious images represented on early playing cards. The purpose of these playing cards was to promote the faithful 'images of devotion' as a kind of propaganda to the masses who were previously excluded from access to such privileges of the upper class (Tilley 1973).

#### *E. India journey*

My great great maternal grandfather Charles Key was born in Nottingham England in 1828. This cabinet depicts the journey he undertook to India where he took occupation as a British sergeant. Even though Charles underwent many journeys during the course of his life, my desire was to depict not only the journey but to focus on the destination and the arrival specifically in unfamiliar territory. India was an exotic destination, which attracted early explorers. Their European ships carried religious icons, the bible and its way of thinking to the lands of the unfamiliar and returned with collections of the exotic (Greenblatt 1991). This cabinet acts as a celebration of the journey and the arrival in the exotic destination.

The cabinet narrative is an enactment of Charles' arrival in India on a British ship.

The Taj Mahal is a landmark in India and in this narrative it is symbolic of the Indian nation. The idea of the exotic is explored in the use of animals, birds and insects which lie camouflaged in the trees to the left of the cabinet. The dark depths of sea reveal further examples of the unknown and exotic in the form of enlarged sea organisms and monsters. The two side panels contain scrolls displaying images of maps, which describe the route undertaken. Other symbols of Indian culture, religion and tradition were layered onto the Fabriano scroll using a transfer printing technique. An image of a trophy cup on the left scroll is symbolic of my maternal grandmother's collection of trophy cups. It is also symbolic of the spiritual quest for the Holy Grail.

### *V. China journey*

Richard Earnest Burrows Key was my great maternal grandfather who sailed on the *H.M.S. Terrible* to Peking in north China. Employed in the Valley of Yang-Tse Kiang as a South African naval officer, twenty five year old Richard Key stood to aid China in the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. The China Medal, which was awarded to Richard, is the only evidence of his journey and is superimposed over one of the Chinese temples. Later while posted in Germany to fight in World War I he was exposed to high quantities of mustard gas which led to his death in 1925 in Observatory Cape Town.

This piece is concerned with the function of the ship as a tool of transport in terms of war, commerce and exploration. In this piece the idea of the exotic destination is revealed. The idea of different cultures of the 'other' encountered, documented, collected and removed for further examination and display back home is explored.

Acknowledging that paper was first invented in China and the primary medium in which my art works are created, I felt compelled to depict this relative's journey to the land of paper's origin. The spiral on the hinged doors represent ocean currents and is symbolic of time and life repeating itself through the generations.

### *VI. Arrival in the Cape*

The final cabinet depicts the journeys of two maternal great great grandfathers to the Cape. In 1850 at the age of 22 Charles Key rounded the Cape on a voyage from India to England. He settled in Cape Town and married. Later he would journey to Kimberly

during the diamond rush but returned to Cape Town and died in 1892 in Greenmarket Square. David Wilson arrived in the Cape at the same age but some years later in 1884.

Together with the family narratives this work also refers to a history of journeys and exploration. Reference is made to the journey of Captain Riou's *Guardian* and Darwin's *Beagle* which rounded the Cape. Under the instruction of Joseph Banks, Captain Riou arrived in the Cape in November 1776 where he was instructed to purchase livestock including exotic deer from Mauritius and replace dying plants with new ones from Colonel Gordon's garden (Nash 1990:xxv).

The function of the *Guardian* and the *Beagle* as well as Bligh's *Bounty* was a carrier or mobile museum of plants and animals to and from Europe. Delivering food and objects for trade, such as money, cattle and guns these ships returned with new plant species for documentation, and other curiosities. This work completes the sea voyages of my symbolic ships and serves to account for my own location in Cape Town.

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## THE CODEX

The four codexes made for this project include *The album*, *The research book*, *The curiosity book* and *The private book*. Each book was hand bound using a traditional bookbinding stitching technique. The spine of each book was left exposed to reveal variations in colour and texture of the papers used.

### A. *The album*

The album is similar to the scrapbook and is symbolic of the act of preservation. It functions to document and record not only important events but the everyday and mundane occurrences in my personal history. Specifically *The album* is a biography of my paternal grand parents, indicated by the playing cards of the couple as the king and queen. It contains images of their parents, their wedding and their family. Found objects originally belonging to the concerned are collaged into the book as traces of the left behind. My grandmother was an avid collector of holy cards and stamps and never threw away an envelope without either steaming or tearing off the stamp. The same applied to my grandfather's Cameo cigarette papers, which I found neatly folded and stacked in tins while clearing out their home. Images of Florence have been used in the Album which refer to my grandmother's longing to travel there – a longing she only satisfied through the images of the city with which she surrounded herself. Lace doilies, spectacles, used envelopes and traditional dolls are reproduced as original etchings or through the technique of transfer printing, and function as symbolic references to objects imbued with the spirit of my grandparents. The reference to travel is located in the many images of star and astrological charts. In the fifteenth century Europe astrology was used extensively to discover both the future and how to act in the present.

The pages of *The album*, were hand painted in layers of washes, calligraphic text and information relating to documents such as wedding certificates and death certificates. The Canson paper was selected for its durability and ability to flatten after being thoroughly soaked. Transfer printing was the first process performed on the paper before treating it with watery Placa paint to achieve an aged, layered effect reminiscent of the passage of time on an ancient manuscript. The process of layering and staining was intended to suggest history and its effect on identity, as well as the presence of multiple influences on the creation of a family identity.

### B. *The research book: the ship*

The Ship functions as an important record holder of information and is the central symbol for *The research book/ The ship*. Selected histories and the symbolic presence of the ship are traced from its beginnings and a time line records the major events around shipping, the voyage and navigation, which are documented throughout the book. Definitions and the symbolic spectrum of the ship are included together with literature and poetry written around the theme of the ship. The notion of a 'ship of fools' is acknowledged and illustrated. Major historical events influencing the design of the ship are listed. A section is devoted to the symbolism of the ship within Christianity. Important inventions such as the compass are included in the book and make reference to the journeys of the early explorers. The notion of the ship as a symbolic vehicle transporting the dead to the hereafter is revealed in the section concerning ship burial. Together with the facts concerning the ship my ancestors' journeys are illustrated. Geographical playing cards are used to locate their place of origin and the countries from which they journeyed.

### C. *Curiosity book*

The interactive potential of the book as an art object which can be explored with curiosity through the act of handling and touching, imparts to the viewer a certain kind of satisfaction which is not allowed in the restricted enclosed space of the cabinet wall pieces. As in the traditional maze the viewer must negotiate the spaces of the curiosity book to uncover the treasure at the end. Along the journey he/she will pass a history of the curiosity cabinet and its contents. The book is similar to a theatrical play- the pages performing the function of theatre curtains.

### D. *The private book: My fathers journey*

The book representing my late father is symbolic of the private. The structure of the book lends itself to the notion of the unexposed or that reserved for the special or sacred --for limited viewership. For this purpose access is denied to certain pages. *The private book* traces the life of Trevor Sales as I have collected it from his birth to his death and his spiritual journey to the next world. Collected objects, clothing and letters have been photographically reproduced and printed onto pages. This book also provides the

symbolic conclusion to the body of work as a whole. In many ways, my own journey to encounter my past, my family history and the meaning of a journey begun with the fateful flight my father took on the Heilderberg. It has ended, for now at least, with one visual setting down of that journey and the closest I can come to the making of a memorial for a lost parent.

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**SECTION 5**

**THE ART WORKS**

*Departures*

1998

90cm x 180cm x 20cm

Multiple plate colour etching and monochromatic etching on  
Fabriano Umbrio, computer manipulated pastel drawing and  
transfer solvent printing. Rope lighting was used for illumination.



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*Departures* detail



*The ship museum*

1999

92cm x 136cm x 20cm

Multiple plate colour etching and monochromatic etching on  
Fabriano Utrubo, computer manipulated pastel drawing and  
transfer solvent printing. Fairy lights were used for illumination.  
Three regular clock mechanisms were used for motion.



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*The ship museum detail*



*The wreck*

1999

94cm x 141cm x 20cm

Multiple plate colour etching and monochromatic etching on  
Fabriano Umbrio, computer manipulated pastel drawing and  
transfer solvent printing. Fairy lights were used for illumination.



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*The wreck detail*



*Raphael's journey*

1999

81cm x 94cm x 71cm

Multiple plate colour etching and monochromatic etching on  
Fabriano Umbrio, computer manipulated pastel drawing and  
transfer solvent printing. Fairy lights were used for illumination.



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*Raphaël's journey* (detail)



*India journey*

2000

110cm x 181cm x 20cm

Multiple plate colour etching and monochromatic etching on  
Fabriano Umbria, computer manipulated pastel drawing and  
transfer solvent printing. Fairy lights were used for illumination.



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*India journey detail*



*China journey*

2000

114cm x 176cm x 20cm

Multiple plate colour etching and monochromatic etching on  
Fabriano Umbro, computer manipulated pastel drawing and  
transfer solvent printing. Fairy lights were used for illumination.



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*U lina journey detail*



*Arrival in the Cape*

2000

110cm x 130cm x 20cm

Multiple plate colour etching and monochromatic etching on  
Fabiano Umbro, computer manipulated pastel drawing and  
transfer solvent printing. Fairy lights and rope lighting were used  
for illumination. One electric powered motor and two solar  
powered motion devices were included for motion.



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*Arrival in the Cape detail*



*The album*

2000

25.5cm x 23cm

Hand bound Fabriano Unifrio and painted canson paper.

Monochromatic, colour etching and paper ephemera.



*The research book: the ship*

2000

25.5cm x 23cm

Hand bound Fabriano Umbria and painted causer paper.

Monochromatic, colour etching and paper ephemera.



*Curiosity book*

2000

25,5cm x 40cm

Hard bound Fabriano Umbria and painted canson paper.

Monochromatic, colour etching and paper ephemera.



*The private book: my fathers journey*

2000

40cm x 25cm

Hand bound Fabriano Umbria and painted canson paper.

Monochromatic, colour etching and paper ephemera.



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