

ALBUM

University of Cape Town

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Obsessive collecting:

curiosity of lost objects and unknown
narratives, an archive of *cartes de visites*.

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Graphic Design
D'Almeida Design (Carlos Marzia)

Proofreader
Thomas Cartwright

Photo credits
Ashley Walters

Repress and printing
Trident Press, Cape Town



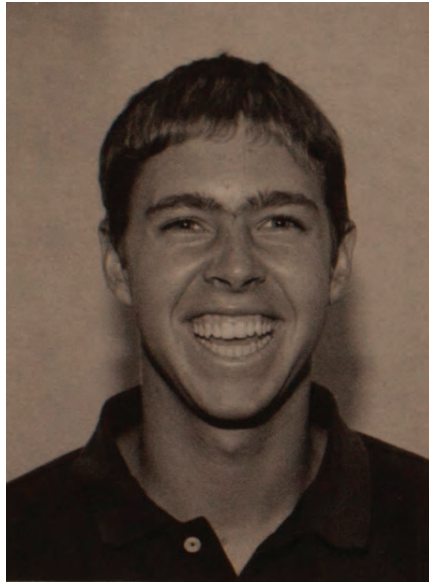
Abstract

This project is an investigation of a community of *cartes de visite*. *Cartes de visite* are 10,5cm high by 6,5cm wide cards, which have extremely detailed portraits of individuals, captured in an intimate moment to document who they were. It is an excavation of the *carte de visite* as object and its materiality, as a collection, as a fragment which captures the sentimentality of people who have outlived their portraits. The *carte de visite* is a piece of photo history, an autobiographical trace, a social phenomenon of the past and present. This body of work is a result of a personal process and psychoanalytical challenge to overcome loss.

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Etienne Clive Froneman
1984-2005

“Don’t be afraid of the
spaces between your
dreams and reality.
If you can dream it you
can make it happen”
(Etienne Froneman)



Preface

This is dedicated to all the people who have been in my life who have given me their legacies to live out. These individuals, who I have lost, have influenced the person I am today. They taught me to stand for what I believe. This project is a result of a battle to keep alive the legacies of people's lives that are under threat of being forgotten.

When I revisit an object that belonged to my dad or brother, I experience melancholy. I long for their presence and attempt to relive my memories through the objects. I try to recall what their scent, their personality, their sense of humor was, and what their laughter sounded like. I fear that this information of loved ones I hold so dearly will disappear and wither over time.

The loss of my brother still pains me deeply. Etienne Clive Froneman was a Gauteng rowing champion with provincial colors. Many knew him for his sense of humor, for always having a smile on his face and for motivating aspiring young rowers, who saw him as a role model. On the 17th February 2004, at the age of twenty, he took his last row. That day he was recognized as a world-class athlete and was asked to represent South Africa in the Olympics. Later that evening a stranger with an illegal firearm and a hollow tip bullet shot Etienne. The man was apparently harassing a sixteen-year-old girl.

Prior to the shooting the sixteen-year-old girl's brother had asked Etienne to accompany him to drive to a meeting spot and talk with the stranger who shot Etienne. There is still no explanation as to why Etienne was shot while he was running in his defense. Eight years since his passing the court case is still pending. To this day I have no idea what happened to the sixteen-year-old girl and her brother who led Etienne to his unfortunate fate and the police docket. The only thing that prevents me from feeling hatred are the words of my deceased brother, "what has happened to me, I would not wish on anyone, not even the guy who shot me." Not only did he take a bullet for a stranger, he also forgave the guy who changed his life, and his family's lives forever.

Etienne was left a paraplegic from his chest down from the bullet's shrapnel. He fought for his life for seven months in an intensive care unit. He went through forty minutes of cardio caress when the doctors attempted to take the remainder of the bullet out of his body. He spent another four months in a rehabilitation center to learn how to move around in a wheelchair, drive a car, control his bowel movements, shower on a chair and do other daily activities. His life dream to row at the Olympics became a painful topic of discussion, but his traumatic accident did not stop him from getting in a motorboat and coaching young rowers in honor of his legacy.

On the 15th June 2005 Etienne passed away due to medical complications. More than one thousand people came to his funeral because the one thousand-funeral booklet was not enough. The pallbearers carried his coffin out of the hall through an honoring rowing blade tunnel past his crewmembers. Between the time everyone in the neighborhood heard of Etienne's passing and coming home from the funeral every corner was filled with a bouquet of flowers and tables decked with sympathy cards. It has not been easy to deal with this traumatic and abrupt loss. In an attempt to suppress the pain and bad memories I focused on the good memories of my brother's legacy.

I struggle to accept the fact that I have outlived my big brother. Today he is only remembered by a close few. In the next ten years what will become of his legacy, his memory? This is why I treasure photographs of my brother, to remember what he looked like. Etienne is just one of the many who have lived, and whose personal stories have been lost over time. My problem is further complicated because I feel we live in a society that has evolved technologically and culturally, leaving behind remnants of people who lived in the same spaces we live in today. What will today's society and future generations remember of communities if we forget the individuals who belonged to it?

I started collecting *cartes de visite* in 2011 because their function was so far removed from their original intention. Each portrait has immense detail, it is not difficult to imagine what the individual represented in each *carte de visite* might have been like in her or his community. Each portrait reveals a personality of someone based on what I see in his or her portrait. What is problematic is that the portraits are mounted on a card without their name or any description of who they were. Numbers for ordering additional copies, and the photographer's details are the only other information placed on these *cartes de visite*. These *cartes de visite* were popular from approximately the 1850s to 1900s in Europe and Cape Town.

This paper is focused on my written research and my practical investigation, which examines the *carte de visite* as a social phenomenon, and its circulation from its introduction to the present use as an object. This paper also introduces the *carte de visite* as an object with a special relation to people who wanted their portraits taken and themselves remembered. This is followed with an introduction of the author's texts that gave me specific insight to the processes and thoughts of sentiment and legacies. I will discuss selected texts closely as they relate to the focus of this project.

I will also discuss how my personal influences have motivated this project. This essay is divided into three parts. Part one is titled *Carte de visite*, wherein I introduce the *carte de visite* and it being a social phenomenon. Part two is titled *Loss*, wherein I discuss Jane Gallop's *The Deaths of the Authors* and discuss how similar thoughts are carried out throughout the narrative of my research. In part three, *Collecting*, I introduce the movie *Red Violin* and discuss Jean Baudrillard's *Subjective Discourse or the Non-Functional system of Objects* (1996), Walter Benjamin's *Unpacking my Library* (1992), and Elizabeth Edward's *Photographs as Objects of Memory* (1999). Throughout the essay I discuss my artwork and how it relates to the latter. It is important to note

that in the first part of my paper I speak about the *carte de visite* objectively, simply to retell its history and to place emphasis on how and why these *cartes de visite* were used. In part two and three my description and connection with the *cartes de visite* becomes more subjective, due to the negligence caused by technological advancements regarding photographic portraits and albums, where in this case they have become traces of their owners.

Asa Briggs' interest lies in social and cultural history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Briggs' wealth of knowledge on the *carte de visite* is what I draw on from his books a *Victorian Portrait: Victorian Life and Values as Seen Through The Work Of The Studio Photographers*, and his trilogy *A Victorian Trilogy: Cities, People, Things*. The *carte de visite* is a product of the 18th century's society and its social influences, which Briggs writes about. This provides valuable knowledge to what makes the *carte de visite* so unique in relation to its photo history, which I explain later.

Jane Gallop is a professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. I relate to her book *The Deaths of the Authors* because Gallop refers to authorship, narratives and temporality followed by a literal death and finally a metaphorical death. Gallop closely reads and critically writes about selected essays by Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. I take selected parts from Gallop's introduction, which discusses and draws a chronology between

these authors. I do this because of how the *carte de visite* mimics a relationship with its authors, as an author itself, the narratives of lives and the object's narratives, the temporality of the object, its many deaths and births and now its rebirth with me collecting these objects.

I also draw inspiration from Walter Benjamin's phenomenological approach to collecting in *Unpacking my Library* (1992). I relate to words that Benjamin uses such as 'mood' and how he speaks about a collector's desire for authentic objects, the magic of collecting, why a collector collects, the fate of objects, and collecting as a process.

Jean Baudrillard is a French cultural theorist, philosopher and sociologist. Much of his works is about how social change is effected by technological advancements and the value of an object, particularly in a personal collection. In his essay '*Subjective Objects*' (1996) he argues that an object's value is determined by four influencing factors; the object's function in society, its exchange value, what the object symbolises, and the object's value as a sign within a system. Baudrillard also examines the object's subjective character by psychoanalysing what an object is to a collector, why a collector collects, and what this does for the object.

In the latter part of this essay I write about my work and its process. I refer to the movie *Red Violin* and to artists Mark Dion and Christian Boltanski's artwork and the rationale that motivates their practice.

Part One

Cartes de visite A brief photo history

According to Henisch & Henisch, ‘photography was introduced to society in 1839, it was considered the sensation of the technological scene’ (1996: 1). Albumen on glass was introduced by Abel Niepce de Saint-Victor in 1848. L.D. Blanquart-Evrard introduced albumen prints in 1850. Briggs says that on 27th November 1854 André Eugene Disderi patented the *carte de visite*: ‘first he introduced the name followed by the method of producing the product and the carte’s unique size’ (1996: 18). At the time the *carte de visite* was one of photography’s technological advancements. On the front of each *carte de visite* was an albumen portrait, which was otherwise known as a photographic ‘likeness’. Often the sitter was referred to as the ‘original’ whereas the portrait on the *carte de visite* was referred to as a ‘likeness’. Below the albumen print, starting from the left, would be the photography studio’s street address, and to the right would be the name of the photographer. This was the extent of the general information found on most *cartes de visite*. On the reverse side of the *carte de visite* would be printed the photographic studio’s coat of arms and possibly a reference number for when clients would order reprints.

Briggs considered ‘the history of photography not just the history of techniques or arts but part of social history’ (1996: 9). The *carte de visite* started off as a mode for identification, similar to the business card of today. After Napoleon III had his portrait taken on May 1859 a social frenzy known as ‘cartomania’ started. Briggs (1996: 14) states that ‘the carte de visite... was the first type of photography that could be marketed at a price that large numbers of people could afford. Its popularity grew from 1859 to a peak during the mid-1860s. It was the mainstay of many studios until the end of the century.’ People from France, Great Britain and America were having their portraits taken and the *cartes de visite* were owned, swapped and collected by family and friends.

The role of the *carte de visite*

The popularity of the *carte de visite* rose during the American civil war because of its size, which could be easily posted. 'Cartomania' spread to Cape Town and subsequently to other parts of South Africa. The *carte de visite* was furthermore used to document travels and popular destination sites, grave sites, 'spirit' photographs¹, popular figures in society, famous actors, singers, circus tour groups, gypsies, used for anthropomorphic studies, taboo female nudes, even criminals had their 'likenesses' taken and made into cartes de visite. According to Briggs 'between 1861 and 1867, it has been estimated, between 300 and 400 million such cartes de visite ... were marketed each year' (1996: 16). Today the *carte de visite*'s technological and social equal would be a social platform such as Facebook.

People treasured these objects, which captured the presence of people they loved and had lost. Queen Victoria 'went on to patronize photographers even after she had gone into mourning on her husband Prince Albert's death in 1861. She was consoled by the fact that when Albert had gone she still had his photographs. She also kept family albums – no fewer than 110 of them' (Briggs 1996: 20). The photographic 'likeness' offered comfort, but it did not offer permanence. Albumen prints are impermanent in many ways. Their chemical composition is not stable and some 'likenesses' one hundred years later are being consumed by the overexposing of silver, resulting in ghostly figures on fragile paper. Over time most 'likenesses' today have been disjointed from their original intention, this being its sentiment, as well as being disconnected from their original owner and in the process they have lost their historical narrative. Today these 'likenesses' of the dead 'originals' stare back muted at new owners, but are very much present in their materiality. Today they generate curiosity and signify new meaning to whoever owns them.

1 - According to the Psychology Dictionary 'spirit photography was the attempt to catch the spirits of the dead through means of photography. The first alleged spirit photograph was produced in 1862 by the U.S. engraver William H. Mumler.' In the case of my representation of spirit photography, the idea behind my work titled *In Spirit* I place a faded representation of myself next to a photo of a loved one to be in-spirit those that I have lost.

Influences which are visible in the *carte de visite*

Author Samuel Smiles produced a book, *Self-help* (1871). There was a strong will and desire to improve an individual, mentally, physically, spiritually and personally by means of education. Many Victorians were in favor of industrialization and advancing scientific development. 'Smiles was concerned with character, therefore, as "the highest embodiment of the human being the noblest heraldry of man". It was that which "dignified" him, which "elevated" [another favorite Victorian word] him in the scale of mankind' (Briggs 1996:52). Poses became a representation of character in photographic studios. 'For this reason alone we have to consider "attitudes, dress, features" and poses when we look at any Victorian *carte de visite*. The picture can tell us as much about the photographer as about his subject' (Briggs 1996: 54) and working in hand with this was the booming industry of stage props to reflect character in portraits. Aspiring Victorian characteristics were to be 'dignified', 'respectable' and to 'elevate' oneself, which all started with becoming literate.

The *carte de visite* was also used as a social propaganda tool for society to conform to what was ethically correct at the time. Having mentioned Smiles' *Self-help* before there were family values to uphold to be a 'respected' and 'dignified' individual. Apart from being literate and educated, family values and being dedicated to a family were one of the doctrines to follow in order to be seen as an individual who conformed to a productive society. Victorian photographer Francis Frith believed that 'Marriage gives solidity, purpose and energy to life ... I reckon the real substance of my life to date from my wedding day' (in Briggs 1996: 120). It was believed that growing up was dependent on family. Thus families were large and in 1861 the average number of children per family was 6.2 according to Briggs (1996: 122) and some families had up to twenty-one members. Documenting a wedding couple, family group portraits, babies, wives and widows holding photographs of their loves and the family album for a portrait, and members of family who were studious were all a means to show friends a 'respectable' family. Each family also had a social class to portray and education was a means to portray a successful family. Victorian children were seldom photographed with toys as toys were seen as 'self-indulgent' and 'leisurely', characteristics which were discouraged. On the other hand of the social scale were gypsies who 'were one group who

believed less in self-help than in luck' (Briggs 1996: 60). Gypsies were instead photographed as anthropomorphic social case studies for the literate.

The photographic album was a place where portraits of family were kept for all friends and guests to see. Love 'was certainly the language of the family album, often associated, as in birthday cards, with sentimental words. There was also an accompanying Victorian language of flowers, and thick card pages might be bedecked with floral ornament' (Briggs 1996: 120). Today most albums have been robbed of their photos and are empty, but their pages are soiled with human finger marks where dust meets human residue.

Education, working and having a career were ideals for living a healthy, productive and happy life. To work was the equivalent of a person's life purpose. Briggs (1996:72) provides an example of a worker called 'Olivia' who worked for a household in 1869 and called her work a "militant agnosticism, attached without the smallest tinge of hypocrisy to the ideals of the time" she had been taught "duty, work, abnegation, a stern repression of what was called self-indulgence, a horror of lapsing from the current code." Other domestic servants were nursing staff, cooks, butlers, maids, factory works, milkmen, butchers, miners and so forth.

'The Victorians were reminded from the pulpit that pride was one of the seven deadly sins' (Briggs 1996: 142). Apart from this social taboo, however, national pride was socially acceptable. *Cartes de visite* of famous buildings, institutions celebrating their anniversaries, military officers proud in their uniforms, famous public figures who were considered to be successful like Lord Nelson, Sir David Livingston and Queen Victoria or members of the American white house and President are a few examples.

Technological advancements like the locomotive for transportation, Thomas Edison's 1876 telephone for fast communication, and advanced printing presses for faster circulation of news allowed for more people to have time to relax. Thomas Cook's invention allowed middle class passengers to also have locomotive transportation in the 1800s resulting in more who travelled and were able to 'describe places in words (and maps) rather than pictures. Sometimes publishers of *cartes de visite* and stereoscopic land-scapes supplied what was missing' (Briggs, 1996:93). *Cartes de visite* of sporting activities were also collected of cricketers, oarsmen, some footballers and "there is a *carte de visite* of the American prize fighter John Heenan" (Briggs, 1996: 98). Likenesses of popular public figures were being circulated.

The family album

Families who had lost their loved ones collected their *carte de visite* and kept it safe in the family album where their 'likenesses' were reminisced over. The American Civil war took place during the *carte de visite*'s popularity and medical practice was not as advanced as today. There was a high death rate in infants owing to whooping cough and scarlet fever. There were also deaths during child birth. 'The infant mortality rate was highest in poor families, those which were unlikely to possess elaborate albums; and we know less of the inner life of these families than we do of the middle-class and aristocratic ones' (Briggs 1996:121). 'The family album often recorded memories of woe' and the *carte de visite* provided a platform for post-mortem photography. In my collection I have two post-mortem photographs, both of children.

What the *carte de visite* meant to people, then and now

Natalie Herzen's writing to her cousin, as quoted in Henisch (1994: 4-6), deserves a lengthy space as she explains how she feels about sentimental objects in 1837:

Looking at your letters, at your portrait, I have wished I could skip a hundred years and see what their fate would be. The things which have been for us holy relics, which have healed us, body and soul, which we have talked about and which have to some extent deputized for us to each other in absence; all these weapons with which we have defended ourselves from others, from the blows of fate, from ourselves, what will they be when we are gone? Will their virtue, their soul, remain in them? Will they awaken, will they warm some other heart, will they tell the story of us, of our sufferings, of our love, will they win the reward of a single tear? How sad I feel when I imagine that your portrait will one day hang unknown in someone's study, or that a child perhaps play with it, and break the glass and efface the features.

The sentiment that Herzen expresses is the heart of my project. This paper looks at the *carte de visite* and discusses its history and meaning in the third quarter of the 1800s. There is an attempt to focus specifically on the *carte de visite* in Cape Town, but an international background is introduced. Today these once sentimental portraits of people are found in scrap heaps, markets, antique auctions, antique shops and some circulate on Bid or Buy;² in private collections like the National Library in Cape Town; and in private dealer's collections in isolated towns in South Africa.³ This is where I have shopped for my 'cartes' that have formed my private collection of approximately 800 *cartes* and six albums. The *carte*' that I collected have been placed into a taxonomical system⁴ in archival boxes where they can be accessed at any time. My work tries to give expression to the sentiments expressed by Natalie Herzen.

Nicole Hudgins⁵ did extensive research on the *carte de visite* in Manchester and Lille in Europe. She argues three points that deserve attention and with which I agree. Firstly, that 'few scholars ... have investigated what personal photographs could have meant to their original owners' (2010: 559). I have been frustrated by the lack of written material that critically analyses what the *carte* meant to the Cape Town citizen when 'cartomania' was the most favoured trend of taking portraits. There is, however, a lot written about the *carte*'s context in Europe. Seeing that this was a European trend that infiltrated Cape Town I will refer to these texts. Secondly, 'What critics have failed to consider is what particular photographs only obtained after a considerable amount of bother, time, or expense may have meant to the nineteenth-century individuals themselves, or how they used them to make sense of their lives' (2010: 561). This task demands that the likeness is observed objectively and in relation to its social and historical context. Thirdly, 'the historian cannot so easily dismiss such objects, which give us so many clues about the past, and which were so valuable to their original owners' (2010: 562). This is one of the reasons why I hunt, collect, save and preserve these *cartes de visite*.

2 - Bid or Buy is an internet business where any manner of object is auctioned and sold.

3- I found and bought a large private collection in Richmond on the N1.

4 - I arrange the cartes according to location, gender and age.

5 - Hudgins illuminates how the *carte* could have belonged to the working-class, how they are dispersed singularly and in albums in municipal archives and antique shops. She also tries to find the meaning of the *carte* by looking in archives, autobiographies, paraphernalia, and hand written letters. For now I have depended a lot on what is written about the *carte de visite* in early Cape Town by Marjorie Bull and Joseph Denfield, authors of *Secure the Shadow* (1970).

How *cartes de visite* started in Cape Town

In Cape Town 'within a fortnight of taking over York's studio, Arthur Green advertised on May 3, 1861, his "Visiting Card Portraits" at one guinea per dozen' (Bull. Denfield 1970: 78). It took a while for the social phenomenon to spread to other parts of South Africa.⁶

'Cartomania' only lasted in Europe until 1866⁷ when interest in the *cartes* started to diminish. There was a general demand for a larger photograph and hence the cabinet card was produced. Although there was a lack of interest in the *carte de visite* in Europe by 1868, Cape Town and other parts of South Africa were still fans of the tiny portraits.

The first *carte de visite* camera arrived in Cape Town in 1861. Photographer Hendrick York⁸ was meant to take ownership of this camera, but, because he had already left Cape Town for England, the photographer Arthur Green took ownership of the camera. This type of technological advancement meant 'inexperienced workers, all keen to reap a rich harvest, became "exponents of the art" overnight. General dealers, pastry cooks, tobacconists and even bookmakers incorporated photography with their trades, and photographic assistants now found it expedient to leave their principals and fend for themselves' (Bull & Denfield 1970: 82). Because of the sudden increase of photographers in Cape Town the portrait became reasonably priced and more people could afford for their "likeness" to be taken. This 'meant that the ordinary man-in-the-street could now afford photographs of himself' (Bull Denfield 1970: 77). The elite⁹ became disenchanted with the medium, as the photographic 'likenesses' were no longer as exclusive, and they became dissatisfied with the quality and who took their 'likeness'.

The most popular photographers, who had famous sitters, were preferred to take 'likenesses' of the elite. Harriet Rabone wrote in one of her letters that she could not have her portrait taken as she thought 'Graaff- Reinet will have the credit of producing some of the worst "cartes" in the Colony. People have now left off trying to get them, and unless a new photographer comes, or our present one begins in another style, there is no chance for us' (Bull & Denfield 1970: 82).

6 - For details, see Bull and Denfield 1970: 78-80.

7 - See *Secure the Shadow*

8 - York documented Prince Alfred and the Royal Family's visit to Cape Town in 1860 and to say thank you Prince Alfred sent York the latest *carte-de-visit* camera. See Bull, M. Denfield J. 1970. *Secure the Shadow* the story of Cape photography from its beginnings to the end of 1870.

9 - Lawyers, advocates, doctors and people with a higher income than a bootmaker, pastry chef etc

028





029

Cape Town Archeological Dig
2012-2013
Variable dimensions
Found *carte de visite*,
archival museum board,
Wibalin covering material,
acid free glue, Galvanized
steel display unit,
accompanied by book





031



Cape Town
Archeological Dig
2012-2013
272 x 354 mm
Albumen prints,
Fabriano rosapina
(220g), Epson archival
ink on Innova paper,
Munkin Lynx Paper

The social side to the *carte de visite*

Writings refer to the collecting and swopping of *cartes* as a ‘fever’, ‘mania’, ‘craze’, and as ‘cartomania’¹⁰. They were also used to take post-mortem portraits, local scenes of Cape Town, historic events, and the likenesses of well-known public figures were made into *cartes* which were collected and swopped as collector items. *Cartes* were also used as identification to a guest list at special functions, used as seasonal greetings, attached to invitations and death notices.

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Collecting the *cartes* of well-known public figures became a hobby and a symbol of status, taste and interests. The collected *cartes* became a fashion and a trend and ‘Capetonians adopted the *carte* craze with as much enthusiasm as their European counterparts’ (Webster 2000: 2).

The *cartes* that were collected became points of discussion in households. In the 1860s other well-known public figures like the British Royal family, actors and actresses were collected and swopped among other celebrity *carte* collectors¹¹. ‘As imported “cartes” of well-known personalities found a ready market in the Cape, local photographers introduced their own portrait gallery’ (Bull & Denfield 1970: 85), capturing the likeness of important figures at the time such as Bishop Colenso¹² in June 1863. The *carte de visite* was also used as an anthropometric¹³ tool in Cape Town: ‘It was through the work of Dr Wilhelm Bleek that several Cape Photographers made a collection of physiognomic and anthropometric studies of a range of individual prisoners under Bleek’s supervision’ (Webster 2000:2). Bleek¹⁴ was influenced by Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895) belief that knowledge could be gained by looking, and that documenting findings from images would lead to scientific understanding and the origin to genealogy Bleek adopted this and, along with his well-known linguistic studies of them, studied Bushmen’s physical appearance. *Cartes* were also used as social

10 - Bull, M. Denfield J. 1970. Secure the Shadow the story of Cape photography from its beginnings to the end of 1870. Gothic Printing Co: Cape Town.

11 - See collections of cartes de visite in the Victoria and Albert Museum, University of Washington Libraries Digital Collections – 19th Century Actors Photographs, William Emerson Strong Photograph Album -- Duke University Libraries Digital Collections, Gettysburg College Nineteenth Century Notables Digital Collection.

12 - Bishop Colenso worked on a mission in Natal with Dr Bleek in 1850 on his studies of the African language. Bishop Colenso was a well known figure in Cape society.

13 - Anthropology is the measuring of the human individual for scientific study.

statements of status and could be used to fabricate status. ‘Often these types of images included black people in the passive role of domestic servants’ and by incorporating this symbol of ownership over someone, power and wealth was suggested (Webster 2000: 4). Anne McCauley explains that this action of wanting to define social status by degrading other people ‘could have succeeded only in a materialistic era which the physical appearance of the family ... [was] seen as important’ (in Hudgins 2010: 561). Similarly Pierre Bourdieu discusses how ‘photography provides a privileged opportunity to observe the logic which may lead some members of the *petite bourgeoisie* to seek originality in a fervent photographic practice freed from its family functions, while it may lead to many members of the upper classes to refuse fervent attachment to a practice suspected of vulgarity by the very fact of its popularization’ (1990: 47).

Photographers and studio locations in the 1860s in Cape Town

The only information on a *carte de visite* is the studio name, address and photographer’s name. The lack of information about the sitter inspires my curiosity and I find it interesting to revisit the spaces the sitter once occupied and walked. By researching who specific photographers photographed I got a vague sense of who the photographer catered his services to.

Arthur Green and Samuel Baylis Barnard were at the time popular and favoured photographers among Cape Town residents. Barnard circulated and sold *cartes* of recognisable public figures. ‘Everyone collected “cartes”, and portraits of governors, presidents and prominent ministers appeared alongside those of actresses, the portrait of the eccentric female Dr. Barry and James E Burton’s *carte* of the 1869 Siamese twins’ (Bull & Denfield 1970: 87). Some of the old studios still exist today, but most have been changed or cannot be found as a result of street name changes.¹⁵

14- In Christopher Webster’s article he discusses a photograph taken by Wilhelm Hermann under the supervision of Bleek in the 1870s. A family portrait was taken in Bleek’s Garden in Mowbray of a Bushman family where each member in the family has their own specific pose. One of Bleek’s informants, Klaas Katkop’s, profile is photographed next to his daughter holding the measuring rod while Griet, Katkop’s wife, is sitting on the ground.

15 - A. Green was content to work in York’s studio and S.B. Barnard opened his studio on 15th May 1865 under the title of ‘Cape Town Photographic Gallery’. James Lawrence took portraits around April 1861. John Charles Anthony Wagner ran his photographic practice at 8 Adderley Street. The South African Photographic Saloon was owned by Saul Solomon & co and occupied the space in St. Georges street in October 1863. Secure the Shadow 1970. Gothic Printing Co: Cape Town.

JOHN HEYNES,
PHARMACEUTICAL CHEMIST,
British Dispensary,
CAPE TOWN.

PURE PHOTOGRAPHIC CHEMICALS,
Toilet Bottles, Scents, Scented Soaps,
HAIR, NAIL, AND TOOTH BRUSHES
OF SUPERIOR QUALITY, FROM BEST MAKERS.

GENUINE PATENT MEDICINES.

034

Photographic chemical
distributor
2013
Quadtych
Albumen prints on
Fabriano rosapina
(220g)

JOHN HEYNES,
PHARMACEUTICAL CHEMIST,
 Wholesale & Retail Druggist,
 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100
 CAPE TOWN.

PURE PHOTOGRAPHIC CHEMICALS

(GUARANTEED),
 TOILET BOTTLES, SCENTS, SCENTED SOAPS,
 HAIR, NAIL, AND TOOTH BRUSHES,
 OF SUPERIOR QUALITY, FROM BEST MAKERS.



Patronized by H. R. H. the Duke of Edinburgh.

HEYNES' TOOTH PASTE,

A fragrant and useful Toilet Requisite, possessing singular virtues. It cleans, preserves, and beautifies the Teeth, giving to the Gums a healthy firmness, to the Breath a pleasant sweetness, and is a certain remedy for Toothache.

British Dispensary, Adderley-street.

HEYNES' TONIC WINE.

This Preparation is one of the pleasantest and most effectual Tonics ever offered to the Public, its basis being pure Quinine. It can be recommended as the best preventive against Fever, Debility, Loss of Appetite, &c., &c.

PRICE, 2s. 6d. per Bottle.

GRATISSE PATENT MEDICINES.

W. JOHNSON,

4, ADDERLEY-STREET, CAPE TOWN,

HAS ALWAYS ON HAND

DRUGS, CHEMICALS, AND MEDICAL MATERIALS,

OF APPROVED QUALITY, AT LOW PRICES.

English and Dutch Patent Medicines,

SOAP, PERFUMERY,

TOILET AND SMELLING BOTTLES,

IN GREAT VARIETY.

FEEDING BOTTLES, TOILET REQUISITES.

PHOTOGRAPHIC CHEMICALS, COLLODIONS,

&c., &c., &c.

Soda, Seltzer, and Lithia Water, Lemonade, and every description of Acalated
Water, manufactured to order.

Particular care is paid to the Preparation of Prescriptions,
and constant Supplies of new Preparations
continually arriving.

JOHN HEYNES,
PHARMACEUTICAL CHEMIST,
 British Dispensary,
CAPE TOWN.

PURE PHOTOGRAPHIC CHEMICALS
 (GUARANTEED),

Toilet Bottles, Scents, Scented Soaps,
HAIR, NAIL, AND TOOTH BRUSHES,
 OF SUPERIOR QUALITY, FROM BEST MAKERS.



Patronized by H. R. H. the Duke of Edinburgh.

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PRICE, 2s. 6d. per Bottle.

GENUINE PATENT MEDICINES.

C. ZEYHER, NATURALIST,

Begs to inform the Public as well as Visitors touching our Shores, that he can supply them, at all times, with South African Indigenous Seeds, Bulbs, &c., &c., and that he has also on hand, Collections of Dried Cape Plants, including Algæ, which are warranted to be correctly named, and in excellent order.

Written Orders, addressed to Mr. C. ZEYHER, and delivered at Dr. PAPPE'S House, No. 28, Loop-street, will meet with despatch.

Also constantly on hand, fresh and selected European Vegetable Seeds, and Seeds of Ornamental Exotics; to be applied for at Mr. H. STURK'S, No. 11, Market-square, Cape Town.

PAUL'S PHOTOGRAPHIC ESTABLISHMENT,

No. 54, LONG-STREET.

TRUE & CORRECT PORTRAITS,

TAKEN DAILY, IN ANY WEATHER,

At moderate Charges, for Cash on delivery.

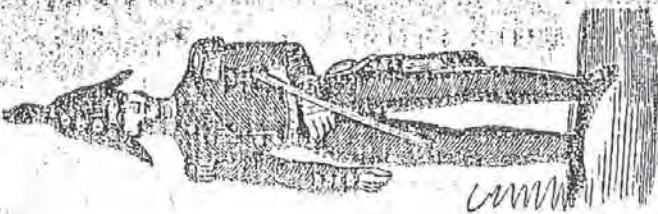
N.B. PREVIOUS NOTICE PREFERRED.

038

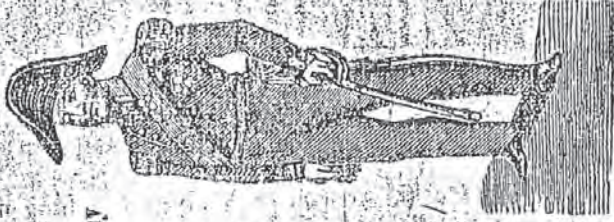
Sentiment expressed
through advertisements
2013
Series of twelve
Albumen prints on
Fabriano Rosapina
(220g)

Original Cape Almanacs
were photocopied and
are kept in Cape Town's
National Library. I
received photocopies
from the National
Libraries photocopies.

Successor to the late
JAMES CAIRNE & Co.



Established in this Colony
upwards of 41 Years.



JAMES BRUCE, TAILOR & HATTER,

No. 20, Adderley-street (Heerenracht),

NAVAL AND MILITARY UNIFORMS, LADIES' RIDING HABITS, &c., MADE TO ORDER.

Always on hand, the usual Assortment for a Gentleman's Wardrobe.

Photographic Portraits.

MR. YORK

Begs to inform the Public, that at his

ESTABLISHMENT, 19, HOUT-STREET,

THE MOST

PERFECT LIKENESSES

*Are guaranteed, at a Reduced Scale of Charges, thus enabling all
to possess themselves of a*

FACSIMILE OF FRIENDS

WHO ARE DEAR TO THEM,

And who may be snatched from their gaze by the HAND OF
DEATH, and thus be lost to them for ever: it is
then that these

INIMITABLE PORTRAITS

Become absolutely invaluable, and then no Money can purchase
what is now within the reach of all. The fact of these
PORTRAITS being seen in any position, and their
durability placed beyond a doubt, renders
them far superior to anything yet pro-
duced in the Colony.

A FEW MOMENTS SITTING ONLY REQUIRED.

A Wet Day as favourable as any other.

A CHOICE SELECTION OF
CASES, FANCY FRAMES,
LOCKETS,
AND
BROOCHES.

Specimens, with Prices attached, may be seen on application,
or at Mr. ROBERTSON'S, Adderley-street.

*Photographic Apparatus and Stock always on Sale. Also,
Electro Galvanic Machines, for Medical Purposes.*

PLEASE COPY THE ADDRESS:

19,

Mount-street, two Doors below Bree-street,
CAPE TOWN.

N.B. All Portraits are guaranteed, and need not be taken unless
considered perfectly satisfactory.

THE FOLLOWING IS A COPY OF ONE OF THE NUMEROUS
LETTERS RECEIVED BY MR. YORK:—

Lieut.-Col. Aston has received the Portraits from Mr. YORK,
and is much pleased with them. He has lately had opportuni-
ties of seeing numerous specimens, by the *best Photographic
Artists in London*, and he thinks that Mr. YORK's Portraits,
for cleanness and sharpness of definition, will fairly bear com-
parison with them,

The Gardens, 15th Nov., 1855.



MELVILLE'S

Commission and Livery Stables,

No 35,

PLEIN-STREET,

CAPE TOWN.

Charges :

Carriage and Six, to Simon's Town,.....	£5	5	0
Phaeton and Four, to ditto,.....	4	4	0
Tandem, to ditto,.....	2	10	0
Gig, to ditto,	1	10	0
Saddle Horse, to ditto,	0	15	0
Carriage and Four, to Constantia,.....	2	0	0
Carriage and Pair, to Wynberg,.....	1	2	6
Pair of extra Horses,	0	15	0
Tandem,.....	1	2	6
Horse and Gig,	0	15	0
Saddle Horse,.....	0	7	6
Phaeton and Pair, per Month,.....	20	0	0
Horse and Gig, per ditto,	15	0	0
Saddle Horse, per ditto,	7	10	0

The Simon's Town Mail starts from this Establishment
Daily.

Horses, Carriages, and Carts, always for Sale.

REMOVAL.



PHOTOGRAPHIC NOTICE.

MRS. WALTER,

Sincerely grateful to her numerous Patrons for their very kind support, begs to inform them, that in consequence of the present situation being too small for her fast increasing business, she has removed to more extensive premises, purposely fitted up with every requisite convenience, and situated at the corner of CASTLE and BURG-STREETS, embracing a splendid Photographic Saloon and Waiting Room, and every comfort necessary for Portrait-taking.

An entirely new stock of Fancy Articles, Stereoscopic Cases, Jewellery, &c., imported expressly.

Portraits taken at any hour of the Day, and in any style.

MR. YORK

SOLICITS A VISIT

TO HIS

PHOTOGRAPHIC

PORTRAIT SALOON,

No. 42,

ADDERLEY-STREET,

NEXT DOOR TO THE

CAPE OF GOOD HOPE BANK,

OPPOSITE THE

Public Offices and Dutch Reformed Church,

CAPE TOWN.

The largest Stock in Town of Fashionable Portrait Jewellery, Stereoscopes, Views, Apparatus, Chemicals, and Stock of every description, for Photographic purposes.

TO PREVENT DISAPPOINTMENT,

PLEASE COPY THE ADDRESS.



H. R. ROSS,
CARPENTER, BUILDER, & COOPER,
BUITENGRACHT,
STORE, No. 39.

N.B.—Stukvats and every description of Casks made on
the Shortest Notice and Reasonable Terms.
Also, Long Ladders, Steps, and Scaffolding, to Let.

H. R. ROSS,
TIMMERMAN, BOUWMEESTER,
EN
KUIPER IN GROOT VATWERK.
BUITENGRACHT,
PAKHUIS, No. 39.

J. MOSSOP,
TANNER AND CURRIER,
 RONDEBOSCH.

Leather and Grindery Store,
 DARLING-STREET,
Corner of Plein-street, Cape Town.

Country Dealers and Shoemakers are respectfully informed that
 Hides, Goat and Sheepskins, and Tallow will be
 taken in Payment at Market Rates.



L. P. BIEL,
BUTCHER,



SHAMBLES No. 7.

ALWAYS ON HAND

Best Beef, Mutton, Veal, etc.

SHIPPING SUPPLIED WITH
 LIVE-STOCK, POULTRY, VEGETABLES, & FRUITS,
 ON REASONABLE TERMS.

W. MOORE'S
PORTRAIT SALOON,
13, HOUT-STREET,
CAPE TOWN.

Portraits taken Daily from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

W. M. having purchased the whole of Mr. CHAPMAN'S valuable
Negatives of the Interior and Natives of South Africa.
Copies of the same can be had at the above
Saloon at Reasonable Charges.

DEALER IN PHOTOGRAPHIC MATERIALS.

 VULCAN IRON WORKS. 

THOMAS SHORT,
ENGINEER, BOILERMAKER,
SMITH,

Wrought-iron Girder Bridge and Iron Boat-builder,
NEAR THE CENTRAL WHARF,
CAPE TOWN.

Orders Executed with Dispatch and Reasonable Charges.

ROYAL
POLYTECHNIC WAREHOUSE,
CALEDON-STREET.

This deservedly acknowledged Chief Repository for Bargains in South Africa is continually sorted up with Job Goods, purchased by a Buyer who has a constant command over the English and Scottish Markets, consisting of

General Drapery, Millinery, Boots and Shoes, &c.

Note.—The Royal Polytechnic Warehouse,
CALEDON-STREET, CORNER OF TENNANT-STREET.

WARNER BROTHERS,
Candle Manufacturers,
GENERAL GROCERS,
DEALERS IN SOAP OF EVERY DESCRIPTION,
20, BARRACK-STREET,
CAPE TOWN,

Opposite to the Main Barracks.

N.B.—A large assortment of Lamps, Globes, & Chimneys; also, the Celebrated "PHOTOLITE" Kerosine Lamp Oil, clear as crystal, by the bottle, gallon, &c.

LAWRENCE AND SELKIRK

(Successors to Lawrence Brothers),

PHOTOGRAPHERS,

111, CALEDON-STREET,

CAPE TOWN.

THIS SALOON IS OPEN DAILY

FROM 9 A.M. TILL DUSK.

Carte de Visite Portraits, per dozen, 15s.
Every other variety at proportionally low rates.

Views of every description photographed.
Plans, Paintings, and Engravings copied.
Photographs colored in water or oil. Artist on the premises.

Copies can also be obtained at the above address, from the negatives of the following Photographers:

- LAWRENCE BROTHERS Cape Town.
- A. GREEN Cape Town.
- J. A. KIRKMAN Cape Town.
- LAWRENCE & HENDERSON.... Malmesbury,
Swellendam, Heidelberg, and Riversdale,

AT ONE SHILLING PER COPY.

A. & F. SPOLANDER,
 Chronometer, Watch, and Clock-makers
 (BY APPOINTMENT)
 TO THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY,
 Goldsmiths, Jewellers, &c.,
 NO. 1, MARKET-SQUARE,
 CAPE TOWN.

Importers, direct from the London Manufacturers, of GOLD and SILVER POCKET CHRONOMETERS, ENGLISH and GENEVA WATCHES, ENGLISH and FRENCH STRIKING CLOCKS and TIME-PIECES, JEWELLERY in assortment, BAROMETERS, THERMOMETERS, ASTRONOMICAL, SURVEYING, and MARINE INSTRUMENTS.

Church, or Turret Clocks and Bells and Marine Chronometers imported to order from any London House,

ESTIMATES OF PRICES GIVEN.

Ships' Chronometers Rated.

REPAIRS AT MODERATE PRICES.

NEW GOODS BY EVERY MAIL STEAMER

ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SALOON,

UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF
His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh.

MESSRS. LAWRENCE & SELKIRK,

In returning thanks for past favours, have much pleasure in announcing to the Public generally that, with the view of furthering the convenience of their Town and Country Customers, as also the Shipping, they have opened a

BRANCH ESTABLISHMENT

OF THE ABOVE NAME

AT No. 14, STRAND-STREET,
OPPOSITE ST. GEORGE'S-STREET,

And beg leave to return thanks for the kind patronage bestowed upon them since the departure of LAWRENCE BROTHERS, and hope, by strict attention to Business, that they will still merit a share of the Public Patronage so liberally bestowed upon them.

The Saloon is open daily from 9 to 4.

Copies can be had from the following Negatives taken by LAWRENCE BROTHERS, Cape Town:

A. GREEN, Cape Town.

J. KIRKMAN, Cape Town.

LAWRENCE & HENDERSON, of Malmesbury, Swellendam, Heidelberg, and Riversdale.

Also by BOSMAN & GROENWALD, Stellenbosch.

THE ABOVE CAN BE HAD FOR 1s. EACH COPY.

Carte de Visites taken at 15s. per Dozen at

LAWRENCE & SELKIRK'S,
No. 111, CALEDON-STREET, AND 14, STRAND-STREET.

H. GREENSHIELDS,

FORAGE AND COAL STORES,

11, DARLING-STREET,

CAPE TOWN.

Oathay, Pressed or Unpressed, Oats, Barley, Rye,
Bran, &c., always on hand.

SHIPPING SUPPLIED.

ALSO,

HOUSE AND SMITHS' COALS.

ORDERS DELIVERED FREE IN CAPE TOWN OR AT THE
RAILWAY STATION.

DIVING



APPARATUS.

THE UNDERSIGNED BEGS TO ACQUAINT

Captains, Agents, Merchants, and Others,

That he still continues to examine Bottoms of Vessels of every
Tonnage, either in Table or Simon's Bay, by means of his Diving
Apparatus, and will make any slight Repairs which may be required

AT A VERY MODERATE CHARGE.

During the last Five Years he has surveyed and repaired upwards of
Forty Vessels, and has always given the highest satisfaction.

ORDERS ADDRESSED TO THE UNDERSIGNED, AT HIS RESIDENCE,
"WOODSTOCK," WILL BE PROMPTLY ATTENDED TO.

HENRY ADAMS.

N.B.—The above method of Surveying and Repairing Vessels at her prevents the Expense,
Trouble, and Delay of discharging Cargo and heaving down.



THE BEST AND CHEAPEST
PHOTOGRAPHIC SALOON
 IN CAPE TOWN,

Je parle Francais. **99** Je parle Italiano.
 Man spricht Deutsch. Deutsch sprechen.

LONGMARKET-STREET,
 BETWEEN
 LEAVE AND ADDERLEY-STREETS.
 B. MAHLER.

NIDDRIE & TONKIN,
 ENGINEERS,

Boilermakers & General Blacksmiths,
 No. 12,

MECHAU - STREET,
 OPPOSITE ROBERTSON & BAIN'S.
 NEAR THE NORTH WHARF.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

MORDAN'S COPYING-PRESS INKSTANDS,
INK BOTTLES,

Patent Screw and Fancy Glass.

DRAWING LEAD PENCILS,

Alexandra and Art-Union, in all Letters.

OFFICE LEAD PENCILS,

Hard or Soft.

DRAWING PAPER,

Whatman's Best.

TRACING LINEN,

Dowse's Patent, 18 and 36 in.

ADDITIONS TO STOCK PER EACH MAIL STEAMER.

49 and 50, St. George's-street.

SOUTH AFRICAN

PHOTOGRAPHIC SALOON,

50, ST. GEORGE'S-STREET.

PHOTOGRAPHY of every description is executed at
the above Saloon at

MODERATE CHARGES.

THE STYLES INCLUDE

Ordinary Positives on Glass (from 2s. 6d.)

Cartes de Visite, Vignette or Full Figure

Cabinet-size Portraits do.

Quadruple Vignette do. (Four Views of the Face on one
Card)

Life-like Sennotype Portraits, in all sizes.

GELATIN'S PORTRAITS.

Special attention is given to this Branch of the Business,
and by the aid of QUICK WORKING INSTRUMENTS,
almost INSTANTANEOUS LIKENESSES can be produced.
The youngest Child can be taken successfully at one sitting.

Views of Public or Private Buildings, Family Groups, &c.,
taken. Pictures, Plans, and Maps copied.

The "Cape Mercantile Advertiser"

IS PUBLISHED EVERY

MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, & SATURDAY MORNING,

AT

NO. 49, ST. GEORGE'S STREET, CAPE TOWN.

Where Advertisements are received till 5 o'clock p.m. on

SATURDAYS, TUESDAYS, AND FRIDAYS.

The "Cape Mercantile Advertiser"

IS CIRCULATED

FREE OF CHARGE

in Cape Town, at Rondebosch, Mowbray, Claremont, Wynberg, Stellenbosch, Paarl, Worcester, &c. &c.,—sent to parties in all the Country Districts on payment of the Postage of the half-year (6s. 6d.) in advance, and also dispatched by every opportunity to England, India, Australia, the British Colonies generally, and other parts of the World.

The "Cape Mercantile Advertiser"

Has a guaranteed circulation of not less than

3,000 COPIES OF EACH ISSUE,

AND IS ACKNOWLEDGED TO BE THE

BEST MEDIUM FOR ADVERTISEMENTS

IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN COLONIES.

WILLIAM JOHN BLORE,

ATTORNEY AND NOTARY, &c.,

General Estate & Orphan Chamber Buildings,

ADDERLEY-STREET,

CAPE TOWN.

G. A. ASHLEY & SON'S

SOUTH AFRICAN

PHOTOGRAPHIC ESTABLISHMENT,

50, ST. GEORGE'S-STREET.

PHOTOGRAPHY OF EVERY DESCRIPTION

IS EXECUTED AT THE ABOVE SALOON AT

MODERATE CHARGES.

Views of Public or Private Buildings, Family
Groups, &c., taken. Pictures, Plans, and
Maps copied.

B. T. LAWTON & CO.,
GENERAL DEALERS.

COLESBERG KOPJE, DE BEER'S FARM,
DIAMOND-FIELDS.

All ARTICLES warranted first-class quality.
STOCK replenished by every opportunity
from the Cape Town Firm,

T. H. & B. T. LAWTON,
33, BURG-STREET.

H. C. HEYNE,

TINSMITH,

PLUMBER & BELL-HANGER,

(SUPERINTENDENT OF SEA POINT WATERWORKS),

102,

LONG-STREET, AND SEA POINT.

058

CHARLES COWEN,

ENROLLED APRIL, 1863,

LAND, LAW AND COMMISSION AGENT.

Mortgages, Transfers & Insurances effected.

TRUSTS AND ESTATES ADMINISTERED
ACCOUNTS RECOVERED.

*Corresponding Agents in all parts of the Colony,
the Fields, Free State, Transvaal and Natal.*

Agent for SEWELL & CROWTHER, and PITT & SCOTT,
England; and Foreign Parcels Express Companies,
London.

CHAMBERS No. 17,

MAIN STREET,

PORT ELIZABETH.

THE
PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIO,
 DONKIN STREET.

ROBERT HARRIS

Begs respectfully to notify that his STUDIO is well lighted and fitted up in a first-class manner with all the newest improvements in Photography, with every accommodation for taking all styles of Pictures, Groups, Enlargements and other forms.

059

Special attention is given to ensure good Portraits.

LARGE PHOTOS,

Taken direct from Life, up to fifteen inches by twelve inches.

This is a great advancement upon the old method of enlargements, as it does away with the coarseness so common in the latter.

Children are taken by an Instantaneous Process.

OUT-DOOR PHOTOGRAPHS.

Farms, Houses, Monumental Tablets, Boats, Horses, Dogs, Birds, &c., in Town or Country, to order.

VIEWS.

A complete Series of Views of Port Elizabeth and the Vicinity always in Stock, which may be had mounted and framed, or unmounted for Scrap Books.

Albums containing a Selection of Local Views always on hand.

R. H. invites inspection of his Large Panoramic View of the Town, which has been prepared with great care.

ANY OF THE LOCAL PHOTOGRAPHS MAY BE OBTAINED OF HIM
 OR OF

WM. HARRIS & Co.,
 PRINTERS AND STATIONERS,
 35, MAIN STREET.

STEAM PRINTING OFFICE.**SAUL SOLOMON & CO.,**Printers, Bookbinders, and Stationers,
49 & 50, ST. GEORGE'S-STREET, CAPE TOWN.**** Orders executed on the shortest notice.**Office of the *Cape Mercantile Advertiser*, published every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday Morning, and of the *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*, published every Tuesday and Friday Morning.**PRINTING AND WRITING PAPERS, &C., &C.**

The Undersigned are always importing PRINTING and WRITING PAPERS, of all sizes and qualities, which they can supply, by wholesale or retail, at current prices. Amongst the Papers are

News, Demy, Foolscap, Letter, Note, Foreign, Overland, and Linear Posts and Notes, Envelopes, Cards, &c., &c., of a very superior quality.

Account Books, Parchments, General Stationery, Stationery Cases, Dispatch Boxes, Opera Glasses, Stereoscopes, &c., &c., always on hand.

SAUL SOLOMON & Co.
49 & 50, St. George's-street, Cape Town.**BOOKBINDING.**

The Undersigned undertake Binding in Cloth, Calf, Morocco, Morocco Elegant, Modern, Antique, and all other Styles, with Economy and Dispatch.

ACCOUNT BOOKS

OF ALL DESCRIPTIONS AND SIZES MADE AND RULED TO PATTERN.

Country Orders promptly attended to.

Covers made to Pattern and to Order, in any numbers, expeditiously and economically.

SAUL SOLOMON & Co.
49 & 50, St. George's-street, Cape Town.

ENGRAVING AND LITHOGRAPHY.

The Undersigned have added to their Establishment a Copperplate Engraver and a Lithographic Printer, with all necessary Implements and Materials, and are prepared to undertake any orders in ENGRAVING AND LITHOGRAPHY, as Cards, Promissory Notes, Certificates of Shares, Bank Notes, Circulars, &c., &c., which they are able to execute satisfactorily and expeditiously.

SAUL SOLOMON & Co.

49 & 50, St. George's-street, Cape Town.

SOUTH AFRICAN PHOTOGRAPHIC SALOON,

50, ST. GEORGE'S-STREET.

At the above NEW SALOON, which has been opened on the Premises of Messrs. SAUL SOLOMON & Co., 50, St. George's-street, and fitted up with every comfort and convenience, VIEWS of all descriptions are photographed, and PLANS, PAINTINGS, &c., copied.

Portraits in all styles taken daily from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Cartes de Visite, 1/6s. per dozen.

SENNOTYPE.

The Proprietors of the above Saloon beg to announce that by arrangement with Mr. CHAS. WILSON, the inventor of a most important improvement in the PHOTOGRAPHIC ART, called SENNOTYPE, they can now undertake the execution of Photographic Portraits in this NEW AND IMPROVED STYLE.

The Photograph can be executed in any size, and is COLOURED by an entirely new process. The colouring is of great durability, and many years of exposure will have no effect upon it. The Portrait, when complete, is equal to the *best executed Ivory Painting*, whilst its cost is very much less.

Specimens of Photographic Portraits in this Style, executed at the SOUTH AFRICAN PHOTOGRAPHIC SALOON, may be seen at the Commercial Exchange, and also at the Saloon, where the prices may be learned.

ALSO,

The DIAMOND CAMEO ALBUM PORTRAIT, in which four different poses of the Sitter are shown, offers an additional inducement to those who are desirous of obtaining more faithful representations of themselves or friends than can be afforded by the more minute productions.

50, St. George's-street.

062

Xaitatin
2013
Dimensions unknown
Epson archival ink on
Innova paper



063

Bleek met /xaitatin at the Breakwater prison - his brother's name was //kabba/hin. His name is marked alongside /alkunta's on //kabbo's map as coming from Strandberg in the Northern Cape. Their paternal and maternal great-grandmother, Ddorruken, was killed by a lion. Their father died at the Breakwater in 1870, the same year that his //kabba/hin arrived at the breakwater.

Wilhelm Bleek's records that /xaitatin was about 22 years old and a 'great mimic, unmarried' (By oral narration from Marlene Sullivan Winberg who got her knowledge from Deacon 2005).

Part two

Loss

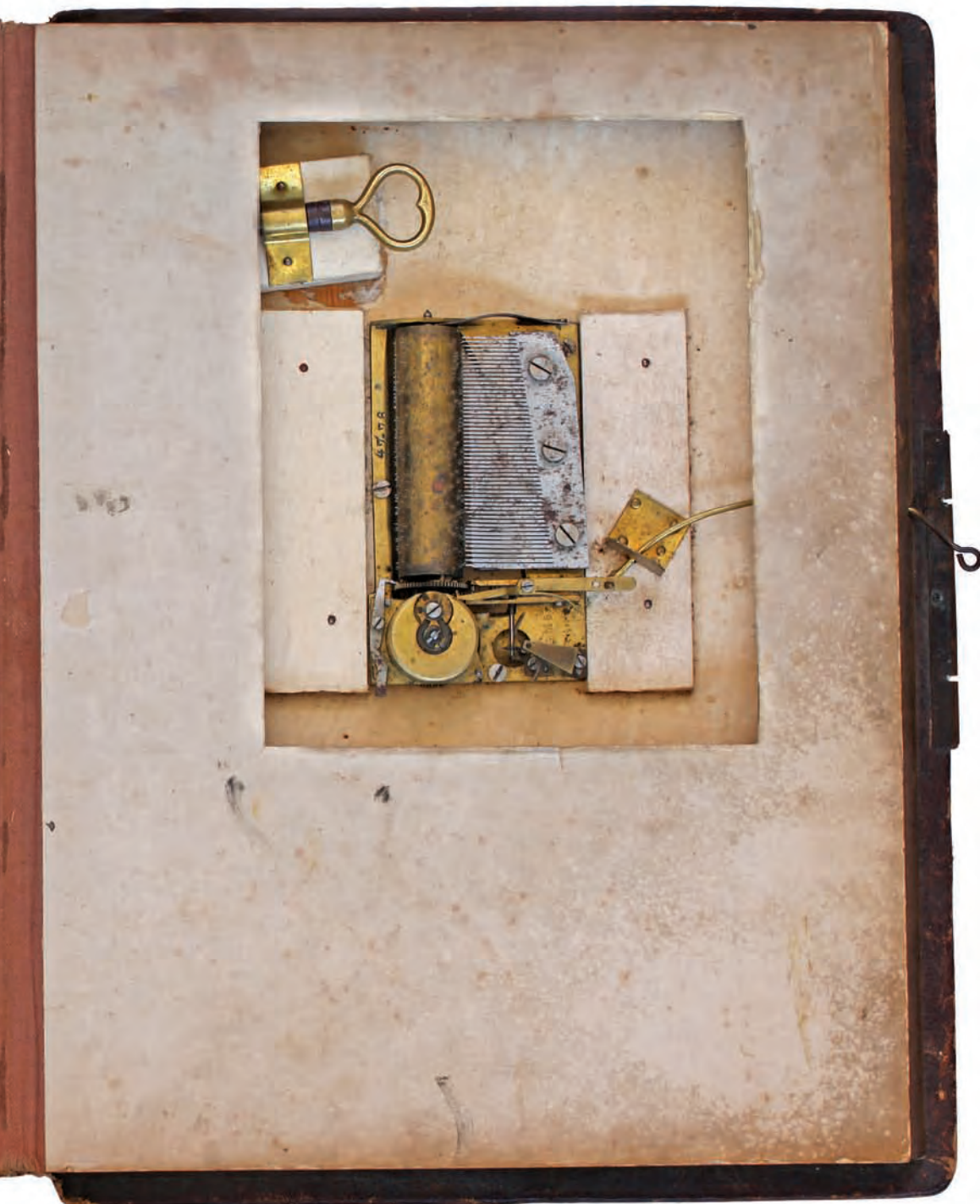
The photographic album

The *carte de visite* is vulnerable to elements like sunlight and water. It needed to be encased and protected in something, but also ‘Photographic albums were a way of domesticating and organising the world, of making sense of the past and paving the way for the future, of building an identity for the album-keeper, and sharing the identity with others’ (Siegel in Guadagnini 2010: 201). Hence albums were created and were beautifully bound in leather covers embossed with flowers, crests, and other designs. The pages of the albums were made of thick cardboard with paper on either side. Each side often had a gold bordered slit to insert a *carte de visite*. Some pages were also decorated with flowers and covers sometimes had brass clasps with gemstones and designs embossed in the leather. Some even had musical pianola scrolls or music boxes built into the album’s cover.

Originally the album was small in size to house the *carte de visite*, but with the introduction of the cabinet card the albums went bigger. Today ‘many of them with their contents are being unnecessarily thrown away as “useless junk”, for today the accent is on pictorials rather than on genealogy; but these albums are of great interest and much useful information in regard to photographic history can be derived from them’ (Bull & Denfield 1970: 85). Most of the albums I have in my possession have had their content removed and items sold individually or possibly even thrown away to only keep or sell the album. In the 1890s the album ‘was a sort of Victorian Facebook, in the sense that dozens or even hundreds of portraits were preserved, displayed, and circulated among social and family networks’ (Hudgins 2010: 565). The albums that are now in my ownership, stripped of their content, no longer suggest a specific narrative of someone or a family’s history.

066





067

Album
2013
Variable dimensions
Epson archival ink on
Innova paper

Element of loss

Susan Sontag states that photographs are consumable objects and that ‘any collection of photographs is an exercise in Surrealist montage and the Surrealist abbreviation of history’ (1977:68). The long gone era which these cartes de visite belong to, the photographers who took the portraits, the sitters, the clothes, the furniture, the props, the companies which supplied the chemicals and the artists who printed the photographer’s details on the *carte* are long gone. There is no humanly possible way to return to that time. There is a strong sense of what is present by realising what is absent in the *carte de visite*.

071

It becomes surreal to see what people wore, their values and attitudes expressed through their facial expressions, their body language and through their poses. To throw these images away like many other old objects from the past would feel to me as if I were throwing away the person themselves, not the *carte de visite*. These *cartes de visite* are keepers of time and keepers of presences. ‘Our junk has become our history’ (Sontag 1977: 69); sadly, what is lost are the details I long to know, information about the sitter, the very person for whom the *carte* was made.

Each portrait looks like a lot of time and effort went into it. Gentlemen are in bow tie, blazers, starched white shirts, pocket watches are on display and tucked into waistcoats, with black shoes shined. Ladies are in their boldest dresses, their hair done to perfection, their best jewellery on display. All this effort was put into capturing their likeness but nothing was done to capture the details of the sitter’s identity (apart from what is seen) – their sense of humour, likes, dislikes and relation to society. A job number hand written on the *carte* allowed for the sitter to return for more copies of their portraits if they wanted. This and the studio information are the only pieces of information that allow us to investigate the historical placement of each specific *carte*.

072

Unknown 2013
2013
Variable dimensions
Water soluble ink on
Japanese washi paper



073

Keeping what is already mentioned in mind, my “purchase on history also implies an undertow of melancholy as well as a surface voracity and impertinence” (Sontag S 1977: 69). I feel melancholy when I see a stranded *carte de visite* and I cannot walk past one without buying it. The *cartes* look vulnerable because of the condition that most are in: there are foxing marks, some are half moth-eaten, some have aged yellow sellotape, some have their corners torn off, and some have watermarks that have dissolved parts of the portrait. They show marks that suggest how they moved from one place to another, and how they have lost some of their materiality since they were created. Because the *carte* is paper it is easy to destroy, and because of its size it is easy to lose or throw away.

Sontag notes that W.H. Talbot referred to photographs as ‘the injuries of time’ with reference to buildings and monuments. What I wish to emphasise is that ‘or us, the more interesting abrasions are not of stone but of flesh. Through photographs we follow in the most intimate, troubling way the reality of how people age. To look at an old photograph of oneself, of anyone one has known, or of a much photographed public person is to feel, first of all: how much younger I (she, he) was then’ (1977: 70) or experience the melancholic thought that this person belonged somewhere and meant something to someone in their functioning society, but that through time their identity has come to be regarded as ‘junk’ in the here and now. Sontag refers to the *carte de visite* as ‘the inventory of mortality’, an object that emphasises loss and knowing (1977: 70). Similarly Walter Benjamin (2008: 14) wrote that:

In photography, display value starts to drive cultic value back along the whole line. However, cultic value does not give ground without resistance. It occupies one last ditch, and that is the human face. It is no accident, not at all, that the portrait forms the centrepiece of early photography. In the cult of recalling absent or dead loved ones, the cultic value of the image finds its last refuge. In the transient expression of a human countenance in early photographs, we catch one final glimpse of aura. It is this that gives them their melancholic, matchless beauty.

Narrative, temporality, ownership and deaths

Jane Gallop rethinks the post-structuralist dismissal of the author in *The Deaths of the Author: Reading and writing in time*. Much of what Gallop analyses, deconstructs and rethinks supports this investigation's nucleus.

Gallop found that as a result of the physical death of the author there would be more of a tendency to think about the author. She first refers to Spivak's deconstruction of Salem Rushdie's death and how a reader rethinks Rushdie as an author and the meaning of Rushdie's death.

Two responses to this rethinking of the death of the author were written by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault. After introducing Foucault and Barthes, Gallop explains that 'the attempt to connect the two deaths, to rethink the abstract theoretical death along with the real loss of the author' is the commonplace for her book's investigation (2011: 5). Like Gallop this project is also inspired by 'Foucauldian' thought and through Gallop's introduction of Barthes's essay is also inspiration. 'the abstract, polemical death of the slogan and a moving, more bodily death of the mortal author' (2011: 4-5). Gallop's first chapter's title, 'The author is dead but I desire the author' is inspired and taken from Barthes's "The pleasure of text" (1974). Knowing that the author is dead is overlooked while there is still a desire to look for the author.

Foucault's *What is an Author* (1969) is introduced to literally deconstruct the meaning of what an author is. Foucault refers to historical examples of the origin and meaning of the word 'death'. In Gallop's summary of Foucault's deconstruction she points out that Foucault uses the example of Greek epics of a 'heroes immortality', which is 'destined' to 'perpetuate' (Foucault in Gallop 2011: 3). Foucault introduces a more critical deconstruction of 'death' in that sacrifice is introduced.

Like Gallop, I am also interested in the return of the author post-death, and that this return be ‘pleasurable’¹⁶ as well as ‘intriguing’¹⁷. Collecting the *cartes de visite* is pleasurable for me and they intrigue me. Like Gallop’s, this essay is a determined but naive ‘reconceptualization of the death of the author so as to include inextricably both theory and personal loss’ (2011: 8). This will be further investigated in relation to Baudrillard’s psychoanalysis of collecting objects later in this essay.

Another important point that needs to be brought to attention is that Derrida struggled to write about Barthes because of his existential exploration of his death. Barthes was ‘known’ and ‘loved’ by Derrida. Derrida experienced Barthes’ death subjectively and literally, which is what made his experience both surreal and existential. It is the temporality of a life’s existence that becomes pertinent to Derrida. The deaths of the authors impress ‘the importance of temporality’ and title her last chapter ‘The Persistent and Vanishing Present’ (2011: 9). Having dealt with the *cartes de visite* I realized their temporality and fragility subjectively as objects, and also realized that the lives which are captured were also temporal and that their existence lingers delicately in the existence of the *carte* today. Stepping out of this context I place my brother Etienne into the role of sitter and consider his temporality today. Another thought is the temporality of my existence today and my trace in society and all the people who share my existence today. As long as something exists, whether it be a living human or a physical trace of them, it may narrate a story. A final death is the totalising of many deaths; the death of the individual, the physical traces they have left behind, and the memories of them. This is the death of a legacy and an irretrievable loss. That narration can no longer influence a new narrative in the future, as the *cartes* are influence me now.

16 - Term used by Barthes which Gallop introduces in Gallop J. 2011. *The Deaths of the Authors: Reading and Writing in Time*. Duke University Press: United States.

17- Term used by Gallop in *The Deaths of the Authors* in Gallop J. 2011. *The Deaths of the Authors: Reading and Writing in Time*. Duke University Press: United States.















Temporality and Fragility

Gallop refers to an article written by Eve Kosofsky titled ‘Memorial for Craig Owens’, which is about the ‘death of a reader’ and not the author (10:2011). Gallop writes that

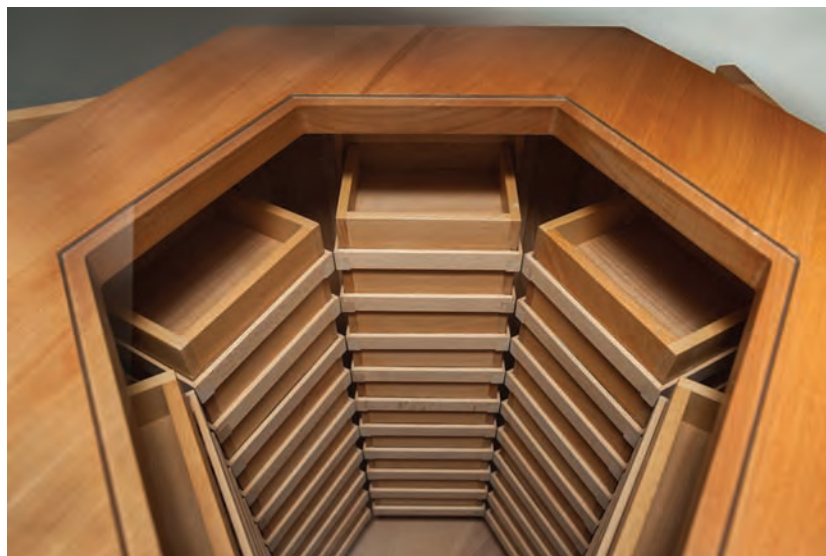
While death is generally a reminder of the fragility of life, the story Sedgwick tells about her reaction to Owens’ death is about the fragility of writing, a fragility that has everything to do with writing’s temporal aspect. Thinking through death from within her writing practice, Sedgwick brings to light the haunted temporality of writing. (11:2011)

085

My thinking about the death of the *carte de visite* makes me aware of it is temporality – nothing about the *carte de visite* is permanent. The existence of the *carte* as subjective object, as a trace of someone’s life and of a community’s legacy rests on my collecting them and preserving them. This collection narrates their existence. I ask the viewer to be active with these objects, to explore them, investigate their materiality, and to revive their fragile existence too.

Digital print
2013
7000 x 1000 mm
Epson archival ink on
Innova paper

086





087

Curiosity Cabinet
2012-2013
Variable dimensions
Beach European wood,
glass, Japanese washi
paper, cotton book
binding tape and thread

Part three

Collecting Collectors and collecting

Objects are picked up, exhibited and displayed, given, exchanged, sold, networked, watched, worn, glimpsed, read... collected... and thrown away. They are also found, loved, desired, worshipped, remembered, hated, feared, lost, scrutinized, studied, revered and much more... These same objects have symbolic functions, embodying and representing our gods and spirits, averting demons and encapsulating memory. They likewise have social meanings. They are used to assert status or power, circulate value, demarcate our habitats and habits, and enforce the law, as well as to connect us to and disconnect us from friends, colleagues or strangers. (Candlin & Guins 2009: 1)

089

I have searched everywhere for these *cartes de visite* and bought them from many owners. They have been examined by customs officials, couriered, flown by air, transported by car, packaged, kept, owned, stored, and sorted within a taxonomy.

These objects are of a specific time and are of a specific community of people. These objects belong to a specific period in photo history. They relate to objects, collections, archives, authorship and narration. They originated from and related to a social network. They were symbols to individuals being that of sentiment, memorializing, or a collectors' interest in a specific genre of *carte*. These objects are a product of a community taking interest in their purpose. Families treasure them and for generations they are used as reference to decedents. These objects reveal societies hierarchy and social status. They were used as anthropological case studies, used to enforce what was socially acceptable in society, religion, political circles.

There is a nostalgia for these objects because of their physicality, which is not provided by digital copies. 'Email and assorted forms of wireless communications, the elusive corridors of cyberspace have whetted our appetite for what we can touch, hold, taste, see. In the virtual age, the sorcery of the physical has intensified. We become attached to objects out of sentiment, perhaps, or for their symbolic value' (Busch in Candlin & Guins 2009: 5). It is the *carte de visite*'s objectness, its foxing marks, its overexposed silver nitrate, its scratches, dents, torn-off edges, yellow stains from sellotape, its dust-stained silhouette from where it once lay in an album, which give them their presence.

These *cartes* belong to an uncertain and ambiguous system today. They circulate as objects of commodity and in private collections with new meanings attached. This project is about where matter intercepts with meaning and how we engage with these objects by looking. These objects speak about histories and debate anthropology and culture through their material signifiers. They are a product of a social history and continue to play a role in a smaller social history today as a commodity.

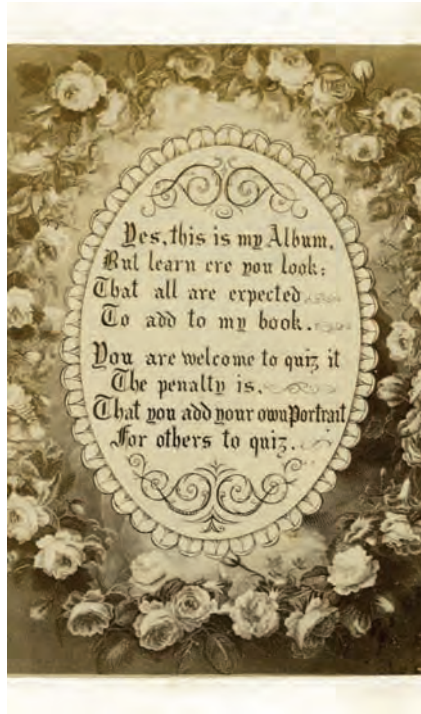
These *cartes de visite* embody a presence, one I cannot eloquently describe. When a gift is given, it is given with sentiment and love. When I give a gift I give a part of myself.¹⁸ I would like to think that the act of giving one's photographic likeness in the 1800s was to 'receive a part of someone's spiritual essence' (Mauss 2009: 23). When *cartes de visite* were given to friends and family, a part of the giver must have been attached to the *carte* by the giver to the receiver. These objects' raw material signifies that 'the blueprint of living things is carried within, by its genetic material' (Candlin & Guins 2009: 8). These *cartes de visite*'s materiality speaks more of what is alive. Without the foxing marks or the continuous exposing of silver the *carte* does not feel like it is aging. It is the hand written notes and messages on the *carte* that suggest who could have owned them through their materiality. This collection of objects suggests what is material and its transition of immaterial

18- Marcel Mauss explains what happens in the act of giving, using the Maori custom as an example. He states that the bond created by things is in fact a bond between persons since the thing itself is a person or pertains to a person. Hence it follows that to give something is to give a part of oneself.

context or where they have travelled from. The metaphysical is important to understanding this collection. The *carte de visite*'s 'thingness is found in the nothingness of the void. Yet, this void actually marks a presence' (Candlin & Guins 2009: 8). Something is present in the *carte de visite*'s absent previous owners. A presence is marked by their absence.

I sense the sitter's presence visually and through the *carte*'s materiality. Mauss (23: 2009) states that 'to keep this thing is dangerous, not only because it is illicit to do so, but also because it comes morally, physically and spiritually from "a person".' Giving was an act of love to remember the 'likeness' and to reminisce over them as if their presence were truly captured and kept as truth. It is not dangerous or illicit to keep photographs of loved ones. Its object-ness does, however, embody a fictitious physicality and the 'spirit' of a person. My *cartes* were once given, but because I bought them today, I consider that the *carte* not only embodies the spirit of its previous owners but the seller who I collected the *carte* from. I consider these *cartes* to embody the 'spirit' of the photographer, the sitter and the loved one who received and kept the *carte* safe until it passed through the hands of various owners to me. My spirit is now also a part of these objects.

Because the *carte de visite* is so far removed from its original purpose, they are inevitably regarded as 'junk' and 'objects of commodity'. I do not regard the *carte de visite* as junk or as an object of commodity; in fact I am aggrieved when I see *cartes* lying abandoned in a flea market. Lukács explains the 'essence' of a commodity, which I feel returns the dignity back to the *carte* as an object of commodity today. Its basis is that a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity', an 'autonomy that seem so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people' (31: 2009). Because of my personal reason for collecting and because of the 'spirit' the object embodies I accept and encourage its traces to continue, thereby reviving the relation between the people who have come into contact with this object.



Psychoanalyzing my collection

There is a whole range of objects – including unique, baroque, folkloric, exotic and antique objects – that seem to fall outside the system we have been examining. They appear to run counter to the requirements of functional calculation, and answer to other kinds of demands such as witness, memory, nostalgia or escapism. It is tempting to treat them as survivals from the traditional, symbolic order. Yet for all their distinctiveness, these objects do play a part in modernity, and that is what gives them a double meaning.
(Baudrillard in Candlin & Guins 2009: 41)

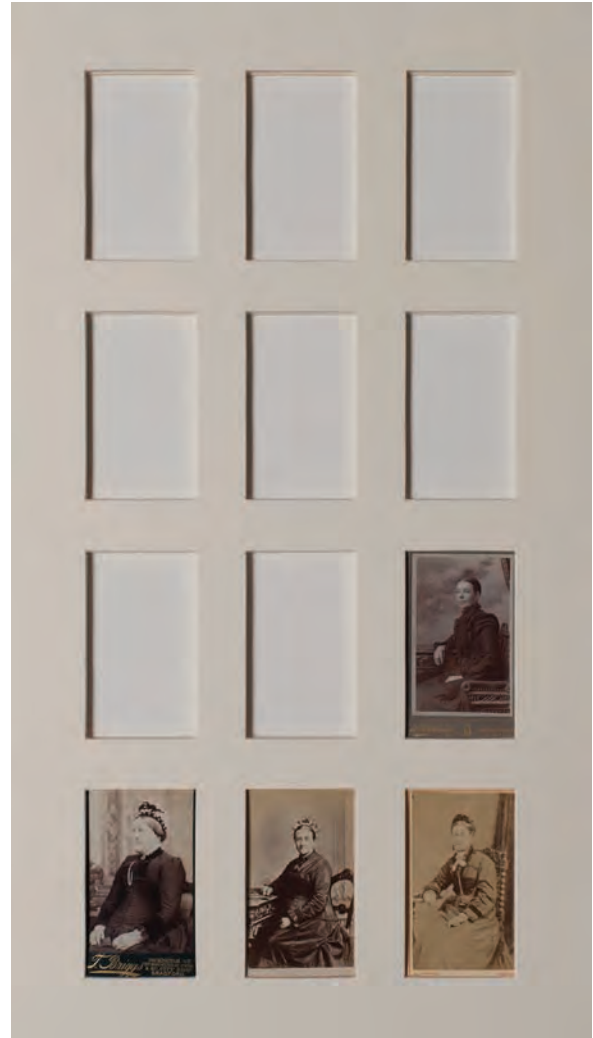
094

19 - People would collect objects and arrange them in 'wunderkamers' or curiosity cabinets, and around the room. Objects were arranged according to a taxonomy. Davenne, C in *Cabinets of Wonder* (2012) explains that the curiosity room is an attempt to connect the past with the present.

This is Baudrillard's famous introduction to *Subjective Discourse or the non-functional system of objects* (1996) which is appropriate to an understanding of the *carte de visite* today. The *carte de visite* as an object is today non-functional and has been outdated by its technological advancements, by time and an erasure of memory. It has outlived its owners, bearing silent witness to its lonely existence as a commodity until it is transformed and revived by a collector. I feel I am rescuing these objects from ultimate destruction. By buying them as commodities and trying to understand why my connection to these objects means so much, by excavating their details and placing them back into the system of order that is my taxonomy, the *cartes* can be seen again for their original purpose. I hope that through my visual taxonomy that there is 'a revealing' of what is true to keeping a legacy. Because this taxonomy is of humans and about humanity I would like that my viewer asks where they place themselves among these objects.

In the work *My album* I wanted to create a ‘wunderkammer’¹⁹ of *cartes de visite*. From floor to ceiling and wall to wall, each box a different taxonomy. ‘The way in which antiques refer to the past gives them an exclusively mythological character. The antique object no longer has any practical application, its role being merely to signify’ (Baudrillard 41: 2009). When I had collected quite a few *cartes de visite*, piecing them together to keep this ‘community’ together felt like piecing together a chaos like the Dead Sea scrolls.²⁰ These *cartes de visite* may be far removed from their original purpose but they have ‘a very specific function within the system, namely the signifying of time’ (Baudrillard 41: 2009). These ‘likenesses’ belong to that time, and we have evolved from that time. The fundamental question is, why have we neglected our predecessors and forgotten what they signify today? Have we all become inhuman? I could have reproduced prints of these *cartes de visite* but deliberately chose to exhibit the original object. ‘The connotation of naturalness can be subtle, but the connotation of historicalness is always glaring’ (Baudrillard 42: 2009). Their ‘naturalness’ is what is true to them and it deserves to be kept and preserved by not creating a reproduction of their originality. I have created a room filled with curiosities and true to their origins. Similarly, its truth combined with its quantity borders the sublime. Its surrealistic experience is as honest and as real as the presence of every single *carte* in the room. The detail of these ‘likenesses’ look very realistic. I think this could be because of the albumen which is used to produce these portraits which provides a sheen similar to human skin.

20 - The Dead Sea scrolls were fundamentally important to the structure of a community of people. Without these scroll what would the Jewish community have to rest their belief structure in? The Dead Sea scrolls have been pieced together in all its scattered traces similar to my piecing together the *carte de visites* from where ever I can find them. Memorializing and remembering what the *carte de visite* was in a community can be witnessed through them being pieced together as a community and viewed simultaneously in one archive. One *carte de visite* cannot speak for a community of people but a collection of people can stand for what they were created for. This being remembering people.





097

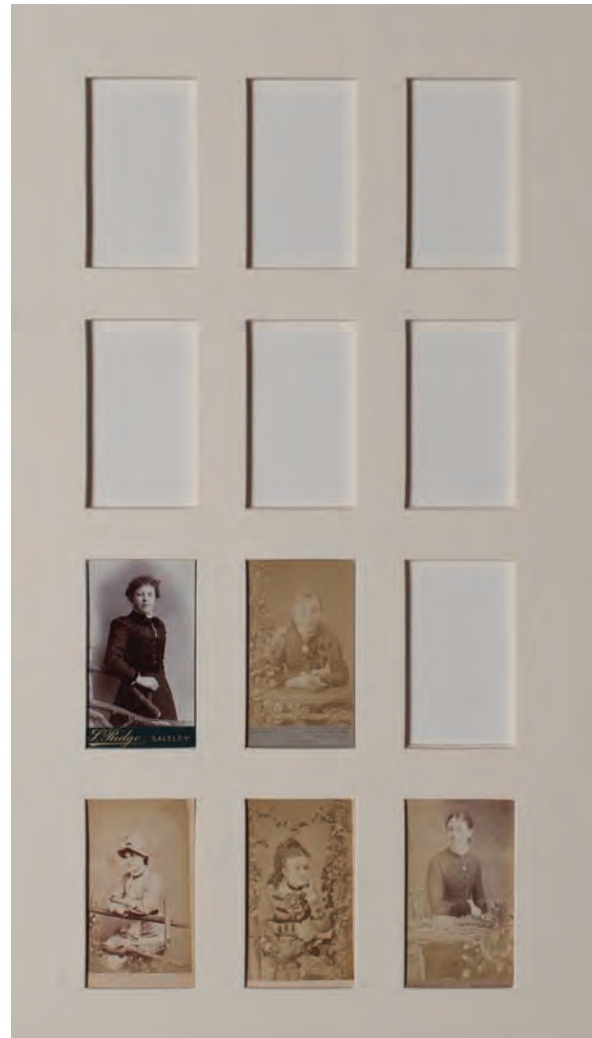
My Album
2012-2014
500 handmade boxes
Found carte de visites,
archival museum board,
acid free glue, wibalin
covering material, virgin
Polyetholene
terephthalate

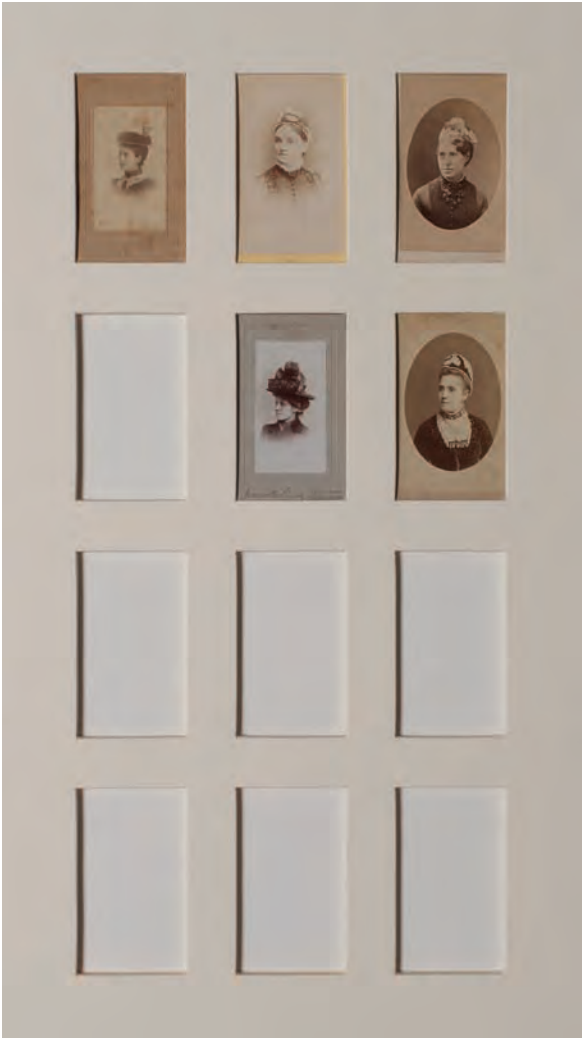




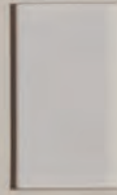


















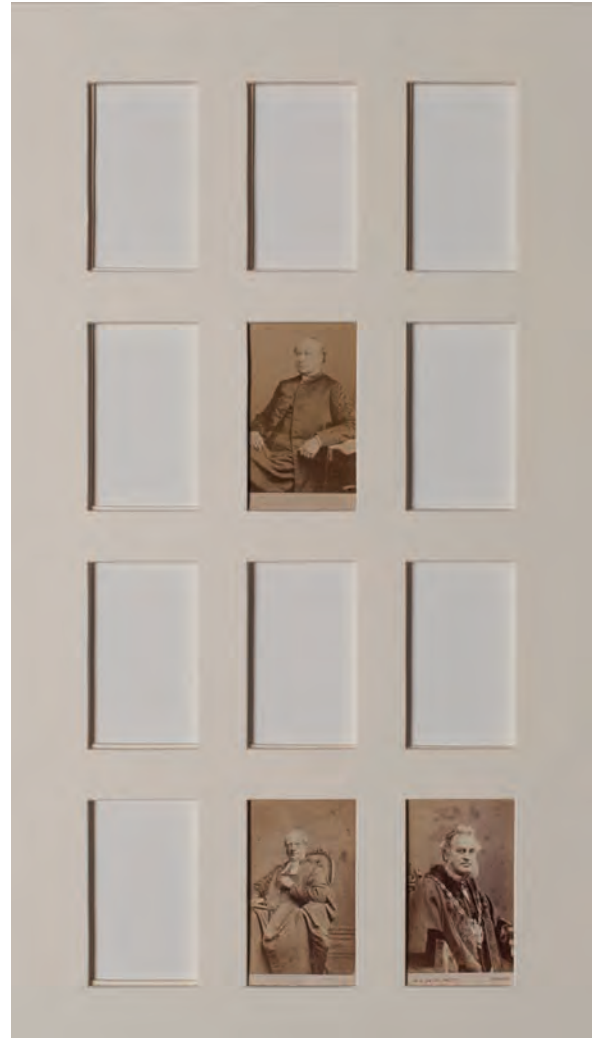








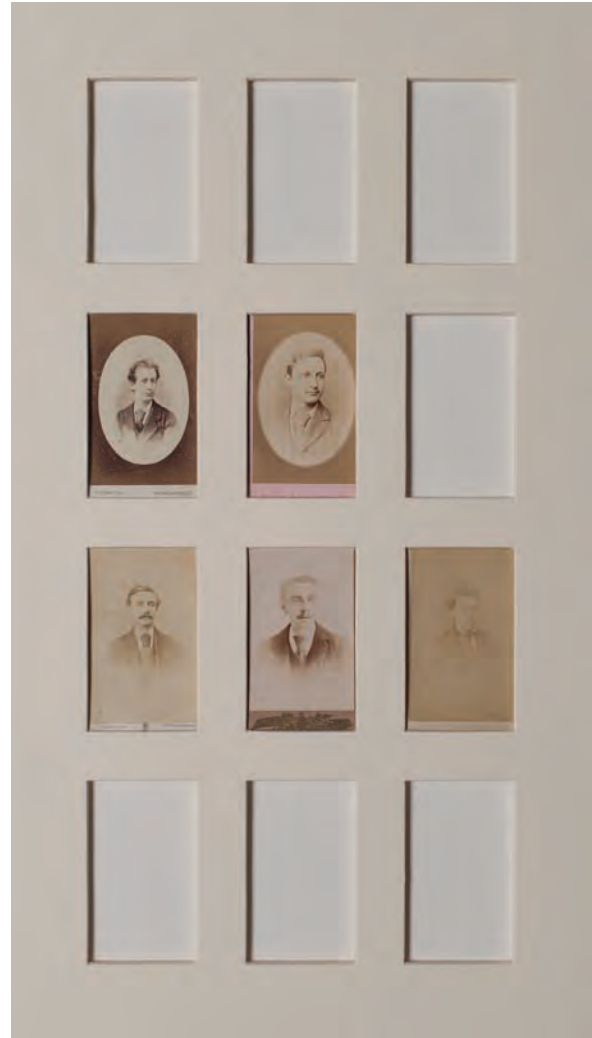














What does the *carte de visite* symbolize?

The *carte de visite* 'as an authentic presence, it enjoys a special psychological standing.' (Baudrillard 2009: 42) Baudrillard suggests that the object's purpose is 'to serve a purpose nevertheless at a deeper level', a level which is true to humanism (Baudrillard 42: 2009). Having already mentioned the *carte de visite* as an object, a gift that embodies a spirit – to becoming an object of commodity (also considered as an antique) with an 'authentic presence', to now signify in the strongest sense of the term, 'a family portrait' and the memorialization in a concrete form of an object of a former being. *My Album* is the result of a 'procedure equivalent, in the register of the imaginary, to a suppression of time' (Baudrillard 42: 2009). It is the result of an object's suppression to tell its legacy and my personal suppression of not dealing with a very real loss. The revival of these objects through the use of the imagination become 'mythological signifies of birth.' (Baudrillard 42:2009) Would it not be fair to say that the *carte de visite* thus is an object which provokes psychological transition. Because with the *carte de visite's* 'objectness' and human imagination there is a possibility to shift from the idea of Thanatos²¹(death) to the idea of eros (love).

Baudrillard dissects what is authentic about an object. There is to an extent an influence to object relations theory. My involvement with the authentic and to objects ties in with objects relation theory. My connection with the objects 'is reflected in an obsession with certainty – specifically, certainty as to the origin, date, author and signature of a work' (Baudrillard 43: 2009). What makes these objects unique and fascinating is that it is physically impossible to return to the moment in which it was created, nor to the photographer or 'original', in order to duplicate a new 'likeness'. When a *carte de visite* is destroyed, its death

21 - The idea of Melanie Klein's Object relation theory stems from psychoanalytical theory where humans are objects and that there is an interpersonal situations. There are external objects and an internal objects. External objects are physical 'objects' (humans) and internal objects are imagined objects which are another representation in the imagination. There are also three 'selves': the first is a 'mental representation of oneself' (consciously and unconsciously), the second 'self' is a human's 'inner representation' of themselves as a result of experiencing other human engagement, the third 'self' is where object and 'self' are unclear and interconnect. Self-psychology is sometimes a reaction where 'the self' becomes narcissistic to the 'internal self'. Objects can be good or bad and used as transitional tools. See Objects Relations Theory, 2014. Victor Daniel's Website in the Psychology Department at Sonoma State University: Available: <http://www.sonoma.edu/users/d/daniels/objectrelations.html> [Accessed February 7, 2014]

is final. It implies the death of the photographer, his photographic history, the 'original', the original's legacy, the sentiment the *carte* kept alive and the *carte*'s life and 'spirit' passed on through all its owners. Indeed 'the fascination of handcraft derives from an object having passed through the hands of someone the marks of whose labor are still inscribed thereupon: We are fascinated by what has been created and is therefore unique, because the moment of creation cannot be reproduced' (Baudrillard 43: 2009).

If I was asked why or what my obsession with the *carte de visite* is, I would quote the Baudrillard (in Candlin & Guins (2009:45)):

These fetishized objects are therefore by no means mere accessories, nor are they merely cultural signs among others: they symbolize an inward transcendence, that phantasy of a centre-point in reality which nourishes all mythological consciousness, all individual consciousness – that phantasy whereby a projected detail comes to stand for the ego, and the rest of the world is then organized around it. The phantasy of authenticity is sublime, and it is always located somewhere short of reality (sub limina). Like the holy relic, whose function it secularizes, the antique object reorganizes the world in a dispersive fashion which is quite antithetical to the extensive nature of functional organization – such organization being the very thing, in fact, from which it seeks to protect the profound and no doubt vital lack of realism of the inner self.

The *carte de visite* allows me to fantasize and deal with loss. The taxonomy I created, which coexists with the 'wunderkammer' (acting as the sublime and fantasy) allows for a process that D.W. Winnicott calls 'transitional phenomena' and in which the objects I collect are 'transitional objects'.²²

Technology and the *carte de visite*

The *carte de visite*'s objectness and materiality will always be treasured because 'technological civilization has rejected the wisdom of the old, but it bows down before the solidity of old things, whose unique value is sealed and certain' (Baudrillard 47: 2009). Facebook cannot measure up to a tangible photo where the cracks in the albumen look like wrinkles of human skin, where silver nitrate overexposes and changes giving a sense of the object being alive, where children have scribbled to add their mark to a portrait or a relative has written a message with fondest love. No electronic or digital rendering could possess the human qualities these *cartes de visite* possess in their objectness. They are 'material bodies'.

Collecting

What is possessed is always an object abstracted from its function and thus brought into relationship with the subject. In this context all owned objects partake of the same abstractness, and refer to one another only inasmuch as they refer solely to the subject. Such objects together make up the system through which the subject strives to construct a world, a private totality. (Baudrillard 48: 2009)

My collection grew very suddenly and quickly when I felt that one *carte* was not good enough, because I knew there were many more that needed rescuing and a home. ‘The fulfillment of the project of possession always means a succession or even a complete series of objects. This is why owning absolutely any object is always so satisfying and so disappointing at the same time: a whole series lies behind any single object, and makes it into a source of anxiety’ (Baudrillard 49: 2009). I would collect maybe six or sometimes one over a period of four months in Cape Town. When I found some, never more than fifteen, I was really happy. Then there were periods of months where I found none at all, even though I looked in every junk shop, second hand store, antique shop, antique arcade, antique auction and even hired an antique dealer to help me look for more *cartes de visite* in Cape Town. Albums are very scarce and when one is found all of its contents have been ripped out to sell for more money. This really made me angry, frustrated and sad. I also had moments of anxiety triggered by fear and disappointment. Today my collection consists of over 4000 *cartes de visite*, and it is still not fulfilling. I don’t think I want or can stop collecting.

Lately I have bought *cartes de visite* from London, America and Paris on ebay.²³ When I found 150 *cartes de visite* for a good price I got excited and anxious about winning the bid for my ‘passion’. I will go to extreme lengths

24 - The longer silver nitrate is left to react with the albumen the more silver and shiny it becomes

to hunt these *cartes* down, willingly sitting up until 3 a.m. to win ‘a lot’ of 150 *cartes de visite*. ‘It is this passionate involvement which lends a touch of the sublime to the regressive activity of collecting’ (Baudrillard 49: 2009). The quality of this collection is based on its quantity. Each time I add a *carte* to the collection I ‘fantasize’ about more and order my fetishized objects.

Throughout every work I have attempted to preserve the intimacy of the artwork. In *My Album* every *carte* is in an archivally-obsessed made box. Each *carte* has its own slot, its own place and fits within the taxonomy. A ladder is provided to allow the viewer to climb and to view and to be intimate with the *cartes* that they cannot see up close. In *curiosity cabinet* the viewer needs to open a door, then a drawer, to take out a box, open the box and look through a hand-bound book made with archival washi paper. The viewer must then return the book in the reverse process and encase the book carefully to be safe-kept again. *Digital Print* is large, but every *carte de visite* is lifesized, which still encourages a sense of intimacy in the viewer. One has to be up close to the print to see the finer details of the individual backs of the *carte de visits* and be further away to see them as a collection. *Cape Town Archaeological Dig* is of the Cape Town residents and asks that the viewer looks through the boxes, with cotton gloves, to open the boxes belonging to past photographic houses street addresses in Cape Town, to then opening a book and a further two books inside the main book to look at the Goad map with the image of what the location looks like today. *Album* is larger than life but asks that the viewer listen to its fragile melody, which still plays today. *Xaitatin* asks the viewer to read the only personal narrative in my entire collection. *Unknown 2013* asks the viewer to manipulate light and to fantasize what its authentic surface information is and to look at the ‘likeness’ staring back as if in visual and psychic dialogue. *Likeness* is larger than lifesized and engulfs the viewer, encouraging the viewer to question what is current through its reflective surface²⁴ and quiz their own portrait. *Mr Walters* reveals the sentiment of an advertisement, today’s Mr Walters in reality cannot replace the old. *Look-a-like* is small in scale to reveal its intimacy. *In Spirit* is very intimate. It is a personal photo that captures an intimate moment. Like other *cartes de visite* it is printed small and intimate. *Sentiment* expressed in advertisements is about the intimacy of the materiality and the relationship sentiment has with intimacy.

My sentiment and the *cartes de visite* as object

The difference between human death and the death of an object is that (to an extent) I can try prevent it from dying whereas a human dies unexpectedly and is not any ones choice but their physical fate. What the object provides is assurance provided it is not stolen from my protection and ownership. These objects provide emotional security for a trauma and loss which is extremely comforting. “The ‘retreat’ involved here really is a regression, and the passion mobilized is a passion for flight. Objects undoubtedly serve in a regulatory capacity with regard to everyday life, dissipating many neuroses and providing an outlet for all kinds of tensions and for energies that are mourning. This is what gives them their ‘soul’, what makes them ‘ours’ (Baudrillard 51: 2009) The object provides a platform to play and to heal. Collecting has become an inward form of playing. It is therefore a psychic and imaginative process which allows to heal. It is this which makes these objects so special and desirable to collect more. Soon it is easy to become obsessed with collecting. What makes the *carte de visite* valuable is also its function to its community of people who also valued collecting the same objects which captured the people they admired, respected, gossiped about, and, mourned over. Queen Victoria’s obsession is no different to my obsession with collecting *cartes de visite*. Collecting and owning many individual *cartes* at once “allows me, in turn, to recognize myself in the object as an absolute singular being, and it is this recognition of myself being present in this collection that gives the relationship to objects all its density – its absurd faculty, and the illusory” which in turn make my appreciation and love for the *carte de visite* grow. (Baudrillard 51:2009) Everything about this object, its materiality, its subjectivity, about collecting is human.

I see the legacy of lives of a specific community, I also see today’s community and am placing individuals in with the collection of *cartes de visite*. Where do we fit into this collection? Or are we also just commodities which will inevitably be ripped out of an album. Will the future collector collect iPads like I collect the *cartes de visite* in a hundred years from now? It would not be the same, it can physically not be because portraits appear as data and pixels on iPad screens. What if a virus corrupts the photos and wipes them out²⁵





Look-a-like
2013
Albumen print Dytych
Found carte de visite
and albumen print,
Fabriano rosapina
(220g)

There is nothing tangible and nothing human about today's portraits, its presence is untrustworthy and threatens future collectors 'playing'. The value of the carte de visite as 'object' is strengthened "only by the virtue of its absence" (Baudrillard 52: 2009) Similar to the absence of human physical presence, and returning to the idea of Roland Barthes 'craving an author even though the author is dead'.

In *My Album* there are many unfilled boxes and spaces. Incomplete boxes was at first disturbing. It felt like there were more 'souls' that needed rescuing. "One cannot wonder whether collections are in fact meant to be completed, whether lack does not play an essential part here – a positive one, moreover as the means whereby the subject reapprehends his own objectivity (Baudrillard 52: 2009) What would make this installation complete is if the people who walk into the room engage, questions, participate in their personal and imaginative dialogue with the cartes de visite and realize their own presence in the room as part of a microscopic collection and the macroscopic collection a larger community.

There is great comfort in seeing that the collection is incomplete because "the presence of the final object of the collections would basically signify the death of the subject" (Baudrillard 52: 2009). This compels me to continue collecting. I would like to be optimistic and think that there are still many more cartes to collect because this social phenomenon was global.

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In Spirit
2013
74 x 110 mm
Albumen print on
Fabriano rosapina
(220g)



'Album'

This is a work as a part of my practical investigation which I felt was appropriate to discuss now in this written investigation.

“Just as harmonic series bring sound up to their perceived qualities, so paradigmatic series, whatever their degree of complexity, bring objects up to their symbolic quality – carrying them, in the same movement into the sphere of the human relationship of mastery and play” (Baudrillard 53: 2009)

This album was bought in Portobello road, London. All of its content was removed and only empty spaces existed, longing for what was so lovingly stored in it pages. I paged through the album, and on the last page in the back cover is a brass barrel covered in coded brass texture. There was a small brass key to wind the mechanisms spring so that it could play. The seller told me that it had never played while she had it. Her husband also tried fixing the album but had no luck. It travelled back to Johannesburg with me all 16276km and a further distance to Cape Town. Not once did it play with all my handling while travelling. I put my bags down and by accident drop the album on my desk, the force caused the album to play a very much alive melody. Quickly unwrapping the plastic and tearing off the three layers of bubble wrap I could witness the barrel rolling the brass chord arms moving and playing to me. It was beautiful and I was wordless that it still plays since 1919. I was really happy it survived, that I saved it, but was really sad that it was playing to ‘presences’ that were taken from its keeping. Now it plays longingly in memory of the ‘presences’ it used to play for.

The word album derived from its Latin roots ‘albus’ which means ‘white’. Its meaning “‘a white (or rather blank) marble tablet’ on which public notices were written”. (Cresswell J 10:2002) In English ‘album’ was “used to describe various blank books used for compiling a collection of items.” (Cresswell J 10:2002)

Albumen is the white of the egg, and is one of the main ingredients to produce these unique 'likenesses'. Today true to the words meaning the albumen prints make up my collection and subjectively speaking make up 'my album' and are today a double-barreled 'blank'. 'Blank' in that the information is limiting and historical narratives muted. Individually as traces to their past and collectively they look like a mass of 'blankness', on closer inspection its material surfaces it reveals traces of sentiment, of once belonging, of having lived and still living - only in a different life with a different purpose. To act as a legacy.

Objects and time

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Engaging with objects is a "refuge-seeking procedure" which Baudrillard describes and is a process which collapses time. While creating order with the cartes de visite I found similar looking people to people I lost. I found a strong similarity between a carte or a man and the ID photo of my dad. Both looking the same only 100 years apart. It felt like I had an original carte de visite of my dad in my collection. There was some comfort in finding this carte de visite. This was so comforting. For in that moment I imagined my dad's existence by looking at the carte de visite. When I come across a similarity I enjoy the memories of them.

What are these objects?

"We sum them up by saying that the object is the thing with which we construct our mourning the object represents our own death, but that death is transcended (symbolically) by virtue of the fact that we possess the object; the fact that by introjecting it into a work of mourning - by integrating it into a series in which it absence and it re-emergence elsewhere 'work' at replaying themselves continually, recurrently - we succeed in dispelling the anxiety associated with absence and with the reality of death" (2009: 55)

Magic of collecting

Benjamin introduces his essay '*Unpacking my Library: A Talk about Book Collecting*' (1992) with a room filled with open boxes, books everywhere and open book shelves. He introduces the 'mood' of this disorderly but exciting space of collected books. Benjamin emphasizes that this scene speaks about the process of collecting and not the collection itself. There are more than one way of collecting. The one reason being that the objects are attached to memories.

Before I started placing my cartes into categories it was a chaotic mess. "Every passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector's passion borders on the chaos of memories" (60: 1955) Benjamin states that there is chaos before digging into ones memory and ordering the books. The ordering as process rests on the collectors' personal attachment to the object and what they see in the object.

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Collectors & Collecting

The collector's passion is fuelled by "a very mysterious relationship to ownership". (Benjamin 60: 1955) Objects in a collection embody 'a magic' which the objects evoke. Collecting, owning and being with them is rewarding. "The period, the region, the craftsmanship, the former ownership – for a true collector the whole background of an item adds up to a magic encyclopedia whose quintessence is the fate of this object." (60: 1955)

Benjamin labels the role of the collector as 'physiognomist', who interpret the fate of the object that have been collected. He paints an image where a collector is inspired when looking into that objects 'distant past'. There is definitely something 'magical' about a moment spent with an object. Benjamin, Like Baudrillard, says that the object in a collector's collection is a rebirth for the object and its fate rest in the ownership of the object by the collector. "To renew the old world – that is the collector's deepest desire" which is my desire for the cartes de visite as well. (61: 1955)

Collecting as Process

Benjamin speaks of collectors 'rescuing' objects and this moment being a collector's 'finest memories' of collecting. The moment which a collector find an object and 'rescues' it is "because he found it lonely and abandoned on the market place and bought it to give it its because he found it lonely and abandoned on the market place and bought it to give it its freedom" (64: 1992) These words by Benjamin express the moment when I came across a cartes de visite in places like the Milnerton Flea Market or in antique shops etc. It feels like I am rescuing them from a fate where I feel there is no more life for them. In my processing the carte they become 'posthumous fragments', a term coined by Walter Benjamin, where I investigate their surface information.

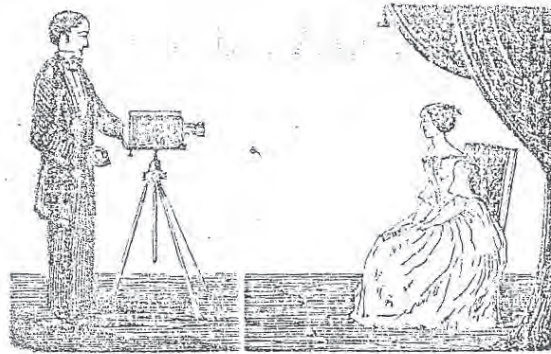
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My investigation of what people looked like becomes very real. I can see the finest detail and feels as if 'little genii' in the surreal reality of the image emerge. "For inside him there are spirits, or at least little genii which have seen to it that for a collector, and I mean a real collector, a collector as he ought to be – ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have with objects." (67: 1992) The cartes de visite become very personal when I stare longingly at the fiber on someone's clothing, or details of their hair and when I gaze at their eyes it feels as if I am visually connected in a dialogue with the sitter.

The materiality of the *carte de visite*

“Memory is refracted through the photograph’s materiality” (Edwards 1999: 331). Edwards introduces ‘*Photographs as Objects of Memory*’ by referring to Roland Barthes and how he experiences a photograph of his mom through the materiality of the photograph as object. He relives a vivid memory through is faded sepia print and chopped off corners which signified that it belongs in a family album.

Cartes de visite are ambiguous. Edwards adds that photographs are transparent. “The subjective and sensuous experiences of photographs as linking objects within memory are equally integral to the cultural expectancies of the medium, the certainty of the vision it evokes, and cultural notions of appropriate photographic styles and object forms, for the expected performance of photography in a given context” (Edwards 1999:332) They act as documenter but their subject matter could be lying. Some ‘likenesses’ could be revealing the truth about the ‘originals’ character or the ‘original’ could be portraying a character as they wish to be known as. I will never know and can only imagine.



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 Chemicals, and Apparatus for Sale.



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Mr Walters
2014
Dyptych
Albumen print on
Fabriano rosapina
(220g), Epson archival
ink on Innova paper

Discussing my practical investigation

Some key words to describe this body of work are: collection, community, blank, albumen, loss, narrative, presence, absence, and materiality.

There are thirteen artworks that investigate my collection of cartes de visite. Each explores different aspects to create a body of work. In this section of the paper each work will be described and how they explore the carte de visite. There will be an introduction and discussion to the artists whose works and concepts speak to the central theme of this project.

In order to explain what these cartes de visite mean to me I would like to introduce a movie called 'The Red Violin' (1999). The movie traces the life of a red violin, narrated by a fortune teller's tarot cards in the seventeenth century. The story threads over four centuries and is owned by "the rich to the poor, from Italy to Poland to England to China to Canada. It is shot, buried, almost burned and stolen more than once." (Ebert 1999) The violin is created in 1681 by Nicolo Bussotti for his unborn son. Bussotti's wife, Anna, receives the tarot reading which reads her life to live the four centuries and be owned by many. Anna passes away that night to her dead son. The devastated Bussotti carries his wife's body to his workshop where he cuts a piece of her hair to make a paint brush and drains some of her blood to paint his stillborn son's violin with. The violin was the last violin Bussotti made and was his masterpiece.

The movie reveals how people are seduced by the violin's sound and how the people who own the violin fall in love with its presence to the point of even adopting an orphan to play the instrument, steal it, sacrifice their life

for in hiding it from a domineering government, become the inspiration in a violinist's love affair for making his music. While the journey of the violin with its owners is narrated there is an expert evaluator who had been searching his whole life for this particular violin. He travels to the orphanage where the violin was given and immediately knows he found his violin. He solves the mystery of its red colour and proves that it is the Bussotti violin for an elite auction house that he works for. "He is also perhaps the one person best equipped to appreciate how rare and wonderful the instrument is but, like many passionate connoisseurs, he lacks the wealth to match" (Ebert 1999). Just before the violin is put on auction he swaps it for an exact replica. He gives the violin to his son for an anticipated many more generations, thus ensuring that the legacy of Bussotti, his wife's life and son, lives on through the presence and existence of the violin.

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I feel like the expert evaluator. I love these cartes de visite because of the human presence retained by the object's existence. That the people who are frozen in time live on through the presence of the carte but nothing more. I am restricted to knowing who they are. I can only imagine and guess. It is their ephemeral suggestions of being or having been which intrigue me. I can't speak to them, I can only look. I cannot have a conversation with them and ask them : Who are you?, What is your name?, Where is your family?, What do you believe in?, What is your community like?, Is it exciting to live in your time with all the new inventions?, How would you like your legacy to be remembered in a hundred years' time? Apart from this major restriction to know answers to questions like this I remain grateful for the beauty of their muted presence.

Artists

Like American artist Mark Dion, I shop for objects at markets and in junk or antique shops. “Just looking is just shopping, but it is not quite right to say it is only hunting. There is also something quietly hypnotic about just looking, something less like hunting and more like dreaming ... For a while I am harmlessly hypnotized, and the world falls away, leaving me in a silent, empty place, alone with the object.” (Elkins J. 1996: 20-21). I hunt for objects because I see a value in them and because they have an element of curiosity in them. I only discovered Dion at the start of 2012 with his visit to Michaelis. He inspires me because his art is ‘practice-led’.

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He finds objects and challenges museums ordering facts according to hierarchy and categorically systematising knowledge. His objective findings are exhibited in a curiosity cabinet as a newly found knowledge. Dion is interested in the revival of the sixteenth and seventeenth century curiosity cabinet, museum collections and epistemologies related to objects. Theorists like Michel Foucault and his writings of archaeology and knowledge influence Dion. The Tate Thames Dig is one of many other art installations that require Dion to collect objects, and catalogue them according to a hierarchy or taxonomy. On tropical nature (1991), A meter of Jungle (1992), The great Munich Hunt (1993), A Tale of Two Seas (1996), are some examples where Dion shows his interest in how collections are categorized and become a part of a knowledge. But what about cartes de visites as found objects in Cape Town?

I have an interest in Dion’s work because of the role he adopts as archaeologist. His process of excavating misplaced objects by today’s living, by categorising them into taxonomical systems creates new interest in the forgotten object and preserves the object. He challenging concepts from the curiosity cabinet and rethinks the way that an object is received by someone to contemplate over. For example Dion does not follow the traditional canon for a sixteenth century curiosity cabinet where objects from the sea are purely just objects from the sea. Dion rather uses themes to organise objects that he

finds. In the Weisman curiosity cabinet (2001) this method was applied and interesting juxtapositions were created. For example aesthetically interesting objects were placed in the 'same theme cabinet' because of objects having a relationship conceptually as a collective and thus the object has a semiotic relationship. Dion revives objects that have been kept but are neglected and forgotten in store rooms, or sold at yard sales and flea markets. It is through his unique investigation into these object's knowledge that interest in the object is gained again.

The presence of death and a forgotten object has a specific aura. Likewise there is an aura and mystery that lingers with old photographs of people. Martin Hall writes a small paragraph in response to Walter Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936).

"Benjamin's argument hinged on the proposition that an original work of art has an 'aura'. This is founded in its uniqueness, 'its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happened to be', and is reinforced by the trace of its history, by 'the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years', and changes in ownership that constitute its history" (Skotnes 2004: 148).

Human memorabilia like photographs are in my opinion proof that someone once lived. But there is something more to an image than just a body. The human portrait is proof that someone that once lived, and the 'aura' of that person literally still lives on through the presence of the object. "What the Photograph reproduces to infinity has occurred only once: the Photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially" (Barthes R 1984:4). There is an intangible relationship between the found object, its lost narrative and the value of someone's life in a portrait which I am interested in.

Boltanski is a French based artist. Key themes of time and fragility of life run in his works. Boltanski attempts to show the numbers of people that have lived. His work also speaks about the loss of identity of someone who has lived. "We no longer know who is who...we can no longer say anything

about anyone, we have lost all information about them, what remains of them is these photo's, strongly combining their presence and their absence" (Boltanski 1997:66).

Boltanski is also an obsessive collector of photographs of people that have been regarded as waist and sold at flea markets. He re-shows these objects that have documented people to the public. His artwork passes comment on the rejection of any chronological history that is meant to be linked to an individual. Boltanski performs a multitude of activities. For example he documents biographical images, he collects images of unknown and nonrelated people, he examines what he collects and he finally creates his own archive made of many boxes.

There are two works that shout archive when seen. The first is *Reserve: Detective*, from 'Inventory' (1988), and the second is *Reserve: The Dead Swiss* (1991). In *Reserve: Detective*, from 'Inventory'. There are three hundred black and white photographs. Each photograph is individually stuck onto its own box. Boxes vary in size, and are a tan colour. Twine is wrapped around the box once to keep its content and lid secure. There are three levels of shelving by which the boxes are stored on. All together are twelve clusters of boxes stored. Each cluster is fifty by sixty centimetres. There are lights fixed to the top of the installation that shines down onto the clusters of boxes. Each box appears to have its own numbering system by which the box has been catalogued according to presumably.

Boltanski attempts to find an identity through an archived installation. By placing photographs onto boxes in an archived fashion concerns are raised about the temporality of an object's testament. The objects Boltanski redisplay, like photographs, represents a loss and initiates nostalgia and curiosity as to who the lost person is in the photograph.

Motivation for collecting

Collecting is my coping mechanism to escape reality and my imagining through the object makes me feel better and think about things I have not internally processed. I believe that collecting does help with my deep-rooted fear of loss. Collecting for me is an external 'self-help' remedy which temporarily satisfies my fear of losing more knowledge of loved ones. At the start of this project I had promised to not discuss my personal history or bring my personal problems into the project. The suppressing of these problems is what drove this project which I only realized when most of the work was in progress. The suppression emerged in my work, in that I obsessively thrived on collecting portraits of people no longer alive, their reminiscence is the *carte de visite*. I treasure these objects and feel the need to safeguard and protect their little existence. I have happily taken on the role of the collector and a keeper of people lost from a community of people whose morals were to be remembered. While the *carte de visite* may be traced back to Queen Victoria's era and a time of humanism²⁶. I am unfortunately a humanist in a digital era. I explore what it means to be human through my work. I am anti-face-book and all other digital means social network. I feel there is nothing human about maintaining a friendship through a computer screen.

26 - Humanism is a philosophy where there was an inquisition of the human soul. The Victorians not only took meaningful portraits, they practiced 'spirit photography' and took portraits of the dead as that deceased's last and departing image.

Materiality

Albumen printing is specific to the *carte de visite*, as is the *carte de visite* to its community which it captured. Because I wanted to be true to the authenticity of the object and the ‘likenesses’ I chose to print any findings on the *carte de visite* in albumen prints. The printing process and its finishes are unpredictable, almost having a mind of their own. Factors like chemistry, coating with the albumen and coating with the silver nitrate need to be given much patience with preparation respect in application which is either rewarded with a print of something went wrong and the print process needs to be scrutinized. This could take a few attempts. In my instance this took me sixteen months to learn and be patient with the process.

Albumen is egg white. When painted onto a surface and dried it turns into a blank and clear layer. Album is a word where its origin means blank. Albums were the keepers of precious portraits and objects of sentiment like the *carte de visite*. Today those albums are emptied and found without their content. Furthermore because we live in an age of mechanical reproduction, the album has been discarded. Today there are no more objects to engage with as portraits are found and saved on removable disks. There is nothing hold, touch or reminisce over physically. We are humans not items of technology. We are not of the same register as digital data. This is what makes the *carte de visite* as objects so special and precious. It is a valuable and delicate object, which needs to be kept and treasured. They are objects of sentiment.

As for the ‘Likenesses’ which are captured and are fixed in albumen their traces are what I fantasize over. Their presence is felt in the materiality of these albumen prints on paper one hundred years old today.

With all individual works I have gone to extreme measures to use only archival materials which are acid free and aid as preventative restoration of the *carte de visites*. Preventative restoration is not restoring the *carte de visites* but a process to stop the further decaying of the *cartes*. In ‘*Album*’ I have used archival museum board. I have sourced and imported this from a company in London as I found this company to provide the most archivable museum board in comparison to other companies. I was looking for a 100% cotton acid free board with a long life span to encase the individual *carte de visites*. In ‘*Curiosity Cabinet*’ the books inside are made of imported Japanese Washi paper which is completely free of acid and a very long life span. The digital prints are printed onto Epson archival paper with archival ink, and the albumen prints are printed onto a 50% cotton fiber based paper.

Collecting

Humans have been collecting since mankind started. An earlier example in the history of collecting starts at the curiosity cabinet, and the Wunderkammer which precedes the museum as entire buildings dedicated to collections of objects. An example would be the Pitt Rivers Museum. James Putnam writes at length on collecting and how collecting is the primary act of artists. He provides Marcel Duchamp's 'readymade' *Fountain* (1917). He dedicated a book on collecting and how the act of collecting forms the base for artistic practice. His interest lies in the curatorial display of museum pieces as cultural artifact. He says that "to present this phenomenon in a coherent form, it has been necessary to advise a classification system, a process which ironically alludes to the museums own need for ordering systems" (Putnam 2001: preface). People were also collectors during the social phenomenon 'cartomania' when cartes de visite were collected. Arthur Munby and Michael Hiley were Victorian carte de visite collectors. Munby collected carte de visite of Victorian working woman as his social interest. Hiley also collected Victorian working woman and "describes his concern as obsessive." (Briggs 1996:58)

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One of my reasons for collecting that "every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably" (Walter Benjamin in Putnam: 2001), and this sincerely does not sit well with me because of my second and personal reason for collecting the *carte de visite*.

Epiphanies while producing the albumen print

Printing with albumen is a time consuming act and requires a lot of patience and care. I have gained a lot of respect for the photographers who used this process of capturing a 'likeness'. I admire their work more now having gained knowledge about this frustrating but rewarding process.

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Likeness
2013-2014
1100 x 2000 mm
Albumen print on
Innova paper



Discussing individual works

'My Album'

Each carte de visite I have collected forms part of my private collection. I seldomly come across duplicate prints. Each carte de visite is a portrait of a different individual. Each carte is unique to itself like the people in the portrait. There are a variety of different poses, clothes worn and props like woman's fans or holding photographic albums. During my collecting process I started getting overwhelmed by how the collection was growing. The project started looking like a disorderly mass of cartes de visite and less about the people captured in the cartes. I then started playing with the idea of finding cartes where people looked the same. For example two cartes de visite of women facing in the same direction, in the same pose, wearing similar looking hats with feathers. I then found my clue to separate human from object. What I mean by this is when looking at twelve cartes which look similar something starts to transform. There is less focus on the carte de visite and more focus on the sitter. Further time spent looking at these twelve cartes makes me aware of the person and their character than on their clothes. This is not that I do not take note of what the person is wearing or holding.

I then created my own taxonomy of this community of people. I taxonomized them into men, male children, woman, female children, babies, group portraits, and cartes which I could not place into a category. I kept each taxonomical group to twelve because there were twelve copies made for each sitting with the photographer for a *carte de visite*.

I wanted the cartes to be seen and not looked at. I want my viewer to engage with the carte de visite. I need the viewer to acknowledge the person in the portrait and admire the beauty of the moment in which the pose was taken and enjoy the presence of the individual captured by albumen and silver nitrate. These individuals belonged somewhere and their cartes were kept by someone, even treasured in albums. Where I found these cartes were not fulfilling the purpose of their creation. They are my curiosities and I wanted to create a room similar to the 'wunderkamers' kept by museums and even some personal family homes in the 1800s had their own wunderkamers to educate their children and boast to friends of travels. I have used the role of the colonial collector collecting curiosities from other lands. I have collected individuals.

'Digital print'

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This print has some of the cartes de visite in my collection. I have only allowed the reverse side to be shown and not the portrait. Each *carte de visite* is to size and I aimed to have true colour. Each carte is laid out according to a vertical and horizontal grid. So this print immediately show that there is order but there are no portraits. I have deprived my viewer to see the portraits emphasizing a loss of something very central to the carte de visite. I wanted to create some order with using a grid. There are two points about this work which need to be expressed. The first is that there is no order, and the second is the idea of micro and macro population. As mentioned before these are only a few of the cartes from my collection, and my collection is a fraction of how many cartes de visite were made and how many people were a part of this community. Collecting these cartes today do not come with detail like where the carte has previously been or which family it came from. All I know is where I bought the carte de visite. This work also works on the idea of the absence of the individuals through the presence of the backs of the cartes de visite where the studio coat of arms are printed. It suggests where people went to have their portraits taken.

There are also some cartes de visite which have writings on them. The question rises; what do the writings signify on the cartes de visite I have collected? Some cartes de visite have someone's hand writing on the back and were addressed to someone with fondest regards-perhaps a secret admirer. Other cartes de visite have a name, an age and a date. I presume this could have been written by someone in the family related to the carte de visite to keep record of their family genealogy. This meant something to the person who wrote on the carte and possibly to the person who was to receive the carte de visite. These two examples signify love and how the carte de visite became an object of sentiment.

This work is pleasing to the eye but something uncomfortable lurks when trying to understand it. The feeling of being deprived of something and a loss is what I wished to emphasize in this work.

'Cape Town Archaeological Dig'

These cartes are the few I have been able to collect locally in Cape Town. I have arranged the cartes de visite according to studio locations. I have also revisited the sights of the address provided on the cartes de visite and photographed what this address reveals today. In most cases the studios are now modern buildings. Some locations are now Woolworths offices, The Southern Sun Hotel, an empty rental work space, or just not present at all because of street name changes.

These are the spaces which the people in the albumen print occupied while taking their portrait. Same space but a different time. The space is there, the carte de visite is still here but the people are gone.

Most of the cartes which I have collected in Cape Town are from European countries.

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'Curiosity Cabinet'

It took twelve months to build this cabinet. Time and care was put into the making of this much loved cabinet. This is a freestanding six sided cabinet made from *'Beach European'* wood. Each side has a door and each side has ten draws. Each draw was constructed with early methods of draw construction which was used during the time when the *carte de visite* was popular. In each draw is a carefully constructed box which is hinged with brass hinges. Inside each box is a hand bound 'blank' book. It takes three hours just to construct one book. There is a glass top at the top of the cabinet for viewers to see a visual which suggests archive.

The idea for the boxes was inspired by the daguerreotype and tintype boxes which I also collect but are not a part of this project. I wanted to create the intimacy which I experience when I open the box and see a portrait. The book is suggestive of a narrative and the book is 'blank' which is suggestive of a muted narrative similar to the muted narratives of the *carte de visites* that cannot orally narrate their personal journeys. The *carte de visites* are portable and that is why I created a curiosity cabinet which is portable. The carte de visite promotes an element of intrigue and curiosity, hence the title of this work. This work speaks of the *carte de visites* as a collection and as an archive.

'Album'

This is a life size image from the back of one of the albums I have collected. In the front of the album there is a dedication which reads "From Maurice with best love, To Elsie, Xmas 1911" and on the following page the album is called "The Excelsior Album". Pages are soiled with finger marks and human residue but the photographs have been removed from the album leaving it 'blank'. I have recorded the melody which still plays. This work is where the sound belongs to the visual but the object is removed from this relationship. I wanted my viewer to realise that there is a beautiful melody playing to an emptiness created by the removal of the albums' cartes de visite.

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'Unknown 2013'

This is a large white reproduction of a carte de visite on white Japanese archival paper. Behind the print is a white led light box. There is a button which can alter the intensity of the light which alters how much can and cannot be seen.

"In one case the emphasis is on the work's cultic value; in the other, on its display value. Artistic reproduction begins with images that serve cultic purposes. With such images, presumably, their presence is more important than the fact that they are seen." (Benjamin 12: 2011) This work is about presence. It has nothing to do with monumentalising a dead colonialist, or what is being worn, or that the figure is female and not male, that the individual is not a well-

known and recognizable figure. It has everything to do with a person's presence through their absence and the limitation to know them further. I wanted to emphasize an aura by limiting colour and creating a luminous effect with the usage of light. When looking at the print there is image noise like the obvious fibre of the paper interfering with a perfect print which does not allow you to see the print without noticing that there is interference. This interference for me is the void of history which the carte de visite bears whiteness to. But objects cannot talk physically, only through their materiality.

'Sentiment expressed through advertisements'

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I have albumen printed advertisements from photographic studios in Cape Town during the late 1800s and when cartes de visite were most popular. I wanted found every photographic advertisement from the Cape Almanacs in the Cape Town National Library from 1800 to 1910. I looked through each years' almanac in hope to find anything photographically related. I came across 28 advertisements of which I selected twelve which express sentiment from the photographer and the photographer's advertisement playing on the sentiment of his customers. These advertisements reveal a desire to have 'the perfect likeness' and some at the best prices which reveals how much it cost someone to have their 'likeness' taken at the time. They provide an awareness to the different photographic processes and at which photographic studios, where the individual photographers practiced in Cape Town and in specific years.

Conclusion

Between the world's irreversible evolution and ourselves, objects interpose a discontinuous, classifiable, reversible screen which can be reconstituted at will, a segment of the world which belongs to us, responding to our hands and minds and delivering us from anxiety. Objects do not merely help us to master the world by virtue of their integration in instrumental series, they also help us by virtue of their integration into mental series to master time, rendering it discontinuous and classifying it, after the fashion of habits, and subjecting it to the same associational constraints as those which govern the arrangement of things in space (Baudrillard in 53: 2009)

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The *cartes de visite* duality of experiencing real and virtual space. There are exact addresses on the *cartes de visite* where they were created, documented a moment in time, capture the 'originals' photographic 'likeness', where people seen in the *carte de visite* lived in the same spaces which we live in today. This work collapses time and allows me to experience a 'shared' space, and revisiting the sight specific locations allows for a very sublime reality. Living in the same space in a different time.

Hopefully this paper has provided some knowledge of what the *carte de visite* was and its history in Cape Town and that there is a recognition of the people staring back,²⁷ who once lived in the same spaces as we do now. Finally, by providing a few examples of how these *cartes* were used to create an individual's identity, and knowing where they are circulating today, that 'You could speak of these photographs as a thinking, as a pensiveness without a voice, whose only voice remains suspended' (Derrida in Richter 2010: ix).

27 - Thinking about James Elkins 'The Object Stares Back' and how loved people have now become as object-like as the *carte* itself has become.

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to my closest family. My mother for her endless support and wisdom to know when to be there for me and when I needed space to get the work done. My uncle-dad, Jacques Tredoux, for financing my studies and providing me the opportunity to study further and explore my passion in life. My Aunt and two cousins, Tracy, Nichola and Jessica Tredoux for their love. My grandmother for all her endless love and support, and to Manny. To my godfather, Peter Manelis, a special thanks to you. You have sat through all the tears and always encouraged me when I felt there was nobody there to help me.

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Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town. Centre for Curating the Archive, University of Cape Town.

Postgraduate funding office for awarding me the McIver award in 2012 and 2013, University of Cape Town.

To my supervisor Professor Pippa Skotnes at Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Fine Art for giving me the opportunity to do my masters and for all her guidance in the first year of my master's studies.

To my supervisor Carine Zaayman, thank you for believing in my arduous work process, for your guidance, for looking after my well being during the latter half of this masters, for listening to my struggles and for seeing this masters through to the end.

To Professor Colin Richards for teaching me how to appreciate text, how to really enjoy close readings, how to analyze and write something to be proud of. I treasure the time spent in his classes, absorbing a fraction of his wisdom, I will carry his legacy with me forever.

Thank you to Professor Stephen Inggs for your support.

Thank you to the director of Michaelis School of Fine Art Professor Fritha Langeman

Thomas Cartwright for your patience, for going through my essay with a fine toothcomb and for your advice on writing.

Thank you to Carlos Marzia at D'Almeida Design for understanding my work and making what was in my imagination a reality. Thank you for your patience and expertise. I appreciate you handling my work with the greatest of care.

Moenieb Dalwaai for directing me to use the correct technical equipment and for his endless support.

Charlie Van Rooyen and Shannon Brand for helping me with all the heavy duty maneuvering, practical assembling, and your endless support.

Thank you Martin for creating my steel shelf as fast as you could with precision.

Tessa Preston for your endless persistence, understanding, and for taking on a huge work load when everyone else was not interested in helping. You are a large part of rescuing and preserving this collection of *cartes de visite*.

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Thank you to Russell Jones at Scanshop for printing all the digital printing and help.

Craig Kallis and the Kallis family for your many hours of dedication and for making the 'practically impossible' a reality.

Thank you to Danny Parsons for helping me capture the *carte de visite*.

To my friend and colleague Ashley Walters for his endless help, understanding this process, support and insight to the process of this project. Particularly the late nights helping me trace and photograph the photographic studios, allowing me to take his portrait, and with his selfless hours with printing and photographic help.

To my friend and colleague Jeannette Unite for making sure I was on the right track, for seeing the true nature of this body of work and motivating me to always dig deep for the true matter of this project.

To my friend Clair Hoon, thank you for making me laugh when I was crumbling. I could not have managed the final hours without your help, even until early mornings on a lot of days.

To my friends in Johannesburg and in Cape Town who were a part of the making of this project, thank you for your words of encouragement and motivation.

This document and exhibition was created as part of a Masters of Fine Art (MFA) at Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town. 2014

