

2013

Print to pixel: how can the cultural implications of mediated images and text be examined using creative practice?

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Print to pixel: How can the cultural implications of mediated images and text be examined using creative practice?

The aim of this research is to identify the positive and negative aspects of the shift from print to digital technology. I explore through creative praxis how the slowing down of information can challenge dominant media paradigms.

By

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MA (Visual Arts)**

**This thesis is presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy
Faculty of Education and Arts
Edith Cowan University**

**March
2013**

ABSTRACT

Information in the twenty-first century is at our fingertips in an instant. Through the technology of the mobile phone, computer, and television, we are alerted to information of international, national, local, and personal significance. The aim of this research is to establish that creative practice can provide a cogent forum with which to interrogate the cultural implications of mediated images and text in the twenty first Century. This exegesis *Print to pixel* explores the interrelationship between the political and cultural values as identified in the various codes within western mainstream news media. The cultural implications of the shift from print to digital technology leading to the immediacy of access to information, is crucial to this research.

I focus on the media coverage of September 11 2001 as an example of the use of codes, framing and repetition in western mainstream news media. The coverage of the reaction to September 11 2001 exemplified the potency of images to communicate a particular political and social agenda. The creative component of my research consists of associated extracted images and text from western mainstream news media. The act of extracting and freezing images from the seemingly continuous flow of digital information is key to this research, allowing art gallery visitors to focus and re-engage with too readily dismissed information on screen. I examine the future of print by including digital and traditional print techniques, on paper, on screens and in books, in an investigation of the links between the different technologies used to report the events and consequences of September 11 2001.

The combination of theory and practice in the form of reflexive praxis is the methodology I use to develop my findings. Reflexive praxis offers a method for arts practice, as a communicative act, to create a new balance by which the artist/researcher adopts processes acknowledging individual and social influences by applying theoretical rigour to draw new conclusions and propose new questions. Jurgen Habermas refers to the validity claims that are made in the communicative act and states that “The validity claims that we raise in conversation – that is, when we say something with conviction – transcend this specific conversational context, pointing to something beyond the spatiotemporal ambit of the occasion” (1990, p. 19). He refers to the conversation as an opportunity to make a statement that goes beyond the immediate interaction and leads to wider implications. I regard the exhibition of my artworks as providing that ‘conversational context’ in which I raise

questions that may have unpredictable implications as the viewer brings to the work their own life influences and prejudices. Therefore, applying reflexive praxis by “reflecting upon, and reconstructing the constructed world,” I constantly analyse the propositions being made through my work and assume “a process of meaning making, and that meaning and its processes are contingent upon a cultural and social environment” (Crouch, 2007, p. 112). It is only through the manifestation of my research ideas in the form of exhibited artworks that an evaluation through reflexive praxis occurs: considering how works are interpreted according to the context in which they are shown, what relationships with other works reveal and whether the artworks successfully address the research aims.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge everyone who has contributed to this extraordinary journey. Each one has provided differing but invaluable support. My initial inspiration at Edith Cowan University was Clive Barstow who constantly encouraged me to believe in my creative practice. Christopher Crouch and Nicola Kaye, followed in the final year by Stuart Medley, provided critical guidance, motivation and friendship throughout the vicissitudes of the PhD journey. My gratitude also goes to my fellow students and colleagues who enriched the whole experience.

My love and respect goes to Darryl, my husband of forty years, who has always provided the essential foundation of support, encouragement and patience in my life. My gratitude also goes to my children, extended family and friends, who have provided endless support and encouragement.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research is to identify how creative practice can provide an effective forum with which to examine the cultural implications of the shift from print to digital technology in western mainstream news media representations. I aim to identify that the conventions of print still fundamentally influence the presentation of digital information and that the major difference is the scale of the increase of information. Therefore I discuss the transition from print to digital technology focusing on the impact of the escalating amount of information. My creative praxis entails extracting, cropping, and exaggerating the repetition in printed and digital art works in order to stall the relentless flow of images and text.

My initial source of information for the first part of my life was the printed word, and its primacy over televised or broadcast information persists for me. I still read the newspaper every morning. However, as a child of the fifties and sixties who did not have access to television or a domestic telephone until I was in my teens the novelty and interest in television is different to that of a younger person who has been exposed to mass media technology their whole life. Understanding that my life experiences were not as immersed in the technologies of communication (telephone and television) as someone born since the 1970s or 80s informs my analysis of the rapidity of change and the enormous cultural effects of that change. A term for people born since the 1980s is 'digital native' or the 'Net generation' "these people are said to have been immersed in technology all their lives imbuing them with sophisticated technical skills and learning preferences" (2008, p. 775). Recognising how the rapidly changing media technology has influenced my personal access to information and shaped the direction of my art practice has alerted me to the problems associated with the sheer amount of information to which we are exposed. Therefore the analysis of the impact of the shift to digital media technology (smart phones, computers, tablets) is crucial in order to appreciate the political and social changes it has wrought.

I examine developments in communication technology from the introduction of movable type in the fifteenth century to current developments in digital media. This historical perspective reveals the relationships that underpin the development of new media and which I incorporate into my creative practice. I use a reflexive praxis methodology, combining theory and practice, in order to analyse those implications. By adopting an objective as well as a subjective interrogation of my work I assume an intellectual engagement with my work. Through a re-ordering of the relationships

between images and text extracted from mainstream media in my exhibited works, I am saying something “with conviction”, as Habermas (1990) states, with the aim of challenging prevailing media messages.

I incorporate still images and text extracted from continuous and repetitious western mainstream news programmes. My creative practice, manifested in many exhibitions during my PhD candidature, is key to this research, which examines the codes present in news images, the framing of content and the subsequent political connotations. I take digital photographs of news items, crop sections that reveal the use of codes, combine them with text from news stories, and transform them into digital prints, books and digital movies which I describe further in Chapter 3. The constant flow of information is disrupted and the viewer/reader is allowed time for contemplation of the ramifications of the political and social content within the overwhelming amount of information. I use the word information to denote the entirety of visual and aural material to which the viewer is exposed, which is not to be equated with knowledge. Communication, particularly in news media, is predicated on the notion of validity and reliability of information, therefore the comparison of the development of print and digital media is pivotal to this research.

Research question

My artwork is an interrogation of the negative and the positive aspects of new media technologies. Instant access to information, the ability to interact locally and globally on a social and business level and the spread of alternative news sites contribute positively and negatively to information access. However, I focus on the over-abundance of decontextualised information which severely restricts the possibilities for informed decision making. Digital prints, traditional prints, handwriting, and digital movies are the forms of my art practice. I use these to explore alternative cultural interactions within our information-saturated society by slowing down the continuous flow of information, exaggerating the repetition by placing media images side-by side in the gallery. My research question therefore is: can creative practice, by disrupting the relentless flow of information in western mainstream news media, provide the viewer a more contemplative space in which to engage and question familiar media paradigms?

The convergence of media, newspaper, radio, television, Internet, fiction and non-fiction books, magazines and text messages, is now the reality of my lifeworld in which one communication medium has not replaced another but has influenced the others. Therefore the interpretation of information within this mass of media

becomes critical. The 'lifeworld' as described by Habermas is the world of everyday actions and beliefs (2000, p. 174). I argue that the ubiquity of digital media increases the dominance of the image. The ease with which images can be captured, manipulated and transmitted using digital technology leads to their dominance in mainstream news media. Habermas in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* asks:

...how to overcome the isolation of science, morals, and art and their respective expert cultures. How can they be joined to the impoverished traditions of the lifeworld, and how can this be done without detriment to their regional rationality? How can a new balance between the separated moments be established in communicative everyday life? (1990, p. 19)

I seek to analyse how the combination of communication media and the technologies associated with them is influencing the viewer/readers' ability to make informed decisions. This analysis is carried out through investigating in whose interests images are chosen, and how repetition, framing and codes influence the interpretation of images.

The news coverage of September 11 2001 has been the primary source of images and texts incorporated into my creative practice. These images and texts amplify the key factors of repetition, framing and codes in mainstream news media which I develop in Chapter 2. My creative practice spans over a decade and reflects a continuing interest in socio/political issues. I regard an open and diverse media landscape as essential for a functioning, informed, politically aware society. Therefore, within the reflexive praxis model I investigate western mainstream news media processes, analysing the cultural implications of the exponential growth in media technologies. In Chapter 3 I describe how the images and texts associated with September 11 2001 are incorporated into my creative practice for the purpose of exposing the elements within western mainstream news media. By placing my artwork in a gallery space I aim to freeze constantly moving information and provide a more contemplative space in which viewers can reflect on the implications of those elements.

System and lifeworld: Resisting colonisation

My research questions whether new media technologies can combine with current forms of mass media to create a public sphere, where the truth or otherwise of statements and images can be tested. Jurgen Habermas' utopian concept defines the public sphere as the space, open to all, where arguments stand or fall with the power of the better argument rather than with the power of coercion (2003,

p. 121). It is utopian in the sense that the ideal of accessibility and rationality is based on the premise that the public is apprised of a similar quality of information with which to make informed judgements. However, the dominance and power of media corporations and governments, which Habermas terms 'systems' (2003, p. 123), creates an unequal system of interaction denying the consumer/viewer the ability to test the validity of claims being made. Salter (2005) citing Habermas (1987, p. 311) describes how:

Systemic colonization does not go as far as to replace communicative rationality, rather it disempowers it: steering mechanisms disempower communicative action's 'validity basis so as to provide the legitimate possibility of redefining at will spheres of action oriented to mutual understanding into action situations stripped of lifeworld contexts and no longer directed to achieving consensus'. (p. 294)

The systemic colonisation of the lifeworld, as described by Habermas, presages the influence of major media corporations, whose power extends through all media platforms. Systems of surveillance and control have also become more sophisticated and integrated in digital technologies. The democratizing and communicative aspects of new technologies are challenged by the systemic colonization of digital technologies.

Where is the equality of information access that creates informed argument? Lee Salter asserts: "systemic colonization doesn't go so far as to *replace* action oriented to mutual understanding; rather it *disempowers* it" (2003, p. 123). I assert that creative art practices offer a forum through which artists and social commentators can critique the hegemonic structures in society.

Rather than taking an oppositional viewpoint regarding new media technologies, I argue that an appropriate medium through which to criticise dominant cultural paradigms is the very digital technology used by communication media. I concur with Nicolas Bourriaud's statement, "Technology is only of interest to artists in so far as it puts effects into perspective, rather than putting up with it as an ideological instrument" (1998, p. 67) and that contemporary artists show a "willingness to inscribe the work of art within a network of signs and significations" (2002, p. 7). My theoretical and creative analysis incorporates and appropriates the same codes evident in popular cultural media. The codes include readily recognised symbols and editing techniques associated with western mainstream news media that I discuss further in Chapter 2. Therefore this writing is an examination of the modes of news dissemination that surround us, which include television, Internet,

mobile phones and other forms of new media technology. I argue there may be incredibly varied amounts of information now available but the ability of the consumer/viewer to analyse and verify it becomes compromised by the sheer complexity it presents. As early as 1994 Theodore Roszak suggested:

If anything we suffer from a glut of unrefined, undigested information flowing from every medium around us. The result is then a new politics in which governments do not restrict the flow of information but flood the public with it. (pp. 162-3)

Informed and ethical decisions become increasingly difficult where governments and multi-national companies manipulate information. The all-pervasive aspect of digital media, disseminated on screens, infiltrates every sector of society at an ever-increasing rate. Creative praxis, “a process of meaning making” (Crouch, 2007, p. 112), is essential for analysis of and reflection on the effects of repeated images and text in mainstream news media. Viewers become passive consumers of events outside of time and place. Arthur Kroker in *The Will to Technology and the Culture of Nihilism* argues:

We watch the Web and download TV. We watch ourselves watching TV. We watch the screen watching us. We like the screen. It's our friend. It's our boredom. It's our crowd. It is our metaphysics. It is also the pleasure of forgetfulness. It is also how the nothing happens to us. But we love the nothing. (2004, p. 36)

In a society where these images are viewed in the privacy and comfort of the home, on the television screen, the computer screen, mobile telephone screen, the viewer can console themselves with their separation from the reality of unpleasant events. However, as Susan Sontag (2002) suggests, “feeling exempt from calamity stimulates interest in looking at painful pictures, and looking at them suggests the feeling that one is exempt” (p. 87). Being exempt, however, also suggests that one is at the mercy of uncontrollable outside influences that can infiltrate and destroy that sense of security. Fear of the other is a framing device, described in Chapter 2, which is employed by politicians and repeated in the media, especially in times of crisis in order to justify the agenda of those in power.

September 11 2001 was a pivotal point in contemporary history. I use the media response to that event as a vehicle through which to examine the cultural effects of current media transitions, moving from print to digital mainstream news media. This is not an examination of September 11 2001, but more precisely an analysis of the coverage of this event which magnified the use of codes, framing

and repetition already present in the production processes of news media. Therefore, the images and text associated with that event are central to my praxis.

I incorporate images and stories extracted from western mainstream news media into my artworks, taking the familiar from media representations and placing them in unfamiliar contexts with the intention of rupturing the viewers' systems of knowledge. The unexpected location of repetitive news images with associated texts in a gallery context is designed to create a more contemplative space in which the viewer has the opportunity to engage with content that can be easily overlooked amongst the continuous flow of information and entertainment on screens. In some cases the work is didactic, when there is a clear relationship of text to image, and in others more esoteric, in the use of cropped images containing vaguely familiar colours and codes, which is intended to challenge the conventions in mainstream news media. Elliot Gaines (2011, p. 12) states that meanings are:

often dependent on a *code* that provides rules for systematic relationships between signs that express meanings within a given context, such as the rules of a game, the way words are organized into sentences, or clues that let audiences know that a particular program contains important information, rather than entertainment.

I use digital and traditional printmaking processes in my art practice. Traditional printmaking is a slow, involved, considered process while digital technology exemplifies immediacy. However, in my practice I disrupt these processes in works that draw on, and combine the properties of each medium. I concur with Felix Guattari's statement cited by Simon O'Sullivan in *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: thought beyond representation* (2006):

The artist – and more generally aesthetic perception – detach and deterritorialise a segment of the real in such a way as to make it play the role of a partial enunciator. Art confers a function of sense and alterity to a subset of the perceived world ... The work of art, for those who use it, is an activity of unframing, of rupturing sense, of baroque proliferation or extreme impoverishment, which leads to a recreation and a reinvention of the subject itself. (p. 92)

This comprehensively expresses my creative aims. 'A segment of the real', in terms of my art practice, includes the images and text by which we are surrounded, that I extract from the media landscape altered, reframed and recontextualised in a variety of formats.

News: Immediacy and limitations

I analyse how the immediacy of access to contemporary western mainstream news media impacts on the viewer/reader's ability to comprehend the social and

cultural implications of that information. New technologies connect us to vast amounts of information at any time, day or night, as it seems that the compulsion to be constantly informed is overwhelming. This raises the question of what defines news and whether serious news, in combination with celebrity gossip, and barely concealed advertising, diminishes its impact. As astonishing as it sounds today, David Bell stated that in 1930 in:

... the early days of radio the BBC sometimes found there was a shortage of news deemed worthy to be broadcast. If this happened, no attempt was made to fill the gap. The announcer just said: 'There is no news tonight.' (1991, p. 1)

This would be totally unimaginable today in contemporary news media. The fact that there is always just the right amount of news every day to fill news programmes attests to the fact that the definition of what is now termed news has been broadened to such an extent that it tends to erode its significance. Manuel Castells argued in 1996, "this normalization of messages, where atrocious images of real war can almost be absorbed as part of action movies, does have a fundamental impact: the levelling of all content into each person's frame of images" (pp. 336-337). The Internet contributes to this "levelling of all content" and possibly exacerbates it, as the viewer is only able to choose from the edited, constructed information available in mainstream news media.

As my focus is on the coverage of the events of September 11 2001 and its consequences, I analyse the limitations of mainstream news media representations of that event. I question whether a balanced and neutral media position during a perpetual 'war on terror' is possible. The implications of a narrow viewpoint dominating the news media was analysed by Lee Artz (2005), who examined the content of *The New York Times* during the first two weeks of the war in Iraq (2003) and found the photographs persuasively supported the Bush administration's justification and spin (p. 12). Similarly the government in Australia:

...had to convince itself, its supporters, the media, and through them the majority of the population that despite no signs of an existing WMD program, and despite the government's acceptance of, if not support for, dictatorial regimes elsewhere, the Iraq adventure was necessary for Australia's national interest. (Jakubowic. & Jacka., 2005, p. 101)

While these issues are specific to the events and consequences of September 11 2001 they reflect the ways in which information is framed and codified to present a particular dominant narrative.

Thomas Keenan in *Mobilizing Shame* (2004) discusses the cultural consequences of the omnipresence of images in news media reportage. He argues the camera, which has been a primary tool of human rights organisations to expose and shame those in power, has now reached such “unprecedented levels of public access” that “the enjoyment or the exposure is now, at least often enough to consider it nonaccidental, on the side of those who appear on camera” (p. 439). He cites the example of news reporters covering the war in Kosovo filming as “Serbian policemen and nearby villagers looted and destroyed” a recently attacked village, Mijalic, in 1999. The looters were aware that the cameras were there and actually waved to the reporters (p. 445). Keenan interprets this as suggesting: “That the camera does not simply capture what happens and convey that elsewhere in the form of knowledge or information, of something to be acted on” the wave communicates “we know you are watching, we know that you know that we know you are watching, but . . . and then it turns out there is no *but*” (p. 445). He argues, “high speed electronic news media have created new opportunities not just for activism and awareness, but also for performance, presentation, advertising, and for political works of all kinds” (p. 443). The proliferation of digital camera technology since then has new implications for exposing and shaming. Similarly digital camera technology has been essential to my creative practice allowing me to capture media images in order to expose the repetition and framing of information in western mainstream news media.

The public now bear witness to serious, tragic, memorable or ‘newsworthy’ events such as September 11 2001 by using their mobile phone technology. Similarly the widespread adoption of these new technologies allows major media corporations the ability to infiltrate online social spaces. Each new technology has not replaced the other but has added a new layer of complexity to the media landscape. This convergence has meant that each new development draws on the preceding media technology but diverges in sometimes, unforeseen directions. A case in point is the mobile phone, which was initially developed for mobile aural communication, but is now a miniaturised computer with Internet access, including a camera and a myriad of other applications.

Thesis structure

The analysis of the shift from manuscript to print forms the initial part of this thesis. The political aspects, leading to a more informed and egalitarian society were described by de Sola Pool in *Technologies of Freedom* “The path from printing to liberalism was not a straight one” and eventually “printing became a challenge to

authority in Europe”(1983, pp. 14-15). My research then examines how the visual codes, repetition and framing, in print and digital mainstream news media, affect the potential for a more informed egalitarian society. I conclude by reviewing how these aspects are expressed in the exhibitions integral to this research.

I analyse the history of the book in chapter 1, with special emphasis on the introduction of the printing press and the consequences of the concentration of ownership and control in the hands of the rich and powerful (Finkelstein and McCleery, 2004, p. 56). This is followed by a brief history of the shift to electronic communication media leading to the Internet, and the political consequences of government and corporate influence on news content. I focus on the ubiquity of images in news media and investigate whether they contribute to an informed public. The transitional phase in each of these technologies is explored and the particular similarities and differences of visual codes discussed. Central to this examination are the authors Elizabeth Eisenstein (1979) and Lev Manovich (2001). Eisenstein analyses the profound consequences of the shift from manuscript writing to the introduction of the printing press, while Manovich examines the move from print to digital technology with particular reference to the development of a new media language. In *The Language of New Media* (2001) he examines the emergent conventions, recurrent design patterns, and key forms of new media central to his analysis. He asserts:

just as the printing press in the fourteenth century and photography in the nineteenth century had a revolutionary impact on the development of modern society and culture, today we are in the middle of a new media revolution – the shift of all culture to computer mediated forms of production, distribution, and communication. This new revolution is arguably more profound than the previous ones, and we are just beginning to register its initial effects. (p. 19)

More recently Manovich states “We have moved from the stage of “**New Media**” to “**More Media**” (2004-.) We are living in an exponential explosion in the amounts of data we are generating, capturing, analysing, visualizing and storing – including cultural content” (2009). The cultural implications of this massive growth in communication technologies is discussed in Chapter 2, examining the effects of this explosion of information focusing on mainstream news representations of the events of September 11 2001.

The analysis of mainstream news media representations and how information has changed, specifically relating to visual representations, is the focus of Chapter 2. This chapter, exploring the codes, repetition, framing and political aspects within

mass media, shapes the material direction of my practice. Repetition of words and phrases within mainstream news media magnifies the limited range of information that impacts negatively on the engagement of the public. As Baudrillard states “We are in a universe where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning” (1983, p. 95). I argue that combining news footage with celebrity gossip and advertisements on mainstream news detracts from the seriousness of the content. The majority of news reports are also interspersed with commercials which, while obviously not part of the news, create a frame in which the consumer/viewer relates to the world. Todd Gitlin (2000, p. 579) suggests that “commercials acculturate us to interruption through the rest of our lives” and that “regardless of the commercial’s ‘effect’ on our behaviour, we are consenting to its domination of the public space.” The existence of commercials before the existence of television and their ubiquity in daily newspapers and radio broadcasts already predisposes the media consumer to acceptance of the interruptions and domination of public space. How can serious and tragic events be assessed and critically analysed by a public accustomed to information presented by a smiling, well-dressed newsreader, interspersed with unrelated advertisements? In *The Silent Takeover: Global capitalism and the death of democracy* (2002) Noreena Hertz states: “Procter and Gamble explicitly prohibits programming around its commercials ‘which could in any way further the concept of business as cold or ruthless” (p. 7). My research addresses the effect that these aspects of the media have on the level of engagement and understanding of the complexities associated with that information. Susan Sontag (1977, 2002, 2004), Jean Baudrillard (1983, 1988 2002), and Simon O’Sullivan (2006) inform this examination.

Chapter 3 is an examination of my creative practice and its focus on the interpretation of images and text in western mainstream news media. Slowing down the continuous and virtually interchangeable images of conflict and disaster is the central method of my creative practice. The sources of those images are actually limited (contrary to the promoted 24 hour live coverage) consequently the images are repeated relentlessly until the power of the information is diminished. A car bomb, destroyed buildings, and distraught people are the staple images in newspapers, on television or Internet news sites, and, accordingly, primary content in my creative practice in combination with Western Australian images. However, the work is not strident; it quietly sets out to disrupt and make new connections which initiate alternative cultural interactions. The use of local images links the cultural impact of the depicted events to that immediate location. I use repetition,

cropping and framing of images derived from contemporary media and incorporated into my creative practice. In trying to be the first with the news or to provide the most comprehensive coverage, western mainstream news media actually create indistinguishable generic symbols. Tamara Witschge (2010) states that: “analysis of the content of mainstream online news (almost all of the UK national newspapers and the BBC online)” revealed “that much of the abundant news online is homogenous: news organizations often cover stories from the same angles and different organizations repeatedly present the same information in their stories (be they images, quotes, or descriptive passages) (Redden and Witschge 2009)” (p. 116). I extract elements common to contemporary media and reinterpret them through my artwork in order to reactivate the viewer’s critical engagement, testing the dominant paradigms in mainstream news reports. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin in *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (2000) describe this kind of borrowing, as “*remediation*”, a “representation of one medium in another” (p. 45). For the purposes of this research I will be using this term to describe elements of my practice.

Johanna Drucker, academic, author, critic, book artist and visual poet, writes extensively on communication aspects of design, typography and artists’ books. Her analysis of the impact of artists’ books on contemporary art informs my creative practice, of which the creation of artists’ books is a significant part. Therefore, her analysis is an important element in Chapter 3. She addresses the possibilities for creative dialogue through the interface of image and text in contemporary media:

Dialogue is a process, not a product: It can’t be packaged, commodified, experienced as a standard “brand” or sign. In an image-saturated culture, one of the functions of fine art is to keep opening spaces of such dialogue within the integrated circuitry of signs, continually pulling meaning back out of the predictable production of a rhetoric of consumption into a rhetoric of critical consideration and thoughtful exchange. (2000, p. 49)

In *The Century of Artists’ Books* (1995, p. 2) she also questions the definition of the book: “What about computer printers and Xerox machines? Is a work which is made only of bound set-up sheets or other found paper a book production? Or one made of blank paper? Or appropriated images?” (1995, p. 2) This relates directly to my creative art practice in which I analyse the definition and form of the book and its inherent relationship to the Internet. The structure, materials and information associated with the book and print are deconstructed and reinterpreted in order to expose effects of the shift to digital technology. My creative practice of extracting visual and textual elements from mainstream news media on screen and

transforming it into print in differing book formats reinforces the historic link between print and digital and fixes the information in an alternative and more contemplative medium. Drucker's writing espouses the integration and cross-pollination of ideas within design and fine art. My previous work history in design informs and influences the aesthetic direction of my art practice in which I challenge the cultural implications of the infiltration of new media into every aspect of society.

Chapter 3 is divided into 2 sections, the first is an examination of the art practices of Hans Haacke, whose work is overtly political, Jeremy Deller (UK's 2004 Turner prize winner) and Thomas Hirschhorn who also draw on contemporary social and political concepts. It is the news coverage of September 11 2001 and its consequences, not the event itself, on which my creative practice focuses. This is not a comprehensive analysis of socio-political art but rather an example of how each of these artist's lifeworlds is expressed in their art practice. The second section of Chapter 3 demonstrates how a reflexive praxis model has been central to my research by analysing the news coverage of the events and consequences of September 11 2001. The concepts of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987) concerning the book and its relationship to the Internet have been pivotal to my creative practice. They describe the unexpected proliferation of communication technologies through the concept of the rhizome. The rhizome relates to, an immediate, indefinite multiplicity of secondary roots grafting onto a principal root and undergoing a flourishing development (p. 5) and that "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be" (p. 7). I draw on the rhizome theory throughout this research, as it applies to the concept of the book and its relevance to the concept of hypermedia on the Internet. Yvonne Waern in the *Encyclopedia of New Media* (2003) defines the term hypermedia as a "nonlinear way of organizing and presenting information in multiple media" and "encompasses everything from a simple combination of text and pictures to complex movies and Web sites" (p. 225). I associate the term 'indefinite multiplicity' to the widespread adoption of digital communication devices linked to the predominance of the image in western mainstream news media.

Finally, I reflexively examine the exhibitions that have been the focus of this research. I analyse the effectiveness of each exhibition in order to attain new insights that address the primary concerns of my praxis. As Crouch states praxis "forces the practitioner to consider more than the practicalities of making" and is a method which is "contingent upon a cultural and social environment" (2007). I conclude with a discussion of my final exhibition entitled *immediacy* in which I build

on these previous exhibitions and aim to communicate the challenges that exist for the viewer/reader in the rapidly shifting and changing new media era.

The cultural and political implications of the naturalisation of new media forms are integral to my research. I investigate the exponential increase (Manovich, 2009) in the access to visual information. As early as 1973, John Berger asserted that: "In no other form of society in history has there been such a concentration of images, such a density of visual messages" (1973, p. 129). He was specifically referring to publicity or advertising images in cities. The era to which Berger refers was also a time of great upheaval: the Vietnam War, political assassinations, the civil rights movement in America, feminism, the moon landing; all were preserved in powerful images in newspapers, magazines, and television. That density of visual messages has grown and continues to grow in the digital era, raising questions concerning the consumer/viewer's ability to comprehend the implicit codes and propositions. Henry Giroux (2006, p. 8) states, "Material repression is the refashioning of language, sound, and image in an effort to diminish the capacity of the American public to weigh evidence critically, exercise thoughtful discrimination, and to make informed judgements". However, I contend that the crucial difference is the immediacy of access, and the exponential increase in the amount of information (Manovich, 2001 and 2009). The immediacy with which we can view news images has increased but the diversity of mainstream news media sources continues to diminish, due to economic constraints. Consequently, repetition of footage or still images, and even accompanying text, has become the norm. My creative practice replicates and exaggerates these norms, exposing and reinterpreting the political aspects inherent in news reports.

Retrieved digital images are remediated into my work in the form of traditional prints, examining the culture, the structure and construction of the book and its relationship to digital information. The "book", in my creative practice, references print technology and its inherent relationship to the development of the Internet and digital technology. Implicit in my work is the analysis of the implications of altering scale of text and image, using a range of materials, using multiples, examining how these influence meaning, in order to create a dialogue between the print and the digital work. Making and testing and reflexively analysing the outcomes of my work in the exhibitions I have had throughout my candidature forms the continuing process of my praxis.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF PRINT/BOOK AND NEW MEDIA

Central to this chapter is the analysis of the histories of the major shifts in mass communication, principally from manuscript to print, and from print to digital technologies. I examine the fragmentation and standardisation of information emerging in print media and increasing in digital media. Images and text from western mainstream news media form the principal content in my creative practice; therefore the analysis of the development and proliferation of communication technologies is an important aspect of this research. The history of each form of media is fundamental to understanding the specific differences and similarities manifested within them. Within this section I will be comparing and contrasting texts including *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1979) by Elizabeth Eisenstein and *The Language of New Media* (2001) by Lev Manovich. These texts explore the histories of print and digital media, their connections, and future directions.

Print

Throughout this thesis the term “the book” is used to signify print technology since the development of moveable type in Europe in the fifteenth century. The material object of the book, newspaper, pamphlet, as we know it today, exists because of that pivotal development. I examine how the fifteenth century in European history created the cultural climate in which the new technology could flourish. This chapter is a review of the key moments of the transition from manuscript to moveable type. These key moments reveal the differences and commonalities that exist between this shift and the more current transition from print to digital technologies. Further in this chapter I discuss the difference in time it takes to create printed information, the ubiquity of images, and the similarities of fragmentation, standardisation and repetition in both media technologies.

In the fifteenth century Johann Gutenberg developed a method of replica-casting metal letters so that large quantities of type could be produced for the composition of extended texts. This new technology was to have an incalculable effect on the transfer of information and the spread of cultural ideas. The production of metal letters for the purpose of printing extended texts created the beginning of replication, fragmentation and loss of context, all concerns currently related to the spread of digital technology (Eisenstein, 1979, Baudrillard, 1988), and an essential aspect of my creative practice. I analyse whether the differing technologies are able

to continue to co-exist. Key to this research is the examination of the transformation of the culture of information access and what it means for the future of print technologies.

Eisenstein (1979) analyses the development and changes wrought by the move from scribal culture (Eisenstein's term for the era of hand-written manuscripts) to print. She argues: "In order to assess changes ushered in by printing, for example, we need to survey the conditions that prevailed before its advent" (1979, p. 8). Similarly, in order to analyse the changes occurring currently with electronic media, the culture of print needs to be examined, as the conventions of print are intrinsically linked to the development of digital media. Manovich describes one of the principles of text organization, the page—a rectangular surface containing a limited amount of information, as applying to the "1984 Apple graphical user interface that presented information in overlapping windows stacked behind one another—essentially, a set of book pages" (2001, p. 74). Similarly terminology associated with print technology: typeface, paragraph, margin, column, cut and paste, etc., has transferred to computer technology.

The book precedes the invention of moveable type in Europe, extending over more than five thousand years (Dahl, 1968, p. 7). Religious, scientific, and literary works were produced on papyrus in the kingdom of the Pharaohs and Dahl (1968) states: "The oldest papyrus known dates back from about 2400B.C., but papyrus is even older, dating back to the time when hieroglyphic was in use, because there is a hieroglyphic symbol for the papyrus roll" (p. 9). There is also evidence that China also possessed the art of writing and produced literary works as early as the third millennium B.C. (p. 13). These works were primarily written on wooden tablets. However, as early as 213 B.C., those in power sought to control the messages contained in books. The Emperor Chin Tain Shihuangti issued an edict to destroy all books to punish authors who dared to criticise his political actions (p. 13). This action echoes through history as the powerful in society have sought to alter or obliterate alternative views. In a contemporary context Jason Ditz states that:

In the wake of World War 2, so aware was the US of the stigma surrounding flaming piles of books that officials decided to pulp, but not burn, the massive numbers of German language texts destroyed in occupied West Germany. (2012, n.p.)

Similarly he states that the culture that allows the Pentagon to buy every copy of a book by Lt Col. Anthony Schaffer in 2010 and burn them all also keeps them

from talking about most cases (2012). How information is constructed and controlled to further political and social control is discussed further in Chapter 2.

In the fourth millennium B.C. the Sumerians originated cuneiform writing on soft clay in tablet form (Finkelstein and McCleery, 2005, p. 29). Writing was “the province of an elite section of society” and “that reverence for the sacred nature of the word was carried through to cultures based in the Sinai and Palestinian regions” (p. 29). Leather has also been used at various places from the earliest times as a material on which to write. Once the skins of sheep, calves or goats were treated in a special way so as to make them smooth and firm on both sides and perfect for writing they were known as parchment or vellum. The cost of these materials further restricted access to manuscripts to “the elite social groupings of society – the court, the law, the laity, monks, and the priests” (Finkelstein and McCleery, 2005, p. 36). One of the major benefits of parchment was that, in contrast to papyrus, animal skin allowed erasures to be made. The cost of vellum led to many manuscripts being erased and then new texts written over them creating palimpsests. The term ‘palimpsest’ defines a manuscript or piece of writing material, historically vellum, on which the original writing has been erased to make room for later writing but the traces of the original remain. The concept of the palimpsest was crucial in initiating my early research, informing a number of exhibitions focusing on the barely visible traces that remain from the past impacting on the content and form of contemporary media.

The use of papyrus in the form of rolls was gradually superseded by parchment. The Greeks had been using small tablets of wood, sometimes coated with wax, on which notations could be made using a metal stylus (Dahl, 1968, p. 25). Occasionally a collection of tablets was bound together for convenience and this form was easily adapted to vellum in the form of a book during the first period of the Roman Empire. This form was called a codex, a term which is still in use for a collection of pages in a book form (Finkelstein and McCleery, 2005, p. 35). Dahl notes that the Roman publishing industry differed from that of our day as the author received no payment and anyone who wished could buy a book and have it copied. (1968, p. 29) This bears a remarkable similarity to the motivations of the early Internet technology developers. Manuel Castells in *The rise of the Network Society* (1996) states: “some of the key innovators of the 1970s Silicon Valley revolution in computer technologies were intentionally trying to undo the centralizing technologies of the corporate world” (p. 6).

Written texts retained the authority associated with the Sumerian inscriptions on clay as Finkelstein and McCleery state: “Truth, authority, and the sacred nature of the written word would also become embedded in the most influential religious movement to emerge from the Sinai basin during Roman times”: Christianity, and that, “The sacralistic nature of the written word became embedded in Church ritual” (2005, p. 30). I reference the history of the authentic and sacred nature of the written word by making handwriting on paper a significant element in my creative practice, as I discuss in further detail in Chapter 3.

According to history Ts'ai Lun invented paper in the year 105 A.D. in China and for almost 700 years the Chinese were able to keep their papermaking methods a secret. As Dahl states, however, “when Chinese papermakers were captured by Arabs in the middle of the eighth century, the process was discovered. From then on paper started its journey through the Arab empire, reaching Europe about 1100” (1968, p. 35). As the Arabs moved through Spain, the city of Toledo and another place close to Valencia became the first centres of paper making in Europe. By the fifth century, parchment codices had become dominant.

Writing and book ownership was limited to the Church and the aristocracy: the court, the law, the laity, monks, and priests (Finkelstein and McCleery, 2005, p. 36). Manuscripts were produced by scribes “with the assumption that few would read the results, but many would end up hearing them: (2005, p. 37). As Dahl states “It was not until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that the middle class attained a cultural, social and economic level that made it possible for them to own books” (1968, p. 68). Even in that transitional phase, printed texts were created to copy the style of manuscripts. However, “The stationers, scribes, illuminators and binders of manuscript books were not ready to give up without a struggle. Aided by universities, they formed a group that sought to hold printers down” (1968, p.111). Scribes even copied printed texts and, as Eisenstein states, “handwork and presswork continued to appear almost indistinguishable” (p. 51).

Elizabeth Eisenstein’s key text *The Printing Press As An Agent Of Change* (1979) analyses the historical and cultural changes wrought by the fifteenth century shift to the printing press, emphasising the increase in standardisation and fragmentation of information. Considering the cultural consequences of the emergence of print technology Eisenstein states: “Concepts pertaining to uniformity and to diversity – to the typical and the unique – are interdependent, they represent the two sides of the coin” (1979, p. 84). Uniformity revolutionised “maps, boundaries and place names, local customs, laws, languages and costumes” (pp. 83-84). It also

led to the concept of “standardisation of dress styles, repeated images representing class distinctions and recognisable images of emperors and kings” (p. 84). This standardisation, however, also led to a “more idiosyncratic sense of the self” (p. 84), referred to by Eisenstein as the other side of the coin. It can be argued that television and the Internet similarly, through repetition and standardised representations of cultural norms, create uniformity. However, the ability to access a diverse range of topics and individual views, particularly on the Internet, may also lead to the formation of highly individualistic lifestyles as Ilkka Arminen (2012) suggests, “The negative visions emphasize the side effects of filtering and mass customization that tend to split society into increasingly smaller groups” (n.p.). Support for extreme views can be accentuated and reinforced by accessing particular Internet sites. Print and digital technology embody the potential for a broader, more inclusive world-view while concurrently providing comfort and validation for narrow, insular views.

Eisenstein argues that the shift from one kind of literate culture to another (p. xii) has not been fully recognised. She suggests: “the effects produced by printing are by no means self evident” (p. 7); similarly the effects produced by digital media technology require rigorous investigation. The problem to which she refers is the difficulty of recreating the transitional time when manuscript yielded to print, as in order to research that time we use printed texts.

The particular characteristics of printed text to which we are now so acculturated include numbered pages, punctuation marks, section breaks, running heads, indices, etc., which were not common previously. Martin (cited in Finkelstein and McCleery, 2005, p. 36) asserts texts could be misinterpreted because of the “lack of significant signals to point to stops, pauses or breaks” and Eisenstein (1979, p. 55) states that, “The incapacity of any two scribes (let alone one thousand) to produce identical copies while taking dictation is overlooked”. However, with more printed information available and more widely disseminated, errors of fact could be checked and amended leading to more standardisation, including: “uniform maps, boundaries and place names, local customs, laws, and languages and costumes” (p. 83). Print not only enhanced the opportunities to read texts but also “increased opportunities for image makers” (p. 68). In the particular “fields of learning such as architecture, geometry or geography and many of the life sciences” (p. 69) the image took precedence over the word. The most important effect of the transition to print, as defined by Eisenstein, was “preservation” (p. 113), as scholars such as “Thomas Jefferson stressed the democratising power of print which secured

precious documents not by putting them under lock and key but removing them from chests and vaults and duplicating them for all to see” (1979, p. 116). Each of these characteristics of print has become so common to the point that their initial importance is easily overlooked.

The development of the Gutenberg Press in the second half of the fifteenth century led to the rise of media industries as new bases of symbolic power throughout Europe. Shillingsburg (2000, p. 27) talks about his visit to the Gutenberg Museum in Mainz in July 2000 where it was impressed upon him that Gutenberg was a businessman and inventor who saw his process as a moneymaking enterprise. Similarly Finkelstein and McCleery state that the invention of printing transformed books into a “tradeable commodity” and that “enduring printing firms tended to be in commercial and trading centres” (2005, p. 46). The first book to be printed by this process was the Bible. As Eisenstein argues, the first printmakers were portrayed as “early capitalists” enabling one to see them as “innovators” (p. 22), not only “business men but also literary dispensers of glory” (p. 23). Walter J. Ong in *Orality and literacy: The technologizing of the word* (2002) argues:

Alphabet letterpress printing, in which each letter was cast on a separate piece of metal, or type, marked a psychological breakthrough of the first order. It embedded the word itself deeply in the manufacturing process and made it into a kind of commodity. (p. 116)

Ong contends that the printing press was the first assembly line process “which printers had worked with for three hundred years” preceding other replaceable-part manufacturing in the industrial revolution in the late 1700s (p. 116-117). He also asserts that: “Print was also a major factor in the development of the sense of personal privacy that marks modern society” (p. 128). The sharing of oral information declined as words were transformed onto the visual space of the printed page and became widely available to a broader cross-section of society.

The advent of print technology is intrinsically linked to modernity as printed texts could be distributed widely and ideas disseminated in a short time over wide geographical areas. In *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (1991), Anthony Giddens states:

Modernity is inseparable from its ‘own’ media: the printed text and subsequently, the electronic signal. The development and expansion of modern institutions were directly bound up with the tremendous increase in the mediation of experience which these communication forms brought in their train. (p. 24)

He asserts, “virtually all human experience is mediated – through socialization and in particular through the acquisition of language” (p. 23). Consequently the spread of ideas through access to the printed word furthered this mediation. He states “The printed word remains at the very core of modernity and its global networks” (p. 24). Giddens also makes the link between electronic communication, in the form of telegraph and telephone, and newspapers (p. 25). He acknowledges that the telegraph was “fundamental to what we now know as the newspaper and to the very concept of ‘news’ itself” (p. 25); furthermore it points to the fact that it hasn’t been a simple, linear transition from paper-based to electronic media. This aspect of news information being available almost instantly over vast distances accentuates the move from the local to the global and the ‘newsworthiness’ of an event overriding its impact on the local community. Giddens refers to this as the “disembedding, globalizing tendencies of modernity” (p. 26). The shift from print to electronic to digital technology has seen an exponential growth in these tendencies that will be analysed further in Chapter 2 in relation to the events of September 11 2001.

The consequences of the transition to print seem to be so intrinsic as to be virtually invisible to contemporary media consumers. The aspects of standardisation and fragmentation, currently associated with new electronic media were actually preceded by the introduction of print. In what Giddens terms late modernity, “Consumer capitalism, with its efforts to standardise consumption and to shapes[sic] tastes through advertising, plays a basic role in furthering narcissism” (p. 172). The myth of the individual having access to endless choice of commodities is fed by mass media, particularly through overt and covert advertising. This myth is particularly relevant currently as the information that forms the news is an extremely valuable commodity. Communicating to the consumer the most effective information is just as valuable to corporations and governments as connecting them to any other commodities. As Giddens states:

Consumption addresses the alienated qualities of modern social life and claims to be their solution: it promises the very things the narcissist requires – attractiveness, beauty, and personal popularity – through the consumption of the ‘right kinds of goods and services.
(p. 172)

The ‘right’ kinds of goods and services, including news services, are dependent on the individual’s social sphere and that social sphere is a mediated construct overwhelmingly influenced by images in mass media. (Giddens, 1991, p. 199) Commodifying news information creates problems associated with the

authenticity and limited sourcing of information with major implications for an informed public sphere. Creating a sphere in which viewers have the opportunity to more fully consider the influence of the relentless flow of imagery in mass media is central to my creative practice.

Images grew in importance with the development of print technology and their dominance has increased exponentially in the digital era. Until the invention of photographs, printed images (blockprints, engravings, etc.) provided crucial information to scientists, geographers, craftsmen and women, explorers, etc., and works in print continue to have an aura of authority that defies the screen-based information. The materiality of the printed image contrasts with the ephemerality or transparency of continuously moving and decontextualized mainstream news media images on screens. As I discuss more fully in Chapter 2, the advent of screen technology has seen the image become the primary focus of news media (Giroux, 2006, p. 2). The quantity and variety of news media formats, including printed newspapers, magazines, and digital television and online programmes, create an overwhelming amount of repetitive visual information that impinges on the viewer/reader's ability to discern the authenticity and value of any given information. In Chapter 3 I describe how I use images extracted from television news media recontextualising them as prints on paper in order to expose the contrast in materiality and transparency of the differing formats.

Print news media is currently undergoing turbulent changes as proprietors move to digital platforms. Books, as material objects however, tend to retain their aura, "including the physical changes that particular copies or exemplars may have undergone, over time – the crumpled pages, faded bindings, print, or handwriting, fingerprints, smudges and so on – and the history of the hands that have touched them" (Danet, 1997, p. 9). The term 'the book' in this research refers to print technology generally, however, printed newspapers have been more impacted by the changes wrought by digital technology than books. I argue that the fundamental changes related to greater access to information that occurred with the introduction of print technology, have accelerated and intensified in new media technologies. As Ted Striplas states, "the late age of print is a period rife with consistency and contradiction, tradition and transformation, deference and discord" (2009, pp. 175-176).

News in the form of newspapers is in decline as digital news formats flourish. The drop in sales of Australian newspapers in the last 35 years is analysed in percentage terms by Henry Rosenbloom in *The Press Under Pressure* (2012):

The Herald Sun: -24.5 per cent
The Daily Telegraph: +5.8 per cent
The Courier-Mail: -26.7 per cent
The Sydney Morning Herald: -24.3 per cent
The West Australian: -18.6 per cent
The Advertiser: -21.4 per cent
The Age: -24.7 per cent
The Australian: +31.3 per cent
The Australian Financial Review: +48.6 per cent

As bad as these figures are for most newspapers, even they mask the size of the real problem. In 1977, Australia's population was around 14 million; in 2012, it is around 22 million — an increase of 57 per cent. This means that, just to keep pace with population growth, newspaper circulations needed to increase by 57 per cent over those 35 years.

To put it another way, the apparent drop in *The Age*'s circulation of 25 per cent was a real drop of 82 per cent. The apparent rise of 6 per cent for *The Daily Telegraph* was a real drop of 51 per cent. Even the apparent rise of 31 per cent for *The Australian* was a real drop of 26 per cent. (It's notable that while books still seem to retain their place in the changing media landscape. (Rosenbloom, 2012)

Print media worldwide is undergoing a rapid decline reflected in Rosenbloom's figures. The ability of the reader of newspapers to quietly evaluate particular information in relation to adjacent articles in the print format requires time. The acceleration, standardisation and repetition of prevailing image-based news media hinder this contemplative process. Therefore my creative practice, described in more detail in Chapter 3, involves placing printed images adjacent to each other, referencing the printed newspaper format and allowing the viewer time to engage with the information.

Transition of print to new media

In this section I investigate the impact of the shift from print to digital technology, how digital technology has influenced access to print production, and the development of the World Wide Web. Lev Manovich's *The Language of New Media* (2001) is a key text analysing the beginning of this transitional period. He analyses "new media" which he defines as "graphics, moving images, sounds, shapes, spaces, and texts that have become computable; that is, they become another set of computer data" (p. 20). One of the key questions that he asks is: "Does it make sense to theorize the present when it seems to be changing so fast?" (2001, p. 7). As a way of analysing the changes Manovich has more recently participated in setting up "**Cultural Analytics**" in order to use "computers, software,

and availability of massive amounts of ‘born digital’ cultural content - to track global cultures” and “developing a new paradigm for the study, teaching and public presentation of cultural artifacts, dynamics, and flows”(2009). The question that Manovich asks concerning whether new media “seems to be changing so fast” rather than asserting that it *is* changing so fast is intrinsic to this research. I question whether new media heralds a fundamental shift that requires further investigation or is just a logical extension of the proliferation of information that began with the printing press. In order to more fully explore this proposition I use a combination of traditional print techniques, digital print technologies and handwriting in my creative practice. The incorporation of these elements is described in more detail in Chapter 3.

New media in contemporary society is changing so rapidly that the ability to evaluate its cultural impact requires analysis. I concur with Manovich’s answer that we can only analyse and make predictions on what we see happening now and if the future takes a different turn then the writing becomes “a record of possibilities heretofore unrealised, of a horizon visible to us today but later unimaginable” (2001, p. 8). I argue that the rapid rate of change in communication technologies may not always lead to more sophisticated content but may simply create a greater amount of fragmented, repetitive and decontextualized information. Jerome McGann argues that “we tend not to imagine that book technology – its history and its functional forms – has much to contribute to the development of this higher-order machine” (2001, p. 212). He also argues that, “digital illiteracy puts most humanists on the margin of conversations and actions that affect the centre of our cultural interests (as citizens) and our professional interests (as scholars and educators)” (2010, p. 80). McGann focuses on the shift of scholarly works to digital formats making the point that “Capitalist entrepreneurs are already actively trying to gain control over as much information as they can” (2010, p. 86) which I argue reflects the situation for news media sites as the most commonly accessed online news sites are linked to the major media networks. The cultural implications of the intensification of the existing power relations in mainstream news media are analysed further in Chapter 2.

Manovich asserts that the introduction of the printing press, and later photography, had a ‘revolutionary impact’, but he argues: “The new revolution is arguably more profound than the previous ones, and we are just beginning to register its initial effects. Indeed the printing press affected only one stage of cultural communication – the distribution of media” (2001, p. 19). More recently, discussing

the Internet, he asserts that, “Hundreds of thousands of students, artists, designers have now access to the same ideas, information and tools” (2009). I argue that this is just a matter of scale as the advent of print saw the beginning of this trend. I contend that his assertion underestimates the wide-ranging consequences of the shift to print technology identified by Eisenstein (1979), and still influencing all forms of contemporary media.

Manovich uses the word ‘language’ in the title of his book “to signal the different focus of the work: the emergent conventions, recurrent design patterns, and key forms of new media” (2001, p. 12). He credits “the Analytical Engine”, designed by Charles Babbage in 1833, as containing most of the key features of the modern digital computer (p. 21). The 1830’s also saw the development, by Daguerre, of the dagueureoptype (the first successful photographic process) and Manovich asserts that the parallel development of these two technologies heralded the beginning of new media (p. 20). He states that these new media technologies “allow the storage of images, image sequences, sounds, and text using different material forms – photographic plates, film stocks, gramophone records, etc” (p. 20). When considering the new forms of media I argue that he diminishes the continuing importance of print media and does not acknowledge the significance of images in print before the development of photography.

Manovich asserts, “New media does not radically break with the past; rather, it distributes weight differently between the categories that hold culture together, foregrounding what was in the background, and vice versa” (p. 229). In Chapter 3 I explain how I take news media images and manipulate them by privileging some over others then combining these with selected texts from news media reports, aiming to rupture the original context. I use this methodology to challenge the prevailing media orthodoxies by allowing the viewer time in which to consider the implications of the images and text in western mainstream news media. I detail these processes of cropping, repeating, remediating in the form of print on paper and the creation of digital movies in my exhibited work.

The most substantial consequence of the computerization of media Manovich describes is the transformation of information into a cultural layer and a computer layer (pp. 45-46). The image can be recognised on the human cultural level and also as a computer file “that consists of a machine-readable header, followed by numbers representing colour values of its pixels” (p. 45). As mentioned earlier in this chapter the particular history and technology of any media format significantly influences the information stored on it. Even though computer information is

numerically coded, the influence of print conventions is indisputable. As Manovich asserts: “On one level new media is old media that has been digitised” (p. 47). This is central to my argument that although old media has been digitised print remains intrinsically linked to the development of new media, however, the crucial difference is the acceleration of standardisation and repetition of information.

Digital technology has also changed the way that the printing industry works with the advent of print on demand allowing for the publication of a diverse range of material for little or no cost. Penelope Davie in *Stand and Deliver: Print on Demand in Making books: Contemporary Australian publishing* (2007), talks about the development of print on demand:

More recent enterprises, such as lulu, are now offering a diverse range of output options, with lulu.com able to publish books, calendars, music and other audio material as well as online writing platforms such as blogs.

Publishing with lulu is free, in contrast to traditional vanity publishing or self-publishing methods. The author of the content chooses the price of the material, and lulu keeps a commission for every item sold. (p. 168)

Digital publishing in the form of print on demand also offers the potential for changes to be made each time a document is printed (p.168). This possibility creates an exciting creative vehicle for investigating the influence of digital technology on the medium of print. As part of my praxis I designed small booklets containing repeated television news photos using an online publishing company for my final exhibition (Fig. 16).

Digital technology is also influencing artist printmakers in various ways by changing the handmade quality of their works, particularly the production of printmaking plates. In 2011 I presented a paper at the Impact7 conference, entitled *Intersections and counterpoints*, at Monash University in Melbourne, Victoria. The conference focused on the multiple identities of print, and considered topics as varied as craft, making, mastery and process, political agency, activism and appropriation, and the influence of digital technologies and new media. The paper that I presented was *Conventions of the book: Analysing the impact of digital technology on the interpretation of images and text in news media* and published in *Intersections and counterpoints: proceedings of the IMPACT7 international multi-disciplinary printmaking conference* (2013). While most presentations dealt with the physical aspects of printmaking and artist's books my paper examined the cultural impact of the shift from print to digital media. In it I argued that creative praxis is an

effective methodology with which to analyse the sheer amount of information, particularly news information, to which we are now exposed.

Internet

The creation of what we now recognise as the Internet or the World Wide Web is commonly attributed to Tim Berners-Lee who proposed it in March 1989 while working at CERN in Switzerland (Jones, 2003). His particular aims were “simply to link documents to other relevant documents, and to make it possible for hyperlinks displayed on a screen to make these documents accessible regardless of where the actual page is stored” (p. 487). The most important aspect of the World Wide Web was the insistence of Berners-Lee that his invention not be patented or made commercial, allowing it to remain free and open to anyone to work on it. Once the Web was out to the public in 1991, other researchers began working to improve his technology (p. 488).

As with other media technologies, particularly television, the cultural conditions associated with the development of the Internet have influenced the content and the way it is used. de Sola Pool argues that “when a new invention is made, such as the telephone or radio, its fundamental laws are usually not well understood” (1983, pp. 5-6). This applies to the introduction of television and the Internet. It is not until the new technology is in use that the attendant impacts become apparent. Gitlin discusses the reduced attention spans of the young in America due to the way information is structured on television asking: “Does a fascination with speed, quick cuts, ten-second ‘scenes’ and out-of-context images suggest less tolerance for the rigors[sic] of serious argument and the tedium of organized political life?” (1991, p. 119). The production structures of printed newspapers (framing, order of placement signifying importance of information, advertising interspersed with serious news, etc.) have transferred to television news media and have been incorporated into Internet news sites; however, Theodor Roszak (1994) states: “No technology has ever unfolded its potentialities as swiftly as computers and telecommunications are doing” (p. xvi). He could not have foreseen the current exponential growth of computer technology combined with telecommunications, but importantly he questions the social and political implications of new communication technologies.

Peter Shillingsburg (2006, p. 2) argues, “web browsers, regardless of the sophistication of their prioritising processes, have no scholarly refereeing system to vouch for the quality of information or disinformation accessed in a search” and that,

“reliable information and accurate representations of foundation documents are undistinguished, and perhaps undistinguishable from rumours and gossip” (p. 2). These are fundamental differences when considering scholarly texts but I assert that these deficits may also be evident in information presented in newspapers, magazines, and television, and intensified on the Internet. To understand the aura of authenticity surrounding print one only needs to view a television interview with an eminent person who wants to add gravitas to their image by sitting in front of bookshelves lined with expensive leather bound books. Walter Benjamin (1999) discusses authenticity as “the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced” (p. 74). The codes inherent in print and digital media are examined further in Chapter 2. I extract codes out of news media images for my own practice testing how the viewer interprets the ‘transparency’ and ‘accountability’ of the message. The significance of these two words and how I apply them in my creative practice is further explained in Chapter 3.

As the cost of computer technology has steadily decreased and its components miniaturised, mobile phones have become sophisticated computers linked to the Internet and providing a wide range of functions. This is particularly relevant to the creation of news stories, as those functions include a digital camera, which has created a culture where images and comment are instantly uploaded and disseminated. The camera function of mobile phones is conspicuously evident in media reports of mass demonstrations: the demonstrators photograph the police and the police photograph the demonstrators, each compiling evidence to argue their case. The public become citizen photo-journalists creating an unverifiable source of information. Information that has so-called news value is uploaded as is the minutiae of everyday life. Social media sites have proliferated communicating and commentating on the trivial events of everyday life as well as creating alternative independent online news sites. Blogs (a personal website on which an individual records opinions, similar to a publicly available diary) have also proliferated as individual political views, news stories, lifestyle choices, and an endless variety of topics are expressed and provide the opportunity for viewer/readers to comment and interact on the blog page.

This current convergence of media technologies is creating an explosion of information sources that are multiplying daily. Therefore this chapter has examined the beginning of the democratisation of the spread of information with the advent of print and leading to the development of digital technology. The inherent link

between the two forms of communication technologies has been demonstrated with print conventions influencing the presentation of information on screens. The growth of digital technology has seen information shift from printed material objects to ephemeral, shifting spaces on screens with images proliferating. The implications of these changes, the speed, the repetition of images and text, and the impact on mainstream news media are central to this research. In the next chapter I examine visual codes, repetition, and framing, already present in print media, but amplified and intensified by the shift to the screen technologies of television, computers and mobile phones.

CHAPTER 2

CONSTRUCTING CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL VALUES

If we can neither refuse technology since it is the essence of human identity nor stand quietly in the digital vortex without losing something essential to the deepest meaning of human existence, then we are in desperate need of a way of thinking the question of technology which mixes the language of destiny and contemplation. (Kroker, 2004)

This chapter examines the visual/text dynamic moving from print to the Internet, along the way analysing visual codes, repetition, framing, the communicative potential of the different media and how these relate to the political. I discuss techniques used by western mainstream news media that shape and reflect contemporary cultural values, particularly whether the traditional ways of interpreting news media have transferred to the digital age. The forms of media have multiplied at an extraordinary rate and the immediacy with which digital information is transmitted has become the norm. Powerful media corporations have retained their dominance since the spread of the Internet, despite the hope that it would create a more democratic social space. As Wark states, “No matter how many channels we can get, our main news feed comes from few hands indeed” and the media, “are not only more concentrated, but increasingly global in both ownership and extent” (p. 267). The manipulation of visual codes, framing and repetition in mainstream news media in support of dominant political paradigms is discussed here in relation to the coverage of the events and consequences of September 11 2001. In conjunction with this examination I analyse the communicative possibilities for digital media, focusing on the independent online news site openDemocracy. The Internet has the potential to be a democratic social space however, there is increased pressure from media corporations and governments to exert control over content.

Constructing September 11 2001 News Story

This section is an examination of the methods employed in western mainstream news media to construct information into daily news reports. I analyse the methods used by media corporations and governments exploring how information has been presented since screens became omnipresent in contemporary western society. Thomas Keenan asks:

What would it mean to come to terms with the fact that there are things which happen in front of cameras that are not simply true or false, not simply representations and references, but rather opportunities, events, performances, things that are done and done for the camera, which come into being in a space beyond truth and falsity that is created in view of mediation and transmission? (2004, p. 435)

The news programme is a media construct in which proprietors, editors and journalists define what is newsworthy in the images they select. This section is an analysis of the cultural implications of the use of codes, framing and repetition in western mainstream news media which are central to this research.

My specific focus is on the presentation of events through news media that are either directly or indirectly associated with the aftermath of the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York on September 11 2001, and the way in which information was disseminated and packaged. As McKenzie Wark in *The Weird Global Media Event and the Tactical Intellectual [version 3.0]* describes, “every now and then there is an event which interrupts all such discrete and parallel times, cutting across them and marking them all with the image of a moment of danger” (2006, p. 265). The destruction of the Twin Towers on September 11 2001 was such an event. Consequences of that particular event include, amongst others, the war on terror, the invasion/liberation of Iraq, the Australian Wheat Board inquiry, and anti-terrorism laws. These consequences are current and influence the political and social sphere daily. Democracy and human rights were exposed as a thin veneer and very fragile in the face of insistent political demands for a show of power and retribution on the part of the United States and their allies. This event and the political and public reaction it elicited serve as examples of the way the mass media, and its association with globalisation, were exploited by both the terrorists and governments and became the primary focus of the outraged reaction. Jean Baudrillard in *The Spirit of Terrorism* (2002, p.101) states: “The worst thing for global power is not to be attacked or destroyed, but to be humiliated”. The images of the destruction of the Twin Towers served the objectives of the terrorists by inflicting highly visible harm to the most powerful country in the world and, conversely, became the focal point of outrage for the US and its allies.

Our perceptions of the real have been so dramatically altered by mass media that even if images of the events were factual, our minds denied the evidence of our eyes. Baudrillard (2002, p. 27) states: “The role of images is highly ambiguous. For, at the same time as they exalt the event, they also take it hostage. They serve to multiply it to infinity and at the same time, they are a diversion and a neutralization.”

The images of the destruction of the twin towers in New York were initially shocking, then as all other television programmes had been suspended in order to report on this event images were repeated as expert opinion was sought. The images were then depicted in the following day's newspapers and continued on the television news for days to come. The difficulty of making rational decisions following this event were exacerbated by the continuing presentation of these images associated with patriotic language calling for retribution. The news programme is a media construct in which proprietors, editors and journalists define what is newsworthy. The cultural implications of the use of codes, framing and repetition in western mainstream news media are central to this research. These are discussed further in this chapter.

An incident that interrupts normal news media flows is described by Wark as the "weird global media event is more than an anomaly in the 'normal' functioning of culture; it is the moment which disrupts its normal functioning, and in the wake of which a new norm will be created" (p. 268). I argue that September 11 2001 specifically fits that description as in the wake of that event a new norm has been created. The new norm is exemplified by the mainstream news media representations of the conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan maintaining the US position, and magnifying the need for surveillance by undermining democratic freedoms. The media reaction to that event exemplifies the structural processes inherent in western mainstream news media on which I focus.

Wark describes a media vector as the line that connects a media event to media consumer:

it can link almost any points together. This is the paradox of the media vector. The technical properties are hard and fast and fixed, but it can connect enormously vast and vaguely defined spaces together and move images, and sounds, words and furies between them. (p. 269)

As the images of September 11 2001 and the ensuing Iraq war were transmitted through vectors they connected to the "sites of image management and interpretation" (p. 268). Wark then argues that, "Vectors then disseminate the flows of images processed at those managerial sites to the terminal sites of the process" (p. 268). The newsrooms of the dominant media companies were the sites in which the images were transmitted and interpreted, with experts in a variety of fields hurriedly contacted for analysis of an incomprehensible event. Consequently the framing and repetition of transmitted images and text becomes the norm. Information from the International Committee of the Red Cross and other

humanitarian organisations concerning the torture of “detainees” in Abu Ghraib prison had been circulating for a year without any repercussions until the photographs became public. Sontag states, in *Regarding the Torture of others* (2004) referring to the images of torture in Abu Ghraib: “The pictures will not go away. That is the nature of the digital world in which we live” and asks:

is the real issue not the photographs themselves but what the photographs reveal to have happened to “suspects” in American custody? No the horror of what is shown in the photographs cannot be separated from the horror that the photographs were taken – with the perpetrators posing, gloating, over their helpless captives. (2004)

Sontag argues that the real problem these photographs caused the US government was not due to the horror of the actions of the military, but as President Bush stated, that they misrepresented the “true nature and heart of America” (2004). The implications of the digital era in photography are exemplified in the photos of Abu Ghraib, as the government can seek to control which journalists can be “embedded” with the military, but it cannot control what individuals photograph and disseminate and eventually finds its way into mainstream news media. The ‘terminal site’ as Wark describes it is “the radio, television or internet terminal within reach – directly or indirectly – of almost everyone almost everywhere” (p. 269). Media vectors fed repetitive, framed information directly to viewers establishing a narrative endorsing a military reaction.

The lack of rigorous media investigation of the claims of the US and its allies regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) and the influence of Al Qaeda in Iraq reflects the influence and complicity of large media corporations and governments. Lee Artz contends: “if media monopolies are understood to be corporate driven and thus politically integrated and ideologically connected to government actions on behalf of market imperatives, then the U.S. invasion and occupation is exemplary” (2005, p. 12). My research then is a creative and theoretical examination of the influence of media corporations and government on the information reported on mainstream news programmes.

In *Beyond the Spectacle of Terrorism: Global Uncertainty and the Challenge of New Media* (2006) Henry Giroux states:

Mediated through the new image-based technologies, the spectacle of terrorism emerges as a central force not only in shaping social relations forged in the culture of fear and death but also in legitimating the very connection between terrorism and security. (p. 31)

Giroux has written extensively regarding the urgency for “educators, artists, and citizens to develop a new set of theoretical tools to comprehend how visual representations of shocking horrific violence are shaping the very nature of politics” (p. 26). He argues that the images of the planes crashing into the symbols of Western economic and military power (the Twin Towers and the Pentagon) require a new critical engagement and cultural analysis. In *Impure Acts: The Practical Politics of Cultural Studies* (2000) he most eloquently expresses a position that I share regarding the importance of interrogating the cultural effects of mass media:

both cultural-studies theorists and critical educators engage in forms of cultural work that locates politics in the interplay among symbolic representations, everyday life, and material relations of power; both engage cultural politics, as ‘the site of the production and struggle over power,’ and learning as the outcome of diverse struggles rather than as the passive reception of information. (p. 128)

Giroux’s exhortation that cultural studies theorists need to engage in cultural work that is productive and located in the political and symbolic representations of everyday life rather than being passive receptors of information coincides with my research aims. The analysis and interpretation of images and text in western mainstream news media is located in the “diverse struggles” defined by Giroux.

My work in deconstructing media images of September 11 2001 and its consequences provides an alternative lens through which to look at the way information is disseminated and questions whether the medium used for its dissemination, the television, computer screen, or mobile phone screen, exacerbates the disconnection from reality. Car accidents kill and injure more people per year than terrorism, but the repetition of the stories of the imminent threat of violence from terrorists justifies the spending of billions of dollars on national security and the undermining of civil liberties.

The transitional phase in communications from print to digital media and the implications for freedom and civil liberties is pivotal to this research, particularly as the material that I am investigating and incorporating into my practice is drawn from contemporary news media. As early as 1983 Ithiel de Sola Pool in *Technologies of Freedom: On free speech in an electronic age*, raised concerns about controls on media freedoms and asserted that “the five-century growth of an unabridged right of a citizen to speak without controls may be endangered” (1983, p. 1). Currently the Internet allows for a more open and independent interaction and flow of information between users; however, the control of media companies has become so concentrated that television, newspapers, magazines and movies are owned by a

limited number of corporations with immense power. Five major companies (Time Warner, VIACOM, Bertelsman, Walt Disney and News Corp) dominate news and entertainment in the United States (Bagdikian, 2004, p. 3). In the Australian context, Paul Barry in *Kicking at the Cornerstone of Democracy: The State of Press Freedom in Australia*, states that: “As existing news companies have expanded into digital space, there is also a great deal of evidence of re-use of material across titles and platforms in each media group” he goes on to say that in relation to the lack of discernible effect of digital media news sites, “all but one of the top 12 news sites in Australia are owned by major existing news outlets” (2012, p. 66). The potential for diversity of alternative news sites on the Internet is constantly challenged by corporations and governments. A critical examination of the impact of the limitations of digital media is a key component of this research.

Initial advocates of the Internet saw social networking in the largely uncontrolled cyberspaces as enabling more free and open discourse. However, it can also be argued that the Internet since then has provided business and government with a perfect gateway to a significantly broader range of consumers and voters. Information flow from state to corporations is increasingly common. As an example Tony Curzon Price in the Liberty of the Networked in *Open Web, Open Society? Liberty, Democracy and the Net* states: “the UK government’s “Transformative Government” agenda includes offering corporate access to the National Identity database (for example, for background checks on criminality)” (2010, p. 219).

openDemocracy

In this section I analyse the history and prospects of the independent online news site openDemocracy, illustrating the strengths and weaknesses of the establishment of alternative news media sources. New technology enables vectors to transmit information to terminal sites almost everywhere (Wark, p. 269) providing the potential for independent sites such as openDemocracy to present alternative viewpoints globally. Giroux describes how new media technologies are “on full display in the global justice movements, in the emergence of bloggers holding corporate and government powers more accountable” (2006, pp. 40-41). I examine openDemocracy as an example of the alternative potentials of new media to create “critical forms of social agency and resistance, while also making more democratic and ethical claims for the use of knowledge, information and images” (Giroux, 2006, p. 40). The mission statement of openDemocracy contains an expression of their

values, which include: “human rights and democracy” and an “aim to ensure that marginalised views and voices are heard.” They also “believe facilitating argument and understanding across geographical boundaries is vital to preventing injustice” (openDemocracy, n.d.). In other words the inherent properties of digital media, immediacy of access to information, the dominance of images, widespread access to communication technologies, have not only assisted mainstream news media but have provided new opportunities for independent news sites to provide alternative views and representations challenging dominant interpretations.

openDemocracy is an example of the way that new technologies can open up access to alternative information sources and online interactions, particularly because of the differences of the Internet to printed or televised news media. Access is free and it allows for the publication of more in-depth articles from a wider variety of sources, specifically because cost issues such as paper and print, and employing journalists, are not a concern, as with television and newspapers. When major events occur, as with September 11 2001, the value of the Internet as an alternative to the major news corporations has been proved by its popularity. James Curran comments on how visits to the openDemocracy site jumped post September 2001:

Visits to the Internet magazine jumped from around 2,000 to over 8,000 a week in September-October and continued to climb to over 12,000 in the following months. The main reason for this surge was that a significant number of Americans, dissatisfied with their own media, logged onto an alternative media source. (2003, p. 230)

Originally, openDemocracy was a venture aiming to provide an alternative networking facility between people involved in the constitutional movement in Britain in 2001. Its originator Anthony Barnett, decided to develop it into a more ambitious project than originally envisaged – an Internet magazine (Curran, 2003, p. 228). From very modest beginnings in a garage in North London’s Tufnell Park, with a website published on a fortnightly basis, it was inherently different from similar ventures. Firstly, it had a strong connection to the heart of British politics and it presented debates between left and right. With a core staff of six people it opened in May 2001 and was an immediate failure, with only 1750 visits a week despite being free (2003, p. 230).

The incident that transformed openDemocracy was September 11 2001. Todd Gitlin, a professor at New York University, had been in London in mid 2001 and was so attracted by the concept of openDemocracy that he volunteered as the North American media editor. On his arrival home to New York he personally witnessed

the destruction of the World Trade Centre and wrote the next day in openDemocracy, sensitively describing the horror of New Yorkers and calling for “restrained retribution” (2003, p.230). Gitlin’s article triggered an ongoing dialogue with contributors from around the world and dramatically changed the character of openDemocracy with numbers who visited the site growing significantly in the following months. The site also became more international and that was reinforced by the appointment of editors from around the world. Visits jumped to 250,000 early in 2003 (2003, p. 230).

The history of openDemocracy reveals the problems associated with starting a new free Internet venture without the capital for promotion. As James Curran (2003, p.232) states, “Most of its energy and resources were devoted to making the website good rather than getting it read.”

More recently, Curran, writing on openDemocracy in 2012, questioned the viability of alternative independent Internet news sites and asked *Why has the Internet changed so little?* (2012, p. 1). He begins by referencing the positive future universally predicted for the Internet in the 1990s and the “assumption that the internet’s technology would reconfigure all environments” (p. 1). He argues that this positive theorising “overlooks the multiple ways in which the wider context of society limits – even negates – the contribution that the internet makes to global harmony and understanding” (p. 2). He analyses the limitations as economic, as access to the net excludes a significant portion of the world’s population. The total proportion of population in 2011 who were internet users was 30 per cent (Internet World Stats 2011a). Secondly, he argues “the world is divided by language” and “The nearest thing to a shared online language is English which, according to the ITU, only 15% of the world’s population understands”. Associated with this is the concept that “language is the medium of power” as “Who gets to be heard online in the global community often depends on their mother tongue” (p. 2). Other aspects that limit the potential of the Internet as a forum for universal communication are defined as the divisions in the world associated with “conflicts of interest and values”, the strongly embedded “national and localist cultures in much of society”, and “national governments seek everywhere to manage or control their media systems” (pp. 3-4).

In relation to the point that “national and local cultures are strongly embedded in much of society” Curran states that “in 2007 American network TV news devoted only 20% of its time to foreign news, while even its counterparts in two internationalist Nordic countries allocated just 30%” (Curran et al, 2009, p. 3). This point directly reinforces the proposition that news reports are framed and

manipulated to extend the dominant paradigms of each particular society. Similarly, he finds that Internet news websites “publish mainly national news, and are only marginally more internationalist than leading television news programmes” (p. 3). My research focuses on the consequences of these limitations for the viewer/reader as sources of information are not as widespread as advocates of new technology might claim.

If, as Curran suggests, the Internet has not led to the changes so universally predicted in the 1990s, then what is it that is preoccupying the media and the public at this point in time? Is it the trivial and mundane, and social media interactions or does the Internet provide a valuable alternative to mainstream media? Through my creative practice I analyse what codes and techniques are in use to keep viewers/readers entertained and informed. Most of the codes have transferred from newspapers, to television news, to Internet news sites, but as I have stated before, the amount of information to which viewers are exposed and the dominance of images have made interpretation more complex.

In the next section I analyse the use of codes, framing, and repetition in mainstream news media. The virtually unseen and unacknowledged manipulation of information in the news is explored in relation to the events of September 11 2001. The reportage of this event exemplifies the aspects of media manipulation that I am exploring.

Manipulation of information: Codes, Framing and Repetition.

The media world in which we live is predominantly visual (Howells and Negreiros, 2012, p. 1) therefore the ability to decode the implicit cultural messages is a key focus of my research. Giroux states “It is impossible to comprehend the political nature of the existing age without recognizing the centrality of the new visual media” (2006, p. 19), and contained within those visual representations are codes that have become so naturalised that we are often unaware of their power. Stuart Hall in *Encoding/Decoding* discusses how codes in images and text become naturalised:

The operation of naturalized codes reveals not the transparency and ‘naturalness’ of language but the depth, the habituation and the near-universality of the codes in use. They produce apparently ‘natural’ recognitions. This has the (ideological) effect of concealing the practices of coding which are present. (1980, p. 132)

Revealing and exaggerating the “effect of concealing” in the naturalness of codes in mainstream news media is key to my creative practice. Decelerating the

constant flow of images is key to my praxis as it tests how I can expose the codes within images extracted from news programmes once they are magnified and recontextualised in differing media. What were the codes in the pictures of the Twin Towers collapsing with billowing smoke and debris inexorably engulfing everything, and how do those codes operate when considered against pictures of death and destruction in Iraq? Baudrillard suggested as early as 1983 that “There is no distinction possible between the spectacular and the symbolic, no distinction between the “crime” and the “repression.” *It is this uncontrollable eruption of reversability that is the true victory of terrorism*” (p. 116). Mainstream news media frame information by using the tone of the newsreader’s voice, the order in which it is placed in the news programme, the time allocated and especially the decisions regarding which images will be used. I argue that the viewer/reader cannot decipher the full implications of the manipulation of information by powerful media corporations. Stuart Hall suggests the television production process is:

framed throughout by meanings and ideas: knowledge-in-use concerning the routines of production, historically defined technical skills, professional ideologies, institutional knowledge, definitions and assumptions, assumptions about the audience and so on... through this production structure. (2007, p.479)

He discusses the ‘conditions of perception’ which are the result of a highly coded, even if virtually unconscious, set of operations-decodings (2007, p. 482). The viewer can see the Towers imploding and the people running but what they experience is a two dimensional picture of the events. They can’t smell or feel the dust or feel the impact of the planes; what they “witness” is an image. However, that event is then subsumed into a narrative, replete with signs that appear to be open and natural. Western media presented the victims of September 11 2001 as individuals with tragic and unique stories, whereas victims of the violence in the middle-east were seen as an homogeneous group, making it more difficult to empathise with their plight. The news reader’s tone of voice also alerts the viewer to the seriousness of the event. The integration of codes within televised images is an element within my artwork which tests the ability of the viewer/reader to recognise those codes in alternative contexts.

The digital literacy of viewers is challenged by the naturalisation of codes and symbols in mainstream news media programmes as digital technology infiltrates our cultural interactions. Castells discusses the “culture of real virtuality” stating, “The inclusion of most cultural expressions within the integrated communication system based on digitized electronic production, distribution, and exchange of signals, has

major consequences for social forms and processes” (1996, p. 374). Castells states real virtuality:

is not virtual reality, because when our symbolic environment is, by and large, structured in this inclusive, flexible, diversified hypertext in which we navigate every day, the virtuality of this text is in fact our reality, the symbols from which we live and communicate. (p. 403)

He asserts that the symbolic power of traditional senders external to the digital communication system is initially weakened but if they “recode themselves in the new system” their power becomes multiplied (pp. 374-375). Traditional senders, refer to print media, particularly newspapers, which impart the encoded social habits of “religion, morality, authority, traditional values and political ideology” (pp. 374-375). He acknowledges that time and space are transformed and something fundamental is changed. Giddens regards the separation of time and space as crucial to the extreme dynamism of modernity (1991, p. 17) and is “the prime condition of the processes of disembedding” stating that, “Disembedding mechanisms separate interaction from the particularities of locales (p. 20). Giddens defines ‘disembedding systems’ as symbolic tokens and expert systems. (p. 18) Money is the prime example of a symbolic token and “expert systems bracket time and space through deploying modes of technical knowledge which have validity independent of the practitioners who use them” (p. 18). Each system relies on trust which Giddens asserts creates “wide arenas of relative security in daily social activity” (p. 19). However, he argues that “new risks and dangers are created through the disembedding mechanisms themselves” citing artificial ingredients in foods which have unknown effects, and environmental hazards (pp. 19-20). He states that the mediation of virtually all human experience “is the prime and original means of time-space distancing (p. 23). Disembedding and remediation of information over time and space were magnified in the news media reports of September 11 2001, accentuating the practices already inherent in new media representations. “Experts” on terrorism and international affairs were contacted and interviewed at length in the immediate aftermath of the explosions creating a framework for future military actions. The shift to digital media and the dominance of the image, combined with the decreasing number of mainstream news sources, magnify these disembedding tendencies. Giroux asserts: “As the power of critical understanding is traded for the simulacra of communication in official discourse, it becomes more difficult for citizens to engage in critical debates” (2006, p. 8). That is why critical engagement with the effects of the overwhelming amount of information and its cultural and political consequences are the focus of this research.

Framing

Framing information is a subtle way of manipulating a story to serve particular ends. This presents a challenge to the consumer/viewer in recognising in whose interests the framing is constructed. In relation to framing Giroux advocates a new form of public pedagogy which analyses “the spectacle as part of a broader constellation of power by examining not only what forms of knowledge and agency it tries to put into place but also what is screened out” (2006, p. 74). Framing not only refers to how a story will be reported but if it will be reported at all, in what context it is reported, and the time allocated to it. Considering the way that the hegemonic system integrates oppositional forms, (terrorist attacks, demonstrations and protests, etc.) Todd Gitlin (2000, p.590) suggests: “major social conflicts are transported *into* the cultural system, where the hegemonic process frames them, form and content both, into compatibility with dominant systems of meaning.” After the events of September 11 2001, information was framed in specific ways in order to place a patriotic spin on the reactions of the US government. As Corey Robin states:

Network executives have admitted to tailoring their coverage in order to avoid the appearance of criticizing U.S. foreign policy – not because they face state-sponsored coercion but because they fear a conservative-led backlash, which might result in lower ratings. (2004, p. 169)

The events were transmitted instantly and followed by continuous analysis whilst being repeated constantly. The story that was built around September 11 2001 was repeated through the media internationally in order to justify the invasion of another country. Voices of dissent were disregarded as nationalistic fervour and outrage was fomented to present one point of view. Using the power of selected images, combined with emotive, patriotic language, the media played a powerful role in framing the way the events were viewed. In *Entertainment Wars: Television Culture after 9/11* Lynne Spigel in *American Quarterly* (2004) reports:

In the days following the attacks, the Bush administration spoke often of the eternal and “essential goodness” of the American people, creating a through-line for the American past that flattered a despairing public by making them the moral victims of a pure outside evil. In a similar instance of denial, commentators spoke of “the end of innocence” that the attacks ushered in as if America had been completely without knowledge and guilt before this day. Not surprisingly, in this respect, the histories mobilised by the media after 9/11 were radically selective and simplified versions of the past that produced a kind of moral battlefield for “why we fight”. (p. 245)

Maintaining the narrative that terrorism is the dominant concern in international politics infiltrates and influences what is privileged in local news as well. The influence of US cultural hegemony on the media locally is evidenced by the way the National Press Club Address (Suzuki, 2006) on ABC television on Wednesday 18 October 2006 by Dr David Suzuki was reported. While not specifically related to terrorism, this example is symptomatic of the selective ways in which news is prioritised. Suzuki was also interviewed later that evening on *Dateline* on SBS but not on the commercial channels. While of great consequence, the content is not the focus of my research, but rather my focus is the contexts of information dissemination since the events of September 11 2001. Suzuki's major concern was the imminent danger the world faces due to global warming and the lack of action by governments around the world. He particularly cast aspersions on then Prime Minister John Howard's lack of action in tackling this issue and his belated acceptance of the very idea of global warming, and then linking global warming to the development of nuclear power. As a regular reader of our only national paper, I checked the next day and could not find one reference to that talk or related subjects on reading and rereading it. The front page covered the divorce gossip of Paul McCartney and his then wife, a headline questioning the benefits of breast cancer screening, and local parliamentary news. A similar lack of attention has been given to new media ownership laws that were very sparsely covered until the predicted flurry of buying and selling of media stocks began. The methods used by the media to frame information is contextualised by Henry Giroux in *Against New Authoritarianism* where he states:

As a powerful form of public pedagogy, the media set the agenda for what information is included or excluded; they provide the narratives for understanding the past and the present; they distinguish between high and low status knowledge; they offer up modes of identity; they legitimate particular values; and they have the power to deeply influence how people define the future. (2005, p. 45)

Giroux (2005) analyses the influence of the media in the US since September 11 2001. He discusses the role of government in favouring the concentration of media ownership by corporations, particularly those that are sympathetic to the government's views (p. 43). He cites instances where the Bush government paid "a number of politically friendly journalists to write in support of administration policies" and hired "actors who then pretended to be news reporters" (p. 44). The fundamental problem with this was that viewers were not alerted to the fact that the reports were not genuine and were in fact state-funded propaganda (p. 44). The consequences for democracy are enormous as the media are crucial to a

participatory society, confident in the journalistic ethics in mainstream news media. Castells (1996) emphasises that information is constructed and framed to fit the structural production processes of the media: “The fact that politics has to be framed in the language of electronically based media has profound consequences on the characteristics, organization, and goals of political processes, political actors, and political institutions” (p. 476). If as Castells asserts, “information is the key ingredient of our social organization” (p. 477) then interrogation of the means of transmitting that information and how it inherently shapes the form and content is critical.

All of these aspects affect the viewer/reader’s ability to judge the legitimacy and authenticity of news reports. Media ownership concentration in a limited number of corporations, the ethical standards of journalists, the influence of governments to frame information to be sympathetic to their interests, and restricting information, are all elements inherent in current western mainstream news media. The framing of media images and text, as I have argued, critically impacts on the ability of the viewer to analyse the wider context to the information they access.

Political

The political aspect of art underpins this exegesis and my creative practice. My analysis is political in the sense that the presentation and interpretation of information in our digital/screen culture affects our engagement with society. In relation to photography Victor Burgin states:

Using the productive capabilities of photography to reproduce the world as an object of aesthetic contemplation, and nothing else, is no less ‘manipulative’ than is any other use of photography: to turn away is an act, to turn away from situations of immediate social relevance is a political act, and to perform such acts in every working moment adds up to a political policy. (2002, p. 41)

Although this quote describes the political in photography, I assert that it is equally relevant to any art practice. I regard all art as having a political aspect to some degree and as Burgin states “to turn away is an act”. I interpret “turning away” to mean not taking a reflexive position and not acknowledging the ethical and moral aspects of the decisions we make. Politics is an engagement with the lifeworld and an awareness of the prevailing social and cultural conditions. This research, theoretically and creatively, is an engagement with and an analysis of the prevailing cultural and social conditions, thereby examining the impact of new media technologies in contemporary western society.

Politics is inherent in news media. Western mainstream news media is reliant on press releases emanating from political and corporate media advisors and those advisors are aware of the news cycle distributing information when it is most advantageous to the particular politician, political party, or corporation. With the economic constraints on journalists limiting the time available to research all sides of a story, the integrity of the information is problematic.

Will the shift to digital technology positively affect the future prospects of democracy as the shift to print affected the preservation of information by disseminating it rather than keeping it locked up? The amount of information to which we are exposed in contemporary society would suggest that unexamined and unanalysed information is just as problematic for an informed democracy as was limited access to information before the advent of print. As Roszak suggested in 1994:

If anything we suffer from a glut of unrefined, undigested information flowing from every medium around us. The result is then a new politics in which governments do not restrict the flow of information but flood the public with it. (pp. 162-3)

I argue that it is not only governments, but also corporations, that flood the public with information therefore the problem is no longer access to information but precisely the opposite. The mass of information to which the viewer/reader is now exposed also creates the problem of identifying what is included and what is excluded.

Repetition

Repetition is everywhere. The television viewer is assailed by the constant repetition of advertisements on television, the interminable replay of old programmes, and the news that is identical on every channel. In the Internet age there is no timetable for particular programmes so the viewer has the capacity to watch news at any time through a wide variety of channels; selected programmes can be saved and watched when it is convenient; and advertisements, while still annoying, can be deleted. However, the viewer cannot choose the images and text within the news, or television programmes, or advertisements, unless one is not a viewer at all, and as Baudrillard suggests: "Those who are under-exposed to the media are virtually asocial or desocialized" (1983, p. 96). Similarly John Fiske suggests that popular culture on television "functions as a 'resource' that can be mobilized as part of the practices of everyday life". (2011, p. xxix) The ubiquity of digital media suggests that very few are not exposed to its influence. Repetition

exists not only in the obvious content but also within the signs and codes to which Hall (p. 132) refers.

Repetition was exaggerated in the media coverage of September 11 2001. The immediate mainstream news media reaction to September 11 2001 is described by Wark as the opposite of the news story, which he called “the event” (2006, p. 265). The immediacy of the coverage relied on images for which there was no prepared story, the opposite of regular news programmes, and as he states one coping strategy was repetition (p. 266). The shock and lack of context for the story that was unfolding exposed the limitations of live coverage and how the media compensated by using repetition. All news media, including newspapers embraced this strategy. The media coverage of that event was so ubiquitous it is almost unnecessary to mention the overwhelming repetition of images but it is essential to analyse the effects of the choice of images and the associated rhetoric. The tenth anniversary in 2011 of the attack on the Twin Towers saw programmes produced to commemorate the event, repeating and reinforcing the encoded messages. Baudrillard predicted this when he said, “...the media are made the vehicle of the moral condemnation of terrorism and of the exploitation of fear for political ends, but, in the most total ambiguity, they propagate the brutal fascination of the terrorist act” (1983, p. 105). Giroux (2006, p. 47) considered the events of September 11 2001 to have been “designed to be visible, designed to be spectacular” and that “The attacks were clearly predicated on the assumption that a ‘picture paints a thousand words’”. The “fascination” to which Baudrillard refers and the “spectacular” to which Giroux refers reignite patriotic sentiments and justifications for the continuing ‘War on Terror.’

Reality is further distorted by the inclusion of advertisements directly before and after serious news reports and the viewer becomes conditioned to short snippets of information bracketed by advertising unrelated to the issues being broadcast. I make reference to the bracketing of news reports in my creative practice by including images of local Perth, Western Australian palm trees among images of conflict since September 11 2001. Even on public broadcast stations that are free of advertising the presenter cheerily ends the news by crossing to the weather presenter. Terror, horror, war, murder, crimes, famine, natural disasters and tragedy have become the staples of news and current affairs combined with the banal, titillating and occasional good news. This is made acceptable as long as there is no time for consideration and we can all move along to the next half hour time slot without having time to seriously consider the implications or to feel too bad

about it. As Christian Fuchs describes: “New meanings emerge from and are produced by this mosaic of disconnected pieces of information” (2005, p.195). Images of the planes flying into the World Trade Centre and the aftermath of suicide bombings have become part of the media landscape, with key images repeated over and over again; severing their connection to time and place. The televising of a constant stream of ‘news’ of celebrity gossip, or sports trivia, bracketing ‘serious’ news renders the message meaningless. Like the destruction of the Twin Towers, images of tragedies, disasters and crimes are mediated, as Baudrillard suggests:

Thus all hold-ups, hijacks and the like are now as it were simulation hold-ups, in the sense that they are inscribed in advance in the decoding and orchestration rituals of the media, anticipated in their mode of presentation and possible consequences. (1983, p. 41)

Repetition is the norm in mainstream television news media: images and text are repeated in short news headlines leading up to the main nightly programme, then repeated again leading up to the late night news. However, there are now television channels that are exclusively devoted to 24-hour news coverage. Advertising on television and the Internet is a continuous repetition of visual and aural codes that are also incorporated into video games and film and repeated in magazines and newspapers. Contemporary communication media is saturated with repetition. My creative practice reflects this excess, not simply to add to the amount of repetition with which the viewer/reader has to contend, but to disrupt and expose the cultural impact of that excess. I present the viewer with exaggerated repetition in a gallery context, in which it is not expected: it is the recontextualisation of images and text that causes the disruption. Images and texts are repeated in framed prints, on screens, and in digitally printed books and traditionally made print works. Gilles Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* (1994) states:

The more our daily life appears standardised, stereotyped and subject to an accelerated reproduction of objects and consumption, the more art must be injected into it in order to extract from it that little difference which plays simultaneously between other levels of repetition, and even in order to make the extremes resonate – namely, the habitual series of consumption and the instinctual series of destruction and death. (p. 293)

The acceleration of the reproduction of ‘objects and consumption’ also refers to reproduced, packaged and commodified media information. Art, as Deleuze (p. 293) argues, is critical in differentiating and extracting the explicatory elements in mainstream media representations.

Repetition becomes a tactic that deflects and reframes information being sought. The media adopt the same techniques in order to create the illusion that news coverage is constant and immediate, whereas it is limited and repetitious, as Baudrillard contends: “information dissolves meaning and the social into a sort of nebulous state leading not at all to a surfeit of innovation but to the very contrary, to total entropy” (1983, p. 100). Therefore by exaggerating and reframing the repetition in my reflexive praxis I focus attention on and expose the deficiencies in news media representations. As news media representations are embedded with codes, reframing breaks the continuous flow of coded information.

Deleuze (cited in O’Sullivan, 2006, p. 1) argues that: “Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental *encounter*”. Simon O’Sullivan, similarly likens the creative practice to an “encounter” asserting: “Our typical ways of being in the world are challenged, our systems of knowledge disrupted. We are forced to thought. The encounter then operates as a rupture in our habitual modes of being and thus in our habitual subjectivities” (2006, p. 1). Retrieving images and text from mass media and reframing them in an art context creates similar challenges for the viewer. The critical selection of the mundane, repetitive elements of relentless news media produces that “encounter” or “rupture”. My intention is to create works that elicit familiar codes but are experienced in an unfamiliar context where the viewer is in the curious position of recognition and provocation. O’Sullivan asserts:

Rupture and affirmation are then two moments of the same encounter, two moments that only seem opposed if considered in the abstract, outside of actual experience. Art, in breaking one world and creating another, brings these two moments into conjunction. Art, then is the name of the object of an encounter, but also the name of the encounter itself, and indeed of that which is produced by the encounter. Art is this complex event that brings about the possibility of something new. (2006, pp. 1-2)

Art, then, has the potential to become a means of challenging hierarchies and established modes of thought, not only in a social sense but also in an individual, personal sense. This potential is addressed by O’Sullivan, citing Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the *minor* as “a way in which art can produce a break with habitual formations and dominant signifying regimes” (p. 69). Minor art is seen as “always being in process, as always becoming-as generating new forms through the break with, but a utilisation of, the old” (p. 73). I argue that this cogently expresses the direction and intent of my reflexive praxis. I analyse the move from manuscript to print and the challenges associated with the transition to digital technology, in

relation to news media, and specifically focussing on the events and consequences of September 11 2001. The transition to print and currently to digital media are expressed by translating digital images extracted from television news programmes onto traditional materials associated with books using paper, inks, traditional print techniques and binding.

In the following chapter I describe the importance of reflexive praxis for this research followed by an analysis of the art practices of Hans Haacke, Thomas Hirschhorn and Jeremy Deller. The contemporary political aspect of their practices relates to the focus of this examination. The final section is a review of the exhibitions held during my PhD candidature.

CHAPTER 3

REFLEXIVE ANALYSIS OF PRACTICE

In the previous chapters I have discussed the synchronicities and differences that exist between print and digital media by analysing their histories and how each has contributed to the spread of information in a way that maintains power in the hands of a limited number of powerful corporations. I have examined how visual codes, repetition and framing, exemplified in the coverage of the events and consequences of September 11 2001, have become exaggerated through the dominance of screens and images in contemporary communication technologies. I concur with Giroux that, internationally, September 11 2001 created a fundamental rupture by redefining “the relationship between the power of the media and the politics of the social imagery” (2006, p. 47), with significant social and political repercussions still being felt worldwide. This research has critically analysed the cultural implications of the transitions in mainstream news media by extracting and remediating images and text by recontextualising them in my creative practice.

Anke Haarmann in *Artistic research: A Tool of cognition parallel to Philosophy?* (2010, p. 10) asks, “what in art can be seen as visual research”? She discusses the “contemporary indignation about art being able to make a contribution to research” (p. 197) and how, “it has been undefined what the methodologically unique character of the praxis of artistic research is” (p. 199). Haarmann argues that “A visual art which reflects visual culture in the medium of image generation, presenting its thematic field of interest in a serial way, devotes itself to a comprehensible examination of its topic – it does research” (p. 203). I argue that my particular art practice which draws on contemporary media images reflects this definition of reflexive praxis and further demonstrates the assertion by Haarmann that “It creates reflexive images by twisting and turning visual culture by way of visual and performative techniques, thus analysing its effects” (pp. 206-207). The examination of these aspects using the reflexive praxis methodology informs the direction of my artwork, and is explained in detail here. This chapter reflexively interrogates my creative practice, exploring the interrelationship between the cultural values identified in the various codes within western mainstream news media.

The first section is an examination of the art practices of Hans Haacke and to a lesser extent, Jeremy Deller and Thomas Hirschhorn. Each of these artists draws

on contemporary world events to create works that have a strong political aspect, focusing, like myself, on September 11, or the Iraq War. The second section is an analysis of my practice and demonstrates the significance of the reflexive praxis model for my research. Within this section I highlight the importance for my creative practice of the concepts drawn from Deleuze and Guattari's book *A Thousand Plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia* (1987). Lastly, I analyse the exhibitions produced during my candidature, demonstrating how each exhibition has informed the others. I address the central aims of this research manifested in exhibited works that explore new meanings as O'Sullivan (2006, p. 146) states, "We might say then that art's peculiarity is that it utilises the stuff of the present in order to move beyond that presence".

Hans Haacke, Thomas Hirschhorn and Jeremy Deller

Many contemporary artists respond to the prevailing political environment through their creative practices. I focus on the practices of Hans Haacke, Thomas Hirschhorn and Jeremy Deller, whose works include references to either September 11 2001 or its consequences, particularly the Iraq war. Hans Haacke's methodology relies on in-depth research into the relationships between the corporate world and art museums, the failings of democratic societies around the world, and the background to current media events. He then creates works that reference and expose the underlying business links that underpin the largesse in sponsoring art. Thomas Hirschhorn's methodology draws on critical theory, global politics, and consumerism in an excessive conglomeration of the most basic everyday materials. Jeremy Deller's works are mainly created outside the gallery confines, breaking down traditional walls between art and the larger world. His methodology includes creating performances by participants unconnected to the world of art. Each of these artists responds to current political and social conditions in very different ways and with differing philosophies. The aspect, however, that links their practices is the analysis and representation of their contemporary lifeworld – this aspect is analogous to my practice as I examine the political and social impact of current mainstream news media representations.

Hans Haacke

As an interrogation of contemporary culture, specifically mass media, forms the basis for my work, I have researched and been influenced by the art practice of Hans Haacke. Haacke's art practice interrogates and critiques the powerful social and political systems in western society.

Hans Haacke touches on taboos in social systems, governments, media, advertising, and arts industries, by analysing and exposing systems and interconnections not generally visible to the public. The influence of corporations and governments on the choices made by major art galleries, the sources of income of major art gallery benefactors and the social capital associated with sponsoring art, are examined by Haacke. His arts practice exposes the links between prominent art gallery sponsors and unethical or illegal business practices which has resulted in some works being censored by some galleries. He makes a strong argument that all art has a political component and that “whether artists like it or not, artworks are always ideological tokens even if they don’t serve identifiable clients by name. As tokens of power and symbolic capital (...) they play a political role” (1995, p. 89).

In *Free Exchange* (1995, p. 28) Haacke discusses the way he uses the press as “the immediate target audience” for support and goes on to say: “The seduction of public opinion cannot succeed without the collaboration of the press. Public opinion is a battlefield (please excuse my use of this martial image) we must not desert. We should learn from the enemy”. Haacke’s methodology is to analyse and integrate the communication skills of the advertising industry as he states: “Without knowing them [focusing on insecurities of the public, using colour and codes, repetition], it is impossible to subvert them” (1995, p. 107).

He subverts the symbols of the corporate world and uses its weapons against it as in Figure 1, *Le Must de Rembrandt*. This work made of concrete, wood, a photograph and fabric is patterned after Cartier’s jewellery store. The central photograph is of striking Gencor mine workers in South Africa in 1985. Inscriptions in gold letters of all the Rembrandt companies in South Africa are printed down each side of the photograph. The quote at the base of the photograph was made by Johan Fritz, the Director of Gencor stating’ “We have a shield against irresponsible actions – a great reserve of unemployed”. Haacke (1995, p. 54) argues that: “A democratic society must promote critical thinking, including a constant critique of itself. Without it, democracy will not survive.” If we acknowledge that mainstream news media has the potential to provide a constant critique of democratic society then the factors limiting transparency and accountability through investigative journalism impacts on critical thinking. As I have previously discussed in Chapter 2 the limited ownership of mainstream news media corporations is a major factor restricting the broader investigation of areas of public interest. By drawing attention to the less visible influences of sponsors of major art galleries Haacke takes on an

investigative role revealing information that is rarely addressed in mainstream media. Creative art practice such as Haacke's, offers the opportunity to slowly and thoughtfully re-engage in alternative ways with political and social matters that are too easily overlooked in the continuous flow of information in mainstream news media. Similarly, as an aesthetic and a political act, I focus on the cultural impacts of current communication transitions in my creative practice.

By incorporating information uncovered during research for new works Haacke has exposed hypocrisy, hidden agendas and patronage, sponsors would prefer undisclosed. Haacke's work *Les Must de Rembrandt*, (1986), (Fig. 1) exposes the underlying bureaucracy of dominant corporations. The Rembrandt Group, founded in 1940 by Anton Rupert, enjoyed the support of Afrikaner capital. Haacke outlines the interests the company had in South Africa in the mining, investment banking, engineering, and various other industries. Rembrandt had a 25% stake in the mining company, Gencor, the second largest South African mining company, which had a history of violent suppression of strikes and brutal treatment of its black workforce, was exposed by his work. The interconnectedness of such companies with luxury goods businesses like Cartier, which adds to its prestige by sponsoring art exhibitions, is what Haacke seeks to expose. Corporations understand that sponsoring art exhibitions adds to their aura of prestige and glamour as Haacke quotes from a Philip Morris (1995, p. 141) slogan: "It takes art to make a company great." The interests of large corporations is revealed when Haacke (1995, p. 87) states:

One can surmise what they are looking for from the jargon with which such behaviour is analyzed in a book published by the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung [FAZ, German newspaper; conservative]: 'Sponsoring has three central communications goals: recognition, attitudes, and the promotion of good relations.' What matters is that 'positive image of the sponsored is transferred to the sponsor (image transfer)'. (Bruhn cited in Free Exchange, 1987, pp. 141-142)



Figure 1: Hans Haacke's Les Must de Rembrandt
(Source: http://lib.haifa.ac.il/collections/art/modern_art/artists-h/haacke.html)

It is through the intensive investigation of corporate and government information and its presentation in contentious locations that he creates a dialogue contesting the hegemonic structures within society.

The interests of governments and corporations infiltrate not only what art and which artists will be shown, but also the daily media to which we are constantly exposed. If authors or artists are censored or, more insidiously, feel the pressure to self-censor, how does the public access a broad range of information on which to base their opinions? Artists, such as Haacke, push the boundaries, and, as he states, "if one tests the limits, sometimes one discovers that there are holes in the wall, that one can get through, and that things can be done which appeared impossible" (1995, pp. 77- 82).

In his exhibition, *State of the Union* (2005), at the Paula Cooper Gallery of New York, Haacke reflected on the events of September 11 2001. Cathy Lebowitz describes the exhibition as confirming the frustration and anger so many members of its audience already felt. Interestingly, it did not arouse the mainstream press or public (2006, p. 100). It would only have been publicised to the gallery-going audience that would most likely have been sympathetic to his views.

Figure 2 depicts the stencil created by Haacke with the shapes of the Twin Towers cut out, and pasted them over existing advertisements whose space rental had expired, and exhibited the photographs.



Figure 2: Hans Haacke's *Citywide*
 (Source: http://www.o-matic.com/public_art/911.html)

The stencils frame the underlying images, creating a dialogue and filter between the everyday commercial advertising images and exposing how the Twin Towers represented western commodity culture. The resulting images were photographed for the exhibition and the stencils were also made accessible on the Internet for downloading as screen savers, browsers and files (“CEC Arts Link,” n.d.). The whole exhibition referenced the symbols of American power, such as the flag, placed in contentious contexts relating to the Iraq war and its consequences. Subverting images and symbols from the media presentation of the Iraq war, Haacke reframed the content in a new and revealing context. (Lebowitz, 2006, p. 102) By drawing on readily recognised symbols and media images and recontextualising them, Haacke reveals the ugly consequences of the war in Iraq and the complicity of the media.

I argue that art is not created within a vacuum and one of its roles is to critique contemporary culture. Just as the traditional arts of painting, sculpture and drawing are legitimate, as new technologies (digital technology of television, computers, and mobile phones) are developed, particularly those with massive visual and cultural effects, so the artist can legitimately incorporate them as another creative resource. In the *State of the Union* exhibition one element consisted of an ink-jet printer churning out “*News Flashes*” from the main wire agencies creating a continuous mound of paper printed with news post-September 11 2001. (Dupuis, 2006, n.p.)

Similarly, understanding how we come to make choices about our lives and the powerful interests that exhort us to consume not only manufactured goods, but cultural products as well, empowers the artist to create informed works that have depth and meaning beyond the aesthetic. Sontag (1977, p. 168) describes how cultural products in the form of photographs make one vulnerable and that “vulnerability is part of the distinctive passivity of someone who is a spectator twice over, spectator of events already shaped, first by the participants and second by the image maker” (1977, p. 88). Haacke interrogates the images and rhetoric used by

dominant corporations creating works that challenge audience perceptions of prestige and influence. The focus on images and text is also fundamental to my creative practice which seeks to examine and reveal the relationships too easily overlooked in the continuous flow of information.

Thomas Hirschhorn

Thomas Hirschhorn in an interview with Sarah Douglas in *Artinfo*, states:

‘I do not make political art, I make art politically’ is the assertion I borrowed from Jean-Luc Godard which for me means to work without cynicism, without negativity and without self-satisfying criticism. ‘Making art politically’ means to take responsibility about everything concerning the artwork, and it means taking the responsibility for what I am not responsible for. (2007, p. 4)

Hirschhorn has been particularly influenced by the art practice of Hans Haacke and Barbara Kruger stating: “their approaches were close to graphic design” (as cited in Buchloh, 2004, p. 10). Each of these artists makes work that comments on contemporary life and the state of the world, referring to the overabundance of information using text and symbols. He incorporates materials common in everyday life: cardboard, foil, duct tape, plastic wrap, television screens, and newspaper headlines, in site-specific assemblages. On first impression, his work appears to be an overwhelming and excessive collection of materials. In an interview with Craig Garrett he argues, “Truth is in excess, and I want to work in strictness and be overwhelmed. Art is affirmation in excess, and I want to give form to this excess” (2004, p. 90).

Thomas Hirschhorn’s work is analysed by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh revealing that:

value in artistic production is circumstantial, contingent and contextual, i.e. that it is merely the result of institutional assignments and spatial conventions: works of art gain value first of all by separation, seclusion and confinement in the specialized places of collection and display. (*Thomas Hirschhorn*, 2004, p. 46)

Hirschhorn’s methodology challenges these institutional conventions particularly as the materials he chooses to work with lack any realisable value. His exhibition *Superficial Engagement*, at the Gladstone Gallery in New York 2006, was in his own words “an engagement and at the same time a challenge” and is the title for “an artistic, political, ethical and aesthetical position” (as cited in Douglas, 2007).



Figure 3: Regen, D. (2006). (photographer). Thomas Hirschhorn's *Chromatic Fire*
 (Source: <http://www.artcritical.com/2006/01/22/thomas-hirschhorn-superficial-engagement-at-gladstone-gallery-and-roxy-paine-at-james-cohan-gallery/>)

Figure 3 depicts mannequins studded all over with nails and images of bloody, mangled bodies to which Hirschhorn denies any specific reading only stating that, "These images show the degree of complete destruction – the destruction of human bodies" and that "The destroyed body reaches a degree of abstraction, beyond the imaginable" (as cited in Douglas, 2007, p. 2):

Concerning today's issues, the use of specific thematics in "Superficial Engagement" intends on creating the artistic evidency: to work out its universality in opposition (in conflict) to a particular historical fact (the Afghanistan war, the Iraq war, 9/11, London suicide bombers, etc.). This artistic evidency that I want to create means working in our historical field, the one we are living in, with the will to build, to give forms to a mega-historical view point. (2007, p. 5)

The inclusion of graphic images of war and conflict within this exhibition has challenged the viewing public and as Saltz describes "These pictures repulse, mesmerize and anaesthetize simultaneously" (as cited in Douglas, 2007, p. 1). As early as 1983 Jean Baudrillard argues "The task of all media and information today is to produce the real, this extra real (interviews, live coverage, movies, TV-truth, etc.). There is too much of it, we fall into obscenity and porn" (p. 84). Hirschhorn incorporates the very same images to which the viewing public is exposed on nightly news bulletins, without fomenting outrage, but when he displaces them into

an art context they challenge the expectations of art gallery patrons. Hirschhorn states “The faith I have is that art, because it’s art, can co-operate with the reality in order to change it” (as cited in Douglas, 2007, p. 4). Recurring themes in Hirschhorn’s work are “the overwhelming and alienating effects of our image bombardment during this period of globalization, terrorism, and war” (Baume, N., 2006, p. 43). These are the themes that inform my creative practice.

Jeremy Deller

Similarly Jeremy Deller examines contemporary reality and seeks to involve the public in a creative response to his work. Thomas Hirschhorn and Jeremy Deller are very different artists but their motivations, I would argue, are quite similar. Commenting on Deller’s methodology Laura Cumming in a review titled Jeremy Deller: Joy in People; Elmgreen and Dragset: the Fourth Plinth review (2012) states:

His material is drawn straight from the life around him, from people’s experiences, from conversation, from history almost as it happens. He is an enabler, intermediary and maker of connections, a producer, collaborator and activist. He has expanded the traditional idea of how an artist may work. (2012)

Deller’s focus on ‘history as it happens’ is common to Hirschhorn and Haacke.

I focus on Deller’s project titled *It Is What It Is* consisting of a car destroyed by a car bomb in Iraq. Thirty five people were killed and hundreds were injured in the bombing. As part of this project Deller filmed the ensuing conversations and posted on YouTube. “As Deller says: ‘It’s the conversation piece from hell’” (as cited in Jones, 2009). Deller towed the wreck around America accompanied by a US soldier who served in Iraq and an Iraqi citizen who worked for the Americans and now must live in exile. Deller states that they were not trying to make an anti-war statement, “We’re trying to present it as neutrally as we can. A lot of veterans talk to us about the car” (2009). I argue that while he may consider that he is trying to be neutral this project defies neutrality. Each of the choices he has made in relation to this work is political. The choice of an anonymous destroyed vehicle, an Iraqi citizen and an American soldier suggests that he was aiming to engage and enlighten viewers concerning the realities of that conflict. This was not meant to glorify the war. In a similar way the use of images of the Iraq war in my creative practice is meant to raise questions for the viewer concerning media representations and motivations and not meant to endorse the war.

The car wreck depicted in Figure 4 was towed to prominent places in American cities where the public was welcome to interact and discuss their

reactions with the soldier and the Iraqi civilian. Although it may seem a provocative act, “Deller wants to avoid finger-wagging; his purpose is to generate insight through conversation and debate” (Jones, 2009).



Figure 4: Walker, J. (2009). (photographer). Jeremy Deller's *It Is What It Is*
(Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/apr/14/jeremy-deller-iraq-war-us>)

This work was subsequently exhibited at the Hayward Gallery in London and as Laura Cumming writes “Set something in a new context and perhaps it will mean more, inspire new reactions, different thoughts: that is at least one of Deller’s methods” (2012). Accompanying this exhibited work is a film documenting the trip around America and the challenging conversations between the Iraqi civilian, the US soldier, and the public, providing a rich resonance to the shocking reality of the wrecked car.

Although the tone of the work of Hirschhorn and Deller differs, they both draw on and critique contemporary culture. Similarly, I examine September 11 2001 and the Iraq war in my creative practice. They exhibit their works within and outside the gallery context and utilise the wide variety of materials and ideas available to the contemporary artist (Jones, 2009). I regard the gallery space as the most appropriate location for my work as it provides quiet, contemplative space contrasting with the constant background sounds of contemporary communication media.

Reflexive Praxis

I regard my creative practice as reflexive, opening up communicative spaces in which critical considerations and analytical exchange are possible. Theorist Karl Maton (2003) suggests that “research proclaiming itself ‘reflexive’ is also often undertheorised” although “almost everyone agrees with the virtue of reflexivity” (2003, p. 55). He is referring to the often narcissistic, “*autobiographical reflection*” which reduces reflexivity to merely a story of the author’s history. This is not how I use reflexivity. I acknowledge that each individual’s life experiences impact upon their choices as Giddens (1991, p. 53) suggests: “Self-identity ... is the self as reflexively understood in terms of her or his biography.” However, reflexive praxis is the combination of many factors relating to the research, of which the personal biography is one. Christopher Crouch’s description of reflexive praxis relates more fully to my research methodology:

the creative process demands reflexive action. When the creative practitioner adopts praxis, it encourages the act of reflecting upon, and reconstructing the constructed world. Adopting praxis assumes a process of meaning making, and that meaning and its processes are contingent upon a cultural and social environment. (2007, p. 112)

Creative practice, as Crouch describes, entails continuing interaction and reflection on the theoretical and creative focus of the research. In analysing the cultural contexts of images and text in mainstream news media, I reflect upon and reconstruct the constructed world. As digital technology is a powerful cultural influence in contemporary western society the examination through reflexive praxis is my primary research methodology. “Reflecting upon and reconstructing the constructed world” (Crouch, 2007, p. 112) is manifested in the process of capturing constructed news media images and recontextualising them.

Although I am critiquing mass media, paradoxically without it I wouldn’t have the material with which to work. Television images, text from television, newspapers and Internet news sites are key materials for my artwork. By analysing mass media advertising and promotion, I then incorporate selected aspects into my artwork. My work interrogates the negative aspects of mass media while also appropriating those same aspects in order to examine their influence. The shiny glow of the televised image in my current work (refer to Fig, 5, 12, 13, 16) replicates the seductive way images are used to entertain and sell. I assert that artists can access and refer to conventions in advertising in order to critique the cultural messages contained within them, analysing the way that electronic media, in particular, uses

the captivating qualities of selected images to seduce the viewer and neutralise critical thinking. Extracting sections, repetition, magnifying and intensifying the focus on the colour and glossy surface are the processes that I appropriate from mainstream news media. O'Sullivan suggests that this collection of existing signs and clichés may be subverted:

Art then might make use of the components of cliché in order to resist cliché. It undoes the triple organization of affectations, perceptions and opinion – that is to say our habitual mode of being – and substitutes something else, a different organization or assemblage, a different 'take' on the world. (2006, p. 67)

By placing plagiarised elements of mainstream news media into the gallery context I am raising questions about the viewer/reader's awareness of the power of the seductive qualities implicit in new technologies. In his influential work *Inside the white cube: the ideology of the gallery space* Brian O'Doherty (1986) argues that the gallery, "is in the image of the society that supports it, so it is a perfect surface off which to bounce our paranoias" (p. 80). I concur that galleries and other exhibition spaces provide spaces in which new ideas and difficult questions can be encountered and where contentious cultural interactions take place. I call these spaces 'interstitial', or 'between spaces'. These are dynamic, in the sense that they can be of and within the dominant structures of society but also creative and thought provoking spaces from which to challenge the dominant paradigms.

Throughout history, artists have been observers, commentators and, since the twentieth century, agitators, expressing their own personal impressions of the world in which they live, and using the materials available to express their ideas. Similarly the current proliferation of digital media provides the material that I utilise in my artwork, challenging the dominant paradigms in mainstream news media. Simon O'Sullivan cites Deleuze and Guattari in which they describe the characteristics of a 'minor literature' as "deterritorialising a major language", and that "everything is political", and it is "always collective" (p. 70). Describing the concept of the minor in relation to an art practice, O'Sullivan states it "pushes up against the edges of representation; bends it, forces it to the limits and often to a certain absurdity" and that "A minor practice must then be understood as always in process, as always becoming - as generating new forms through the break with, but also a utilisation of, the old" (2006, p. 73). My creative practice incorporates new technologies in order to subvert dominant paradigms in mainstream news media, and challenge political rhetoric.

Reflexive praxis offers a methodology for arts practice, as a communicative act, to create a new balance by which the artist/researcher adopts processes acknowledging individual and social influences by applying theoretical rigour to draw new conclusions and propose new questions. Habermas also refers to the validity claims that are made in the communicative act and states that “The validity claims that we raise in conversation – that is, when we say something with conviction – transcend this specific conversational context, pointing to something beyond the spatiotemporal ambit of the occasion” (1990, p. 19). He refers to the conversation as an opportunity to make a statement that goes beyond the immediate interaction and leads to wider implications. I regard my artworks as creating the opportunity to make a statement or, more importantly, to raise questions that may have unpredictable implications as the viewer brings to the work their own life influences and prejudices. Therefore, applying reflexive praxis by “reflecting upon, and reconstructing the constructed world,” (Crouch, 2007, p. 112) the creative artist constantly analyses the propositions being made through their work and “assumes a process of meaning making, and that meaning and its processes are contingent upon a cultural and social environment” (Crouch, 2007, p. 112). Through a re-ordering of the relationships between images and text extracted from mainstream media in my exhibited works, I am saying something “with conviction”, as Habermas (1990) states, with the aim of challenging prevailing media messages. It is only through the manifestation of my research ideas in the form of exhibited artworks that an evaluation through reflexive praxis occurs: considering how works are interpreted according to the context in which they are shown and what relationships with other works reveal and whether the artworks successfully address the research aims. My creative practice is aimed at providing the contemplative space in which a dialogue is metaphorically generated between the viewer, artist and the exhibited works. This research examines how capturing, slowing down, and recontextualising images and text in a gallery context can allow a more contemplative space in which to encounter alternative cultural interactions.

Disrupting mainstream media messages

I explore the technologies associated with print and digital media, reflecting my continuing focus in socio/political issues. I encourage audience participation and inclusion, not in a didactic sense or by constructing questionnaires, but by creating ruptures in the expected modes of communication. By combining handwritten texts with the images I am not seeking to make a didactic statement but encouraging the

viewer/reader to consider alternative interpretations. My objectives as an artist are clearly expressed by O'Sullivan when he asserts that on viewing art:

Our typical ways of being in the world are challenged, our systems of knowledge disrupted. We are forced to thought. The encounter then operates as a rupture in our habitual modes of being and thus in our habitual subjectivities. It produces a cut, a crack. (2006, p. 1)

That cut or crack in relation to my practice can be defined as a “rupture”, as O'Sullivan describes “anything ‘new’ must involve a break with the dominant” (p. 149) and I again concur with his definition that art is a “...complex event that brings about the possibility of something new” (pp.1-2). I interpret O'Sullivan's ‘possibility of something new’ in my creative practice as providing the viewer/reader with an encounter that disrupts the constructed representations in mainstream news media. I have focused on mainstream news media as it exemplifies the repetition, framing and encoding that is common in mass media which I exaggerate in my creative practice.

In this following section I discuss the power of the image, and how I use plagiarism, manipulation and recontextualisation in my methodology. I then discuss the differing mediums I use in my creative practice and their link to the cultural impact of the shift from print to digital communication with an analysis of the constraints associated with the influence of governments and multinational corporations. Next I describe how elements of the book *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia* by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) have provided a critical inspiration for my creative practice challenging the form and content of the book. Finally I reflexively examine the exhibitions that I have held during my PhD candidature.

The theories of Deleuze and Guattari reveal an insightful link between the way a book should be accessed and the way that the Internet has developed. Manuel Castells (1997) states: “Because culture is mediated and enacted through communication, cultures themselves, that is our historically produced systems of beliefs and codes, become fundamentally transformed, and will be more so over time, by the new technological system” (p. 328). The concepts expressed by Deleuze and Guattari have been inspirational to my art practice by providing a creative language linking print and digital technology.

This is an examination of the key theories that have inspired my approach to creating books and works on paper, and digital works. Deleuze and Guattari provide a unique view of the book contending that it is a “little machine” that needs to be

plugged into other machines to make it work (1987, p. 4). Their compelling examination reveals the synchronicities that exist between the technologies of print and digital media.

The book as a multiplicity

Deleuze and Guattari contend that the book is a multiplicity, an assemblage that is to be approached not in a sequential way but to be accessed randomly (p. xv). O'Sullivan states that Deleuze and Guattari's concept of multiplicity: "allows us to imagine our world differently, and as such offers escape routes" (2006, pp. 28-29). Their definition of the book suggests that it exists on a flat plane or plateau with ideas spread out in "rhizomatous" formations, with signs influencing signs and interconnecting in a way that defies order:

A book is neither object nor subject; it is variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds. To attribute the book to a subject is to overlook this working of matters, and the exteriority of their relations. It is to fabricate a beneficent God to explain geological movements. In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. (1987, p. 3)

I argue their theories have presented an alternative view to the book as a discrete entity, challenging concepts of linear progression of thoughts and ideas in a coherent narrative, creating a closer relationship to the way information is accessed via digital technology. They state that:

There is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made. Therefore a book has no object. As an assemblage, a book has only itself, in connection with other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs. (1987, p. 4)

Liz Grosz in *Volatile Bodies: Toward a corporeal feminism* draws on the work of Deleuze and Guattari. She defines an assemblage as following "no central or hierarchical order, organization, or distribution; rather like the contraption or gadget, a conjunction of different elements on the same level" (1994, p. 167). She states that assemblages consist of "endless experimentation, metamorphosis, or transmutation, alignment and realignment" and that "they are essentially in movement, in action, are always made, not found" (p. 16-17). Deleuze and Guattari define the "Body without Organs" as "a place, or even a support upon which something comes to pass" (1987, p. 153), and which Grosz interprets "as a surface of speeds and intensities before it is stratified, unified, organized, and hierarchized" (p. 169). This support, or place on which endless experimentation or

metamorphosis takes place suggests a correlation between their definition of the book and Internet technology. The current transitional phase from print to digital technology exemplifies the notion of differing speeds and intensities. I demonstrate this in my creative practice by decelerating the speed of digital information by translating it into print on paper.

The approach taken by the Deleuze and Guattari in analysing the form and function of the book reveals a new source of ideas concerning the concept of a book. They suggest a book is a part of connecting lines of strata or “rhizomes”, only existing in relationship to every other book that has been or will be produced and only able to work in relationship to every other book. This interconnectedness is an alternative way to look at this system that encompasses “multiplicity”. They define it as the “radicle-system”, where the idea of the principal root has been retained but through damage to the tip “an immediate, indefinite multiplicity of secondary roots grafts onto it and undergoes a flourishing development” (p. 5). This, then, is the rhizome.

Brian Massumi in *A user's guide to capitalism and schizophrenia: Deleuze and Guattari* (1992) and the translator of the original *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987) states that Deleuze and Guattari's concept that “language as a storage and retrieval of pure information (the cybernetic model) is a recent invention paralleling the rise of the computer” (p. 41). He says that they propose the book as a flat plane stating: “The ideal for a book would be to lay everything out on a plane of exteriority of this kind, on a single page, the same sheet: lived events, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups, social formations” (1987, p. 9). The “plane of exteriority or consistency” refers to “the flattening of all of the multiplicities on a single plane” (p. 9). Ideas are spread out from the source (root) and able to be drawn upon as the interest takes the reader, arguing that the book is like a branch of the original root book that informs and underpins the growth of all books. I argue that this concept of the book could similarly apply to information on screens as the conventions of print underpin the development of new media technologies. It is now the scale, the repetitiveness, and the framing of information in mainstream news media that is the problem. Deleuze and Guattari's concepts have inspired my creative practice in which I produce printed works on paper and digital work on screens. Their views on linguistics expose links that can be and are made about data access via the web (Fuller, 2005, Genosko, 1994), although they only make cursory reference to computer

technology within this text. Lev Manovich in *The Language of New Media* furthers these links stating:

As a cultural form, the database represents the world as a list of items, and it refuses to order this list. In contrast, a narrative creates a cause and effect trajectory of seemingly unordered items(events). Therefore, database and narrative are natural enemies. (2001, p. 225)

Massumi states that Deleuze and Guattari use the word “schizophrenia” as a positive process of “inventive connection, expansion rather than withdrawal” and that it is “the enlargement of life’s limits through the pragmatic proliferation of concepts” (1992, p. 1). Massumi suggests “The best way of all to approach the book is to read it as challenge: to pry open vacant spaces” and that “The question is not: is it true? But: does it work” (1987, p. xv)? This interpretation relates to creative practice as O’Sullivan states: “Art practice functions as a kind of blockage in the smooth running of larger institutional, and indeed global, coding machines” (2006, p. 25).

Deleuze and Guattari suggest that their book should be accessed by taking a concept to your liking and jumping with it to its next appearance, as they tend to cycle back: some may call it repetitious, they call it a refrain (1987,p. xv). Consider how the viewer/reader interacts with the Internet and jumps from one site to another: this “inventive connection, expansion rather than withdrawal” that prefigures hyperlinks and hypermedia. The definition of the rhizome accentuates this relationshi

A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, *intermezzo*. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb “to be”, but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, “and...and...and...”.(1987, p. 25)

Massumi elaborates on Deleuze and Guattari’s use of the word ‘plateau’ defining it as being “reached when circumstances combine to bring an activity to a pitch of intensity that is not automatically dissipated in a climax leading to a state of rest” (1992, p. 7) further relating to creative practice. The plateau also suggests the screen where everything is surface or two-dimensional. Although Deleuze and Guattari have been cited greatly in relation to computer culture they only mention the computer briefly, in relation to information sciences which “still cling to the oldest modes of thought in that they grant all power to a memory or central organ” (1987, p. 16). This concept can be applied to illustrate how the conventions of print still underpin the development of electronic media. As I have discussed previously

media technology continues to grow and be adopted at an exponential rate, however, the formulaic content and the hegemonic interests of the mainstream media proprietors prevail.

I argue that aspects of information control have become amplified as Internet and digital technology have expanded; therefore my work draws on and exaggerates the elements common to mass media. I create artworks by manipulating images and text extracted from the familiar sphere of western mainstream news media and transformed into printed works on paper and into digital form. Placing the works in the gallery space provides the viewer with new opportunities to engage with and interpret images that have been repeated so incessantly until they become too easily dismissed in everyday life. Stuart Hall writes:

The symbolic power of the image to signify is in no sense restricted to the conscious level and cannot always easily be expressed in words. In fact, this may be one of the ways in which so-called power of the image differs from that of the linguistic sign. What is often said about the 'power of the image' is indeed that its impact is immediate and powerful even when its precise meaning remains, as it were, vague, suspended – numinous. (2002, p. 311)

An example of the power of the image having an immediate impact even when its precise meaning remains vague can be seen in Figure 5. I use this particular image, extracted from television news footage, repetitively in framed printed images, in books, and in digital movies. Within the image are easily recognised cross hairs signifying gun or bombsights. The more specific, but suspended or vague aspect is the location of the conflict, the reason for the conflict and particularly the effects of the conflict.



Figure 5: Detail from various works in *immediacy* exhibition.

The choice of images for my creative practice exemplifies this statement concerning the precise meaning of an image being “vague, suspended – numinous” (2002) which is further exaggerated by repetition and framing in digital media. Christian Fuchs discusses political coverage in mass media and states: “There is a tendency that ambitious, demanding, substantial contents are substituted by commerce, sex, and scandals. The political is frequently marginalized and extremely simplified by the mass media. Visual images dominate text and words” (2005, p. 194). Images within this television news context become “disconnected pieces of information. Due to the interlinked, fast-flowing character of information that is transmitted by the mass media, it is sometimes hard to judge whether or not meanings correspond to factual reality” (p. 195). By intensifying and focusing on images and text extracted from mainstream television news images, in my artwork, I aim to accentuate that “information and entertainment, education and propaganda, relaxation and hypnosis are all blurred” (Castells, 1996, p. 336). As noted in the Introduction I use the term ‘remediation’ defined by Bolter and Grusin in *Remediation: understanding new media* (2000), to describe this kind of borrowing. Borrowing refers to taking information from one medium and recontextualising it into another. I specifically take extracted information from mainstream news media programmes and incorporate them into print media.

My creative practice combines print and digital technologies, examining the differences between these media and analysing the cultural consequences of those differences. I argue that the omnipresence and relentless flow of images have not only added to the complications for the viewer/reader to seriously engage with news information but have trivialized it and turned everything into entertainment. I extract and disconnect slices of images, or “signs of the real” (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 167), from the flow of information in western mainstream news media, then recontextualise, reframe and repeat that information in new juxtapositions. Carolyn Kitch states:

Despite current claims that the most vivid visual new experiences lie in interactive digital media, the best known examples of visual memory are in fact still images, whether they first appeared in print or video. What is preserved in our minds, and often is later revisited in anniversary or summary journalism, is the moment of memory imprint, “a neat slice of time, not a flow,” wrote Susan Sontag. (2011, p. 65)

Elizabeth Eisenstein (1979) argues: “When ideas are detached from the media used to transmit them, they are also cut off from the historical circumstances that shape them, and it becomes difficult to perceive the changing context within

which they must be viewed” (p. 24). In my creative practice I detach ideas (images and text) from the medium that is used to transmit them challenging the dominant paradigms expressed within them.

Through the media of print on paper, digital works on screens, and handwritten works, I examine whether the actuality of the computer screen and Internet connectivity has fulfilled its communicative potential, as early advocates may have hoped. Handwriting (Fig. 7, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19) is a significant aspect of this creative research addressing the importance of manuscripts prior to the introduction of print and also adding another individual layer to the work. Images and texts relating to September 11 2001 are repeated on screens and on paper reflecting the mainstream news world of newspapers, television and Internet.

Plagiarising, manipulating and recontextualising are the key creative processes in my methodology. Guy Debord’s term for this concept is “detournement”: “It is plagiaristic, because its materials are those which already appear within the spectacle, and subversive, since its tactics are those of the ‘reversal of perspective’, a challenge to meaning aimed at the context in which it arises” (cited in Plant, 1992, p. 86). By plagiarising I mean extracting elements from media representations, such as colours, signs, text, iconic images, and manipulating these until they are almost unrecognisable but still vaguely familiar. Debord states: “In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation” (2002, p. 95). Taking those manipulated pieces out of context and placing them in new and contentious relationships transforms their meanings and raises questions about their original content. Repetition is also a key element of my work, referencing the way words and images are repeated so often in the media that they become a meaningless mantra. Central to my investigation is the difference between the presentation and interpretation of information in print media and in screen-based media. Therefore paper, text, print, handwriting, images, and screens are the key materials in my artworks. Bourriaud asserts:

we can say that art creates an awareness about production methods and human relationships produced by the technologies of the day, and that by shifting these, it makes them more visible, enabling us to see them right down to the consequences they have on day-to-day life. (1998, p. 67)

The all-pervasive screen is the medium through which the current changes in communications are taking place and is also the technology I have integrated into

my creative practice with projected works or movies on small portable dvd screens, The screen has moved from television in the social spaces in the home, to the computer in even more private spaces, to the mobile phone, which has become indispensable. Screens are significant as entertainment and information spaces, consequently the cultural influence of the material it transmits is central to my creative practice.

As Crouch suggests: “Praxis encourages a move away from the pitfalls of introspective narcissism and towards an analytical engagement with human interaction” (2007, p. 112); this move is key to my research. My creative praxis examines the cultural impact of the exponential growth of digital technology on communication media. Gramsci, cited by Haug, defines praxis as “a fusion, a making into one, of ‘philosophy and politics,’ of thinking and acting” (2000, p. 2). The creative model that I apply to my practice incorporates Gramsci’s definition of praxis as it relates directly to our social and political world. Thinking and acting, analysing and making, extracting and manipulating, are the key aspects of my practice, which are central to this examination.

The cultural effects of media production processes associated with western mainstream news media were magnified by the coverage of the events of September 11 2001. In Figure 12 the majority of the images was extracted from images extracted from television news programmes related to September 11 2001 or the Iraq war. The materials used in my creative practice are consciously chosen in order to reflect the similarities and differences of these technologies. I concur with the words of Ian Burn (1999, p. 190): “Once one understands that art is not *in* objects but in the completeness of the artist’s *concept* of art, then the other functions can be eradicated and art can become more wholly art.” Analysing and testing the most appropriate materials in relation to the concepts in my artwork is crucial.

In this reflexive analysis of my practice I argue that there is too much information in mainstream news media for the viewer/reader to make informed judgements about its authenticity. I must acknowledge, however, that as an arts practitioner I am adding to that accumulation. I contend that by extracting information from its usual source, placing it in a new context, and creating different juxtapositions, the work actually exposes and challenges established interpretations.

It can be argued that the apparent schism between print and electronic technology is only a matter of scale. Each technology has introduced the means for information to be more easily dispersed, with those in control having a wider audience and consequently more power. By this I mean that the power exerted by control over the media has advantaged and promoted the hegemonic systems in society. The emancipatory aspect of the more democratic spread of information has been widely asserted; however, each form of media has been incorporated into major corporations which expound their world view. Digital technology, predominantly the Internet, embodies a similar promise of egalitarian access to information as did the development of the printing press, but it presents different complications for the user. Governments and multi-national corporations are determined that their particular agendas are privileged in the media. Rajesh Makwana (2006) asserts: "Seventy percent of world trade is controlled by just 500 of the largest industrial corporations, and in 2002, the top 200 had combined sales equivalent to 28% of world GDP" and that "The convergence of economic power has created a concentration of political influence in society which is reflected nationally and globally". (2006)

As governments cede their power to multi-national corporations citizens lose their power to hold anyone accountable for the accuracy of the reports in the media. I concur with Nick Couldry's argument that, "any idea of the media presenting us with a neutral selection of the 'world's events' is fanciful; things simply don't work that way" (2001, p. 2). Further in 2012 he argues that:

Fears over whether 'net-neutrality' can be preserved continue; the trade-offs between the everyday convenience of search-engine use and corporate Google's resulting ability to do side-deals with US phone-provider Verizon over the openness of the wireless internet, apparently beyond the reach of the Federal Communications Commission, are troubling; Google's market dominance is now facing legal challenges by the US Federal Trade Commission and the European Competition Commissioner. So we cannot treat the 'space' of the internet as simply free and available to all. (p.10)

Couldry's arguments for a deeper analysis of the cultural impact of the image in mainstream news media coincide with the principal aims of this research.

I argue that the ubiquity of the image has a significant cultural impact and the difference between digital imagery and images in print requires investigation. Therefore the analysis of the history of the book and the introduction of the printing press fundamentally underpins this research. By incorporating the materials associated with print with information retrieved from electronic media, I raise

questions concerning the intrinsic qualities of each medium and how that affects interpretation. How does the extraction of information from constantly flowing digital information on screen, and then transforming it into a fixed printed image affect the viewer's ability to contemplate its meaning? Does the artistic representation of exaggerated repetition and framing of images and text in mainstream news media provide a quieter more reflective encounter? I extract images from television of September 11 2001, the Iraq war, conflict in Afghanistan, and the related political and social repercussions of those events. Similarly, I use text associated with those same events: speeches by politicians, senior army officers, and media commentators. Viewer/readers are swamped with images of violence from all sides and expert interpretations presented *ad nauseum*. Making sense of all this visual information is a significant problem, particularly as screens are integrated into most forms of communication technology.

Screens are becoming ubiquitous in contemporary society as is witnessed by the proliferation of mobile phones, miniature computers that appear to be essential accessories, almost a bodily appendage. Being perpetually connected via communication media appears to be a pathological urge while creating anxiety at the impossibility of being in touch with every new style, gossip, trend, or social development all the time. Risto J Moisio in Negative consequences of mobile phone consumption: Everyday irritations, anxieties and ambiguities in the experiences of Finnish mobile phone consumers in *Advances in Consumer Research* states that "the practices relating to sustaining this connection with the rest of the world facilitated worries or even forms of pathologies among consumers". (2003, p. 3) "Nomophobia" is the term used to describe what is "considered a disorder of the modern world and refers to discomfort or anxiety caused by being out of contact with a MP or computer. It is the pathological fear of remaining out of touch with technology (2010, p. 52). Being perpetually connected via the mobile phone does not take into account, however, the quality of the content to which users feel the need to be connected.

As early as 1983 Baudrillard stated "Information devours its own contents" and "Instead of causing communication, it exhausts itself in the act of staging the communication; instead of producing meaning, it exhausts itself in staging meaning" (p. 97). Technology continues to improve and has created access to an amazingly wide range of 'staging' options; however, I argue that the content has not improved at a similar rate and the analysis of the implications of the proliferation of information online lags behind. Print allows time for thoughtful transfer of

information and even the most trivial gossip magazines take time to produce, print, distribute and read, whereas every petty, inconsequential thought is available instantly online, creating a mass of information that is difficult to validate. However, I contend that the immediacy of content online has also had a major influence on the content and style of magazines and newspapers. The media world presents a heightened reality remote from the social realities of lived experience, but now the social world does not seem real if it does not reflect the mediated world.

The feature of digital technology that allows for instant connectivity is also instrumental in forging positive social links; however, it also opens up connections between those with less desirable social objectives, intensifying antisocial tendencies (paedophiles, extremists, organised crime, etc.). These aspects are often cited by governments seeking to create a more controlled online environment. Those classified as terrorists, hackers or proponents of illegal activities are just as able to promote their causes online, as governments and corporations are to disseminate their particular views. The freedom of the Internet challenges the dominant social order and consequently the pressure remains to find some way to monitor and control the space. There are many historical precedents, which I have cited in Chapter 1, where those in power have sought to exert control over access to information, in order to maintain their dominance.

The identity and allegiances of Internet users also raises concerns. On the one hand there is opportunity for manipulation and defamatory information to be spread. However, this very aspect also allows for alternative voices to be heard who would never find an outlet through the major media companies. The reader/viewer is therefore presented with a flood of conflicting information, the veracity of which is difficult to ascertain. Habermas contends that only through the evaluation of validity claims by all participants can a consensus be reached when he asserts: "When employing normative utterances in everyday life, we raise claims to validity that we are prepared to defend against criticism" (1990, p. 56). Claims to validity are complicated by framing, manipulation and repetition of images in mainstream news media. Through my artwork I assert that the omnipresence of images in mainstream news media creates a fundamental complication for determining the veracity of information as the techniques for manipulating images have become so sophisticated.

Exhibitions

Information in the twenty-first century is available in an instant. Through the technology of the mobile phone, laptop, and television, we are alerted to information of international, national, local, and personal significance. My work examines the radically different ways that information is disseminated and interpreted in the current transitional phase from print to digital (screen) technology. This section is a reflexive examination of the exhibitions that have focussed on the key research questions, specifically whether dominant media paradigms can be challenged through visual arts practice. I analyse and incorporate the particular material and cultural elements of each form of media in order to expose the complexities inherent in the current transitional phase between analogue and digital. Central to my practice, as stated previously, are the images and text extracted from mass media reports relating to September 11 2001 and its consequences. This material constitutes the majority of visual information incorporated into prints on paper and digital works.

I regard the term *a minor art practice* as defining the method in my art practice. O'Sullivan refers to it as an "affirmative action" which "is involved in the invention and imagining of new subjectivities as well as turning away from those already in place" (2006, p. 76). The "turning away from the subjectivities already in place", in relation to my artwork, refers to the extraction of material from its original source and its cultural context, and recontextualising it in order to propose alternative readings or to create a rupture. However, as a minor art practice my artwork draws on and incorporates the elements associated with the dominant or major in mainstream news media in a subversive process that mimics the codes, framing, and repetition employed in western mainstream news programmes. The art practice is then a reflection, query, critique and reappraisal, the expression of the intimate, and the public, in new contexts and combinations.

In the following section I examine the exhibitions intrinsic to this research: *Allusion* (2008) Kurb Gallery, Perth, Western Australia, *Incite/Insight* (2009) Heathcote Gallery, Applecross, Western Australia, *Allude2* (2010) Brunswick Street Gallery, Melbourne, Victoria, *screen* (2011) free range inc., Perth, Western Australia, and *immediacy* (2012) Spectrum Project Space, Perth, Western Australia. Each exhibition was crucial to my reflexive praxis as valuable insights were gained into the success or otherwise of the material in expressing my research aims. These

reflexive insights influenced the direction of the following exhibitions and consequently contributed directly to this research.

Allusion (2008) Kurb Gallery, Perth, Western Australia.

This initial exhibition built upon my previous Masters research and was essentially an exploration of new ways of interpreting images and text. I focused on the notion that images allude to certain ideas, whether superficially or in more subtle connotations, and examined ideas of ambiguity and the manipulation of the viewer through the use of codes or the lack of codes in images extracted from news footage. I then extracted slices from these images that did not explicitly define a location or subject. Kurb, an artist run space, provided a quite intimate and informal, less than immaculate white space, in which to trial new works. Colour digital prints, black and white prints on printmaking paper, and toy plastic palm trees and soldiers were included in this exhibition.

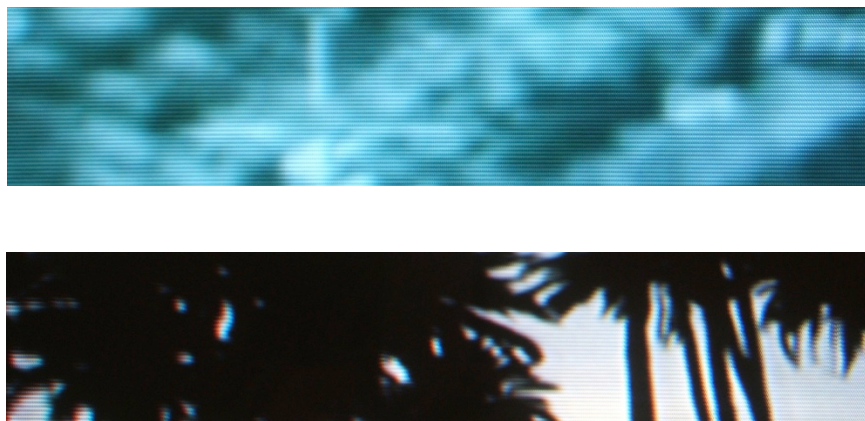


Figure 6: *Slice*: (detail) digital prints on aluminium 84.5cmW x 14.5cmD exhibited at Kurb Gallery, Allusion Exhibition 2008

Handwriting was a significant element in this exhibition for the first time. My aim was to analyse how text taken from digital and print news was transformed in this more personal form of communication. The handwritten works were of speeches made by the then president of the US, George W Bush justifying the war in Iraq. As my work examines the history of the book and print, the incorporation of handwriting referenced historical manuscripts before the shift to print. Converting texts accessed from newspapers, television and the Internet into handwriting was an important shift in my art practice. Writing, as Joanna Drucker in *Figuring the Word: Essays on Books, Writing, and Visual Poetics* (1998), asserts:

is an act of individual expression and an instance of that most rule-bound and social of human systems—language. It is at once personal and social, unique and cultural, asserting real physical presence and functioning through intertextual chains of association and reference. (p. 57)

Writing is not just about language; it is as Drucker states “also an image” and it is “the manifestation of an individuated identity which shows itself in the bodily gesture of mark making” (p. 62). Therefore the handwritten element of my creative practice is a conscious and considered acknowledgement of my individual and social influences directly referencing the pre-digital era. In emphasising the function of writing Drucker also avers that it is “both to provide an image of the self and to position that self within language as the system of the symbolic order” (p. 62). Handwriting as an expression of reflexive praxis proved to be a crucial development, directing future creative research.

I transformed excerpts of printed texts into handwritten texts, rupturing the structured context of news information. The remediation of images and text into differing contexts and materials is central to my practice, which questions how that alters or “ruptures” the interpretations. Bourriaud states: “A work may operate like a relational device containing a certain degree of randomness, or a machine provoking and managing individual and group encounters” (1998, p. 30).

The gallery creates a space that allows time and quiet for contemplation, and also a space for tension between adjacent images and texts. I argue that the creation of quiet space seems to be a defiant act amidst the cacophony of constant images and sound. Therefore, I prefer to present my work without a sound component as a contrast to the world of mass communication. Postman (1993, p. 90) contends that almost all television programmes are embedded in music, which helps to tell the audience what emotions are to be called forth. By excluding sound and manipulating visual information I am encouraging the viewer to take into consideration the ‘alterity to a subset of the perceived world’. As the images are from television and are normally saturated with sound I am exploring whether the lack of sound diminishes the meaning or intensifies it. This exploration happens through the exhibition of works that are located in quiet gallery space allowing the viewer to contemplate the work without aural distraction or direction.

My aim was to create an exhibition that required the audience to invest time and concentration to fully engage with the works, in contrast to the immediacy and accessibility inherent in contemporary mass media. The exhibition provided valuable feedback from those who attended and recognised the connections of the

materials and the content. The feedback was not collected in any organised way but randomly through conversations with gallery visitors who wished to discuss the exhibition. The interactions with the visitors, stimulated by the works in the exhibition, inspired continuing creative explorations. The juxtaposition of images and text was remarked upon, particularly the incongruity of the palm tree images, signifying recreation and exotic holiday locations, but retrieved from images of the Iraq war. These artworks explicitly referred to the key research question, exploring the cultural implications of mediated images and text in western mainstream news media and examining the codes and distinctive properties that define and limit new media technologies. The codes relating to the Iraq conflict include the ochre colour of the dusty landscape, the palm trees, the mangled car bodies, and aerial photographs and maps seen through gun sights (Fig. 6). The seductiveness of the colours of the digital prints, extracted from television images, created a disruption in viewer's expectations as the content and context became obvious. Many gallery visitors remarked to me that the framed works initially appeared to be an interesting photographic exhibition but on closer inspection the combination of text and image was more disquieting than they had expected. Similarly, the attractiveness of the handwritten script belied its serious political content. These works reflected the immediacy of access to huge amounts of information in new media by emphasising the repetition of images and text in mainstream news media. The contrast between the handwritten works and the digital prints exposed and magnified the shift that has occurred in the production and transmission of information.

***Incite/Insight* (2009) Heathcote Gallery, Applecross, Western Australia.**

Heathcote Gallery was a much larger space than that used for *Allusion*, with a variety of different-sized exhibition rooms allowing me to re-examine and renegotiate some previous works in relation to those spaces. Further exploring the textual aspect of my practice, I produced works on paper embossed with the words *transparency* and *accountability* (Fig. 11), which are used repetitively in political media discourse. The almost invisible and unobserved repetition of these particular words became the inspiration for creating this artwork in which the words are only shadows produced by the embossing process on thick white print paper. This exhibition focussed more on text and included printed works on paper and multiple photocopied works.

On entering the exhibition the works in the first space were the works on paper (Fig. 9) stacked in a small pile with the identical, printed black and white image of Saddam Hussein's statue falling after the invasion/liberation of Iraq. Over

the image, words used by the then president of the USA, George W. Bush, to mitigate the horror of the Iraq War, were stamped. Euphemisms such as “collateral damage”, and emotive words, such as “democracy” and “freedom”, were repeatedly stamped over the print of the falling statue in reference to the reinterpretation of events in mainstream news media. The elements incorporated into this work, the paper pages, the print technique, and the text, all referenced the concept of the book challenging the standard bound codex. This work was quite small (25.5cm wide x 18.5cm long) and accompanying it were toy plastic palm trees (8cm high) referencing the Iraqi location and their frequent depiction in war images, contrasting with their more usual association in the western media with exotic holidays and beachside recreation. Using plastic palm trees also alluded to the plasticity of news footage, the infantilisation of media rhetoric, and its primary intent to entertain.

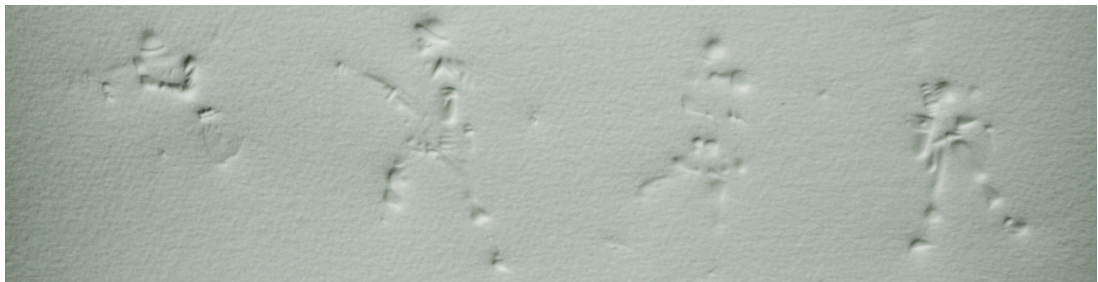


Figure 7: *Bush speech*: (in background of top picture and detail below) handwriting on paper with embossing at Heathcote Museum and Gallery, Incite/Insight Exhibition 2009



Figure 8: *Bush speech*: (detail) plastic soldiers and army equipment exhibited at Heathcote Museum and Gallery, Allusion Exhibition 2009

Situated in the same space was another work (Fig. 7 & 8) consisting of many pieces of paper exhibited in two rows on the wall. Each piece was embossed with

impressions of toy soldiers combined with hand written excerpts of an inauguration speech by George W. Bush. The plastic toy soldiers had to be squashed going through the printing press in order to create the impressions on the paper. Below the papers were piled more plastic toy soldiers and military equipment.

The text used on the *Bush speech* work referred to the professed glorious motives and sentiments of the United States of America and its divine purpose to bring freedom to the world. Taking the words out of their original context and associating them with war through the images of soldiers embossed on the paper and the pile of plastic soldiers beneath the words set up a dialogue concerning the connection between words and consequences of the speech. The two works referred to the multiplicity of information platforms transmitting almost identical information in contemporary western news media in support of the Iraq war. Pictures were extracted from television, and words from the Internet and newspapers, recontextualised in order to challenge dominant media paradigms.



Figure 9: *Words and Pictures*: multiple prints and plastic palm trees exhibited at Heathcote Gallery, *Incite/Insight* Exhibition, 2009

The multiple paper pieces also refer to the conventions of the book and how it can be reinterpreted in the Hyperlink era. My aim was to create a work that could be identified as book-like but without the binding or narrative. The image and text were identical on each page referencing the repetition in mainstream and online news media and the lack of hierarchy online. Jerome McGann (2001, p. xii) asserts: “scholarship devoted to aesthetic materials has never been more needed than at this historical moment.” He also contends that the genetic relationship between the book and the computer “has been too much taken for granted, as if it were simple to see and understand (p. xii).” The analysis of that “genetic relationship” and its communication limits and opportunities were a major influence in this exhibition.

In a small side room was a bench with many cardboard files along its length (Fig. 10). Loose pages were placed inside the files with printed images and text retrieved from television, the Internet and newspapers. The text and images were repeated throughout the files but not bound allowing the viewer to re-arrange as they liked. Some text was on clear film and allowed for interesting juxtapositions when placed over another word or image. The work was titled *response* as it responded to the loose and often random way that information is accessed on the Internet. The lack of binding or order in the files and the opportunity for the viewer to rearrange the pages created a space to reconsider the metaphoric values of the book and the properties of both print and Internet contained within them. White gloves were provided for the public to open and move the pages around as they saw fit. My intention was to encourage this interaction and leave people to create their own narrative for as Bourriaud contends “the liveliest factor that is played out on the chessboard of art has to do with interactive, user friendly and relational concepts”. He also asserts: “the emergence of new technologies, like the Internet and multimedia systems, points to a collective desire to create new areas of conviviality and introduce new types of transaction with regard to the cultural object” (1998, p. 8).

This work was particularly influenced by the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), specifically their alternative definition of a book (that it is to be approached randomly as the interest takes one, and not in a sequential way (p. xv)) and the relationship with Internet interaction. The relationship between print and digital media was explored in this work with images and text transferred from digital to print and vice versa, and also challenged the conventions of the book as a fixed, bound object. The gallery viewer was given the opportunity to manipulate the printed information in contrast to the orthodox approach to reading a book.



Figure 10: *Response*: (detail) digital photographs and text on loose photocopied pages in multiple files exhibited at Heathcote Museum and Gallery, *Incite/Insight* Exhibition 2009

On the spine of the folders were stamped either the word “transparency” or “accountability”, referring to the words repeated over and over by those in power to reassure the populace that all is above board and their interests are being taken into account. These words were also repeated in another work on paper with the hand written words embossed many times on separate pieces of paper and placed on the wall to create a texture of shadows. The repetition of these two words also explored the subtlety of the messages in the media and the eventual diminishment of their meaning. Repetition occurred throughout the exhibition exaggerating the manipulation of information in western mainstream news media.



Figure 11: *accountability/transparency*: (detail) embossed works on paper exhibited at Heathcote Museum and Gallery, *Incite/Insight* Exhibition 2009

In the end room were 24 slice pictures arranged in three columns of eight. They formed the major focus in the room and provided a colourful contrast to the other works. I increased the number of slice pictures for this exhibition in order to create a stronger relationship to the concepts of constant repetition of identical information and images presented in the media becoming overwhelming and leading to a feeling of powerlessness.

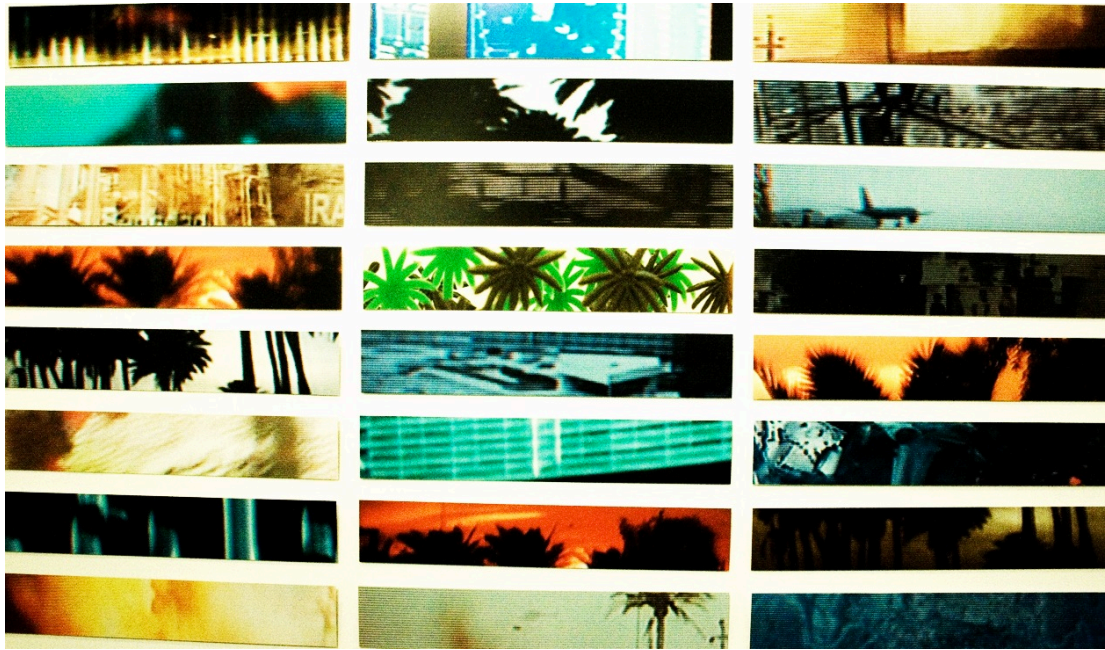


Figure 12: *Slice 1-24*: digital prints mounted on aluminium (84.5cmW x 14.5cmD each) exhibited at Heathcote Museum and Gallery, *Incite/Insight* Exhibition 2009

This exhibition exposed opportunities for future larger combinations of the slice works that will totally cover the walls of an exhibition room. The impression of glowing colour images retrieved from television sliced into bits surrounding the viewer expresses a stronger link to my theoretical concerns, positing that we are exposed to so much information in the form of images that it is difficult to verify the authenticity and therefore develop an informed opinion.

***ALLUDE2* (2010) Brunswick Street Gallery, Melbourne, Victoria.**

The Brunswick Street Gallery is a very large space taking up one floor of an old building in Melbourne with a variety of rooms available for a differing range of exhibitions. The date and location were chosen to synchronize with the Melbourne Art Fair. As this gallery is in Melbourne there was an opportunity for the work to be seen in a new geographical context and to test its significance beyond the local sphere.

The allocated exhibition room itself was quite small, about a quarter of the size of the Heathcote Gallery and Museum, so that curating was critical; therefore I chose to limit the number of prints exhibited to provide discrete space rather than fill the room with competing visual information. A positive aspect of the space was the link with the projected work that could be viewed as visitors came up the stairs and entered the main exhibition room. Viewers were alerted to the relationship of the projected images and text to the prints in the gallery space.

This exhibition in particular saw a move to exaggerate the repetitive elements of mainstream news media through prints, handwritten and printed text, and projection. I have used projection in my practice previously and in this particular context I used more text repeating through the images. This was a totally new work produced for this exhibition in which repetition was the central element. The adjacent space in which the projection was shown provided an entrance to the room in which the work was exhibited and all other rooms on that floor. This proved beneficial as gallery visitors came into the gallery space already aware of the content and ideas relating to the accompanying exhibition.

Words and Pictures, the multiple prints on paper with small plastic palm trees lined up behind were stacked together and placed on a plinth just inside the exhibition room entrance, providing a link to the digital slice prints of palm trees in Iraq war images. Smaller glossy prints on aluminium, were placed in unexpected positions, either very low or high, challenging the traditional placement of artwork and referencing the omnipresence of the image in society.

In response to the limited number of people who physically interacted with the *Open Book* files I produced for the *Incite/Insight* exhibition, I anonymously placed some of the loose-leaf booklets amongst exhibition stationery on the counter at the gallery and in some local cafes among newspapers and magazines. I will never know what happened with them. As Bourriaud asserts:

These days, communications are plunging human contacts into monitored areas that divide the social bond up into (quite) different products. Artistic activity, for its part, strives to achieve modest connections, open up (One or two) obstructed passages, and connect levels of reality kept apart from one another (1998, p. 8).

Rather than continue to place these loose-leaf books in the gallery space where the etiquette of gallery patrons to physically interact with them is inhibited, I chose to challenge the art object aura. Walter Benjamin, in his seminal work *The work of art in the mechanical age of reproduction* (1999) discusses the aura of the work of art:

The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition. This tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable. An ancient statue of Venus, for example, stood in a different traditional context with the Greeks, who made it an object of veneration, than with the clerics of the Middle Ages, who viewed it as an ominous idol. Both of them, however, were equally confronted with its uniqueness, that is, its aura. (pp. 75-76)

The tradition embedded in the work of art, particularly in a gallery setting, still influences the viewer's perception of the associated 'aura'. Therefore as Benjamin states: "In other words, the unique value of the "authentic" work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value" (1999, p. 76). In order to challenge this I placed the books randomly in cafes and other public places where magazine racks offer reading material for customers. My intention was to reach people who may never go to an art gallery, and to provide a way of contrasting the information in mass media magazines with an alternative form of printed matter. 'Guerilla art' reflects this type of artistic action which is defined by Keri Smith as "any anonymous work (including but not limited to graffiti, signage, performance, additions, and decoration) installed, performed, or attached in public spaces, with the distinct purpose of affecting the world in a creative or thought provoking way" (2007, p. 11). Currently my work is most effectively located in the gallery space but this type of artistic action may be developed in future. This exhibition proved valuable allowing me to reflect on the cultural reading of prints on quality printing paper and their compilation into books for gallery exhibitions, in contrast to cheaper photocopied or digitally printed books or leaflets placed in the public domain, exploring the various spheres in which this work could exist. The exhibition, in terms of my reflexive praxis, exposed the strengths and weaknesses of the direction of my work and provided a basis for analysing the interrelationship between my exegesis and my creative practice. The projected work, in particular, reinforced the significance of repetition in my creative practice, testing the patience of viewers to endure the amount of repetition of key words and images. Similarly repetition of information in mainstream news media is reinforced as a critical element in my theoretical research.

***screen* (2011) free range inc., Perth, Western Australia.**

The artworks in *screen* were a progression of and response to previous exhibitions, reflexively analysing the strengths and weaknesses revealed. The exhibition examined the synchronicities that apply to the transition from script to the advent of print (the book) and the current shift from print to digital technology. As with all my current artwork, the images and text incorporated in this body of work are focused on the media coverage of events since September 11 2001. As stated previously, my research is not a forensic examination of that event. Instead I regard the media reaction to the event and its consequences as confirming and highlighting existing tendencies in western mainstream news media. I regard this as a pivotal

point in contemporary history on which the media has focused and played a key role in influencing public opinion.

The title of the exhibition refers to two meanings of the word *screen*. The noun refers to the flat surface through which we commonly access most of our information; it can be seen as a transparent medium, allowing us to see through it. The screen in homes, at work, in a pocket or handbag, is the medium through which one accesses the world and conversely allows outside interests to access each individual. Screens are the windows which connect and detach us from the world. As Giroux states, they are, “enabling modes of spectatorship that cannot be collapsed into a monolithic mass, they deploy unheard-of powers in the shaping of time, space, knowledge, values, identities, and social relations” (2006, p. 20). Screen culture, since September 11 2001, as described by Giroux “has emerged as a crucial pedagogical tool, administering a 24-hour series of visceral shocks to viewers, radically displacing their former selves as consumers of material goods; now they are organized largely through shared fears rather than shared responsibilities” (2006, p. 2). Television has alerted us to the dangers associated with the threat from others through programmes that have focused on border control at airports not only locally but internationally have reinforced these fears. The images and text on screens and in print in this exhibition reflect the use of codes, repetition, and framing in shaping the ‘culture of fear’ to which Giroux refers. The other definition of the word *screen* is the verb “to screen”, to conceal, to partition something off or to selectively discriminate. Again the screen allows constant access to information but the interests of those who construct and/or manipulate or ‘screen’ that information are ill-defined. As I have demonstrated in previous chapters framing, repetition and codes limit the means for interpreting photographic images, as images form the majority of information on screens, Giroux argues:

Critical reading demands pedagogical practices that challenge common sense, resist easy assumptions, bracket how images are framed, engage meaning as a struggle over power and politics, and, as such, refuse to view reading (especially reading images) exclusively as an aesthetic exercise, but also as a political and moral one. (2005, p. 132)

I concur with Giroux’s argument that viewer/readers need to be alerted to the framing and filtering techniques associated with mediated images and text. There is also a need for them to be aware of the implications of being overwhelmed with the amount of information. The implications include the virtual impossibility of deciphering and analysing the mass of information now available online in order to

make informed decisions. The rapid normalisation through pervasiveness of screen technologies in western societies necessitates visual culture analysis and research examining prevailing mass media representations. Screens, in themselves, are transparent neutral components of information technologies; however, their omnipresence allows for the wide dispersal of information, transforming the screen into a powerful agent of mainstream communication enterprises. The limitations associated with interpreting in whose interests information is framed creates the second meaning of screen: to conceal, or to selectively discriminate. Each of these definitions applies to the access to information in new media. The incorporation of screens in my exhibitions reflects their prevalence in all aspects of western society, and examines which definition of 'screen' applies to media images and text.

The *screen* exhibition consisted of works on paper and on dvd screens demonstrating the direction of my ongoing research into the cultural implications of the shifts in information technology. Repeated images and text were played on 10 portable dvd players which were similar in size to books, alluding to the essential relationship between the book and the Internet. The portable dvd players were placed in small black boxes and distributed around the floor of the exhibition space. This required the viewer to crouch down to see the entire movie and to be mindful as they negotiated the gallery space. It also meant that as the viewer walked around the exhibition fragments of flickering movement and colour were visible incidentally. Included in this body of work were digitally printed works on paper referencing the relationship between digital media and print media. The prints on paper were pinned to the surrounding walls, further exaggerating the repetition of images and text being played on the small dvd players.



Figure 13: *Screens 1-10*: portable dvd players in black wooden boxes exhibited at free range gallery, *screen* Exhibition 2011

My aim in this exhibition was to demonstrate the convergence of media to which the public is exposed and the repetition of content on all platforms. The cultural impact of new media was crucial as I combined images and text subverting the prevailing norms in western mainstream news media. Western homes are now filled with media technologies: radio, television, computer, mobile phone, computer games, digital books, and printed media: books, magazines and newspapers. As I have been arguing, the amount of information in western mainstream news media has grown exponentially but the sources providing the content have diminished.

These particular works echoed the words of Marilyn Deegan and Kathryn Sullivan:

we live in a world of technological hybridity, in which systems of information storage and delivery borrow and reinterpret functions from one medium to another; and as readers, users and viewers we too conduct our lives between media. (2009, p. 3)

Each piece in the exhibition reinforced the contention that new media forms require focused research and enquiry, and new interpretive skills. These works examined the transition of access to information and the future of the traditional printed form on paper. Deegan argues:

In prophesying the death of the book, the enthusiasts for the new technology and the elegists of the old recognised an undoubted truth that how we represent to ourselves what we value in art, music and literature is refreshed by and implicated in transformations in methods of production and communication. (2009, p. 17)

The placement of the printed works on the walls, higher than the works on portable dvd players alluded to the current elevation of printed information in the hierarchy of communication technologies. However, the transitions taking place, challenging that hierarchy, informed the creative investigation of the implications of that change.

Repetition of words and images extracted from the media, particularly news programmes, was incorporated into these works, reflecting the unremitting flow of repetitious information masquerading as live coverage. Key words such as “accountability”, “transparency”, and “democracy” recur so frequently that they arguably have lost all meaning. Similarly, images of conflict or disasters are repeated endlessly so that the relationship between time, location and meaning has lost its impact.

Following the integration of text in the dvd work in the *Allude2* exhibition I placed more emphasis on textual works in this exhibition. I created digital prints on

paper leaving space to handwrite text also extracted from mainstream news media. A conscious decision was made to handwrite the text in direct reference to the personal aspect of this research, reflexively referring to previous exhibitions, and acknowledging the historical development of communication from manuscript to print to digital. Drucker defines “the term ‘writing’ as the visible form of language from the level of the marks to the letters and includes all the characteristic features of the visible medium,” and she also asserts, “these features contribute to structuring the linguistic significance of the text” (1998, p. 232). Handwriting in this context also alludes to the changes taking place to a once important skill, similar to the apparent decline in reading and comprehension skills associated with the introduction and ascendancy of digital communications.



Figure 14: *Constructed reality* (45cmW x 78cmD) digital prints on paper with handwritten text exhibited at free range Gallery, screen Exhibition 2011

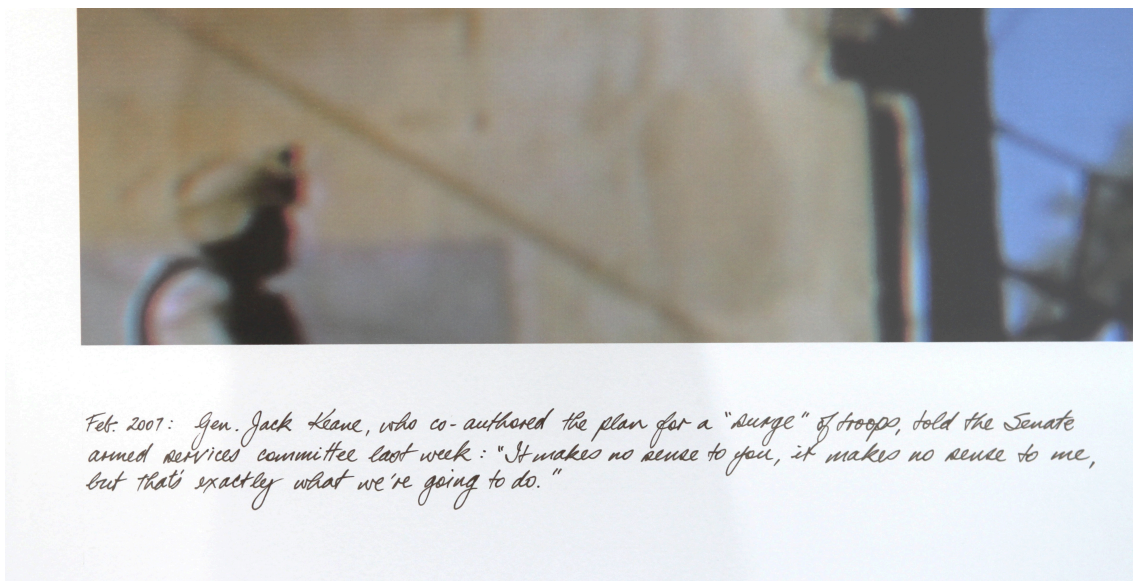


Figure 15: *Constructed reality*: (detail) of print and handwriting exhibited at free range Gallery, screen Exhibition 2011

In all of these exhibitions I have included images that are not extracted from television news footage of events associated with September 11 2001. Rather these are images of plastic toy palm trees, and of palm trees photographed in and around Perth WA suburbs. These images from Perth alluded to local news content reported with the generic global content produced by mass-media corporations. My Inclusion of the images of local palm trees signified the unequivocal support by the Australian government for US imperatives post-September 11 2001, making the Australian population complicit in the consequences of those actions. Those images were also a stark contrast with the mediated images of palm trees in conflict situations in the Middle East.

This exhibition formed a key component of my current research, incorporating creative praxis, analysing the cultural implications of digital media for the future of print by examining the history and the concept of the book. Developing the digital component of this research while refining the print aspect continues this exploration.

***Monster* (2012) Oats Factory, Perth Western Australia. (group exhibition)**

I was invited to participate in the *Monster* exhibition in June 2012, in which each artist was asked to interpret her or his own concept of the word monster. I chose to frame 10 selected printed works and include them in this exhibition. The works chosen were printed images on paper from the *screen* exhibition relating to the Iraq war and text handwritten beneath, challenging the prevailing political justification for that conflict. I regard the military conflicts driven by retribution for September 11 2001 and the political jargon used to convince the public of its validity as monstrous. Therefore these works fit the criteria for the exhibition. Visually the artwork was not monstrous but the concepts dealt with were.

The major difference in these works from works exhibited previously was that they were framed. The purpose of the framing was to explore how that changed the acceptability of the content and to reinforce that framing is a powerful element in western mainstream news media. Physically framing the works altered them in unexpected ways. They had a more familiar appearance and could be located as commercial products that could be transferred into the domestic sphere. The framing of the pictures emphasised that framing information on screens, physically and politically, also transfers uncomfortable content into acceptable content in the home. This proved successful, and I decided to include framing in my culmination exhibition.



Figure 16: *framed*: framed digital prints on paper with handwritten text (59.5cmW x 78cmD) exhibited at Oats Factory at *Monster* exhibition 2012

PhD Exhibition
***immediacy* (Oct 2012) Spectrum Project Space, Perth, Western Australia**

This final exhibition was the culmination of my PhD research, incorporating the key aspects of my reflexive praxis. Repetition, codes and framing in contemporary mass media were referenced and images remediated in traditional prints on paper, book art, projection, and digital prints. The exhibition encapsulated the research aims of this thesis, interrogating the interrelationship between the political and cultural values exemplified in western mainstream news media while drawing on the histories of the transitions from manuscript to print, and from print to digital media. The distinctive properties that define and limit new media technologies inform this exhibition.

The omnipresence of the image in contemporary media was reflected in this exhibition, particularly as the image pertained to September 11 2001. The viewer, so accustomed to virtual or constructed images of violence and terrorism in movies, questioned the reality of the events, and conspiracy theories flourished. The problem in discerning the real from the mediated is a crucial point addressed in my

creative practice. The images of palm trees I would assert clearly reflect this element in my artwork. The palm trees were intended to reference tropical holidays and appear to be images of fiery island sunsets but in reality they are images of the endemic date palms in footage depicting the violent conflagration of exploding bombs in Iraq. The *time-space distanciation* defined by Giddens (1991, p. 23) could not be more pronounced than in the alienation of the viewer witnessing the real time images of the bombing of Baghdad. The language of “shock and awe” and the preceding propaganda justifying the invasion, was disseminated in mainstream news media exacerbating the unreality and lack of engagement with the human consequences of the bombardment. The framing of that conflict as retribution for the events of September 11 2001, as a ‘War on Terror’, in which there were emphatically defined sides of good and evil, reflects the elements already common in mass media which determine what is bought, who is voted for, and who is of us or not of us.

The retrieved images and text associated with this event, serve as an exaggerated example of the manipulation of information in mainstream news media, exemplifying the political and cultural implications of the media corporations’ power to shape public opinion. In his analysis of the effects of the media coverage of September 11 2001, Wark proclaims that “to see it was to be implicated in it” and that “there was no safe haven from which to observe, unaffected” (2006, p. 271). Similarly, I assert that the repetition of violent events in nightly mainstream news media implicates and affects media consumers. In proposing alternative strategies for a new language with which to address current oppositional language in the media Wark suggests: “combining tactical media with a tactical knowledge, of using the extensive vector of the media in combination with the intensive vector of the scholarly archive” (p. 273). I contend that this creative and theoretical examination combines to reflect that research process. The incorporation and exaggeration of repetition, framing and the use of codes prevalent in mainstream news media, was central to this exhibition.



Figure 17: *framed*: framed digital prints on paper with handwritten text (59.5cmW x 78cmD) exhibited at Spectrum Project Space at *immediacy* exhibition 2012

The major piece of work was a very large book, *remediation* (each page approx. 60cm deep x 80cm wide). The book was made of heavy print paper, referencing the material difference between digital and print media. I have a continuing interest in artist's books and have created many. However, this book was more sculptural in scale, examining the material qualities that define the printed book: the paper, the binding, and the printing process. The feel of the paper and its surface texture, how it bends or curves, the impressions left by the printing process, the type of binding, or if it is bound at all, the amount of information on each page, are all areas I considered in conjunction with how form works with the content.



Figure 18: *remediation*: Handmade book: Hanemhule paper, solvent transfers, handwriting, letterpress

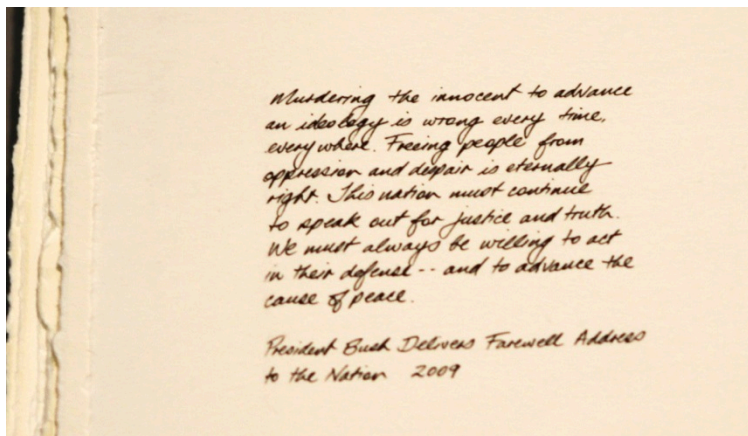


Figure 19: *remediation*: (detail) Handwriting

Although the processes and materials were traditional, the content is derived from images and text extracted from and manipulated using digital technology.

The artist's book has a long and varied history, becoming a more developed artform in the 20th century (Drucker, 1995, p. 1). Drucker states that the development of artists' books was particularly marked after 1945, "when the artists' book had its own practitioners, theorists, critics, innovators, and visionaries" (p. 1). Artists' books are created in many different formats and address a multitude of aesthetic issues. The book that I am creating is a manifestation of the concept of remediation of information: shifting images and text from one medium to another to interrogate dominant media norms. It is not part of an edition, as many artists' books are, but a single sculptural object in the form of a book. Joanna Drucker discusses this book related activity that developed in the late 1970s where book-like or book

sculpture became highly visible (p. 13). She states that, “the recent increase in these productions marks an intensifying exchange between artists who make books and the world of mainstream visual art” (p. 13). Drucker also discusses the “important critical tensions inherent in book structures” asserting:

No single encounter with a successful book closes off its polyvalent possibilities. The sense of limit which an edge, binding, and spine provide is countered by the infinite space of the page and opening, capable of drawing the reader inward in an endlessly expanding experience of sensation and association. (1995, p. 359)

The tension to which Drucker refers is also evident in the interrelationships of the text and images that form the content of the book. The book as a metaphor strongly relates to the direction of my practice. I have previously tested the limits of the metaphoric concept of a book or the “book-ness” of an object in the work *response* (Fig. 9), in which there was no binding or linear narrative. Every time I produce multiple prints on paper I consider the relationship to book structures. I make decisions concerning how the edge of the page is created; whether it is torn or cut or whether the printing goes right to the edge or well inside the surface area; how many pages; whether I print on both sides. I also consider the size of the pages: whether they are all the same size or whether some are larger but fold back into the book. If all the pages are the same type of paper I consider why to choose one type of paper over another. All of these decisions are made with the content, context, and form in mind and a consideration of how each aspect influences the other.

For the past ten years Drucker has been working on the transformations taking place from print to digital information with research defined as ‘digital humanities’ which “extends the theoretical questions that came into focus in deconstruction, postmodern theory, critical and cultural studies” (2009, p. 6). As she states: “Humanists are skilled at complexity and ambiguity. Computers, as is well known, are not” (p. 7). Drucker argues that aesthetics practices need to play a role in the development of digital language (p. 6). The combination of print and digital techniques in my handmade book is related to this search for a way to understand how differing aesthetics influence knowledge.

Another problematic aspect of the book as a visual art object is its limitations in an exhibition space. Books are either under glass, denying the viewer access to any view other than the opened pages, or require the viewer to put on white gloves to leaf through the pages in order to access the content. These are the tensions to which Drucker refers (p. 359). However, I acknowledge these limitations and

tensions in my artwork which define the “book-ness” of my book sculpture. Works such as *Words and Pictures* (Fig. 9), *Response* (Fig. 10) and *Screens* (Fig. 13) test the traditional bound codex form of the book. As this research encompasses the communication possibilities associated with print and digital media, therefore the incorporation of the materials associated with each technology is critical. This exegesis locates my practice within the field of the book arts in recognition of the historical context and communicative possibilities of the medium.



Figure 20: I can't watch the news anymore, sites, colours of war, palms: Digitallly printed books (17cm x 17cm) (print on demand)

Print media, including newspapers and books are being significantly affected by digital technology; therefore it is critical for researchers and creative practitioners to examine the political and social implications of the transition. As I have stated previously, I regard my art practice as political, defined by O'Sullivan (2006) as “the location of critique from within creativity” (p. 77). Dissent is another aspect of the ‘minor practice’ as he states: “Dissent is crucial” and that “it is as if there must be two moments or movements to a minor practice” “one of dissent (either a strategic withdrawal as a form of engagement, or strategic engagement itself), and one of creativity (the production of new forms)” (p. 77). These elements are evident in my artwork in the choice of images and the connections I make with political texts which also appear in books which I have designed using online book production technology (Fig. 16). The transition of images and text from digital to print to projection and back to digital in my creative practice, reflects the current state of affairs within mainstream news media.

Screens 2, small portable dvd players, playing short movies and originally exhibited in the *screen* exhibition, were part of this exhibition. They were recontextualised and refashioned for this specific gallery space. Drawing on the

information gained from the *screen* exhibition, these little dvd players in small boxes were attached to the walls in a variety of positions. The movies also reinforced the repetition that is the key element of my creative practice. The difficulty of remaining engaged with repeated images and text was deliberately exacerbated and exaggerated in the body of work and were reflected in the artwork in this exhibition.



Figure 21: *screens 2*: digital movies on portable dvd players exhibited at Spectrum Project Space at *immediacy* exhibition 2012

This final exhibition was a culmination of the preceding research including the thesis, the presentation and peer reviewed paper for the Impact 7 conference publication, and exhibitions. I have used the reflexive praxis model in order to analyse how dominant communication paradigms can be challenged through visual arts practice. The reflexive praxis model impels the researcher to examine their own lifeworld and the impact of the wider social and cultural sphere on their lifeworld, recognising how each influences the other. Consequently, the cultural aspects associated with media information were central to this exhibition. Images and text were reconstructed to challenge and rupture the prevailing media orthodoxies. Each of the works in this exhibition demonstrated this reflexive communicative aspect. As Crouch states reflexive praxis is a reflection upon and reconstruction of the constructed world (2007, p. 112). Consequently, the combination of images and text printed (Fig. 17,18, 20), handwritten (Fig. 17, 18, 19), and in digital movies (Fig. 21), exemplified the reflexive praxis methodology. The large book *remediation* (Fig. 18.19) combined paper, letterpress, handwriting and spirit transfer images referring to the traditional material qualities of print. The *framed* works (Fig. 17), while also on paper, combined and contrasted digital prints with handwriting reflecting the dynamic state of current communication technologies. The digital movies *screens*

on the portable dvd players (Fig. 21) exaggerated the repetition of information on screens and reflected the ubiquity of repetition in contemporary communication technology. Drawn from the constructed world of western mainstream media and recontextualised in the gallery space each work created a dialogue, “pulling meaning back out of the predictable production of a rhetoric of consumption into a rhetoric of critical consideration and thoughtful exchange” (Drucker, 2000, p. 49).

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research has been to question how creative practice can address the cultural implications of mediated text and images and whether the shift from print to digital technology has had a significant impact on political and cultural values. I have demonstrated that creative practice, using the reflexive praxis model, is crucial in challenging dominant media paradigms. I combine ‘thinking and acting’ (Gramsci, cited by Haug, 2000, p. 2), theory and creativity, in order to critically analyse the shift to digital media. As an artist engaged with the political and social aspects of media representations I have shown that rupturing ‘our habitual modes of being’ (O’Sullivan, 2006, p. 1) through creative practice is an essential expression of a critically informed lifeworld. In my case this has been carried out through recontextualising images and text, from western mainstream news media, in exhibited artworks to explore and expose the potential and limitations of these changes. The rapid rates of change in digital communications, the increasing ease of use of the technology, the implicit pressure to continually update to the newest communication gadget, influence all cultural interactions. The degree to which society is impacted upon by these changes is the focus of my creative practice and this exegesis.

I have shown in Chapter 2 that repetition, codes and framing of information were evident in print media well before the introduction of newer media technologies. The difference in contemporary mainstream news media is the immediacy of access to information, the ubiquity of the image, and the extraordinary repetition of information available. As the media coverage of the Vietnam War was a pivotal point in western television news media history, emphasised by the power of a largely unconstrained press corps, so the media coverage of September 11 2001 fundamentally exposed the limitations of mainstream news media. Fuchs argues, “Due to Vietnam experiences, the U.S. government in subsequent decades tried to keep the mass media out of war zones and the invaded countries” (2005, p. 198). “Embedding” journalists with U.S. troops became an effective way to “assure patriotism and improve voluntary propaganda activity from the national media” (Brandenburg, 2005, p. 234). The conscious and imposed framing of information, particularly in times of conflict, has been shown (Robin, 2004; Spigel, 2004; Giroux, 2005) to exist in all mainstream news media representations to varying degrees.

September 11 2001 was however, that ‘weird global media event’ (Wark, 2006) witnessed live as a result of new media technologies. The cultural

consequences of that event in shaping the contemporary world require analysis through creative practice in an examination of western mainstream news media representations. However, much the images of the Twin Towers collapsing in September 2001 are etched into our brains, the repercussions of the manipulation of the media portrayal extends far beyond the immediate physical and psychological effects. My art practice explores the way our personal lives are influenced by media representations that infiltrate our domestic sphere by focusing on constructed television images. I examine the cultural implications of the constant stream of information coming not only from television, but also from the Internet, radio, newspapers and magazines. The words of Giroux most eloquently express my ideas regarding the importance of interrogating the cultural effects of mass media:

both cultural-studies theorists and critical educators engage in forms of cultural work that locates politics in the interplay among symbolic representations, everyday life, and material relations of power; both engage cultural politics, as “the site of the production and struggle over power,” and learning as the outcome of diverse struggles rather than as the passive reception of information. (2000, p. 128)

I regard the investigation of the symbolic representations in the media through my creative practice as part of that “diverse struggle” to challenge and expose rather than passively receive. I assert that artists and other creative practitioners will always seek alternative opportunities to critique dominant cultural paradigms, despite efforts to close loopholes and limit dissent. In my case this is carried out by using the very tools and content of the mainstream media, and exposing the repetition, codes and framing of information. My analysis therefore aims to integrate all aspects of my research methodology in the form of creative praxis, assessing the impact of mass media images and text and whether they enhance or nullify the viewer/reader’s involvement in the public sphere.

Central to my research has been the question concerning whether the cultural consequences of the shift from print to digital media can be explored through visual art practice using reflexive praxis methodology. As Crouch has asserted the process of reflexive praxis is contingent upon a cultural and social environment. (2007, p. 112) I have demonstrated that western mainstream news media plays an important role in interpreting and shaping that cultural and social environment. Capturing images and slowing down the relentless flow of information and combining them with reiterated phrases extracted from news sources has provided the key methodology by which I have addressed this question. I contend my creative practice has proved that when common news media images are

recontextualised within a gallery space allowing time for contemplation, a more focused and critical engagement is possible. Similarly I have established that visual art practice can challenge dominant media paradigms through intensive research, by combining theory and practice, and the continual showing and testing of exhibited works using the reflexive praxis methodology.

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