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[Home](#) > [THESES](#) > 345

Unpacking my library : stories of how we understood the world

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Abstract

Unpacking my Library is the title for the body of artistic work and its associated documentation. The work has been produced over a four-year period, consisting of four interrelated sets of artist's books and framed wall-mounted photographs. The work is a visual library.

My aim was to create a body of work that traced the development of visual objects and, by so doing map the development of a cultural identity. I was interested in exploring what I perceived as a correspondence between the processes developed in the studio to articulate ideas and how cultural identity develops. The work was based on the principle that the processes and the development of cultural identity involve

negotiation between self and site. It was my intention that in a visual documentation of how the development and creation provided insights into those moments in which the process subject.

The installation of this work has been formulated around a moment in the performance of unpacking the library, the library books which frame the subject. What is captured in this frame her memories of some of the terms and phrases used to describe who she was in the world. These memories relate to the year 1972.

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

The form of the project has been designed around the idea of a library of artist's books. This aspect of the work's structure was triggered by Walter Benjamin's essay *Unpacking my Library* which borrowed the working title for the project.

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

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

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

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

Additional information

The whole website is included as a zip file to enable download in original format.

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