The Haptic Touch of Books by Artists

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abstract

The book as a medium for creative practice proliferated during the twentieth century. The early stages of this period were marked by an engagement with visible language driven largely by poets and, to a lesser degree, artists. From the mid-twentieth century, a distinctive literature and discourse for these books began to emerge. It was not until the late-twentieth century and particularly through artists’ conceptual engagement with it that the book as a medium was afforded recognition as a distinct field, termed ‘artists books’. Within the growing literature, a consistent tension relating to the multidisciplinary nature of the field is evident. It has led to concern that, until the discourse reaches the level of a critical field, the field itself is in danger of losing its identity. While this view has received widespread support, how to mature the discourse has proved contentious.

At the turn of the twentieth century, when the West's privileging of sight began to attract critical attention, the haptic (pertaining to touch and materiality) was identified as a means to address the effects of that privileging. Together with a renewed interest in materiality, it informed the early-twentieth-century poets and artists' engagement with the book. In recent decades, the haptic has emerged as a disciplinary focus in many fields, particularly aesthetics. Within artists books discourse, the haptic nature of a book has now been raised as a potential focus for the field. Research into the literature of haptic aesthetics, as it is being termed, soon uncovers a wealth of significance for artists books relating to the sense of touch and its role in perception. With such an historical and a contemporary presence, the haptic warrants investigation as a focus for artists book practice and discourse. The research undertaken during my PhD candidature initiates such an investigation.

This exegesis establishes that the haptic represents a disciplinary focus for the field and presents a theoretical framework by which to apply the haptic to artists book practice and discourse. Together with the studio work it accompanies, it is influenced by and responds to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concepts of ‘smooth and striated’ space and the 'haptic touch' of haptic aesthetics. Within this framework, my studio research outcomes verify the significance of the haptic and contribute to discourse and debate shaping the field.
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Tim Mosely
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one relief printed book, *sample pages*, accompanying this exegesis.
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I acknowledge, with my deepest gratitude, my Father.
Included in this thesis are two papers in Chapter 5 of which I am the sole author. Appropriate acknowledgements of those who contributed to the research but did not qualify as authors are included in each paper.

The first of these papers has been published, its bibliographic details are:


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_________________________________________  __________________________
Tim Mosely

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Supervisor: Professor Ross Woodrow
the
public
touch
jobooks
byartists
introduction

an inherent tension within the book

At the core of any book is an insoluble tension. The book is essentially reliant on it. Jacques Derrida describes this tension in his essay “The Book to Come” refining the book to a point of insoluble tension between that acts of “gathering through dispersion” between the material and phenomenal forms of a book. For the field of artists books, this tension also lies between the fields of literature and fine art. To recognise the insoluble pairing of two parts they must be contained together in a state of tension. Resembling a glass jar that holds together water and oil the book is such a container. Break the container, allow the insoluble tension to dissipate, and the 'book' is lost.

a need to advance discourse within the field of artists books

Artists books had little more than emerged as a creative field when, in 1985, Lucy Lippard expressed concern over their future. Lippard co-founded Printed Matter in 1976, which is now one of the world’s leading platforms that supports artists books/publications. She argued that while artists books clearly represented a sub-current of creative practice, they had also fallen into “the trap of inaccessibility”, and risked being perceived as a self-indulgent and/or an elitist pursuit. Her concern for the field was reiterated in 2005 by Johanna Drucker, one of the field’s most prominent figures. Drucker argued that the field draws little serious attention within the realms of fine art and literature and that, until the

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2 Ibid., 13.
5 Ibid., 56.
discourse within it is raised to the level of a critical field, this will remain the case. As such, she called for the development of a book arts aesthetics and a critical apparatus built on critical terminology and a descriptive vocabulary drawn from historical sources and perspectives. In a post-Derridian\textsuperscript{7} environment, a critical apparatus is a contentious pursuit, and many have objected that it would undermine the inherent tension that underpins the field’s creative momentum. This is a very real concern, and Drucker’s attempts at a critical apparatus have largely been ignored. Nevertheless, the concern she raises remains; that is, the need to translate significant artists books into scholarly and critical works that positions them firmly within contemporary fine art and literature. Addressing this concern without dissipating the insoluble tension that provides the field with so much creative impetus represents a significant challenge for the field.

**what are we talking about when we refer to artists books?**

Due to the overwhelming number of artefacts being made under the umbrella of ‘artists books’, any critical engagement with them needs a working definition.\textsuperscript{8} Stefan Klima identified in 1998 that, despite over twenty-five years of critical writing on the subject, a definition of an artists book was still a primary concern of the discourse.\textsuperscript{9} This bleak point has been repeatedly raised by writers in the field, most recently by Betty Bright’ in her 2005 book *No Longer Innocent*. Bright begins with the same question, aware that “(m)uch to the chagrin of critics and the frustration of artists, the enduring debate over the years has turned on the most basic of questions: What is and what isn't an artists book?”. My working definition draws upon Germano Celant and Jacques Derrida.

Klima identifies Celant’s 1981 essay “Book as Artwork: 1960–72”\textsuperscript{10} as constituting the beginning of debate in the field, and Celant himself asserts it as the first analysis of books as artworks. In the essay, Celant identifies a numbers of artists making books that, he

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\textsuperscript{7} By post-Derridian I refer to an environment shaped and informed by Jacque Derridas writing and in particular to the practice of deconstruction commonly associated with him.

\textsuperscript{8} A definition for artists books is a move away from the ‘smooth space’ (a term I will define and expand upon in the next chapter) that I wish to create here, and accordingly a peripheral concern. Nevertheless, it is necessary in this academic context.


describes, explore “total linguistic/theoretical abstraction”. These include Joseph Kosuth's book *Function*, of which Celant, in a defining comment, writes “It is a use and meaning of language ... which becomes a work of art through the book.” In other words, without the book, Kosuth is not able to realise this artwork.

Playing a pivotal role in the realisation of an artists book, the nature of the book needs some clarification. Derrida considers this in “The Book to Come”, particularly in the light of the new digital technologies. Drawing on Maurice Blanchot's essay “The Book to Come” in which Blanchot writes of Stephane Mallarmés seminal book *Un Coup de dés (A Throw of the Dice)*, Derrida identifies that the tensions between the collecting or gathering together of a book and the dispersion or division of the book occur in both its material and phenomenal forms. A book performs both of these divergent actions in a material codex and within the readers conception of the book as they read it. Thus, my working definition of an artists book is informed by Celant's concept that it “becomes a work of art through the book” and Derrida's point regarding the insoluble tension within it.

Artists books are artworks realised through the book - through a point of insoluble tension between gathering through dispersion.

**Ron King's Turn Over Darling**

A brief description of Ron King's *Turn Over Darling* exemplifies my working definition. The book can be viewed at www.circlepress.com/catalogue/turn-over-darling/index.html

Under the impress of Circle Press, Ron King has published and received acclaim for many diverse forms of the artists book. *Turn Over Darling* is one of his most successful books. Published in three editions, the first in 1990 and the third unlimited, it is available for purchase online, and I was able to secure a copy for my research. *Turn Over Darling*, a very simply constructed codex, consists of a single signature of six blind embossed folios sewn to a light, handmade card cover and housed in a slipcase. On each folio is printed, in blind emboss, a different reclining nude composed of two halves that meet in the centre of the folio. As a blind emboss, the image exists on both sides of the folio. When the six folios are gathered and sewn into a single signature, the front page presents the upper body of

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11 Ibid., 102.
12 Ibid., 105.
the nude and the last page presents the lower body. The eleven double-page spreads reconstruct the reclining nudes. When a reader turns a page, the image flips or metaphorically 'turns over' with the page. In all, the reclining nude turns over eleven times and into eleven different positions. Without the book, this artwork could not exist. King has relied on the simple structural elements of the codex (gathering) and on the act of reading (dispersion) to realise this artwork. Outside of the book, these are simply six embossed images of reclining nudes. In the book, the figure literally turns over into different positions. Thus, despite its simplicity, it is a concise example of Celant's defining statement: it "becomes a work of art through the book".

*the history of the printed book informs artists book practice and discourse*

The print culture that emerged out of Johannes Gutenberg's (1395-1468) development of movable type in 1450, and equally owes its existence to the visual phonetic alphabet, has indelibly shaped our world. Though the first movable type is attributed to Bi Sheng 400 years earlier during the Song Dynasty in China, Gutenberg's type heralded a revolution in learning, thought and knowledge in the West that did not appear to materialise to the same degree in the East. This can be largely attributed to the mere twenty-six characters of the phonetic alphabet in comparison to the approximately 4,000 characters required to realise Chinese script. Gutenberg's type was far more manageable than Sheng's and it enabled European print shops to print and distribute 1,000 reliable copies of authoritative manuscripts in the time it took a scribe to make a single copy of one.

The phonetic alphabet represents an early example of an abstract analysis of a subject into its basic component parts. It led to the transcription of aural language into visual language, the effectiveness of which is made particularly evident in the success of Gutenberg's technology. The development of the printed book significantly extended the impact of visible language. Its production promoted the establishment of standards in the fonts, styles, structures and forms of printed texts that have since characterised Western thought and knowledge, a print-made knowledge. The production of formal Western knowledge is commonly realised through the abstract analysis of parts broken down from a whole or a subject as a means of exploitation. In the twentieth century, this method of

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analysis came under increasing scrutiny as it readily denudes the subject of its richness and fails to take into consideration the relationships that exist between different wholes or subjects. This is particularly evident in the West's analysis of human perception through the senses. Breaking down our senses into five parts led to a model of perception that did not fully appreciate the relationships between our senses, and directly contributed to a privileging of sight over touch. The marriage of the book to visible language has inadvertently played a prominent role in this privileging.

Since the early twentieth century, numerous academic disciplines have attempted to redress this imbalance. These efforts focus on what could be termed a symphony of the senses that inform human perception rather than five separate inputs that feed into perception. Research into the sense of touch has formed around a number of foci, one of which is Haptics. In its most common use as an adjective, *haptic* relates to the sense of touch, in particular “to the perception and manipulation of objects using the senses of touch and proprioception”. This focus carries implications for the book, a medium that is essentially reliant on the sense of touch and has shaped our print-made knowledge. Apart from its marriage to visible language, does the book as a medium offer more to the aesthetic reception and evaluation of artefacts?

15 See ‘haptic’ in oxforddictionaries.com: **haptic** Pronunciation: /ˈhæptɪk/ adjective relating to the sense of touch, in particular relating to the perception and manipulation of objects using the senses of touch and proprioception: haptic feedback devices create the illusion of substance and force within the virtual world. Origin: late 19th century: from Greek haptikos ‘able to touch or grasp’, from haptein ‘fasten’.
Gary Frost raises the haptic in his article “Reading by Hand: The Haptic Evaluation of Artists' Books”, where he suggests that the haptic features of a book suggest the sense of touch as a mode of communication, and that this can inform the emerging critical discourse within artists books. While Drucker firmly dismissed this idea, “the haptic” does carry considerable implications for the field of artists books and its discourse.

As a site of studio research, the book significantly predates the recognition of artists books as a distinct field, which Claire Colebrook makes apparent in her essay “Derrida, Deleuze and Haptic Aesthetics”. The haptic, as an emerging focus within aesthetic discourse, is supported by critical terminology and a descriptive vocabulary drawn from historical sources and perspectives. Colebrook relies on William Blake's poetry and visual art practice to inform debate within contemporary aesthetic discourse on haptic aesthetics. As Colebrook identifies, Blake's concerns over the aesthetic experience are shared by haptic aesthetics; they were a central concern of his art practice as was the autographic printed book. His practice extends the origin of the field of artists books, that is the book as a site of studio research, to the late-nineteenth century, and demonstrates that the haptic was integral to that origin.

The haptic also underpins research by many early-twentieth-century poets and artists into the book, image and text. Responding to an increasing awareness of the privileging of sight and in pursuit of an aesthetic that embraced the other senses (i.e., haptic perception), Futurists, Constructivists, Dadaists and Surreal artists turned to the book. Their investigations, firstly from the field of literature and then from art, led up to the Fluxus artists and the recognition of artists books as a distinct field.

With a history tied to the book and its role in the privileging of sight in the West, and with its heritage of studio research in pursuit of haptic perception, contemporary artists book practice and discourse must engage the haptic and the emerging haptic aesthetics. This leads to my research question:

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Can the haptic inform the emerging critical field of artists books?

To answer this question, five specific concerns needed to be addressed. These are as follows:
- an outline of my primary theoretical source and a background to my creative practice;
- positioning my research within contemporary discourse;
- a concise understanding of what is mean by the term the haptic;
- the application of the haptic to the reception and evaluation of artists books;
- studio research strategies that have engaged the haptic in my artists books.

I address these concerns respectively in the five chapters of this exegesis that loosely follows the formal structure of a thesis. It varies in that responding to my primary theoretical concept I have presented the text in a bricolage format.

...
Chapter 1

touching the book & touching the bush
an outline of my primary theoretical source

I encountered Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's work, particularly their concept of “smooth and striated space”, while researching the term ‘haptic' that Gary Frost introduced to artists book discourse. My interest in and research of the haptic stems from my formative years that I describe in the second half of this chapter. At this point it is suffice to say a loss of touch led me to the haptic. Having adopted Deleuze and Guattari’s smooth space as a primary resource I then identify a broad range of other sources, particularly Alois Reigl.

Deleuze and Guattari’s 'book'

Deleuze and Guattari introduce A Thousand Plateaus with a description of ‘a book’ in consummate haptic fashion. Rather than a crisp concise description of the book, their writing presents surfaces that the reader must move over, across and around to develop tangible conceptions of the book. This movement requires more of a reader’s time than is commonly expected of reading. They write:

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. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds constitutes an assemblage. A book is an assemblage of this kind, and as such is unattributable. It is a multiplicity—but we don't know yet what the multiple entails when it is no longer attributed, that is, after it has been elevated to the status of the substantive. One side of a machinic assemblage faces the strata, which doubtless make it a kind of organism, or signifying totality, or determination attributable to a subject; it also has a side facing a body without organs, which is continually dismantling the organism, causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate, and attributing to itself subjects that it leaves with nothing more than a name as the trace of an intensity. ... There is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made. Therefore a book also has no object. As an assemblage, a book has only itself, in connection with
other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs. We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities.\(^{18}\)

Assembling a book involves firstly a phenomenal form perceived by the book’s maker(s) through the immediate experience of their senses; secondly, a material form that is the culmination of its making; and thirdly, the phenomenal forms perceived by the book’s readers. Deleuze and Guattari identify both the haptic and the optic within our relationship with that assemblage. A book’s assembling is undertaken within a spectrum between haptic perception (involving all the senses) and optic perception (privileging a single sense), and can move back and forward along this spectrum. In the chapter “1440: The Smooth and the Striated” in *A Thousand Plateaus*, they link the haptic and the optic to their smooth and striated space. Deleuze and Guattari provide no specific definition of these terms rather they rely on detailed metaphors and analogies to convey the concepts. This is consistent with the smooth nature of their writing. For the purpose of introduction I make a brief description of them. I must clarify though that I am reticent to define smooth space as to define is to strate.

‘The striated’ can be readily understood as the pursuit of control of a resource. The greater the efforts to exploit a resource the higher the degree of striation. When multiple layers of control are applied to a resource they build up to into striations. ‘The smooth’ on the other hand is a concept far more difficult to describe. An understanding of it is arrived at through relationship (rather than taken hold of) and this in itself reflects the concept. To instigate that movement I ask you the reader to make a comparison between knowledge (the striated) and knowing (the smooth). Knowledge of someone or something can be secured independently of any direct relationship with them / it. In counterpoint knowing someone or something is only arrived at through a sustained and reciprocally responsive relationship with them / it.

**smooth and striated space**

Deleuze and Guattari use six models to convey smooth and striated space: technology, music, the maritime, mathematics, materials (the physical) and aesthetics. In Appendix 1, I

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 556.
have included an extract from their technology model in which they use the structure of fabric and the nature of felt as metaphors for striated and smooth space respectively.

Smooth and striated 'spaces' are not literal spaces, but rather they abstractly describe the nature of human relationships with place and the nature of any material relationship. Any place, be it material, conceptual, virtual or other, can be experienced as either smooth or striated space. For my research, I am only concerned about the nature of a person's relationship with the place of a book. Deleuze and Guattari do not place the smooth and the striated in opposition to each other; rather, they describe a constant transition between the two.

Smooth space describes any relationship that is formed through haptic perception; through an intimate knowing of place, an increasing awareness and sensitivity to the complexity of place and by responding to place. Simply put, the more a person relies on their haptic perception of a place, the smoother is their experience of it.

Conversely, the more a person relies on optic perceptions of a place, the more striated is their experience. Deleuze and Guattari link optic perception to the striated, i.e., the privileging of one sense over the others, overlaying an interpretation onto what is sensed of a place, an interpretation originating from another place. In human experience, it not only generates striated space but also drives the production of tools of measurement that minimise direct engagement with a place.

an unwieldy toolkit and a bricolage writing style

In choosing smooth and striated space as my primary theoretical model, I have taken into consideration Deleuze’s description of his theories and writing style. The following is taken from a transcript of a discussion between Michel Foucault and Deleuze:

A theory is exactly like a box of tools. It has nothing to do with the signifier. It must be useful. It must function. And not for itself. If no one uses it, beginning with the theoretician himself (who then ceases to be a theoretician), then the theory is worthless or the moment is inappropriate.¹⁹

André Colombat writes “A Thousand Plateaus comprises a rather unwieldy tool box since both Deleuze and Guattari refuse to offer their readers a closed system or ‘recipe’ to work from.” He likens Deleuze to a cabinetmaker who can only become one after becoming sensitive to signs within the wood. The nature of Deleuze’s tools starkly contrast Drucker’s critical apparatus. He intends that his tools be adopted by many disciplinary fields, and encourages scholars to “redefine them within [their] own field of study”. Having adopted his smooth and striated space as a tool, I have also adopted his writing style.

Deleuze and Guattari identify the haptic as a significant aspect of tribal or nomadic perception. Their writing style (and that of Marshal McLuhan, which I address in chapter 3) mimics the nomadic that they privilege, as identified by John Peters,

In the end, however, I would vote for Deleuze as the recent French thinker McLuhan resembles in the most intriguing way. Not only are there approving citations to McLuhan in Deleuze’s work, .... but Deleuze’s anti-dialectical assemblages and endlessly creative philosophical bricolage suggest a deep affinity in working method. Both Deleuze and McLuhan owe a lot to the improvisational ethic and hip demeanour of jazz; Mille plateaux, after all, can be translated as “one thousand turntables.” Both wanted to provoke and prod fresh thinking rather than nail down empirical truth; both wrote maddeningly brilliant anti-texts.

For this exegesis, I have adopted a bricolage style of writing that builds a case, reflecting smooth space, rather than the striated space of a formal thesis structure.

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21 Ibid, 12.
touching the book & touching the bush
and a background to my creative practice

“Members of the Samberigi people, who had never before encountered Europeans, meet Australian Patrol Officer Jack Hides” (photographed attributed to L J O’Malley? 1935?), University of New England Archives, Armidale.

a confluent identity

My identity is fused to the book. Formed within the confluence of three divergent cultures, it was shaped and is still influenced by mission Christianity, Sa:mba:leke tribal culture and my European/Australian heritage. More often than not I have found myself on the edges of these cultures and any identity I construct for myself inevitably incorporates tensions between them. As the son of Christian missionaries, I lived from birth to the age of eight with the Sa:mba:leke people in the remote southern highlands of Papua New Guinea. As early as I can recall, I understood that the circumstances that I found myself in were a direct result of the Bible. From what I have been able to ascertain, the Sa:mba:leke tribe numbered over 20,000 when first encountered by Australian patrol officers. By their next contact with the pink man, they had been reduced to a population of under 5,000 as a result of diseases introduced by them. My father first established a mission station in 1957
at Samberigi, a place name by which the Sa:mba:leke are now known. \(^{23}\) I was born in 1961, and for eight years, my parents, three siblings, a third missionary, Missionary Aviation Fellowship pilots and the occasional visitor were the only 'white' people in my world.

The mission station bordered a village, and I interacted daily with the Samberigi and the rainforest (bush) that surrounded us. Touch saturated Samberigi culture. It was integral to all aspects of communication and it became a part of my experience. It was also very apparent in Samberigi's intimate relationship with the bush. Despite its vast and overwhelming technological superiority, European knowledge has no equivalence to this relationship. European interaction with the bush was one of control to exploit. The Samberigis' relationship with the bush was most evident to me in how they used bush materials in daily life. They wrapped their food in leaves to carry, cook, store and trade - using different leaves for particular purposes. Responding to the nature and properties of different leaves, they developed what can only be described as functional and aesthetic resolutions to wrapping their food. This wrapping aesthetic evidenced an intimate haptic relationship with bush materials.

The Samberigi also relied on the bush for their toys. What is commonly called 'Kunai grass' in Papua New Guinea is also known as blady grass in Australia. Picking a leaf of this grass and then making a series of simple alterations to it turns the leaf into a small but authentic dart or arrow. Learning to make this toy is a cultural practice learnt tacitly; it requires demonstration and can only be learned through practice. \(^{24}\) I learned these cultural practices of wrapping with leaves and making kunai grass spears, initiating a haptic relationship with the bush. It is one of the few aspects of my identity that I can still directly attribute to the Samberigi that emerges whenever I find myself in the Australian bush. During many walks through the bush, I have consistently found myself making darts from Kunai grass and picking leaves to wrap with them.

\(^{23}\) See samberigipi.net/en/_5681.
\(^{24}\) The following is a description of a similar toy. "The "Wee-bah," another toy weapon [also obtained from blady grass] might be designated an arrow, the flight, though not the impulse, being similar. A single stem of grass is shortened to about fifteen inches. By being drawn between the nails of the thumb and the first finger, the web is separated from the midrib for about three inches. The sportsman pinches the web end loosely between the lips. The split ends, held in the left hand, are bent over a thin stick in the right hand. Upon the stick being moved smartly forward, the web peels from each side to the midrib, which shoots ahead with an arrow-like flight in the direction the marksman designs. Velocity, accuracy, and range are remarkable. The arrow will penetrate the skin (the stem having an awl-like point) at a distance of ten or fifteen yards, and twenty yards is not an uncommon limit to its range. ... A few handfuls of blady grass supply a sheaf of missiles," E. J. Banfield, Chapter XXV in My Tropic Isle, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/b/banfield/ef/b21tr/contents.html.
My education commenced with school of the air, an aural 'classroom' held together by radio. From eight to eleven years old, I boarded in a mission hostel and attended Tari International Primary School in Papua New Guinea with approximately twenty-five other children, all 'missionary kids'. I didn’t come 'home' to Sydney, Australia, until the age of twelve at which point I boarded with a Baptist minister and his family. I commenced secondary schooling in an all-boys school of over 400 boys. My experience of 'home' was nothing short of isolation. Despite the colour of my skin, it was very evident to me as well as the church and high-school communities that I was from another place. In particular, I can recall that the communicative touch that I was familiar with was unwanted and unacceptable in my home culture. My direct touch of the bush remains the only form of haptic touch I picked up from the Samberigi.

It took some years to appreciate that as the Samberigi in me was being overwritten by my 'home' culture at the same time it was overwriting the Samberigi as I watched from a distance. The effects of this overwriting have been dramatically different for me in comparison to the Samberigi. I was, and continue to be, increasingly privileged within my home culture whereas the Samberigi were, and are being increasingly disadvantaged and disempowered in their land. In the last couple of decades the Samberigi have encountered particularly insurmountable odds. Oil and gas have been discovered on their lands and the resulting exploitation of those resources has fractured their communities and placed their cultural identity under acute stress. My European heritage was/is the very reason why the Samberigi are being exploited. This dilemma contributes to ambivalent feelings that I continue to wrestle with and motivates me to sustain a direct touch with the bush. Such tension is common within confluent identities.

*the book and my confluent identity*

My desire to sustain a touch of the bush has migrated into my art practice that as a whole has revolved around the central themes of the bush, the print, Christianity and touch that appeared in my work in that order. During the thirty-five years of my art training and professional practice, the book has emerged as the most effective medium that allows me to embrace the senses related to touch.

The book and, in particular, the codex was present from my initial tertiary studies; however, it only emerged as a primary concern in the later stages of my practice. I first
encountered artists books in the flick books of Jennifer Marshal\textsuperscript{25} during my undergraduate degree. I undertook postgraduate studies in printmaking at Monash University College at the advice of Udo Sellbach whom I had the opportunity to meet at the Queensland College of Art in 1989. He recommended I study under Kay Green who had established a recognised artists book practice. From that point, the book has increasingly featured in my practice. As a medium, as a point of insoluble tension between gathering and dispersion, it allows me to consider and engage the insoluble tensions inherent within my confluent identity.

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\textsuperscript{25} One of these Flick Book's, held by the National Gallery of Australia, is described by Alex Selenitsch in \textit{Australian Artists Books}. Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2008, 90-91. Also see jennifermarshall.com.au/artist-books/.
Chapter 2

artists books – a part of print culture
positioning my research within contemporary discourse

“firing” a broadside

In February 2006, I attended the third Australian Artists Book Forum.26 An initiative of Robert Heather (then director of Artspace Mackay) these forums had quickly developed into the most significant event within the field of artists books in Australia. The 2006 installment featured a series of lectures by international figures within the field, among them Sarah Bodman, then the Research Fellow for Artists Books at the Centre for Fine Print Research, University of the West of England, Bristol, and Marshall Weber of Booklyn Artists’ Alliance, New York.27

Weber used his invitation to present the keynote lecture as a platform to critically respond to Johanna Drucker’s contentious and now infamous 2005 essay “Critical Issues / Exemplary Works”.28 Drucker (then Robertson Professor of Media Studies at the University of Virginia) asserted that the field of artists books is not taken seriously by the broader arts community because it lacks the mature critical discourse required of a critical field. She asserted that a critical apparatus is needed to achieve this maturity. In his lecture,29 Weber acknowledged that Drucker’s attempt to influence the art form typifies a committed scholar and agreed that the emerging artists book discourse needs to be raised to a higher level. However, he disagreed with Drucker’s underlying assertion that little serious consideration

26 The Australian Artists Book Forums were hosted by Artspace Mackay, a regional art gallery operated by Mackay Regional Council in Queensland Australia. The fifth and final forum was held in April 2010.
27 See www.booklyn.org/index.php.
is given to artists books, arguing that her focus is limited by a Eurocentric perspective. He directed strong criticism at Drucker's initial attempts at a critical apparatus. He writes,

While I believe that Drucker is doing important practical work in the area of cataloging, the limitations that her theoretical writing sets on her concept of a “zone of activity” construct a categorical hierarchy of artists' books. She has created a little canon and doesn’t seem to realize it. It’s a static system of validation by descriptive definition. Drucker's concepts form a modernist body of writing in post-modernist clothing. We need an alternative to what has become the mainstream and unknowingly conservative scholarship in the field of artists’ books. This scholarship is an incomplete scholarship, which is primarily focused on the books and/or style of a small exclusive group of 20th Century American, British and European bookmakers.

Weber, while acknowledging the scholarship of which Drucker is a part, frames her intent as restrictive or closed criteria for the evaluation of artists books. Drucker, however, is far less adversarial than she appears, stating “I’m willing to make a start so that at least we’ll have something on the table to generate conversation.” Ironically, and substantiating Drucker's observation, Weber was not able to identify an alternative scholarship that locates artists books within the broader discourses of art and literature.

**Drucker's absent “critical apparatus” animated debate**

Drucker is well known for her assertion that “the artist's book is the quintessential twentieth-century artform”, an idea Richard Cavell locates in other prominent thinkers in the field, premised on the high degree of participation that the book as a medium can demand of the reader. Drucker's scholarship is unquestioned and, as the “field's best informed writer ... who has seen and handles so many” artists books, she arguably has been the most prominent figure in the emerging discourse. Her observation that little serious attention is given to the field of artists books within the realms of fine art and literature echoes earlier concerns raised in the aforementioned 1985 essay by Lucy

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Lippard, “Conspicuous Consumption: New Artists’ Books.” Both Lippard's and Drucker’s concerns are substantiated by the critical reception of Xu Bing's artists book *Tianshu*.

Since it was first exhibited in Beijing during 1988, *Tianshu*, which is an artwork realised through a book, has captured the public’s attention and has drawn sustained critical acclaim from fields as diverse as anthropology, philosophy and art history. It has been described by Western scholars as one of the most significant artworks emerging from China in the twentieth century. Conspicuously, only fragments of the relationship between *Tianshu* and artists book practice appear in the literature, a relationship Xu Bing acknowledges as early as 1993. That an artwork of such significance is not identified in the wider community as an outcome of artists book practice only substantiates Drucker's concerns. Even more conspicuous is the absence of critical engagement with *Tianshu* in artists book discourse.

Drucker attributes this lack of attention to the absence of a critical apparatus required of any discourse to raise it to the level of a critical field. Contentiously, Drucker states that such a critical apparatus would provide “gatekeepers” the means to establish a canon for the field through critical debate. Drucker knowingly accepted that her argument would draw many objections and, in a post-Derridian environment, her essay and critical apparatus did. As Anne Moeglin-Delcroix, Emeritus Professor at Université Paris-Sorbonne, describes, it seems obvious that the concept of establishing a canon for a field that emerged from postmodern thought is going to be met with considerable resistance, and the negative response to her critical apparatus has been unequivocal. The most contentious element of Drucker's output is her online database, which she established to instigate a critical apparatus. Relatively few scholars contributed to it and, having acknowledged that strategies she adopted for it have proved problematic, Drucker has indicated that it will be archived.

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36 Lucy R. Lippard, "Conspicuous Consumption."
40 Anne Moeglin-Delcroix outlines the emergence of artists books within the context of the structuralist method of literary criticism in her essay "Other Books" in Carrión, *On Books*, 107–120.
In 2002, Rob Perrée, a member of the editorial staff of the Dutch art magazine *Kunstbeeld*, responded to Drucker’s “critical apparatus” that was already in the public domain through earlier texts. Perrée writes:

Her book *The Century of Artists’ Books* leads the reader on a delirious journey through scores and scores of categories. Aside from their often arbitrary nature, they serve no purpose. The artist is not interested in this. The art lover has nothing to gain from it. Worse, we run the risk of losing our love for the artists book in the process. Drucker’s book is unquestionably a fantastic reference for someone wanting to investigate the medium, but her approach is more likely to generate antipathy than interest or acknowledgement.42

Giorgio Maffei, who co-curated the exhibition *Il Libro come Opera d’Aarte (The Book as a Work of Art)* exhibited at the Galleria Nazionale dArte Moderna, Rome, in 2006, shares the same concerns. The catalogue for this exhibition makes a significant contribution to artists books discourse by documenting their emergence within European art. Author of one of the catalogue’s five essays, Maffei writes

Critics, in trying to deal with a relatively new medium, have raised the question of demarcation by dividing books into different categories, according to their various operational modes. The result is that they have lost sight of the revolutionary scope of an item which ... has been recognised as indispensable for understanding the artistic events of the century.43

Maffei acknowledges that in curating *The Book as a Work of Art*, he does not escape the problem he identifies. He defends his adopted categorising term ‘Book as Artwork’, taken from the title of Germano Celant’s 1971 definitive essay,44 as one that “better than any other clarified the essence, role and the purpose of the artists book”.45

**responses to the call for participation**

The field still needs to establish conceptual foundations for the translation of significant artists books into the discourse of contemporary fine art and literature. This is clearly demonstrated by the lack of critical engagement with Xu Bing’s *Tianshu* in artists book

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42 Perrée, *Cover to Cover*, 131.
44 Germano Celant, “Book as Artwork.”
discourse. Drucker’s call for the development of a critical apparatus has drawn many responses.

“Shaping a New Critical Discourse for the Field” was one of the “guided sessions” at Action/Interaction: Book/Arts Conference held at the Columbia College Chicago's Center for Book and Paper Art in June 2007. Written up in JAB 22 and available as a downloadable MP3 file, the session meandered around the fringes of critical thought. The Action/Interaction: Book/Arts Conference was one of many conferences hosted by teaching institutions in the USA over the last couple of decades that focused on the book. Following the conference, the College Book Arts Association (CBAA) was founded in 2008 to “support and promote academic book arts education by fostering the development of its practice, teaching, scholarship and criticism”. I have yet to determine whether it was formed in response to the concerns that Drucker highlighted. The Association established a “task force on criticism responsible for developing and identifying potential publishing venues and prioritizing ideas for the enrichment of the discourse in book art, as well as its integration into mainstream art discourse”.

It has also launched Openings, a peer-reviewed journal, to support the emerging discourse, publishing its first issue in 2012. Having attended the 2014 biennial CBAA conference, I feel that the association is still in the process of establishing a structure that will support and sustain critical discourse. If it can establish a double blind peer reviewing of the papers it accepts for presentation, and given the numbers of participants the conference attracted, I am confident the Association will establish its conferences and journal as a pinnacle of critical discourse on artists books. The production of artists books has been firmly located within a suite of courses commonly offered through art, design, library and literary programs at universities and colleges.

Jae Rossman’s article “Reading Outside the Lines: Paratextual Analysis and Artists’ Books” was published in JAB 23. In it, Rossman adopts Gérard Genette's paratextual analysis, a recognised critical tool by which the text of a book is evaluated through the peripheral printed material such as the title, the preface and illustrations. Rossman applies this tool to evaluate seven artists books. It's a positive move to develop the discourse and

46 See www.collegebookart.org.
one developed further by Daisy Turrer in her essay “A Study on the Paratextual Space in Artists Books”.49

**a concerted response from Bodman**

In direct response to the debate that Drucker launched, Sarah Bodman led the 2008–10 UK Arts and Humanities Research Council funded research project *What Will Be the Canon for the Artist’s Book in the 21st Century?* This project “investigated and discussed issues concerning the context and future of the artist’s book, in an attempt to extend and sustain critical debate of what constitutes an artist’s book”.50 The project’s outcomes include three exhibitions and a published book by Bodman and Tom Sowden available free online.51 The book incorporates the responses of twenty-eight invited artists within in the field to questions developed for the project. One of these artists was myself.52 Bodman’s approach was to gather a broad perspective of the field, drawing from its uncomfortable edges, so as to contribute to building a specific terminology. This was achieved through interviews, case studies and responses to an online forum hosted by the Australian website Artist Books 3.0.

In an extended interview and case study Radoslaw Nowakowski took the opportunity to directly contribute to the discourse through the term *liberature*.53 Zenon Fajfer’s term, which references ‘liber’ (Latin for ‘book’) and ‘literature’ (literally, ‘things made from letters’), exemplifies the tension inherent within the field that stems from its dual/multi-disciplinary nature. This tension, which repeatedly emerges within Bodman’s research, underpins the concerns raised against any move for restrictive criteria in the evaluation of artists books, and one that is agitated by any move to categorise the field. David Paton, in

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50 [www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/canon.htm](http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/canon.htm) viewed 22/08/2012
52 Ibid., 134–37.
53 "Liberature involves the consideration of all parts of the book as equal in value: original text, image, concept, format and presentation, and most importantly the creator’s original intention of how the book should work, in particular with Fajfer and Bazarnik’s work with authors such as James Joyce and Stéphane Mallarmé (http://www.liberatura.art.pl). In this respect, liberature is very much related to the intentions of an artist producing books." Bodman, *A Manifesto for the Book*, 6.
a response to Bodman, addresses one of these growing tensions.\textsuperscript{54} He considers the relationship between the material book and the many hybrid digital “books” being made under the umbrella of artists books, one that Moeglin-Delcroix finds problematic, asserting that “a digital book is not a book, except metaphorically. It is only a text reproduced in a new medium and in new ways.”\textsuperscript{55} The questions Bodman uncovers at the uncomfortable edges of the field consistently relate to the dual/multi-disciplinary nature of artists books.

\textit{a tension inherent to the field}

In her 2007 article “Disciplinary Duality: The Contested Terrain of Book Studies,”\textsuperscript{56} Masha Stepanova specifically addresses tension in the field; in the emerging field of Book Studies, she identifies “a disciplinary tension ... affecting the academic nature of the field”.\textsuperscript{57} This tension is linked to the wide appeal of the field from other well-established academic disciplines. She identifies two centres that the field appears to be forming around, that of book history (literature) and book arts (fine art). The tension has been present in the field from its origins and it is significant that Ulises Carrión, a writer-turned-artists-book-maker, shaped some of the earliest conceptions of artists books and clearly articulated the field’s independence.

In her 1997 essay “Other Books”, Moeglin-Delcroix describes Carrión “as the first—the only?—artist to have attempted to work out a general theory of artists’ books”.\textsuperscript{58} She presents Carrión as a Mexican writer who, while studying in Paris during 1964, was exposed to the developing new literary criticism and the subsequent “literature’s end” that stemmed from it. This led him to literally abandon literature, and his pursuit of concrete poetry led him to the book and visual art. Moeglin-Delcroix singles out Carrión from the broad field of writers/artists of that period (including Dieter Roth and Ed Ruscha) as unique in his pursuit of the book in all its forms as his sole medium. Carrión’s writing on artists books, or as he terms the field, 'the new art of making books', continues to influence artists book discourse. In his text “The New Art of Making Books”, he builds up a concept of the

\textsuperscript{55} Arnaud Desjardin and Anne Moeglin-Delcroix, "Bibliographies and Other Questions: A Correspondence," \textit{Art Libraries Journal} 38, no. 3 (2012): 44.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 106.
\textsuperscript{58} Anne Moeglin-Delcroix, in \textit{On Books}, 107.
book as a structure with an inherent vocabulary independent of the content commonly placed in the book (a text) that remains largely unexplored by the fields of literature and art.

A book is not a case of words, nor a bag of words, nor a bearer of words. A writer, contrary to popular opinion, does not write books. A writer writes texts. In the old art the writer writes texts. In the new art the writer makes books. In spoken and written language, pronouns substitute for nouns so as to avoid tiresome, superfluous repetitions. In the book, composed of various elements, of signs, such as language, what is it that plays the role of pronouns, so as to avoid tiresome, superfluous repetitions? This is a problem for the new art; the old one does not even suspect its existence. In order to read the old art, knowing the alphabet is enough. In order to read the new art one must apprehend the book as a structure, identifying the elements and understanding their function.  

Reflecting the influence of the Structuralists, he locates the book within a relationship between its material and phenomenal parts as only perceptible “in the experience of reading.” Then a relatively unexplored structure, Carrion identifies that the book is neither the support nor the content, but what the two combined become through reading. It describes a space between the two fields of literature and art that can be investigated from either of them. It’s a space that, as Maffei and Picciau demonstrate in their 2006 exhibition, had already been entered in the late-nineteenth century by poets/artists who introduced “visual elements into poetry, [to] break away from rigidity, and bring together verse and figuration”.  

The exhibition catalogue for *The Book as a Work of Art* records Maffei and Picciau’s curatorial practice, and clearly demonstrates the emergence of artists books as a unique outcome of the West's engagement with the printed book through literature and art. Commencing with Stephane Mallarmé’s *Un Coup Dés Jamais N'Abolira le Hasard (A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance)*, recognised as one of the most significant critical engagements with space in a book, Maffei and Picciau traverse through the Futurists, the Constructivists, the Dadaists and Surrealists through to the present. They document a rich investigation into the relationship between print and the book that has shaped the discourse of artists books from its outset. This relationship, fundamental to the print culture of the West, must inform an emerging critical field of artists books.

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60 Ibid., 117.  
The relationship between art and the book is far older than Gutenberg's technology, as evidenced in the scholarly research of illuminated, illustrated and painted manuscripts from many cultures. As Anne Burkus-Chasson describes, the relationship between the print and the book appears to have been initiated in China during the Tang Dynasty (618–907) through the whirlwind or dragon-scale book-binding style. However, the most recognised outcome of this relationship is “the Gutenberg technology, on and through which the American [and much of the West's] way of life was formed”. Gutenberg's development of movable type for the printing press facilitated a “rich composite of previous cultural inventions”. When woodblock images were incorporated into this composite the European printed illustrated book was formed. The first of these appears to be Der Ackermann aus Bohmen (The Ackermann from Bohemia), printed by Albrecht Pfister in 1461 with woodcut illustrations. Since then, the print in both word and image form has become synonymous with the book, and the printed book is ubiquitous the world over.

The previously mentioned exhibition The Book as a Work of Art clearly demonstrated the fundamental role that the printed book has played in the West's embrace of the artists book. This role is premised primarily on the mechanically reproduced print, though the autographic print was also represented in the exhibition, and is exemplified by the books of William Blake (1757–1827) and William Morris (1834 –96) together with the tradition of the Livre d'Artiste. Members of the early-twentieth-century avant-garde relied on the mechanically reproduced print in their books in an effort to increase the participation of the public in the reception of art. According to Drucker, it was not until 1945, well after the Italian Futurists and Russian Constructivists embraced the mechanically printed book, that books by artists emerged as a distinct field, one that had “its own practitioners, theorists, critics, innovators and visionaries”.

64 ibid.
In his 1964 essay “The Medium Is the Message”, Marshall McLuhan anticipated a change in the West's relationship with the book, effected by the new mediums of light; he wrote that “(t)he electric technology is within the gates, and we are numb, deaf, blind and mute about its encounter with the Gutenberg technology.” The emergence of artists books as a distinct field appears to be related to the changes that McLuhan identified and anticipated. The developing new digital mediums, dependent on the medium of light, continue to take more and more of their content from the book. This effectively releases the book from a role ascribed to it through Gutenberg's technology; that is, to carry or contain a content of currency, knowledge. As reflected in the falling numbers of newspaper readers in the digital age, the contemporary transfer of knowledge from the book to digital mediums echoes the prior transfer of knowledge from pre-Gutenberg manuscripts to the printed book. Gutenberg's technology revolutionised the production of knowledge, and such a revolution is again being played out between the medium of the printed book and digital media. Released from its role of purely carrying texts and knowledge, the book can be seen for what it is rather than what it carries.

McLuhan also anticipated that it would be artists/poets who would take up the printed book as it is released of its role to carry content. He identifies the “serious artist” as the most able to perceive the character and nature of a medium. With diverse histories inextricably linked, particularly through their combination at Gutenberg's press, it’s an obvious outcome that artists who work with either the book or with prints would combine them. Through this combination, artists books have emerged as a significant concern within the practice and discourse of contemporary printmaking. They are a primary source of creative output that informs the emerging artists books critical discourse.

The increasing presence of artists books within printmaking practice

The exhibition The Graphic Unconscious featured at Philagrafika 2010, an international festival celebrating print within contemporary art that was held in Philadelphia. It showed the work of forty contemporary artists who incorporate printmaking into their practice and its accompanying catalogue included nine essays. The Artistic Director and Chief Curator of Philagrafika 2010, Colombian José Roca, curated the exhibition as a response to the question, is there a print unconscious? In his catalogue essay, Roca identifies the diversity
of approaches to the print medium as a key factor in arriving at this question. He brings together print and a variety of media, including sculpture, performance, video, installation and the book. Roca perceives the idea of the Graphic Unconscious “as a theoretical device to mobilize the print ... to re-read—indeed re-imagine—critically the field of contemporary artistic production”. He writes

Walter Benjamin proposed an interesting analogy in A Small History of Photography: “it is through photography that we first discover the existence of this optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis.” This gives rise to a provocative question: Is there a print unconscious? If so, where does it lie? Just as printed materials have become so pervasive in our daily visual culture that they pass by unnoticed, so too have print processes taken on an increasingly central role in artmaking without being acknowledged.68

Roca clearly realised his curatorial purpose, drawing out the ubiquitous presence of print in contemporary art practice. One of the key locations of print is in the medium of the book. Ten of the artists invited to exhibit incorporated print and the book in their work. Furthermore, artists books consistently appear in the supporting essays, as exemplified by John Caperton’s “Virtually Universal, Printmaking as a Tool”. The significant presence of artists books within Philagrafika 2010 exemplifies their growing presence within the field of printmaking.

**locating and engaging artists book discourse within the field of printmaking**

The Centre for Fine Print Research69 (CFPR) at the University of the West of England, Bristol, has established itself internationally as a leading venue for research into the production of artefacts primarily predicated in print and one of a select group of internationally significant centres that maintain a research focus on artists books. Sarah Bodman leads the book arts (artists books) area of the center, one of its eight key fields of research.70 In 1999, as a response to a perceived need for an international forum specifically for printmakers, the CFPR established the biennial International Multi-

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69 See www.uwe.ac.uk/sca/research/cfpr/.
disciplinary Printmaking, Artists, Concepts and Techniques (IMPACT) conference. Artists books are an ongoing focus at these conferences, and papers presented have contributed to both printmaking and artists book discourses. I first became aware of the research being undertaken on artists books at the CFPR and the IMPACT conferences when I attended the Third Australian Artists' Books Forum in 2006 at which Bodman spoke. I was impressed by the fact that all the papers selected for presentation and publication at IMPACT conferences undergo a double blind refereeing process; as far as I have been able to ascertain, this standard of selection is not currently matched by any other conference that focuses on the artists book. Given my academic pursuits, I have primarily positioned my PhD research within the context of the IMPACT conferences.

A thread of artists book discourse has consistently run through the eight IMPACT conferences held to date. Beauvais Lyons's essay “In Praise of Neglected Printed Histories, which includes an analysis of printed encyclopedias, instigated the thread. My involvement with this thread and the conferences was initiated at the start of my PhD candidature in 2009, the same year that IMPACT 6 was held. The two-day conference included the session “Artists' Books: International Views” in which four papers on artists books were presented. I presented a paper titled “the codex events”, in a session titled “International Collaborations”. The paper outlined a collaborative practice I initiated in 2006, the codex events, that focuses on artists book practice within a papermaking and printmaking context. During the conference, I also presented work at an Open Folio event from both my own art practice and from the codex events. My paper was subsequently published in the conference proceedings.

At IMPACT 7: Intersections & Counterpoints, hosted by Monash University, Melbourne, in 2011, seventeen papers were presented that either directly or indirectly engaged the relationship between printmaking and the book. Two days were given to this thread at the conference. I presented a paper titled “books by artists, Derrida's insoluble tension and smooth space”. I related the haptic to artists book production and reception using Australian artist John Smith's artists book The Book of Laughing and Crying as an example. My paper was subsequently submitted to the peer-reviewed journal Blue

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71 “IMPACT 6,” University of the West of England, www.impact.uwe.ac.uk
Notebook for publication, and was published in 2012. I have included this article in Chapter 5.

At IMPACT 8: Borders and Crossings, hosted by Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee University, Dundee, in 2013, at least eighteen papers/presentations were given that directly engaged with artists books. Further, the conference featured an exhibition of selected artists books together with an “open books” event that provided an opportunity for artists making books to directly present their work to delegates and the public. I presented both a paper titled “A Definitive Haptic Practice and a methodological model for an artists book practice” and a presentation titled “The Book, a quintessential medium for a haptic practice”. These papers further developed an application of the haptic to artists book practice and discourse. I also presented my work at the open books event. My paper, selected by double blind refereeing, was accepted for publication in the conference proceedings.

Over the three conferences, I have established a clear presence within the field that highlights the focus of my PhD research; that is, an application of the haptic to artists book production and critical evaluation. To complement this presence, I also attended the CBAA conference held in Salt Lake City in January 2014. Supported by exhibitions, workshops and studios visits, the conference attracted over 250 delegates. One of only two international delegates at the conference, I presented a paper titled “Xu Bing’s Tianshu & the Vocabulary of the Book”. It initiates a translation of Tianshu into the emerging critical discourse of artists books and I have also included it in Chapter 5. Following my presentation, I was invited by the editors of the Journal of Artists Books and of Openings to submit it or another article for publication in those journals. I am in the process of writing those submissions. I also presented some of my recent artists proof books at an “open books” event held at the conference.

In an opportunity that allowed me to position my research within an Australian context, I was invited to speak at Codex Australia’s inaugural Symposium and Book Fair in Melbourne in March 2014. The event attracted over eighty participants, including a number of PhD candidates who are also researching artists books. I presented a paper titled “re/membering touch” in which I introduced the term the ‘haptic touch’ and an application

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74 “IMPACT 8: Borders and Crossings,” www.conf.dundee.ac.uk/impact8/home/.
75 codexaustralia.com/
of it to artists book practice, reception and evaluation. The symposium was supported by a
book fair that, open to the public, allowed me to introduce some tangible examples of the
haptic touch of artists books to a well-informed and interested audience. My participation in
all five conferences has allowed me to clearly position my research within the discourse of
the field, establishing a platform from which I can contribute to the shaping of the emerging
critical field of artists books.

**a keyed entry point into artists book discourse for my research**

Gary Frost's 2005 article “Reading by Hand: The Haptic Evaluation of Artists Books”,
introduces the haptic qualities of handling a book into artists book discourse. He suggests
the haptic features of a book can inform the emerging critical discourse through “the
aesthetic consequences of a work of book art in the hands of the reader ... This is a haptic
(pertaining to the technology of touch) domain where the study of touch as a mode of
communication is at work”.  

Frost's article is brief. He poses some haptic descriptors and it is clear that his ideas are
well founded in the practice of making books. In particular, his phrase “touch as a mode of
communication” carries significant interest for artists making books.

Responses to Frost's article are few. Drucker responds very directly in the same
*Bonefolder* issue, writing that “We wouldn’t want to confuse the 'literal' physical book with
the virtual 'phenomenal' work. The haptic could tend towards a literalist conflation of the
object and the experience [of the book].”  
Stepanova identifies Frost's observations as an
element that will inform an emerging interdisciplinary field, still in its infancy, and the word
‘haptic’ has begun to appear in the literature, as demonstrated in David Paton's article
“Ideologies and Identities in Digital Artists' Books”.  
The apparent disregard in the
literature over Frost's haptic features of the book may be a result of the immediate and
dismissive response made by Drucker, the scholar who Frost was responding to. That no
debate has appeared in the literature over Drucker's position on Frost's article again only
exemplifies that lack of critical engagement in artists book discourse that Drucker
identifies.

76 Frost, "Reading by Hand." 3.
78 Stepanova, "Disciplinary Duality."
79 Published online in *Imaging Ourselves: Visual Identities in Representation* at philpapers.org.
Literature searches into the relationship between haptic and visual art will quickly identify a significant amount of research on the role that the sense of touch plays in perception. This research is being undertaken in diverse fields and commonly seeks a synthesised touch to incorporate into digital technologies. The research has been loosely termed ‘Haptics’ and it reflects the adjectival nature of the word ‘haptic’. Literature searches into the haptic evaluation of artefacts uncover a substantial and very different body of theoretical texts across aesthetics, art theory, art history and critical theory. An emerging haptic aesthetics discourse can be found within these texts. As established critical fields that have already embraced the haptic, it is reasonable to expect that their critical terminologies, descriptive vocabularies and theoretical, historical and aesthetic frameworks would offer an emerging critical field of artists books elements of a critical apparatus. However, ‘the haptic’ of these fields is a concept richer than what the adjective ’haptic’ refers to, and it is not readily grasped.

“the reception and the experience of works of art are never haptic as such”

During the Deconstruction Engaged seminars held in Sydney in 1999, Derrida made the following observation in an open discussion on the nature of perception and art.

If I am not wrong, there is no reception or evaluation of a work of art through touching. We evaluate, we enjoy, we experience works of art through seeing, hearing, and tasting and so on but never by touching. It is a strange situation: production is always haptic, so to speak, but the reception and the experience [of works of art] are never haptic as such.

The inextricable relationship between seeing and touching is well established in academic discourse, as Mark Paterson describes in “Seeing with the Hands, Touching with the Eyes”. In this light, Derrida’s observation initially appears to be an anomaly. This is particularly so when we consider public sculpture and even more so artists books, where

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80 For an example of an application of Haptics to creative practice see the research of David Prytherch at BID, Birmingham, UK. [www.bcu.ac.uk/biad/research/people/research-staff/david-prytherch](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/biad/research/people/research-staff/david-prytherch)

81 These seminars were presented by the Power Institute; Foundation for Art and Visual Culture, Sydney, and subsequently published as an edited transcript. [Paul Patton and Terry Smith, eds., Deconstruction Engaged (Sydney: Power Publications, 2001), 28.](http://www.powerhousepub.com.au/DeconstructionEngaged.html)

there is no question that we rely on our touch of a book to read it. However, Derrida's observation stems from a rigorous engagement with touch, evidenced in his 2000 book *Le toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy* (*On Touching, Jean-Luc Nancy*). His remarks begin to draw traction when understood within the context of the hegemonic struggle of one sense over the others. Derrida cites two examples, the Wests “exorbitant privileging of the eye”, and “a dominant tendency to want to make touch the absolute sense, that is, to understand all the other senses as a kind of touching”. In no part of his observations does Derrida infer that he is addressing the tactile when discussing the haptic; rather, he relates the tactile to the optic, “and the tactile impression—'the optical', as one says”.

Claire Colebrook addresses the difference between the optic and the haptic in her article “Derrida, Deleuze and Haptic Aesthetics”, where she writes that “Derrida locates Jean-Luc Nancy (and, briefly, Gilles Deleuze) within a tradition of haptic ethics and aesthetics that runs from Aristotle to the present.” Colebrook, in addressing the “curious border of touch between philosophy and sensibility”, describes Nancy as expressing a faith in the ability of the flesh to make sense; Derrida as “more cognisant of the necessary distance between flesh and sense”; and Deleuze as intuiting within “the haptic” another approach to the boundaries between flesh and making sense. Colebrook identifies a crucial aspect of this discourse: “The haptic is not the tactile, [it is] not a touch taken by the commanding hand for the sake of the viewing eye and the speaking mouth.” Understanding this facet of the haptic, in which touch is taken beyond its conventional context of the tactile and into the very edges of making sense, is essential to appreciate Derrida's observation and what Deleuze intuits within the haptic. I address this in chapter 4.

**contributing to the shape of the critical field of artists books**

When applied to Drucker's response to Frost, Derrida's observation folds and reveals within it a keyed entry point to artists book discourse for my research. Drucker's concerns

85 Patton and Smith, *Deconstruction Engaged*, 18.
86 Ibid, 28.
87 Ibid, 22.
89 Ibid, 22.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., 33.
are clear and warranted if Frost's 'haptic' is limited to an adjective. Drucker, however, finds in Frost's ideas a trace of relevance beyond the literal (adjective) haptic and her own choice of words pulls a thread from critical discourse on the haptic into her response. It's a thread that leads to Derrida and (what proves to be the most significant) to Deleuze's engagement with the haptic. She writes,

Gary Frost's proposal puts idea of "the haptic" into play. He calls for attention to dynamics and mobilities. Books are physical objects and our tactile experience of and with them is part of their multi-dimensional potential to effect meaning. We wouldn’t want to confuse the "literal" physical book with the virtual "phenomenal" work. The haptic could tend towards a literalist conflation of the object and the experience.93

Drucker equates, or at least relates, the tactile to the haptic and in doing so draws into Frost's question a relationship between the haptic and the optic. This relationship has a long history within aesthetics. Dictionaries commonly state that the haptic relates to the sense of touch, to the tactile. Nevertheless, Derrida finds clear difference between the two, and Colebrook identifies an irreconcilable tension between the optic tactile touch and the touch of the haptic.

Our touch of books, which overwhelmingly serves our eyes in the act of reading, is a tactile touch as Colebrook identifies. Derrida's observation raises crucial questions for those of us who make and read artists books. If the haptic involves a touch that is separate from the tactile touch that we are so familiar with, what is the nature of that touch? And does such a touch need to inform an emerging critical field of artists books or, as Celant termed them, books by artists?

To address this question, a concise understanding of the term ‘the haptic’ is needed.

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93 Drucker, "Beyond Velveeta," 10.
chapter 3

‘the haptic’ and the artists book
a concise understanding of what is meant by the term ‘the haptic’

haptic, haptics and ‘the haptic’

The word ‘haptic’ can broadly be categorised into three distinct areas: the adjective ‘haptic’; the noun ‘haptics’; and the theorised term ‘the haptic’. In its most common context, the adjectival form relates “to the sense of touch, in particular relating to the perception and manipulation of objects using the senses of touch and proprioception: haptic feedback devices create the illusion of substance and force within the virtual world”. 94

touch is now understood as a manifold of senses

Mark Paterson describes touch, the most complex of our senses, as a manifold of senses 95 that both covers the surface and permeates our bodies. He draws from research into perception that currently distinguishes between eight and up to twenty-one senses. 96 In this context, the adjective haptic relates to a complex manifold senses of touch. 97 Referring to earlier work by Lederman and Klatsky, David Prytherch, Senior Research Fellow in Haptics and Computer Interface Design at Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, refers to four basic scanning movements of haptic exploration that demonstrate the manifold nature of touch: lateral motion, identifying surface and texture information; pressure, identifying material firmness; contour following identifying form; and enclosure,

94 “Origin: late 19th century: from Greek haptikos ‘able to touch or grasp’, from haptein ‘fasten’”, oxforddictionaries.com.
95 Paterson, The Senses of Touch, 3.
96 Ibid., 20.
97 There is still debate within the field as to whether touch constitutes a single sense or a manifold of senses.
identifying volume. Research into touch continues to reveal more of its highly complex and multifaceted nature.

**haptics, a science of touch largely driven by the pursuit of a synthetic touch**

Paterson identifies that in this age of digital senses, the nature of touch and haptic perception have become the object of a significant body of research termed Haptics. This research has, and continues to develop synthetic models of touch that are then embedded into digital technologies and that are reshaping our use of touch, a purpose Paterson also relates to the commodification of touch. Ironically, this is an optic pursuit, an interpretation laid over what is materially sensed. In a 2003 paper, Prytherch and Bob Jerrard draw upon this research, which indicates that due the “sheer complexity ... of the ... sensory information being produced moment by moment” in the human body, most of what we sense through the manifold senses of touch is subliminally read and managed at a pre-conscious level. Apart from Haptics, touch has been a concern of the field of aesthetics from its origins.

**the haptic: a focus of sustained critical thought within the histories of aesthetics**

In *The Senses of Touch*, Paterson gives a detailed historical overview of debates within academic discourse on the nature of touch and its role in our perception of space and the material world. He clarifies that, “(d)espite the inescapable nature of everyday touching and tactile experiences, ... touch ... is astonishing(ly) under-theorized”, and that “sight, sound and the body in general have been studied extensively in the humanities, the social sciences and the natural sciences. But within an academic climate that celebrates visual cultures, and the popular media’s infatuation with visuality, touch remains largely

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100 David Prytherch and Bob Jerrard, "Haptics, the Secret Senses: The Covert Nature of the Haptic Sense in Creative Tacit Skills," *Proceedings of Eurohaptics 2003* (Dublin, Trinity College, 2003), 384. This paper analyses interviews with creative practitioners with regard to the interaction of vision and the haptic senses in the production of artworks.
neglected”. Paterson pays specific attention to the relationship between touch, the haptic and aesthetics in his chapter “How the World Touches Us”. He addresses the distinction between the haptic and the optic within aesthetic discourse that emerged through applying the haptic to the historical evaluation of artefacts. This generated an extension or even a significant shift in the meanings of the words ‘haptic’ and ‘optic’—from adjectives to nouns (i.e., ‘the haptic’ and ‘the optic’). Within an emerging haptic aesthetics, the haptic refers to an embrace of all the senses in perception, and the optic refers to the privileging of any one sense over the other senses in perception. Consequently, in contrast to their common references, the optic can refer to the privileging of touch and the eye can have a haptic rather than an optic function.

**the relationship between touch and sight informs an emerging haptic aesthetics**

The nature of the relationship between touch and sight in human perception is fundamental to the field of aesthetics. Paterson traces this relationship back to Aristotle's initial aesthesis (350 BC), a concept he describes as referring to the broad spectrum of the sensory faculties. With his aesthesis, Aristotle established a hierarchy of five senses, sight at the apex and touch at the base. His model did not distinguish between perception and sensation and this allowed his 'touch' to take on a distinctly different quality to the other senses. Unlike their evident correlations to an organ, Aristotle considered touch as relating to the heart and the body's flesh, as the medium for touch. Despite its 'difference', Aristotle saw touch as the most necessary sense, essential to the whole sense faculty aesthesis. Because touch was considered different, such a unity of the senses was lost within Western perception through its exorbitant privileging of the eye. The 'difference' between touch and the other senses was not challenged by scholars for some time; for example, Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. Paterson locates in 'Molyneux's question' a source of contemporary discourse on the nature of touch and its relationship to sight. Raised in the late-seventeenth century, this question considered the relationship between touch and sight if a blind person was suddenly able to see. Would they be able to make sense of their vision before they informed it with touch? Bishop Berkeley, in 1709, initiated a further movement towards Aristotle's aesthesis in which the perception of space is understood as primarily a tactile experience, one in which touch teaches vision. This still

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102 Ibid., 3.
104 Jacques Derrida's acclaimed On Touching commences with "'When our eyes touch...' Signing a Question—from Aristotle".
developing knowledge now asserts that the visual is calibrated by the manipulation of objects using the senses of touch and proprioception; that is, haptic perception. Nothing demonstrates this calibration more clearly than the inversion that our perceptual apparatus applies to the upside-down retinal image, aligning our vision to what our touch senses.\textsuperscript{105} Recent inroads within developmental psychology support this understanding, indicating that “spatial cognition is constituted by both tactile-kinaesthetic and visual experience ... (and that) tactile/motor experience 'calibrates' visual experience.”\textsuperscript{106} Within aesthetic discourse, now informed by distinctions between perception, sensation and the manifold senses of touch, the aesthetic experience has taken on the semblance of Aristotle’s “whole sense faculty”. As a result, a metaphorical touch of the eye, that is, an eye that senses haptically, has emerged. This metaphor is readily translated to any of the other senses. So while the haptic primarily relates to touch, it also relates to the visual, to the aural and to the spread of senses that a person is able to use in perceiving an environment.

As Prytherch identifies of touch, the sheer scale of the tactile, aural and visual sensory information produced in the body at any time, far exceeds our conscious capabilities to process; rather, we limit and manage the combination of what we sense to achieve conscious cognitive perception. This management occurs across the entire sensory and intellectual apparatus of the body, a ‘space’ termed the sensorium. The ratios by which we combine what we sense vary significantly; they depend on the spread of senses available to a person, the cultural shaping of those senses and the nature of the environment being sensed. The emerging haptic aesthetic's embrace of all the senses seeks to address the optic privileging of any one sense that impacts the ratio of the senses used in perception.

\textit{haptic aesthetics informs the emerging critical field of artists books}

Haptic aesthetics has emerged from the rigours of critical discourse that spans Aristotle's aesthetic and Mark Paterson’s \textit{The Senses of Touch}. In raising a question over haptic evaluation within artists book discourse, Frost unearthed a stub from haptic aesthetics that unequivocally carries implications for the emerging critical field of artists books. His question, “are haptic features consequential to the evaluation of book art?”\textsuperscript{107}, echoes an application of haptic concerns to the evaluation of artefacts by art historian Alois Riegl

\textsuperscript{105} McLuhan discusses this phenomenon in his essay “The Photograph, The Brothel-without-Walls,” in \textit{Understanding Media}, 207.
\textsuperscript{106} Paterson, \textit{The Senses of Touch}, 41.
\textsuperscript{107} Frost, “Reading by Hand,” 3.
(1858–1905) within the fields of art history and aesthetics. Following threads that run from Riegl's defining work, acknowledged for his impact on philosophers such as Walter Benjamin and Deleuze,\textsuperscript{108} the haptic emerges as a theoretical and conceptual framework on which to base a critical evaluation of artists books. In this chapter, these threads are picked up in Riegl and followed through the work of Benjamin, Simone Weil, McLuhan, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, and Laura Marks to develop both a broad perspective on the haptic and establish its significance to the field of artists books. Furthermore, from these threads also emerges a history of poets and artists making books in response to the haptic that can be traced back to William Blake.

\textit{the haptic within aesthetic discourse}

\textit{Riegl links the haptic and the optic to the human perceptual relationship with artefacts}

Riegl, who “in some marvelous pages, gave fundamental aesthetic status to the couple: close vision–haptic space”\textsuperscript{109} continues to be recognised as a central figure in the emerging area of haptic aesthetics. He adopted the German word 'haptisch' in his analysis of late Roman art, first published in 1901. He uses haptic as a descriptor of the relationship between human perception and what we sense, between the materiality of an artefact and our interpretation of it. In his 2005 article “Time and History in Alois Riegl's Theory of Perception”, Michael Gubser quotes at length from Riegl's text \textit{Spätrömischen Keunstindustrie} (\textit{Late Roman Art Industry}) to describe the relationship between human perception and artefacts.\textsuperscript{110} English translations of \textit{Spätrömischen Keunstindustrie} are not readily available in print and I have included an extended quote by Gubser of Riegl in Appendix 2. Gubser writes

The human perceptual relationship with the objective world, Riegl believed, was a production of the eye, the touch, and the mind. This relationship passed through historical phases, oscillating between an emphasis on vision (optic) and touch (haptic or tactile). ...

\textsuperscript{109} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 572.
\textsuperscript{110} Associate Professor of History at James Madison University, Gubser's quotes are translations of Riegl's German publications and are authoritative considering his extensive readings of English and German texts on Riegl. I quote them at length having been unable to readily find the text in English.
In Riegl's historical account, the visual aspects of perception gradually came to mask tactile and mental contributions, a tendency that led to misunderstandings about the nature of empirical perception and the "unity" and "continuity" it affirmed. ....

The apparent preeminence of vision belied the actual collaboration of sight, touch, and thought in the perception of physical unity.\[111\]

Riegl understood perception as a collaboration between the eye, touch and the mind. This collaboration could include a recollection of a previous perception sensed directly through sight and touch. So, human perception can also be the product of the eye, the memory of touch and the mind. He identifies that the speed at which reliable perception can be produced through the memory of touch contributes to a relegation of touch from, and an optic centering of, the human perceptual relationship with artefacts.

In applying his theories to the aesthetic evaluation of historical artefacts, Riegl revealed phases in the history of European art that emphasise either a haptic (the touch) or an optic (the eye) human perceptual relationship with art. Riegl termed the emphasising of touch, (linearity and shape) as 'close vision–haptic space', and the emphasising of vision (colour, light and shadow) as 'long distance vision–optic space'. Riegl also describes a balanced vision between the two, which he termed "normal-sichtig", normal-sighted vision, which has not attracted the same attention in the field as the previous two terms.

**Riegl's close vision-haptic space**

Arriving at the term 'close vision-haptic space', Riegl refers to experience that is intimate, immediate and close, and in which the senses of touch in particular, respond to the material properties of an artefact. The term describes a direct relationship between perception and what is being perceived. A simple but essential aspect of haptic space is the investigatory movement over, across or around an artefact. The longer this investigation can be sustained, the more dynamically an object can be known. Conversely, the optic seeks to reduce both the time taken and the need for movement to the minimum required.

**Riegl's long distance vision-optic space**

'Long distance vision-optic space' refers to experience that is distanced from the materiality of an artefact. It is experience that is informed, understood or interpreted through prior perception (usually haptic perception though it can also involve visual perception). Such an interpretation can be applied to an artefact with little or no regard to its materiality. Riegl attributes this distancing to vision's capacity to execute "the operation of multiplying singular perceptions far quicker than the sense of touch", a premise now verified and termed as 'inspection time' within research into the psychology of perception. As a consequence, the thinking observer begins to apply prior (rather than direct) haptic perception to visual sensations. This allows the observer to 'grasp' the extended material surfaces of an object without having touched them, a premise verified by J. J. Gibson in “The Perception of Visual Surfaces”, in which he outlines the impressions of surface and edge as the fundamental 'sensations' of space. This visual grasp of material surfaces and edges is a haptic capacity of sight; a metaphorical touching by the eye that moves over, across or around an artefact in its investigation of it—a haptic touch by the eye.

**an optic-centric, long distance vision mode of representation**

The refined literal representations of objects in space that reached a pinnacle in Renaissance rules of perspective are read within long distance vision-optic space. We learn to read these illusionary images when we learn to optically overlay prior perception onto what we sense of the image. Etchings such as Giovanni Battista Piranesi's *Imaginary Prisons* series (figure 3) are rendered within the rules of Renaissance perspective. They are read when the haptic touch of the eye grasps an optic interpretation of what is visually sensed.

This image can be viewed at [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni_Battista_Piranesi#mediaviewer/File:Piranesi01.jpg](en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni_Battista_Piranesi#mediaviewer/File:Piranesi01.jpg)

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112 Ibid., 472.
114 McLuhan identifies clear differences between reading an image haptically or optically in *the Gutenberg galaxy p 36-42* and see the section below Riegls "Kunstwollen" provides critical tools for Walter Benjamin.
115 English: Giovanni Battista Piranesi: Untitled etching (called "The Smoking Fire"), plate VI (of 16) from the series The Imaginary Prisons (Le Carceri d'Invenzione), Rome, 1761 edition (reworked from 1745).
This complex perceptual relationship with the etching can be described as follows: a production of the eye, the memory of the eye, the memory of touch and the mind. Read in Renaissance perspective, a print’s material surface figuratively dissolves into thin air. The haptic touch of the eye does not directly engage with the artefact; rather it touches distant stone walls and construction sites rendered through memory. Consequently, the ink of the print is not read in a literal material sense through any direct haptic experience; rather, the ink renders the empty space of an atmosphere and the building behind it. A blivet, paradoxically named the two-pronged trident, offers a unique example of this multi-layered optic perception. This impossible object only exists as a virtual object within the rules of Renaissance perspective; it cannot exist in space. Unlike Piranesi’s images, the blivet sets up a conflict between haptic and optic perception. The optic infers an object that the haptic verifies as impossible. Once read within Renaissance perspective, the mind finds it very difficult to abandon its optic interpretation of it. It requires considerable effort to see/read this blivet as a two-dimensional image.

The sustained privileging of optic perception that can “mask tactile and mental contributions”\textsuperscript{116} in the eye-touch-and-mind collaboration leads to the assumption that optical perception is sufficient to “produce certainty about the material unity of external things”.\textsuperscript{117} In this privileging, the haptic capacity of the eye to ‘touch’ without touching replaces the need to touch, and touch is reduced to a tactile role in the service of optical perception. It is the haptic touch of the eye rather than the senses of touch that senses that the above blivet cannot exist as a three-dimensional object.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
Riegl’s “Kunstwollen” provides critical tools for Walter Benjamin

Through his analysis of historical artefacts, Riegl showed that societies in general demonstrate movements to either the optic or the haptic production and interpretation of art—that the mode of production informs the mode of interpretation. In doing so, he linked an artefact's value to haptic or optic perception. He termed the broad cultural forces that effect such movements as Kunstwollen, explaining that this force “regulates the relation between man and objects as we perceive them with our senses; it is how we always give shape and colour to things”.\(^{118}\) McLuhan exemplifies Riegl's position in his description of the contrasting modes of perception between the illiterate and the literate person.\(^{119}\) The modern literate person is able conceptualise the three-dimensional space represented on a film screen as independent of the present. By contrast, until a person illiterate in Renaissance perspective is “educated in the literature of film” they cannot separate these two spaces. From my own experience as a child watching films with the Samberigi, I can attest that such ‘illiterate’ persons walk behind a film screen to see where the actor on screen has gone after they walk off the edge of the screen or through a door on screen.

Gubser acknowledges the significance of Riegl's impact on preeminent philosophers and historical theorists, “above all”\(^{120}\) Walter Benjamin, which is discussed by Jay Hetrick in “What Is Nomad Art? A Benjaminian Reading of Deleuze’s Riegl”.\(^{121}\) Hetrick notes that Benjamin relies on Riegl's Kunstwollen to legitimise his analyses of literature, art, and the new medium of cinema. This bears particular significance in Benjamin's famous essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”. Having demonstrated that “the value of a work is established—within the mode of perception through which it was produced and consumed”,\(^ {122}\) Riegl provides Benjamin the tools to differentiate between the audience’s reception of the autographic print and the mechanically reproduced print. Hetrick writes

The ‘destruction of the aura’ is a ‘process of immeasurable importance for both

\(^{120}\) Gubser, "Time and History," 457.
\(^{121}\) Hetrick, "What Is Nomad Art?," 29.
\(^{122}\) Ibid., 29.
thinking and perception’ since it indicates a disruption of the given distribution of sensibility as well as the birth of a new mode of perception that seeks to overcome distance with a desire ‘to ‘get closer’ to things’ (Benjamin 2002: 105). As we shall see, this language of nearness and distance is intimately connected to Riegl’s opposition between the haptic and optic. Thus, we should take Benjamin to mean that the birth of modern art, as measured by the destruction of the aura, is to be understood as a fundamental shift from an optic to a haptic distribution of the senses.\textsuperscript{123}

Hetrick also identifies Benjamin’s acknowledgement of “a new type of group experience of landscape paintings in the mid-nineteenth century” as the inauguration of “this new mode of (haptic) perception”.

Benjamin’s analysis of the mechanically reproduced print continues to inform contemporary discourse, particularly the critical evaluation of the ubiquitous presence of the print in Western art, as Philagrafika 2010 demonstrated. This relevance is premised on the new mode of haptic perception Hetrick finds in Benjamin. Nevertheless, this new mode of perception is premised on the haptic touch of the eye, not touch, which still fundamentally privileges the eye.

Writing of the new and engaging visual effects being developed and employed by film, Benjamin, in relating them to the movement of the eye around the screen image and to new perceptual modes developed through film, describes the haptic touch of the eye. He considers film to be the obvious resolution to the Dadaists’ attempt to break the privileging of the optic in Western art, since film did not allow the reader time to “abandon himself to his associations”\textsuperscript{124} in contemplating a work of art.

With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject. So, too, slow motion not only presents familiar qualities of movement but reveals in them entirely unknown ones ... the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowering and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its extensions and accelerations, its enlargements and reductions. The camera introduces us to the unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses.

Dadaism attempted to create by pictorial—and literary—means the effects which the public today seeks in film. ... From an alluring appearance or persuasive structure of sound the work of art of the Dadaists became an instrument of ballistics. It hit the spectator like a bullet, it happened to him, thus acquiring a tactile quality. It promoted

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 31.
a demand for the film, the distracting element of which is also primarily tactile, being based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator.  

At the end of his essay, Benjamin specifically addresses the optical and the tactile. He relates the tactile to an absorption of an environment through touch-by-habit (this equates to the haptic) and relates the optic to perception through sight-by-contemplation.

Buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception—or rather, by touch and sight. Such appropriation cannot be understood in terms of the attentive concentration of a tourist before a famous building. On the tactile side there is in no counterpart to contemplation on the optical side. Tactile appropriation is accomplished not so much by attention as by habit. As regards architecture, habit determines to a large extent even optical reception. The latter, too, occurs much less through rapt attention than by noticing the object in incidental fashion. This mode of appropriation, developed with reference to architecture, in certain circumstances acquires canonical value. For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is by contemplation, alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation.  

The relationship between Benjamin's tactile appropriation through habit and the haptic is readily evident; both rely on a movement over, across and around the object. Benjamin also acknowledges sight's reliance on touch, and that the canonical can be perceived through the haptic. In contemporary terminology, this reads as touch calibrating sight, and any development in a mode of perception will require a recalibration through touch. Benjamin identifies a touch by which we can make sense.

**changes to modes of perception and the ratio of the senses within the sensorium**

Through a methodical bricolage of scholarly sources McLuhan addresses the effects that technologies have on the ratio of the senses used in human perception in *The Gutenberg Galaxy*. He describes the mix of the senses in the early human sensorium as a mosaic pattern that incorporates all of them. As humanity has developed technologies that extend our senses, their ratios in that mosaic have been affected. For example, the technology of writing transcribed spoken language into a visual form that extended the capacity of sight to perceive language. With this extension, the sense of sight captures a greater role in the mix of the senses in the sensorium, altering our mode of perception. McLuhan's focus is

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125 Ibid.
126 Ibid., 18.
on technologies that allow us to convey information; that is, a medium. In particular, he addresses Gutenberg's technology, a combination of technological extensions. The printed book has effectively extended our memory, the reach of our language across space and through time, our capacity to learn and think, our capacity to identify with a large number of people and, most significantly, our capacity to develop new technologies. These and more that McLuhan identifies are built on the extension of sight to perceive language, on an optic interpretation of the material properties of visible language.

Gutenberg's technology also demonstrates that the content of any medium is always another medium. The content of the book, initially drawn from manuscripts, is the medium of written language that draws its content from the spoken language. In “The Medium Is the Message”, McLuhan distinguishes between the effects of a medium and the content it carries. When a medium’s content holds significant currency for an audience, the character and effect of that medium can become transparent to the audience. The book is such a medium; its effects have remained relatively transparent as the effects of its contents have drawn the attention of its audience. One of the book’s transparent effects has been to alter the ratios of the senses within the sensorium. The marriage of the book to visible language, both image and text, “on and through which the American [and much of the West’s] way of life was formed”, 127 has significantly contributed to the exhortitant privileging of the eye in the West's mode of perception.

McLuhan describes the manner by which a technology affects a people as one that occurs steadily and without resistance. These affects do not occur at the level of opinion or concepts but rather in the ratio of the mix of the senses in the sensorium. He identifies the “serious artist”, 128 someone who is expertly aware of the changes in sense perception, as the most able to encounter technology with impunity.

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128 McLuhan, Understanding Media, 19.
In the chapter “Artiste de Livres”, in McLuhan in Space, Richard Cavell identifies McLuhan’s interest in artists who were “reharmonizing the senses”.129 These artists were concerned over the hegemony of the visual in art, and represented the beginning of a fusion of the “audile/tactile ... with space and time”.130 In particular, McLuhan took interest in poets and artists who saw the book as a major focus of this subversion of visual hegemony. McLuhan’s interest in these artists/poets was initiated though his encounters with the work of William Blake and Stephane Mallarmé.

The early-twentieth-century books that McLuhan responded to were those produced by the Futurists, Russian Constructivists, Dadaists, Surrealists and the Bauhaus who turned to the book for the same reason that Benjamin identifies others turned to film: the book is a time-based medium that involves movement. Unlike film, the book tangibly involves three-dimensional space and literally engages the senses of touch. Adopting dramatically different formats, text structures and embracing abstraction, these books “hit the spectator like a bullet, it happened to him, thus acquiring a tactile quality ..., being based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator”.131 Drawing from these books, McLuhan produced a number of his own books that investigated non-Euclidean aesthetics “in an environment where the new electronic media was destabilizing the hegemony of the visual culture that had been established by print”.132 Termed ‘non-books’ by McLuhan, the first of them, Verbi-Voco-Visual Explorations, was published by Dick Higgins of Something Else Press in 1967. Cavell identifies the significance of this collaboration. Higgins established Something Else Press as a publishing venue for Fluxus artists, the avant-garde who were working with a mix of mediums that included print, the book and the new electronic mediums such as the computer. Marshall also co-published The Medium Is the Message and Of War and Peace in the Global Village with the designer Quentin Fiore.

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129 Richard Cavell, McLuhan in Space (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 104.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid., 119.
McLuhan forms a concrete link between the haptic touch of the eye and artists books

As mentioned, Celant, in “Book as Artwork: 1960–72”, a text often cited as the earliest critical engagement with the field of artists books, identifies McLuhan's writing as a primary influence on the development of the book-as-a-work-of-art in the mid-twentieth century. In particular, he discusses the period in which humans’ relationship to their media became a focus of art. This change led artists to focus on all the media available to them, including the book. Higgins’s Something Else Press, established during this period, was premised on the term he coined ‘intermedia’, a reference to this focus. It is a focus influenced by McLuhan's interest in the haptic touch of the eye, as his non-books demonstrate. McLuhan’s books remain relatively obscure within the field of artists books despite the recognition that Higgins, a prominent early figure in the field, gave them. In responding to the early-twentieth-century Futurist, Constructivist and Dada artists, McLuhan recognised and continued their employment of the metaphorical haptic touch of the eye in an attempt to reharmonise the senses. They expanded the investigation of the metaphorical touch of the eye that informed the development of film and the development of abstraction within modern art. What the medium of the book offered was a space within which the abstraction of either literature or art could be employed beyond the single surfaced plane that has dominated Western art and still remains central to film.

The haptic touch of the eye underpins the early-twentieth-century artists books and the emergence of the field of artists books

An overview of the vast numbers of artists books made since poets and artists adopted the book as a medium in the early-twentieth-century evidences that this engagement is marked by the metaphorical haptic touch of the eye. This is illustrated in Maffei and Picciau's exhibition catalogue. The touch required of the reader to read these books is still primarily the tactile touch that Colebrook identifies and is exemplified by Ed Ruscha’s highly acclaimed Twenty-six Gasoline Stations. McLuhan's three non-books themselves relegate the reader's touch to a tactile touch. This continuing tactile touch of the artists book reflects Riegl’s observations. Societies in general link the interpretation and value of artefacts to their mode of production, and artists books realised through optic modes of

133 In Books by Artists, 85–104.
production, such as *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations*, will draw an optic reception and evaluation.

There are exceptions that expand out from the metaphorical haptic touch of the eye, and Maffei and Picciau's exhibition catalogue documents some of them: Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Tullio D'Albisola's *Parole in libertà futuriste. Offlative, tattili, termiche*, Marcel Duchamp's *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires*, Asger JORN and Guy-Ernest DEBORD's *Mémoires* and the books of Bruno Munari.

Images of *Mémoires* can be viewed at


*Mémoires* (Memories) is an artist's book Asger Jorn made in 1959 in collaboration with Guy Debord, the second of two books they collaborated on while they were members of the Situationist International. It has already drawn significant acclaim for its employment of visual abstraction to subvert the hegemony of visual space in art. Its content is classically Dada and keeps the eyes and the mind constantly moving over its pages. The book's covers are made of sandpaper and exemplify an employment of the haptic touch in an artist's book, pulling the aural and touch into its reading. The cover, chosen by Jorn, was
designed to scratch any surface it came into contact with, including any book that shares a shelf with it. Since the book does not sit comfortably in a reader’s hands—it literally roughs up the reader’s skin—its reception and evaluation necessitates haptic perception. Its texture directly sensed by touch conveys content, that is, this book will not sit readily in the established parameters of what a book was/is. Ironically, the Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum's copy of this book, which I have spent time with, is stored in a cover that prevents it from scratching anything beside it, an optic response to a haptic intent. The V&A Museum's collection also includes contemporary examples of artists books that involve the haptic touch, such as Happiness Pursuit: A Step-By-Step Work-Out Handbook in 19 platitudes by Bogdan Bocanet (1993) in which Bocanet has embedded scrap metal into the pages that draw the readers haptic touch, and Neopostmodrinism, or, Dieser Rasen ist kein Hundeklo, or, Gabberjabb Number 6 by Walter Hamady (1988) in which Hamady's use of letterpress and cutouts occupy a three-dimensional space that engages the haptic touch.

Bruno Munari's Libro illeggibile MN 1 can be viewed at www.corraini.com/en/catalogo/scheda_libro/35/Libro-illeggibile-mn-1

Libri illeggibili (Unreadable books) is a series of books begun in 1949 by the Italian designer and artist Bruno Munari that contain no printed words or images, but explore the vocabulary of the book. They consists of folios, leaves and pages of differing shapes and colours that, gathered together, form abstract compositions within the syntactical structure of a codex. When read, the differing pages reflect light off each other to form many more colours; they form new shapes and generate dynamic spaces throughout the reading of the book. Munari’s use of different page shapes generates a sense of cutouts that allow the reader to see pages ahead and in the past of the book’s material structure. The book’s
content is reliant on the haptic touch of the reader. This small book is in its seventh printing and readily available for purchase online.

The earliest book to engage with the literal haptic touch is a 1914 book by Russian Futurist poets and artists Vasily Kamensky, David Burliuk and Vladimir Burliuk.


*Tango with Cows* comprises letterpress-printed Ferro-Concrete Poems in a format that echoes the advertising pages of 1914 Russian newspapers. The pages of the book are made from roughly printed wallpaper that engages the haptic touch when read. It is a conceptually simple, though tangible use of the material properties of wallpaper to assail
the spectator. It demonstrates an engagement with a literal touch of the book in the context of the haptic; that is, a haptic touch.

*from Riegl's haptic space emerges the term the haptic touch*

The haptic touch contributes directly to perception. Jennifer Fisher describes haptic touch as “the quintessential relational sense... [being] simultaneously relational and sensorial ... [it] extends from actual touch to include an immersive engagement in dimensional space ... it can play a critical role in articulating the extra-visual modalities of aesthetic experience”.134 In counterbalance to the haptic touch, a tactile touch serves the eye; its contributions to perception are encapsulated by the optic, which Colebrook identifies. She writes, “The haptic is not the tactile, [it is] not a touch taken by the commanding hand for the sake of the viewing eye and the speaking mouth”.135 The haptic touch is not a privileging of touch; rather it is an employment of touch that directly contributes to the mix the senses in the sensorium. It is an active inclusion of touch in the mind-and-touch-and-sight collaboration. It is an engagement with the corporeality of aesthetic perception and, as a relational sense, the haptic touch allows an artefact, an environment, a place to touch us and to affect us.

*Simone Weil's thinking body and a history of thinking about touch by women*

In her 1997 article “Relational Sense: Towards a Haptic Aesthetics”,136 Fisher argues for a recuperation of aesthetics, one that “moves beyond modernism's preoccupation with the singularity of the visual”137 and engages with the corporeality of aesthetic perception. She argues that feminist theory foregrounds a corporeal haptic aesthetics, comprising the tactile, kinaesthetic and proprioceptive senses that can contribute to establishing new knowledge. Such a recuperation is tangible in Laura Marks's critical essays published in her book *touch*.138 In the introduction, Marks succinctly integrates the haptic into art

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135 Colebrook, “Derrida, Deleuze and Haptic Aesthetics,” 33.
137 Ibid., 5.
criticism, and locates haptic criticism within aesthetic discourse. Premised on Deleuze and Guattari's smooth space, her writing is lucid:

Touching, not mastering ... The haptic critic, rather than place herself within the "striated space" of predetermined critical frameworks, navigates a smooth space by engaging immediately with objects and ideas and teasing out the connections immanent to them. ... Haptic criticism cannot achieve the distance from its object required for disinterested, cool-headed assessment, nor does it want to. ... The events that the critics want to approach are endlessly complex and nuanced; their surfaces are textured and porous. The best criticism keeps its surface rich and textured, so it can interact with things in unexpected ways. It has to give up ideas when they stop touching the other's surface. ... I try to move along the surface of the object, rather than attempting to penetrate or “interpret” it, as criticism is usually supposed to do.\(^{139}\)

Mark's and Fisher's thoughts can be traced back to Simone Weil (1909–1943), a contemporary of Benjamin.

In her book *Philosophia*, Andrea Nye articulates the need for women thinkers to engage with the weight of knowledge that has been established by the thoughts of men. Nye argues that “The tradition of male philosophers has failed to produce an understanding of divinity, self, value, reality [and] knowledge [that] is viable in the late twentieth century”,\(^{140}\) and that women's thought is a key means of addressing that failure. One of the thinkers Nye looks towards to bring women's thoughts into the discourse of contemporary philosophy is Weil, whose thought in particular carries significance for the haptic touch and smooth space. Nye collects some of Weil's thoughts together under the term 'The Thinking Body'. She writes:

To replace representational science, Weil ... consistent with her “first philosophy,” [begins] with the living, thinking body, the ground of all experience in the world. The body thinks, Weil argued, even in its most physical reflexes. In response to stimuli, the body classifies events and orders the world. In conditioned reflexes, the body responds to forms. These material processes are essential to learning and education, as are instincts, sexual or maternal, which are also reactions to forms or ideas. Perception, Weil argued, is never passive. Always it is associated with movement: with the movement of two eyes that together act as pincers to get a grip on the world; with the movement of the body as we move around what we want to see; and it moves around us.\(^{141}\)

\(^{139}\) Ibid., xii–xvi.
\(^{141}\) Ibid., 87.
The correlations between a thinking body, Riegl’s human perceptual relationship and the haptic are clear. Weil's eyes that 'get a grip' equate to 'eyes that touch'. Her body's senses work in collaboration to perceive through movement. Weil is not willing to relegate touch in the human perceptual relationship to a subordinate tactile role,

Weil reversed the order of traditional epistemology. Knowledge does not begin with the particulars and then move by abstraction to universals. Instead, in bodily experience, a thinking woman begins from the general, from linkages and ratios discerned in the course of her actions. In so far as a thinker manages to remove herself from her body, as Descartes claimed is possible, distancing herself from her instincts and sensations and pretending to an illusionary independence of thought, she is cut off from reliable meanings and valid inference.\footnote{Ibid.}

In the smooth space of Weil's thought, responsive to haptic perception, questions over the most appropriate course of action to pursue, in health for example, can only be answered through real physical bodies whose health or fitness is a fact. “Validation in Weil’s terms is not in philosophical logic or in laboratory experimentation, but on the factory floor, in the power plant, the farm, the clinic, the household”,\footnote{Ibid., 88.} or, I would add, in the artist's studio, making and reading artists books.

\textit{Weil's relations and ratios}

Nye finds in Weil a movement from an optic to a haptic distribution of the senses. She writes “Objects given in perception are not collections of atomised and passive sensations [the optic] but relations and ratios [the haptic]. Abstraction in language [then, that of relations and ratios, rather than the measured illusion of three-dimensional pictorial space] only strengthens a bodily ability to grasp the whole.”\footnote{Ibid., 87.} Weil engages diverse subjects, including creative practice, and in her writing, she uncompromisingly writes:

\begin{quote}
Literature and morality. Imaginary evil is romantic and varied; real evil is gloomy monotonous, barren boring. Imaginary good is boring; real good is always new, marvelous, intoxicating. Therefore "imaginative literature” is either boring or immoral (or a mixture of both). It only escapes from this alternative if in some way it passes over to the side of reality through the power of art.\footnote{George A. Panichis, \textit{The Simone Weil Reader} (New York: Published by David McKay, 1977), 382.}
\end{quote}
The ideological aspects of this statement are obvious; however, irrespective of ideological difference, it asserts the capacity of creative practice to effect a haptic space, that is, a human perceptual relationship with the reader/viewer premised on the materiality of the artefact rather than optic interpretations projected onto the artefact. Perception in Weil’s thinking body involved relations and ratios of the senses combined in the sensorium—that is, haptic perception. Weil’s thought continues to attract attention, exemplified in On Beauty and Being Just by Elaine Scarry.\(^{146}\)

**Weil’s “radical decentering”**

In On Beauty and Being Just, Scarry argues that the sublime disconnected beauty “from the metaphysical, permitting it to inhabit only the ground of the real”\(^{147}\). However political, moral and realism critiques have refused beauty any “place on the ground of the real. ... beauty has comes to us like a fugitive bird unable to fly, unable to land”\(^{148}\). Scarry relies on Weil’s thinking of the body grounded in our senses to describe radical decentering. She writes,

> At the moment we see something beautiful, we undergo a radical decentering. Beauty, according to Weil, requires us “to give up our imaginary position as the center. . . . A transformation then takes place at the very roots of our sensibility, in our immediate reception of sense impressions and psychological impressions.” It is not that we cease to stand at the center of the world, for we never stood there. It is that we cease to stand even at the center of our own world. We willingly cede our ground to the thing that stands before us. ... Weil speaks matter-of-factly, often without illustration, implicitly requiring readers to test the truth of her assertion against their own experience. Her account is always deeply somatic: what happens happens to our bodies.\(^{149}\)

Weil considered that beauty is validated not by an optic distance but by the intimate haptic. Her recognition of artists’ ability to translate creative imagination into “reality” rather than mere representation, together with radical decentering, has considerable implications for the critical debate shaping the emerging field of artists books. This is particularly so in light of the relational sense of the haptic touch. Radical decentering is premised on relational sensing. To give up our imaginary position as the centre not only of the world but also of our own world involves willingly ceding our ground to what we sense in the artwork. This

\(^{147}\) Ibid., 85-86.  
\(^{148}\) Ibid., 86.  
\(^{149}\) Ibid., 111.
can only be experienced if we are able and willing to let the artwork literally affect us. This correlates to Riegl's, Benjamin's and Deleuze & Guattari's movement between haptic-abstract-smooth space and optic-figurative-striated space and to McLuhan's ratio of senses. Movement to the haptic opens up our perception of an artefact and facilitates its effects on us whereas movement to the optic circumscribes our perception of an artefact and facilitates our colonisation of it.

the haptic underpins the use of the book as a medium within creative practice

Riegl's close vision-haptic space effectively applies the haptic to the evaluation of artefacts. It demonstrates that artists books can be evaluated through close vision-haptic space and that their method of production can engender such an evaluation. A movement towards haptic space is evident in early-twentieth-century poets and artists’ engagement with the mechanically printed book. McLuhan’s recognition of these artists’ attempts to reharmonise the senses (a movement towards haptic space) informs his writing on artists’ use of mediums. His writing, also movement towards haptic space, was influential on the early Fluxus artists from whom it is commonly recognised that artists books emerged as a distinct field.

The basic premise underpinning early-twentieth-century creative engagement with the book is the metaphorical haptic touch of the eye. As early as 1914, this premise was extended to incorporate the literal haptic touch. This haptic touch, a primary concern within an emerging haptic aesthetics, is consistently if sparsely evident in books made by artists/poets to the present. Within the context of a Weilian thinking body and Benjamin’s canonical perception appropriated through haptic habit, the haptic touch represents a theoretical concept of critical significance to the reception and evaluation of artists books. It offers the emerging critical field the resources that Drucker identified as necessary to advance its discourse. That is, critical terminology and a descriptive vocabulary with a historical perspective to build a book arts aesthetics.
Having established the significance of the haptic to the field and having introduced Deleuze's and Guattari's concept of smooth and striated space in chapter 1, I will now address their engagement with the haptic in more detail. They provide a contemporary theoretical framework within which to investigate the haptic touch of artists books. Before I engage them, I need to address a “dominant tendency to want to make touching the absolute sense”.\(^{150}\)

During the “Deconstruction Engaged” seminars, Derrida remarked on the strange situation that “there is no production of anything artistic without touching, usually touching with the hands ... production is always haptic, so to speak, but the reception and the experience (of works of art) are never haptic as such”.\(^{151}\) Derrida was discussing his book and exhibition both named *Memoirs of the Blind*\(^ {152}\) in which he considers an optic touch portrayed within Western art. This was a privileging of touch above all the other senses. His observation was made in the context of the dominant tendency to make touching the absolute sense in the West, that is, “to understand all the other senses as a kind of touching”.\(^ {153}\) He couches his observation between “if I am not wrong” and “as such”, leaving room for the inevitable failure that his theoretical position expects of him. His remarks carry a tension evident within discourse on the haptic, a tension Colebrook gives texture to in “Derrida, Deleuze and Haptic Aesthetics”. It’s a tension over differences between Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy regarding the ability of the flesh (that is our senses independent of our minds) to make sense. Nancy argues a touch that makes sense independent of thought and Derrida locates sense within our perceptual apparatus. This difference raises very real questions: is the haptic evaluation of artefacts even possible, and if so, would that involve a privileging of touch?

Colebrook's touch of the haptic identifies that the “haptic” that Derrida refers to is the haptic of aesthetics and not the common context of the adjective ‘haptic’. This locates Derrida's concern in a specifically Western context, in a culture that, having privileged the eye to such a degree, has relegated the senses of touch from the

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\(^{150}\) Derrida in *Deconstruction Engaged*, 28.
\(^{151}\) Ibid.
\(^{152}\) The exhibition was held at the Louvre Museum, Paris, from 26 October 1990 to 21 January 1991.
reception and evaluation of an artwork. Derrida does not negate the possibility of a reception and evaluation of art that involves touch; rather, he identifies how an exorbitant privileging of sight has affected the West's perception of artefacts. His concern lies in the hegemony of any sense over the others, such as the privileging of touch he identifies in *Memoirs of the Blind*. Gubser also identifies that touch can contribute to the reception and evaluation of art. He writes “Benjamin understood the revolutionary importance of Riegl's art historical method to lie in the fact that it locates the value of a work within the mode of perception through which it was produced and consumed”, confirming that the 'consumption' of the artefact can be haptic.

Ideologically, the haptic is located outside any hegemonic practice. It could be described as an egalitarian embrace of the senses, though such a description places political intent in the haptic. The haptic and movement towards haptic space engage all the senses in a dynamic relationship to form perception within the sensorium. While the haptic does not privilege any sense over another, the haptic itself can be privileged over the optic. Such a privileging is evident in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

**Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari**

Unquestionably, Deleuze and Guattari undertake the most explicit application of Riegl's close vision-haptic space in contemporary critical discourse, and consequently to an emerging critical field of artists books. The whole body of *A Thousand Plateaus* is underpinned by haptic perception, as is Deleuze's *Francis Bacon, The Logic of Sensation*. They address their close vision-haptic space and long distance vision-optic space in the chapter on smooth and striated space that was previously discussed.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari apply Riegl's analysis of the human perceptual relationship with an artefact to the whole realm of human perception and experience. They further extend it into a means of describing the material universe from the sub-atomic to the vastness of space. Their book applies Riegl's close vision-haptic space and long distance vision-optic space to philosophy and writing. In privileging the

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155 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*
156 A critical reception and evaluation of Francis Bacon's paintings.
haptic, as its form exemplifies, *A Thousand Plateaus* is a movement towards smooth space.

**the haptic, smooth space and aesthetics**

In their aesthetic model, Deleuze and Guattari take some risks [in] making free use [of the] fundamental aesthetic status [Alois Riegl gave] to the couple *close vision - haptic space* ... It seems to us that the Smooth is both the object of a close vision par excellence and the element of haptic space (which may be as much visual or auditory as tactile). The Striated, on the contrary, relates to a more distant vision, and a more optical space—although the eye in turn is not the only organ to have this capacity.157

Deleuze and Guattari extend Reigl’s investigatory movement (close vision-haptic space) to any relationship a person is a part of, both material and conceptual, and to the relationship between any of the materials that constitute the universe. Consider the delicate roots of a tree that, over time, are able to negotiate in smooth space the harshest of material substratum. At the other end of the spectrum, consider a black hole. The relationship between the material theoretically at its core and the material that it theoretically draws into itself could be considered as pure striated space; the black hole imposes itself upon that material to the point that it obliterates it. As relational descriptors, smooth and striated space can be applied to the broadest sense of the word ‘place’.

**smooth space and the nomad**

Deleuze and Guattari draw heavily on nomadic existences to identify smooth space. They describe it as as the path of a nomad, a path that passing through a point is informed by and responds to the nature of that point, whereas striated space as a path informed by points at either end of it, a path determined by measurement orientated to an origin and a destination. Smooth space is a path negotiating through an environment, relying on an immersive perception of and informed by an intimacy with that environment. Striated space is traversing through an environment in reference to a mapping of it, a mapping informed by a territorialization of that environment. Smooth space is close-range vision in which you

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can “lose oneself, without landmarks”\textsuperscript{158}, whereas striated space is long-distance vision by which you can ground yourself in reference to a horizon.

In their maritime model of the smooth and striated, Deleuze and Guattari refer to the sea as “smooth space par excellence”.\textsuperscript{159} On the one hand, to be lost in this environment, at the mercy of the sea, without any tools of striation, of measurement, is to be immersed in haptic perception. The mapping of the sea, on the other hand, is the “archetype of all striations of smooth space”,\textsuperscript{160} which has culminated in the satellite-based Global Positioning System (GPS). Navigating the oceans with sophisticated GPS instruments is to be in striated space. Such journeys or paths are determined and informed by origins and destinations, in reference to prior measuring and mapping of the sea. It has little if any direct engagement with the environment being traversed, responding only to aspects such as severe weather conditions as a matter of survival.

Navigation without the aid of instruments is a very different space. Deleuze and Guattari very briefly refer to the nomads of the archipelagos, to an initial “complex and empirical nomadic system … of open seas navigating … based on the wind and noise, the colours and sounds of the seas”.\textsuperscript{161} However, Deleuze and Guattari’s reference to such nomads is scant at best and they refer far more to the Bedouin in the sea of sand and the Inuit in the white of the snow.

\textit{it is difficult to overstate that vast difference between the nature of nomadic/tribal and Western perception}

Deleuze and Guattari’s reliance on nomadic tribal existences to underpin their nomadology reflects the work of McLuhan. In \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, they describe McLuhan’s writing as a movement to the smooth, that is, to “a neoprimitivism, a new tribal society”.\textsuperscript{162} McLuhan describes tribal perception as a balance or a ratio of the senses little affected by technology. Historically, this ratio/balance is altered each time a new technology extends one of our senses. These extensions occur regularly as technology advances. Both Deleuze and Guattari and McLuhan describe how modern perceptions of our world are

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 573.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 557.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 558.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 557.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 420.
shaped by privileging effected by such extensions. They contrast this with tribal or nomadic perception, where the balancing of the ratio of senses remains relatively unaffected by technologies. This balancing is not a value judgement; rather, it indicates a dynamic adjustment of what the combined senses sense of a changing environment. Perception formed through a balanced ratio of the senses relates to 'the haptic' whereas perception formed through a ratio that is dominated by a privileged sense relates to 'the optic'. Both McLuhan and Deleuze and Guattari identify the haptic as a significant aspect of tribal or nomadic perception. Their writing styles mimic the nomadic that they privilege, as noted in Chapter 1 of this exegesis.

an inherent and insoluble tension within Deleuze & Guattari's smooth space

Any touch of the nomadic by a colonially privileged intellectual must be scrutinised. With my own experience as an inadvertent agent of colonialism, I hold very deep reservations over Deleuze and Guattari's employment of nomadic peoples' lives to argue their case, and there is no doubt that they do. Their reference to the nomadic uncomfortably bears hallmarks of Theodor Adorno's consumer item in which there is no reference to the human cost of how it came into being.¹⁶³

Let us now move to consider the margins (one can just as well say the silent, silenced center) of the circuit marked out by this epistemic violence, men and women among the illiterate peasantry, the tribals, the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat. According to Foucault and Deleuze (in the First World, under the standardization and regimentation of socialized capital, though they do not seem to recognise this) the oppressed, if given a chance (the problem of representation cannot be bypassed here), and on the way to solidarity through alliance politics (a Marxist thematic is at work here), can speak and know their conditions. We must now confront the following question: on the other side of the international division of labour from socialized capital, inside and outside the circuit of the epistemic violence of imperialist law and education supplementing an earlier economic text, can the subaltern speak?¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ "Walter Benjamin refers to the development of the arcades of nineteenth-century Paris—glass-roofed rows of shops that were early centres of consumerism—as a phenomenon of extreme cultural ambivalence that advocated the fetishism of the commodity. He cites Adorno's uncompromising definition of the commodity as "a consumer item in which there is no longer anything that is supposed to remind us how it came into being". Seen from this vantage point, the arcades and the goods in them would do no more than prostrate the consumer before the idol of consumption". Christopher Rollason, "The Passageways of Paris Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project and Contemporary Cultural Debate in the West". In Rollason, Modern Criticism, 267–68.
In her text “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak rigorously analyses Deleuze and Guattari's touch of nomadic peoples. The subaltern are “the men and women among the illiterate peasantry, the tribals, the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat”. Spivak responded to the text “Intellectuals and Power: A Conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze” to address her question. She argues that these two figures, representing the most important contributors to French post-Structualist theory, “systematically ignore the question of ideology and their own implications in intellectual and economic history”. Spivak's text is densely theoretical, and having read it numerous times, my submergence into it is still shallow. Nevertheless, I have been able to pierce some of its depth. Spivak paradoxically identifies within Deleuze's smooth space a distancing from the nomadic, a long distance vision-optic space that assumes the oppressed: the colonised can speak for themselves. This paradoxical presence of the optic deeply embedded in the haptic remains insoluble. In particular, Spivak identifies Deleuze and Gauttari’s deteritorialisation as a ferocious motif that sanctions the intellectual silencing of the subaltern, the very nomad that they privilege. This gesture by Spivak centres around the dispatchment of the signifier, of representation, that is present in smooth space and evident in Deleuze and Guattari's description of a book. Such a dispatching renders the nomadic mute and, as McLuhan uncompromisingly clarifies, “the reservations that the nomadic and the tribal have of the West's technologies of representation will avail them not”. Their knowing will be altered by our technologies steadily and without resistance. It will be replaced by a knowledge shaped through the West's knowledge—the very representative knowledge that Deleuze and Guattari employ.

This desolate dilemma remains insoluble and reflects the ambivalence within my confluent identity. It describes why I sustain a direct touch with the bush and my pursuit of directed smooth space. In regards to the dilemma it raises over my choice to embrace Deleuze and Guattari's smooth space, I draw from Spivak. Her conclusion is firm. The subaltern cannot speak. Any participant of the intellectual industry has a circumscribed task that they cannot disown. As a participant of that industry linked to the Samberigi, as a serious artist able to sense the effects of the technologies of representation (as McLuhan identifies), I must respond. Deleuze and Guattari's “directed smooth space” is a movement towards the smooth that acknowledges a consistent presence of the striated. It is a path found by

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165 Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” 79.
166 Ibid., 66.
167 Ibid., 70 and 74.
168 McLuhan, Understanding Media, 19.
negotiation through an environment that also employs a clear element of striation, prior knowledge of a destination that informs the negotiation of a path. This informing constitutes a semiotic structuring of that negotiation and an ability to “speak” within a movement deep into smooth space. I have positioned my engagement with Deleuze and Guattari and my PhD research within directed smooth space. It’s only within directed smooth space that I am willing to make any reference to the subaltern whom I am tied to.

**the haptic touch generates Deleuze and Guattari’s smooth space**

Smooth space is what Deleuze intuits within the haptic, as Colebrook identifies.

we need to go beyond a certain notion of the haptic as the pure event of force, quality, flux or sensible ... to a more radical notion. That radical ‘before’ or beyond of the haptic would not be an originary condition—say, the ‘life from which all particular sensations emerge or unfold—but what Deleuze refers to as smooth space.  

Smooth space is the other approach to the boundaries between the flesh and making sense that Nancy and Derrida engage. Deleuze locates within haptic smooth space a relational touch, the haptic touch, that extends beyond the conventional context of the tactile and into the edges of making sense. It’s a way of making sense that arises out of a relationship between the senses of touch and a place, an environment. It is the sense of an emerging haptic aesthetics simultaneously relational and sensorial, extending from the immersive literal touch to the metaphorical touch that engages all forms of space and place. It is the touch that Derrida identifies is predominately absent in the West’s reception and the experience of works of art, that is absent in our tactile touch of artists books.

The smooth space that Deleuze and Guattari identify in the ability of nomadic peoples to find paths through environments incorporates the haptic touch. These paths are found, not followed, in response to the spaces they sense. A definitive example of the haptic touch can be found within a path-finding practice of the semi-nomadic tribal people that settled the islands within the Pacific Ocean. These navigators are described in a single sentence within *A Thousand Plateaus* as an

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169 Colebrook, “Derrida, Deleuze and Haptic Aesthetics,” 40.
170 Ibid.
example of directed smooth space. Their haptic touch of the ocean involves a semiotic structuring of their negotiation with the ocean. It is a semiotics of touch that is tacit and difficult to explicate. In a Weilian validation, the verification of a semiotics of the haptic touch lies in the islands they find; they are verified within haptic space not optic space. Consistent with Rieg'l's observation, the mode of production by which this haptic touch is produced will determine the mode in which they are interpreted. We cannot read this touch through optic interpretation.

**a definitive practice of the haptic touch**

The Pacific Ocean covers about a third of the Earth's surface, approximately 165 million square kilometres, which is greater than the combined land surfaces of the Earth. Within its vast expanse lie an estimated 30,000 islands. At times, the Polynesians, whose settlement of these islands represents a “unique maritime achievement”, made return journeys of over 7,000 kilometres between the most remote of them. Their journeys over the southern Pacific Ocean, the archetype of smooth spaces, are a concise example of Deleuze and Guattari's directed smooth space.

In his book, *We, the Navigators*, David Lewis describes a relationship the Micronesians, Polynesians and Melanesians have with the Pacific Ocean. Based on years of research, involving living and travelling with a Micronesian navigator, Tevake, Lewis documents many navigational techniques used in oceanic journeys that were far more prevalent than Europeans first considered possible. These techniques commonly involved visible and aural signs within the behaviour of the ocean, winds, clouds, bird and marine life. One technique in particular involves relying on the body's proprioceptive sense of touch to read ocean swell patterns, which is an astonishing example of the haptic touch. Proprioceptor touch receptors are largely found in muscles, tendons, joints, and the inner ear. They detect the motion and position of the body or a limb by responding to stimuli arising within an organism. Ocean swell navigation techniques involve two forms of interpretation: firstly, reading ocean swells, and secondly, reading interference patterns within them. Lewis describes this technique as one that can be relied on when all other visual signs are absent.

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Holding course by swells seems to be a matter more of feel than of sight—which emphasizes the value of the act on overcast nights. Tevake told me he would sometimes retire to the hut on his canoe's outrigger platform, where he could lie down and without distraction more readily direct the helmsman onto the proper course by analysing the roll and pitch of the vessel as it corkscrewed over the waves.\(^{173}\)

One particular journey that Lewis describes tangibly demonstrates the reliability of this technique and of the ability of Tevake (who was later "lost at sea .. while on a lone voyage from the Reefs to Santa Cruz"\(^{174}\)). They are in a sailing boat for this journey, though other journeys are described in sailing canoes. It is crucial to understand that reef islands are generally so low they cannot be seen from more than a few miles away.

The return from Taumako to the Reef Islands was commenced an hour before daybreak ... a distance of 60 miles. ... From approximately 06.00, when the clouds shut down we had to steer exclusively by the swell. A violent squall came in from the north around 08.30 and over the next five hours the wind veered suddenly from in turn to north-east. east-north-east, and finally south-east. Heavy overcast persisted with visibility remaining poor even between rain showers. ... It was for eight solid hours that Tevake stood on the fore-deck ... gazing intently at the sea and only moving to gesture from time to time to guide the helmsman. Then around 14.00 something more substantial than mist loomed up through the fine murk on the port bow perhaps two miles off. 'Lomlom', said Tevake, with satisfaction. Very soon afterwards Fenualoa also became visible to starboard and it was apparent that Tavake had made a perfect landfall on the middle of the half-mile-wide Forrest Passage between the two, after covering an estimated 45 to 48 miles since his last glimpse of the sky.\(^{175}\) [The full account is included in Appendix 3.]

An example of a Reef Islands 'TEPUKEI,' or sailing canoe, can be found at the end of the article found at http://anglicanhistory.org/oceania/oferrall_santacruz1908/.\(^{176}\)

\(^{173}\) Ibid., 87.
\(^{174}\) Ibid., 309.
\(^{175}\) Ibid., 89–90.
\(^{176}\) http://anglicanhistory.org/oceania/oferrall_santacruz1908/.
This technique is also described by Nainoa Thompson, a Wayfinder and President of the Polynesian Voyaging Society, in an account of the abilities of Mau Piailug, a Carolinian Islands wayfinder:

> When it gets cloudy and you can't use the sun or the stars, all you can do is rely on the ocean waves. That's why Mau said to me, "If you can read the ocean you will never be lost." One of the problems is that when the sky gets black at night under heavy clouds, you cannot see the waves. You cannot even see the bow of the canoe. And that is where people like Mau are so skilled. He can be inside the hull of the canoe and just feel the different wave patterns as they come to the canoe, and he can tell the canoe's direction lying down inside the hull of the canoe.

**swell interference patterns**

On top of reading multiple sea swells to hold a course, Oceanic wayfinders also learnt to read "swell interference patterns". These patterns are generated by the landmass of an island that reflects waves back against a swell and refracts a swell in its wake. They were an important means of detecting the presence and bearing of land and islands unseen.

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177 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_the_Santa_Cruz_Islands_(Solomon_Islands).png#
178 In respect to these navigators it is appropriate to adopt the term wayfinder, which appears to be the best translation of their term. It reflects the nature of their activity, finding the way rather than following a path.
179 www.pbs.org/wayfinders/wayfinding2.html, viewed 30/05/2014.
180 Lewis, *We the Navigators*, 181.
over the horizon. Perceived through touch, swell interference patterns indicated a path that needed to be negotiated in constant response to the environment. A path found through the wayfinders’ intimate tacit knowing and reading of the environment not orientated to a visible point. Though swell interference patterns were commonly read in conjunction with other signs that indicated the presence of land, such as the reflection of clouds, the presence and behaviour of phosphorescence in the ocean currents and the behaviour of marine and bird life, if necessary, the path could be found solely through ocean swells and swell interference patterns' navigation.181

Wayfinding by ocean swells and swell interference patterns epitomises Deleuze and Guattari’s directed smooth space. It is a line or a vector, the direction of which is constantly negotiated by the wayfinder. It is directed in that the resolution (an island) affects the environment with indexical signs that direct the wayfinder's negotiated path. Significantly, sight need play no role in this perceptual relationship. On dark nights, the wayfinder is able to find the path relying solely on their senses of touch. In Riegl's terms, this is a collaboration between touch, the memory of the eye, and the mind. Verifying that the haptic touch can directly inform cognitive perception independently of sight, ocean swell navigation is the reception and evaluation of a place through the haptic touch.

**wayfinding by ocean swells exemplifies research practice**

In applying smooth and striated space to science, Deleuze and Guattari differentiate between nomad and royal science. Nomad science correlates to smooth space and haptic perception, and “subordinates all their operations to the sensible conditions of intuition and construction—following the flow of matter, ... linking up smooth space”.182 In contrast, royal science aligns to striated space and optic perception, marking paths to be followed from point to point. It “isolates all operations from the conditions of intuition, making them true intrinsic concepts, or categories”.183

The basic premise of nomad science is that it engages with, responds to, and is informed by the nature of the material or subject of a research practice. The smooth space in nomad

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181 Mau Piailug successfully navigated from Hawaii to Honolulu with the Polynesian Voyaging Society (over 2000 miles) relying solely on his traditional navigation techniques despite never previously having made the journey.
183 Ibid.
science bears a very strong resemblance to the “tacit knowing” that Michael Polanyi, a chemical-engineer-turned-science-philosopher, argues is integral to scientific research in his book The Tacit Dimension.\(^{184}\)

In this book on tacit knowing, Polanyi attempts to address “a crucial question”\(^{185}\): how can modern science resolve the impasse between its declared aim to establish a strictly detached, objective knowledge when scientific research is premised on a paradox identified by Plato in *Meno*? Polanyi confirms that good scientific research must always start from a good problem, but also that Plato demonstrates “that to search for the solution to a problem is an absurdity; for either you know what you are looking for, and there is no problem or you do not know what you are looking for, and then you cannot expect to find anything”.\(^{186}\) Polanyi then asserts that this paradox relies on the premise that “all knowledge is explicit, i.e. capable of being clearly stated”,\(^ {187}\) which is why Plato points out that we must intrinsically know the solution to a problem as we must know what we are looking for. But, as we do know problems, it appears that “we can know ... important things that we cannot tell”,\(^ {188}\) a tacit knowing. Polanyi argues that tacit knowing is a basis on which research relies, firstly to identify a good scientific problem and secondly to recognise the solution that generated the problem. He describes the process:

> all the time we are guided by sensing the presence of a hidden reality toward which our clues are pointing: and the discovery which terminates and satisfies this pursuit is still sustained by the same vision. It [the vision] claims to have made contact with reality: a reality which, being real, may yet reveal itself to future eyes in an indefinite range of unexpected manifestations.\(^ {189}\)

Simply put, Polanyi argues that the 'sensing' that a research scientist relies on is tacit knowing; that is, what the scientist knows about the research problem but cannot tell or explain. Tacit knowing can be simply demonstrated in the scope of a language's vocabulary. Words are fundamental to anyone's conscious perception of themselves and the knowledge they hold. Yet, despite all of our words, at times they are unable to facilitate expression; sometimes we simply do not have the words to express what we feel, think or understand. Sensual perception, what the body directly experiences through the senses, is a more complex example. The sensual perception of a particular colour or texture can only

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\(^{184}\) Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Glouster, Mass: Peter Smith, 1983).

\(^{185}\) Ibid., 20.

\(^{186}\) Ibid., 22.

\(^{187}\) Ibid.

\(^{188}\) Ibid.

\(^{189}\) Ibid., 24.
be conveyed through a shared experience. Descriptions of these perceptions cannot convey them; they can only be known through direct sensual perception. Polanyi uses the ability to ride a bike as an example of tacit knowing, a skill we can know but must directly experience to acquire. Catching a ball in mid-flight while running is another example. This skill, this knowing, can only be acquired through direct experience and involves sensual perception of enormous complexity. Sight, touch, and our proprioceptive senses all come into play in catching a ball. Harry Collins\(^{190}\) argues that the highest level of tacit knowledge exists within the complexities of the shared knowledge of dynamic communities. Such a level of complex tacit knowledge would arise within an emerging critical field of artists books.

Tacit knowing draws upon our faculty of subception (subliminal perception); that is, stimuli that we respond to but are unaware of. Polanyi relies on subception experiments in his argument that demonstrate a person’s ability to perceive impending events without being able to explain how or why. The sensual perception and subception that inform tacit knowing involves the same intimate, immediate and close qualities that inform haptic perception. It takes time to acquire tacit knowing, movement around over across a subject, which correlates to haptic perception. The haptic describes the acquisitional nature of the per/subception, and tacit knowing describes the difficult nature of linguistically expressing that per/subception.

Having emerged within the cultures of the peoples that settled the islands of the Pacific Ocean, the archetype of smooth space, oceanic wayfinders exemplify the relationship between the haptic and tacit knowing. Their wayfinding is a shared knowledge built up and passed on through haptic perception and cultural practice. The ocean swell techniques involve a tacit semiotics of the haptic touch that allow a wayfinder to hold a course and point to the presence and direction of land still unseen. This tacit knowing can take many years to acquire—Mau Pialug argued at least twenty.

**wayfinding by ocean swells models the reception and evaluation of an artists book**

In directed smooth space, the path to a resolution is not one to follow but one to find. It’s not a matter of learning to read the marks left by someone who has already traversed the

path; it’s one of intimately knowing a place and responding to it to find the path. If the traces of the wayfound paths between two oceanic islands were mapped, a myriad of paths would emerge. Each path would differ, having been found in a highly dynamic environment. In contrast, the mapped paths of GPS navigation would merge into a single path travelled over and over again using the tools of striation.

During my PhD candidature, I have modelled my studio research, as well as my reception and evaluation of artists books, on ocean swell wayfinding. I am deeply familiar with the field of artists books having begun to engage with the book during my initial studies in visual art in 1980. I have read broadly on the book and its related fields and immersed myself in theory relevant to artists books during my PhD candidature. This movement over, across and around the surfaces of the field has provided me with an intimate familiarity of it.

**a theoretical framework for a creative research practice**

The haptic historically underpins early-twentieth-century Western poets and artists’ engagement with the mechanically printed book. That engagement was premised on the metaphorical haptic touch of the eye that, despite being a movement towards haptic space, is still premised on the privileging of vision that seeps through Western thought and knowledge. It was a movement towards smooth space that occurred deep in striated space. Some of that engagement did break out beyond the metaphorical haptic touch of the eye to investigate the literal touch, a touch that preludes the haptic touch of an emerging haptic aesthetics. As I have detailed here, the haptic touch occurs within smooth space, continues a movement deeper into smooth space and as such informs the acquisition of tacit knowing. The quintessential relational sense, it represents a touch that can directly inform cognitive perception. As an element of haptic perception, it works in collaboration with the other senses in the sensorium. In engaging with an increasing complexity of sensory information, the haptic touch does not arrive to a conclusion; rather, it dynamically informs a relationship between the object and the perceiver. The haptic touch involves a tacit semiotics of touch that, formed primarily within haptic perception, is difficult to interpret in optic perception. In this framework, the haptic touch represents a critical focus for the maturing discourse of artists books. It informs the modes of artists book production, the nature of reading artists books and the reception and evaluation of them.
The haptic, the haptic touch and directed smooth space that inform the critical discourse of aesthetics, are the focus of my studio research. They provide the critical terminology, descriptive vocabulary and historical perspectives that will shape book arts aesthetics within an emerging critical field of artists books. Significantly, these can be embraced by the field without dispersing the tensions inherent to it. As elements of smooth space, these concepts resist the striation of the field and its discourse. They are a movement away from Drucker’s territorialising critical apparatus, engendering debate that is essential for the field. Therefore, it is imperative that haptic aesthetics and the haptic touch inform the emerging critical field. Effecting this informing, contributing to the shaping of artists books discourse takes two forms: making artists books that engage the haptic touch and embracing the haptic touch in the reception and evaluation of critical writings on artists books.

The next chapter addresses the reception and evaluation of artists books, and the final chapter will discuss the studio research output of my candidature.
chapter 4

translating artists books into critical discourse
the application of the haptic to the reception and evaluation of artists books

Deleuze anticipated that the shape of his theoretical tools would change in response to their use in other disciplinary fields. This reflects the nature of smooth space. How the field of artists books will shape his tool ‘haptic smooth space’ can only emerge as the tool is used, as a relationship between the tool and the field is established.

In this chapter I actively develop that relationship through the evaluation of two artists books. In undertaking this evaluation I see myself metaphorically as a cabinetmaker who is at the same time a bricoleur (tinkerer). This reflects the qualities of directed smooth space, i.e. the pursuit of a known outcome on a path yet to be found. I do not apply a critical apparatus to these artists books rather I rely on my intimate knowing of the practice and discourse of the field to find a resolution191.

191 This chapter is based on two papers presented at relevant conferences. “The Book of Laughing and Crying” was first presented as “books by artists, Derrida’s insoluble tension and smooth space” at IMPACT 7, Intersections & Counterpoints, hosted by Monash University, Melbourne, in 2011. It was published in The Blue Notebook, a peer-reviewed journal established to support artists book discourse, in 2012. I have not included the full paper as the first half of it paraphrases much of the previous chapter. Xu Bing’s Tianshu and the vocabulary of the book was presented at the College Book Arts Association Conference, Print Produce Publish, in Salt Lake City, USA, in January 2014. I am in the process of submitting it to The Journal of Artists’ Books.
In his article “Reading by Hand: The Haptic Evaluation of Artists Books”, Gary Frost identifies a new aspect to the discourse. He writes about “the aesthetic consequences of a work of book art in the hands of the reader where tactile qualities and features of mobility are appreciated. This is a haptic (pertaining to the technology of touch) domain where the study of touch as a mode of communication is at work.”

He locates this idea within what he acknowledges as the “great environment for evaluating artists books” that Johanna Drucker has provided the field.

The modelling of aesthetic practices into smooth/haptic and striated spaces by Deleuze and Guattari raises a question that expands on Frost's initial application of the haptic to the emerging critical discourse. Does Deleuze's and Guattari's abstraction of the haptic offer a means to advance the emerging critical discourse on artists books? I begin to answer this question by evaluating John Smith's 2004 artists book *The Book of Laughing and Crying*, an altered book of *Tables of Computed Altitude and Azimuth*.

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John Smith's *The Book of Laughing and Crying* can be viewed at
www.silverwattlepress.com/REaDBOOKS/BoLaC/BoLaC.html

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193 Frost, “Reading by Hand,” 3.
194 Ibid.
195 A web-based copy of Smith's artists book can be found at
www.silverwattlepress.com/REaDBOOKS/BoLaC/BoLaC.html
In a description of his practice during an artist's talk at Southern Cross University in 2007, Smith stated,

I have deliberately employed a strategy of looking at a lot of children's work and sometimes directly borrowing from them. I have built a repertoire of mark making and painting processes over a long period of time that I see as unlearning and effacing on the one hand and yet engineering and composing paintings on the other to produce a psychological affinity (in) the tradition of the Grotesque. [...] they are gestural, immediate and expressionist works. However the strategy of appropriating and manipulating a young child's drawing in the composition of the features of the face is an intellectual decision I made to develop a format to produce a series of works. This creates a strong tension, of two figures kind of tearing themselves apart, within the face. 196

The genre of the grotesque often involves the combination of distorted human figures and patterning. Smith's book reflects this; he draws obscure laughing and crying faces over the patterns of numbers within the found book's pages.

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196 Taken from an unpublished transcript of his artists talk.
printed numerical figures contained in tables, as a representation of bureaucracy. He has
drawn in texter and highlighter pens over these tables. The book is replete with tensions:
the tension between creative practice and bureaucracy; Derrida's “insoluble tension
between gathering through dispersion”; the tension between smooth and striated spaces
as described by Deleuze and Guattari; and the tension between Drucker and Weber. The
artwork's reliance on the form of the book to be realised also exemplifies Carrion's and
Celant's defining perceptions of books made by artists.\textsuperscript{197}

When asked what the book’s initial purpose was before he altered it, Smith answered that it
was a book used “to find out where you are”. Specifically, the book's tabulated numerical
values are used to interpret astro-nautical readings to accurately locate where you are on
the surface of the earth. An extraordinary achievement for its time, the book has long since
been replaced by GPS technology. The mechanical recording of numbers in the book, the
grid structure and methodical mapping of the Earth’s surface clearly reflect a bureaucratic
structure—a structure that after dealing with for so long (as a senior academic), Smith does
not know whether to laugh or cry about. Through the many hours Smith is required to
spend in meetings, he has developed a particular habit of drawing child-like images on the
paperwork that accompanies these meetings’ agendas. This drawing practice is the basis
of over 150 drawings found in this artists book. The red marks represent laughing and the
blue marks crying. They are childlike, though in no way childish, unrestrained and carefree
of formal boundaries other than those of the book's structure. The drawings lounge over
the text and numbers, spilling over the surface of the paper as a child's drawing might. As
Smith has stated, “the book represents bureaucracy and structure and I drew all over the
fucker”. \textsuperscript{198}

This book contains an uneasy sadness as the drawings representing many hours spent
dealing with bureaucracy mount up. The unresolved tension between a creative practice
and institutional structure permeates the pages of this book. A reader's hand senses the
volume and weight of the gathered pages and this conveys a sense of burden. Under its
aesthetic layers and typical Australian humour, this is an articulate expression of
frustration.

The multiple tensions in this artwork echo Derrida's description of the book and gives
weight to Smith’s choice of the book as medium. The first of six volumes, this book's earlier

\textsuperscript{197} See chapters 1 and 2 of this exegesis re these three tensions, Carrion and Celant.
\textsuperscript{198} In conversation with Smith, 2008
function relied specifically on possessing the gathered set. In the absence of the other five volumes, the initial book’s function has been lost. Derrida’s “insoluble tension” does not describe a tension that cannot be dissolved but rather the containment of two parts that will not dissolve, like a glass jar containing both water and oil. To be a book, the insoluble acts of gathering and dispersion must be held together in tension. Allow this tension to dissipate and the book is lost. Smith has recycled this volume, relying on it to make a new book, to hold in tension the insoluble acts of gathering his drawings to disperse them. He could disperse them ungathered; however, they only convey his intent gathered.

This reliance on the book, on the tension within a book as refined by Derrida, on the physical structure of a codex as vocabulary to convey content as Carrion describes, places *The Book of Laughing and Crying* succinctly within Celant’s defining idea of becoming an artwork through the book. Smith relies on the book, both conceptually and as medium, to realise this artwork.

Smith’s pairing of a creative practice and institutional structure finds common ground in Deleuze and Guattari’s couplings of haptic-optical, close - distant and abstract line-concrete line. The six volumes of the *Tables of Computed Altitude and Azimuth* represent an intense striation of the oceans, and Smith’s coupling of them to his smooth childlike drawings is a very tangible engagement with both spaces. He has never encountered Deleuze and Guattari’s maritime model of smooth and striated space, and his choice to alter a book that is the very archetypal striation of the oceans demonstrates the strength of his creative output. In looking specifically for the haptic, for smooth spaces, in *The Book of Laughing and Crying*, three can be readily identified.

First, an obvious one is Smith’s drawing practice. His stated intent of unlearning and effacing his drawing practices are a deliberate pursuit of the haptic, of close vision and the abstract line. The drawings float, ungrounded from any perspective or little interpretive references; there are no horizons or landmarks other than the edges of the pages themselves. They are abstract with only hints of figurative content. They deface the initial book, dismissing a journey between two points. The narrative structure inherent in the codex determines the sequence of the drawings, though Smith has traversed this structure as a nomad reading a path, rather than following a path between the two points of the front and back covers.

Second, this altered book’s structure is a smooth space, not the striated space that the
book was in its initial form. Smith achieves this literally and simply by taking it out of its initial context. In the new context, the tables of numbers begin to reflect Inuit space, a space without any tangible visual signs. A space where haptic perception is the only means of engagement, the only frame of reference. The horizon is referred to in the numbers though in an inaccessible language, which effectively obscures it from view. While the case binding implies a specific sequence to follow the inherent pattern of reading, a codex offers little narrative.

Thirdly, reading *The Book of Laughing and Crying* is a haptic activity, a smooth space. This artwork, this book, is a space that can only be interpreted through an intimate relationship with it, corporeally and/or experientially, involving visual, tactile and auditory perception. At an elementary level, the book must be opened, which requires the reader to touch the artwork. Once initiated, the reading takes on a very different nature to the defined interpretive guidelines that determined the reading of the book in its initial form. A reader who comes across this book needs to spend time with it, find their way through it, seek out a resolution as they develop a familiarity with it and respond to it, or they may abandon it. This very evaluation of *The Book of Laughing and Crying* that you are reading demonstrates a haptic reading, smooth space within reading, and confirms that Deleuze and Guattari’s abstraction of the haptic can inform the emerging critical discourse.

Smith’s transition of a striated found book into a smooth artists book also exemplifies the differences between correlating artists book practices. The refined qualities read by the hand in lateral motion over the surface of the pages remind the reader that this book is a manufactured product, in stark contrast to the texta drawings on the printed pages. The complex designing that is commonly involved in the production of books represents a highly striated space, a space where many artists books are generated. Conversely, allowing the making of the artwork to inform the nature of a book represents a smooth space. This difference is what Drucker and Weber contest. Drucker’s efforts to ensure the emerging critical discourse is advanced is a striation of the field; Weber’s concerns and resistance are an effort to ensure the smoothing the field. Neither needs to be privileged as the two spaces merge into and emerge out of each other.
The strength within *The Book of Laughing and Crying* lies in Smith’s reliance on both the physical structure, that is a codex, and the tension inherent in what a book is, to give expression to the tension and frustration between smooth and striated spaces. The found book—of dense mathematical tables housed in a codex, facilitating point-to-point travel over the oceans—is the striated space. Smith’s childlike drawing practice, unlearning and effacing, following yet defacing the path of the codex’s structure, is a smooth space. They are held together in tension becoming an artwork through the book; the medium is and conveys the message.

Poetically, there is an aspect of Smith’s book that ironically plays out this tension. The very structure that allows Smith to so effectively express himself also confines his expression. Like a child who starts a drawing on a piece of paper only to find themselves running out of space, Smith’s smooth drawings are informed and confined by the striated edges of these pages; “it’s a joke, but a very serious one”\(^{199}\), he notes.

\(^{199}\) the unpublished transcript of Smith artist’s talk
Xu Bing's 天书 (Tianshu)
and the vocabulary of the book

This image can be viewed at http://angelinazhou.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/XuBing.jpg

Xu Bing Tianshu (A Book from the Sky) 1987–91, books: hand-printed woodblock print, wood, leather, ivory, boxed 49.2 x 33.5 x 9.8cm (each containing four books), banners: 103 x 6 x 8.5cm. Installation at Crossings/Traversées, The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 1998.

an enigma

Xu Bing's Tianshu (A Book from the Sky), is an enigma. It holds together in tension mystery and non-sense in a grip that appears tenuous but proves resilient. Tianshu can radically decentre you; that is, it can undo within you the sense that you are at the centre of your own perceptions. The ease with which Tianshu can do this unnerving. That it does this through the book and across cultures warrants the attention of anyone interested in shaping the emerging critical field of artists books.
decentring

_Tianshu_ first decentred me when I encountered it in the 1992 travelling exhibition _New Art from China_ showing at the Queensland Art Gallery. Fully arrayed, _Tianshu_ spoke of a rich creative practice beyond my heritage, and, with a developing sensibility for the autographic printed book, I was overwhelmed by of the scope of its conception, carving, printing, binding and presentation. Most recently, _Tianshu_ radically decentred me when I was able to intimately touch one of its books held at the Queensland Art Gallery.\(^{200}\) Xu intended for the printed marks within these books to be “empty of all content”.\(^{201}\) As I opened these books and turned their pages, my senses of touch awoke. My fingers followed the printed marks over the silky paper, across the fore-edge folds and back into the valleys of open pages. I sensed an ease with the books, their “bodies” rolled with my hands, they suited the shape and mechanics of my body. Their production in the authoritative “Song” typographic and binding style\(^{202}\) spoke of a prolonged relationship between the senses of touch and the book that I am not familiar with in the Western codex. At the same time as being decentred, I responded to the carving, printing and binding of _Tianshu_. I sensed Xu’s carving of the wooden blocks. I am intimately acquainted with the material properties of paper pages, of the printed mark on paper, of indexical signs from the printing process and of the tensions inherent in a bound book. These properties are content in _Tianshu_. They are signifiers that are echoed in authoritative texts produced through autographic processes across many cultures. My familiarity with them verifies my association with those who produce autographic books that shape cultures. The printed marks in _Tianshu_ convey no linguistic meaning but they do carry content. Since I first responded to _Tianshu_, I have become keenly aware of its poignant relationship with what is commonly known as the ‘ten black’ or ‘ten lost years’. The Chinese Cultural Revolution was an attempt to literally eradicate any semblances of cultural heritage from the life of the Chinese, and _Tianshu_’s making commenced a mere eight years after it subsided.

description of _Tianshu_’s making

_Tianshu_ unquestionably celebrates the cultural practice of the production of the autographic printed book and yet at the same time effectively critiques that very cultural heritage. It is the culmination of four years of work, involving research, drawing, carving, printing and binding by Xu and an un-named factory that specialised in traditional Chinese

\(^{200}\) Held in the Queensland Art Gallery’s Kennedth and Yasuko Myer Collection of Contemporary Asian Art.


\(^{202}\) It was during the Song Dynasty that movable type was first developed - see page 15.
books. Xu first conceived of the work having read himself into a state of confusion during academic studies after the Cultural Revolution. He wrote that the “more I read, the more muddled my thinking became, until I felt as if something had become lost to me.”

He commenced *Tianshu* by designing and hand carving approximately 4,000 individual characters in the style of the Song typeface, none of which carry any linguistic meaning. This was an achievement in itself. The carved characters were then printed as movable type, in a process developed during the Song period, onto posters, banners and paper pages subsequently bound using a Song binding style into the books that form *Tianshu*. The various forms of the installed artwork draw from the banners, posters and of the major element of the artwork—an edition of 120 sets of four books. The experience of the artwork ranges from intimate reading spaces to expansive immersive installations.

**critical acclaim**

Since it was first exhibited in Beijing during 1988, *Tianshu* has captured the public’s attention and has drawn sustained critical acclaim from diverse fields. It has been described by Western scholars as one of the most significant artworks to emerge from China in the twentieth century. Initially named by Xu as *A Book that Analyses the World (Fenxi Shijie de Shu)* the artwork was renamed by the Beijing public as *Tianshu (A Book from the Sky)*. This name refers to the marks left on the skin of a person struck by lightning, commonly referred to as words written by the sky. Xu describes *Tianshu* as a meditation and warning on culture and acknowledges that the success of the artwork was reliant on the cultural and artistic milieu in China after the Cultural Revolution. It was a time of intense activity and experimentation with Western art out of which Xu's *Tianshu* eloquently addresses cultural heritage and new critical thought. A common thread in the growing delta of critical discourse on *Tianshu* is that it is a critique of Chinese cultural practice and language. Xu's play with the reader's search for meaning echoes other artists' book practice. Take, for example, the photocopied books of Noel McKenna, *KDKC, LKME* and *OBAN*, that lead the reader on a merry chase for meaning, or Bruno Munari’s illegible books. Xu's illegible books have captured the public’s imagination, leading them on a search for meaning with marks that appear to be signs but are not. The effort Xu has undertaken to do this is astounding. In his own words, he “spent four years of his life making something that says nothing.”

Zooshoo Yow (Souchou Yao) writes, “*Tianshu* moves resolutely from form to meaning in one moment, and back in another. In these

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204 Ibid., 63.
movements, both form and meaning never lose their respective integrity in a seductive dance with each other”, and that “Tianshu is most powerful when we see it ... not merely as a sign of what is to be known but (as) ... in itself an object worthy of knowledge.”

There is tension in Tianshu, beyond that inherent in the book, which cannot be resolved. This artefact signifies worth in all its material forms and yet its meaning(s) dissipate as readily as they emerge. Tianshu’s reception exemplifies Deleuze and Guattari’s description of the book as smooth space. “There is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made. Therefore a book also has no object. As an assemblage, a book has only itself, in connection with other assemblages ... We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with.”

an anomaly in artists book discourse

Tianshu is only briefly touched upon within the literature of artists books despite Xu Bing’s acknowledgement that the work is an artists book. That an artwork of such significance is not identified in the wider community as an outcome of artists book practice is an anomaly and only substantiates recent debates in our field over the lack of critical attention artists books are attracting. Even more conspicuous is the absence of critical engagement with Tianshu in our own literature. This paper initiates such a critical engagement in an effort to translate Tianshu into the discourse of the emerging critical field of artists books. To effect this translation, I have adopted Celant’s definitive statement that an artists book “becomes a work of art through the book” and Derrida’s refinement of a book to a point of insoluble between gathering through dispersion.

translating Tianshu into the emerging critical discourse

Celant’s definition immediately raises two questions. First, what is it in Xu’s gathering and dispersing that becomes art? And second, what role does the book play in realising Tianshu?

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206 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus.
208 Celant, Book as Artwork, 104.
From the outset of producing these books, Xu, having felt that he had lost something in the intensive reading he undertook after the Cultural Revolution, determined that they would possess all the cultural signifiers of authoritative Song texts but at the same time be empty of all linguistic content. By emptying the books of what they commonly contain, Xu has effectively removed the analytical comprehension associated with the act of reading formal texts. What he has gathered together is the very material and cultural processes involved in the production of culturally significant texts. This is the carving, printing, binding and the presentation of such books. Paralleling Deleuze and Guattari's statement “there is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made”, Xu first directs our attention to the material artefact—that is, the relationship between paper, print and binding—and then to our response to this relationship in an act of reading. Devoid of its linguistic content, Xu literally presents the autographically printed material book in itself as a vocabulary that is worthy of knowledge, a vocabulary that is not inhibited by cultural or linguistic differences. The printed marks imply characters with symbolic and iconic meaning but in essence are abstractions, an inference of written language. Their aesthetic value together with the aesthetic value of the material book defers to the material vocabulary of Tianshu. What becomes art in Tianshu is both this vocabulary of the book and the public’s readings of it. Derrida’s gathering includes the interpretations and readings of a book, and by accepting the public’s renaming of his work, Xu gathers their reading into Tianshu. The Beijing public's reading is an acknowledgement of the mystery in the work. Zooshoo identifies the movement between the material artefact and the act of reading as the heart of this mystery, a movement of tension between the intensely rich making processes and the absence of linguistic meaning in its printed content. Placed within the book, itself a point of tension between gathering and dispersion, this tension between signification and non-sense is intensified and raises questions over the nature of the book, over the difference between Gutenberg's technology and the book. It’s a difference Carrion identified in “The New Art of Making Books” writing that “a book is not a case of words, nor a bag of words, nor a bearer of words”, and that, contrary to popular opinion, a writer writes texts not books. It’s a difference Moeglin-Delcroix also raises in asserting that “a digital book is not a book, except metaphorically. It is only a text reproduced in a new medium and in new ways”.

While there is text in Tianshu, it cannot be read by the dominant mode of reading books—that is, an analytical comprehension arrived at through the act of reading visible language.

211 Arnaud Desjardin and Anne Moeglin-Delcroix, "Bibliographies and Other Questions," 44.
Deleuze and Guattari’s comparison between the making and reading of a book asserts that it is unreasonable to expect to comprehend a book that took four years to produce in a half-hour reading. Such a reading of Tianshu could perceive it as the new clothes of an emperor, but to do so would be to confirm the very concerns Xu raises: that to reduce the act of reading to an academic pursuit is to lose what it is that gives artists books their vitality. This raises a further point of tension between the more common mode of reading and the smooth manner of reading that Deleuze and Guattari describe. Fei Davie (Fei Dawei), Artistic Director of the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in China, describes Tianshu as an artwork in which Xu “intended to make an incomprehensible book. ... Xu Bing wanted to convince the public that the language and concept that lies within the artwork can constitute art itself. It’s a break away from the realistic tradition where the meaning and story told through language is the core of artist creation.”

To break apart Tianshu, to undo the gathered components and end its readings would release the tension that is formed by holding together the signifying bibliographical practices and the printed marks of non-sense. The mystery would be lost; we would be returned to Walter Benjamin’s “mild boredom of order” and to Xu's sense of loss having read himself into a muddle. It’s a sweet irony that in critiquing the authoritative bibliographic practices of his heritage, Xu has captured the imagination of readers across the globe. Tianshu challenges any artist who makes books to reconsider their use of the book’s material vocabulary.

Finally, and again demonstrating the significance of Xu's achievement, Tianshu simultaneously addresses and exemplifies concerns raised in recent debate within our field over the lack of critical attention artists books are attracting and its Eurocentric focus. This exegesis has already described Lucy Lippard’s and Johanna Drucker’s thoughts on the field, and Tianshu addresses both of their concerns. This artwork is realised through the book, it is internationally recognised and collected and its delta of critical acclaim continues to grow. And yet, un-identified as the outcome of artist book practice in this acclaim, Tianshu also exemplifies Drucker's very real concern that the field is not represented in the critical discourse of fine art and literature. Furthermore, concerns over a Eurocentric focus of our field are again addressed and exemplified by Tianshu. Produced independently of the West's gaze, this book has been recognised for its significance and embraced by the West. However, our own field, that of artists books, has not readily

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213 Walter Benjamin, Unpacking My Library, 59.
involved itself in this embrace, giving voice to the concern that our field needs to expand its focus.

*Tianshu* is the outcome of an artists book practice that represents benchmarks for our field. It raises questions over the nature of the vocabulary of the book and our utilisation, here in the West, of that vocabulary. It initiates debate within the field over the significance of contemporary artists books practice to the broader fields of fine arts and literature, a significance that Xu Bing, through his art practice and his comments, acknowledges.
chapter 5

engaging the haptic touch of the reader

studio research strategies that have engaged the haptic in my artists books

a haptic mode of production

The strategies outlined in this chapter are premised on Riegl's observation that the mode of interpretation by which an artefact is received and evaluated is related to its mode of production. Accordingly, an artists book produced primarily through optic modes of production will attract an optic interpretation. For my studio research, a rigorous movement towards directed smooth space, I have investigated haptic modes of production to produce artists books that address my research question, i.e. can the haptic inform an emerging critical field of artists books? These strategies to engage the haptic touch will invite and draw out a corresponding haptic touch within the readings of those books.

wayfinding by ocean swells: a model of studio research

The nature of my studio research can readily be related to ocean swell wayfinding. This practice of negotiating a dynamic ocean environment, relying solely on the senses of touch if necessary, employs the haptic touch that my research question addresses, it exemplifies the directed smooth space that I pursue.

Wayfinding by ocean swells involves, firstly, holding a course in reference to those swells and secondly, and most significantly, sensing indexical signs within those swells that identify the presence of and direction to an island. In my studio research, I am in negotiation with an ocean of concepts, materials and processes in a search for specific islands of resolution, that is, artists books. The swells of this ocean that I have come to know intimately and tacitly are printmaking, papermaking, artists books and, to a lesser degree, haptic aesthetics. To negotiate paths through this ocean I have relied on over thirty years of professional experience in printmaking, over twenty-five years of professional experience in bookbinding and artists books, over twenty years of
professional experience in papermaking and over five years of professional experience in haptic aesthetics. Through my haptic touch of these swells, both literally and metaphorically, I have been able to sense the presence of artists books that I went on to find. Quite literally, my touch of the materials, processes and prints in my studio research have informed the realisation of artists books that answer my research question. Having been acquired through years of professional practice, most of this touch is tacitly known and is necessary to achieve proficiency within these fields.

**studio research strategies to engage the haptic touch**

Consistent with directed smooth space, I have adopted strategies that have informed and directed my artists book practice. Of the many strategies I sensed and found, I chose to work with six for their specific relationship to the haptic touch that specifically relate to printmaking, papermaking and making books. I employed all these strategies in the production of the artists books I will exhibit in the final exhibition of my candidature. They are documented in the book of sample pages that accompanies and forms a part of this exegesis. Before I address these strategies, I will describe the point within my studio research that led to them.

**a pivotal point in my research**

The formative stages of my art practice were heavy influenced by mimetic modes of representation; it wasn't until I commenced postgraduate studies that I began to employ abstraction. Since then, my art practice has consistently shifted back and forth between the figurative and abstraction. During the early stages of my PhD candidature, I began to question my choice of mimetic forms to investigate my research question.

Two texts that engage representation have had a particular effect on my research: Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?” and Weil’s writing on “the thinking body”214. Both theorists present uncompromising positions on the effects of representation that challenged my use of mimetic forms.

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Spivak, in her rigorous critique of Deleuze and Foucault in “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, clarifies that the nature by which the subaltern is represented in academia can either extend or perforate the empiricism that generated that subaltern. I am fully cognisant of the need to ensure that my representation of the Samberigi does not take advantage of them. Spivak’s critique has effected a refinement of my concerns, particularly in regards to the mimetic representation of the Samberigi. Further to Spivak, Weil writes,

> Imaginary evil is romantic and varied; real evil is gloomy, monotonous, barren, boring. - Imaginary good is boring; real good is always new, marvelous, intoxicating. Therefore “imaginative literature” is either boring or immoral (or a mixture of both). It only escapes from this alternative if in some way it passes over to the side of reality through the power of art.\footnote{Weil in, Panichis, The Simone Weil Reader, 382.}

One of my primary concerns is that any representation of the Samberigi that I make must escape the circumscription that Spivak and Weil address.

Adding to this concern, my readings on the haptic introduced me to the West's exorbitant privileging of the eye and the absence of the haptic in its reception and evaluation of artefacts. It became apparent to me that my employment of the mimetic in works such as *Dreaming of Mt Giluwe* (2012) did not explore the haptic to the degree I wanted to. While this work did engage the haptic touch of the eye, I wanted to embrace the literal haptic touch. This would introduce the haptic to the reception and evaluation of my artworks, and be a means to address the privileging of sight that I sought to address.

Tim Mosely *Dreaming of Mt Giluwe* 2012, 15 relief prints on awagami kozo paper, 450 x 170cm
Responding to this concern, I translated *Dreaming of Mt Giluwe* into a book format and exhibited both the print and book in my exhibition *works in progress* at QCA's POP Gallery in February 2012. Despite being well received, the reception of both works highlighted my concerns. *Dreaming of Mt Giluwe* remained distant to the bush and to touch and the corresponding artists books did not break free of the reader's tactile touch.

That exhibition made clear that to break free of the entrenched optic mode of interpretation that the Western reader brings to the book, I would have to employ stronger tactics. My artists books up to that point already challenged optic modes of interpretation but they did not break free of the tactile touch. This is demonstrated in my books *lookback* (2009), *byregard2* (2010) and *white as snow* (2011). In these books, the metaphorical touch of the eye is engaged and the literal touch to a degree. However, they primarily attract an optic mode of interpretation through my use of mimetic forms.
To address this issue, I decided on two courses of action. Firstly, in an effort to draw out the haptic touch of the reader, I would expand my investigation of the form of the book and reduce my use of mimetic representation. I had already made two books that informed this decision, *see no hear no speak no* (2010) and *percussion book 1* (2010).

Secondly, I decided to source rainforest wood from which to make prints rather than continue with silkcut. I was unsure where this would take me but it introduced the option of literally touching the bush in some way rather than representing it mimetically. These courses of action proved pivotal in my studio research.

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216 The trademark name for a product that has replaced lino, a common material used to make relief prints.
**the rainforest and prints**

In pursuit of rainforest wood I stumbled across a pile of unwanted sheets of luan plywood in a wholesaler’s warehouse. Cut to size for a major client only to be rejected by them, the plywood sheets were being offered at a very reduced price just to recoup some costs. Luan plywood is manufactured from rainforest timbers loosely titled Meranti, often illegally and unethically logged within the Asia Pacific rim. These plywood sheets allowed me to literally restore an intimate haptic touch with the rainforest (the bush) within the confines of Brisbane city, without supporting illegal rainforest logging practices. I purchased twenty sheets for experimentation and printed all twenty sheets raw, that is, unaltered. The resulting combination of rainforest wood, industry processes, printmaking process and prints within the context of the haptic touch provided me the direction that Spivak’s and Weil’s critique of representation demanded of my practice. It also reduced the touching distance between my books and the rainforest.

Very evident in the plywood’s rough surface is a grain that emerges into view through the plywood manufacturing process. This grain was formed beyond the realm of sight in growing rainforest tree, within Deleuze and Guattari’s smooth space. Through the manufacturing process and in a movement into striated space, the grain is brought into the realm of vision. It is defined in this state by the visible tonal variations in the processed rainforest wood. I expected that the relief printmaking process would mirror this visible grain; however, the prints revealed a second grain not evident to the eye in the raw plywood. This second grain, related to varying densities in the wood and the manufacturing process, was only made visible through the smooth space of proficient relief printing. A third layer of texturing, also exposed through the relief printing process, was a range of marks left on the plywood's surface by the manufacturing processes. All these manufacturing marks exemplified the qualities of striated space. They printed as uniform, straight, parallel and perpendicular lines that sit starkly over the highly organic and fluid marks of the plywood’s grains. Relief printing the plywood opened up a diverse field of movements between smooth and striated spaces. Mirroring the material properties of the matrix these prints embrace the indexical nature of a print. They effortlessly bypass mimetic representation through the intimate touches of printmaking. They open up an avenue within which I am able to make art that moves beyond the circumscription that Spivak and Weil identify of representation and within books they bring the rainforest into touching distance. This holds particular significance for me in regards to the Sa:mba:leke. I
am able to refer to them and their haptic touch of the bush without mimetically representing them or the bush. In all, I purchased eighty sheets of plywood and have made over 2,000 prints from them.

Tim Mosely *Untitled* 2012, relief print from iuan plywood on awagami Kozo, 96 x 70cm

**the pursuit of directed smooth space**

Making over 2,000 prints with this rainforest plywood has generated the directed smooth space that I have specifically pursued to answer my research question. To make these prints, I relied on the smooth space of my printmaking practice. As I developed an intimate and responsive relationship with these plywood sheets and prints, I then relied on the smooth space of my artists book practice to find resolutions (studio research outputs) to my research question. Of the more than thirty-three unique and editioned books I have made during my candidature I have chosen fourteen to exhibit for my examination exhibition. Combined these represent a lucid embrace of the haptic touch of books by artists. Of these I included twelve in a forty page catalogue I produced for the exhibition[^217] , having already exhibited the other two in my solo exhibition *The Confluëntês Sea*[^218]. As a


[^218]: *the Confluëntês Sea*, Webb Gallery, Queensland College of Arts, 18-29 March 2014.
whole I have given the twelve books in my examination exhibition the title *re/membering touch, an anthology of artists books* and I titled the exhibition *re/membering touch*.

The twelve books of the anthology are broken into four series as follows,

an insoluble difference;

* coloured by touch
* privileged by blood
* textured by sight
* from the deep

an archipelago of remnant gardens;

* touching rainforest
* untitled (as of the 14th July 2014)
* kanage pholu wanda

the Sangre de Christo isles;

* given
* with a kiss
* for given again

and the haptic atols

* tears that see
* the book of tears one

The critical reception and evaluations of my artists books situates them and the haptic touch of artists books within the discourse of the field. This was initiated by Jess Berry in her catalogue essay for the exhibition *Beneath the Surface*. The artists book *from the deep* illustrated below was one of four works I showed in this exhibition held at the Crane International Project Space (gallery 105) at Crane Arts, Philadelphia, in February 2014. Berry writes of my work,

> According to Laura Marks, a criticism of the haptic is that it “tends to rest on the surface of its object rather to plunge into depth, not to distinguish form so much as discern texture. It is a labile, plastic sort of look.” This observation could equally be applied to print’s apparent obsession with the material surface through technique; yet, Mosely is able to overcome this by exploring the tensions between these two types of visuality. Through the layering of surface, viewers see the landscape itself

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220 Jess Berry, "Tim Mosely: How Deep This Touch," in *Beneath the Surface* (Brisbane: Queensland College of Art, 2014), 8–9, 25–31; see Appendix 3.
contrasted with its form and texture along with barely there impressions of the forest fading into the paper’s tooth and grain. As such, the viewer’s look flickers between optical vision and haptic experience; they are never really sure as to what is on the surface and what lies beneath. It is only through absorbing their vision in this texture that viewers can visualise the watermark gestures of canopies and root systems hidden beneath the stratum of the processed wood’s grains. This careful construction of surface confronts viewers with Mosely’s conceptual concerns of disappearance and decline, the rainforest lost to destructive logging. Moreover, it reveals how the print’s depth of surface can move beyond appearance to the experiential.\(^{221}\)

**strategies within my studio research to engage the haptic touch**

To aid in describing these strategies, I will refer to my artists book *from the deep*, illustrated on page 109, in which most of these strategies are employed. The illustration presents a sequence of images portraying an opening of the book. I have also included with this exegesis a “book of sample pages” that forms a part of it.

To incorporate the haptic touch into the reception and evaluation of an artists book, haptic modes of production must be employed to realise the book. The following six production strategies, which are a move towards Deleuze and Guattari’s smooth space, have allowed me to shape the nature of artists books with qualities that invite and even demand that the reader break away from an optic interpretation.

**gathering/assembling a book**

Derrida describes the book as gathering, Deleuze describes it an assembling, and Riegl links its mode of production to the mode of its interpretation. Allowing these terms to shape my studio practice, I began to gather and assemble my books through haptic perception. The more time I gave myself to gather my books, the deeper my movement into smooth space.

\(^{221}\) Ibid., available at issuu.com/qcagriffith/docs/beneath_the_surface/9?e=3092855/6709987.
Tim Mosely *from the deep* 2014
unique artists book, woodblock relief prints on handmade awagami Kozo
bound into a single section together with a single curved folding folio, 65 x 32cm (open)
During my candidacy, I have given myself far more time to gather my books than I have previously taken. The *Sangre de Christo Isles* books were gathered over a period of eighteen months. Initiated by a gathering of prints taken from the rainforest plywood and visual quotes on touch taken from Western art, the gathered pages were considered, altered, added to, taken from and collated in numerous ways that involved a myriad of haptic touches both literal and metaphorical. The gathering involved making changes to sequence, making tears in the pages, sensing a page’s weight, surface and print qualities and the selection of felt for the book covers, all of which relied extensively on the touch of the hand. The gathering was directed along a path sensed in response to the process as it unfolded. The path was not laid over the process to follow but found within the process. The binding for these books was found in conjunction with the gathering, and constitutes a part of what was gathered.

The longer I took to gather the books, the more their material forms revealed the nature of my gathering. The folio is more evident, the bindings of these folios have become simpler; the materials I use reflect a warmer relationship with the hand. My books in general reveal that they have already been heavily touched by their maker’s hands. My gathering has begun to reflect the production of manuscripts and codexes that Gutenberg’s technology gradually replaced. This was a haptic mode of production undertaken by scribes.

Elizabeth Eisenstein describes the “texture of scribal culture [as] so fluctuating, uneven, and multiform that few long range trends can be traced” within it. This is consistent of haptic space. Early manuscripts were commonly compiled by their authors/owners. A monk, a scholar or a scribe either made or secured a codex and then began to compile its contents. This content was copied or transcribed from the aural readings of another manuscript. The production of manuscripts could take the forms of a gathering of many and diverse texts from different sources by different scribes to the duplication of a single manuscript by a single scribe. While these modes of production represent varying degrees of smooth space, they stand in clear counterpoint to the striated material production of contemporary books.

The extended time I gave myself to gather a book is a strategy that allows me to sustain a movement over the many material and conceptual surfaces of a book. This is consistent with a literal and metaphorical haptic touch. At times, I left the books alone for extended

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periods before I touched them again. All the books that I have found during my PhD candidature were arrived at in this manner. Some I have abandoned, others I have put aside for further touching at a later time.

**material as content**

Benjamin asserts that touch must inform any change in a mode of perception. As such, attempts to introduce the haptic touch into the reception and evaluation of artists books must obviously engage touch. Imperative for my research is that the touch of an artists book must migrate from an optic tactile touch into a haptic touch. Riegl identifies that the optic lays an interpretation onto/over the material of an artefact and this extends to the material that forms an image—for example, ink. The haptic reading of a book's visual or tactile content must respond to what it is materially, independently of symbolic or iconic meanings. For this reason, I have used materials in my books selected for their conceptual and tactile properties that invite and even require the sense of touch to be fully appreciated. The reader's literal touch of these materials carries conceptual content. The covers of *from the deep* are made of the rainforest plywood that I have taken my prints from. A reader literally touches the rainforest when they read this book.

This is also evident in my ephemeral artists books *book 1, 2, 3 & 4* exhibited in my exhibition *The Confluentés Sea* at QCA's Webb Gallery in March 2014. Visitors to *The Confluentés Sea* were able to walk around *book 1*, a floor piece, and did so to appreciate its varying richness, colours and textures. Walking involves all the senses of touch, and, as the visitors walked, some were prompted to touch the book, a literal touch of the rainforest, touch as an act of reading. *books 2, 3 & 4* involved a more direct bodily engagement. Visitors were invited to leaf through the prints of these books that were hung to reference a sequence of pages. I made the invitation explicit through a supporting didactic. My estimate is that a third of the visitors felt able to take up this invitation, some choosing to do so before they became aware of the invitation. Leafing through those pages involved a reader’s whole body and took on a performative quality. Some readers literally entered the spaces between the pages. What was particularly poignant for me was that after touching the printed pages of *book 2, 3 & 4*, a number of visitors identified the connection between the plywood in *book 1* and the printed pages.
I chose the paper for my books based on their ability to carry content and invite a haptic touch. As a papermaker, I am familiar with the variable qualities a papermaker can instil into a sheet of paper. Time did not permit me to make my own paper for this research and I have not been able to include in this exegesis the rich relationship between Deleuze and Guattari’s smooth and striated space and the nature of Western and Eastern paper. What I did find was a supply of custom hand-made Kozo paper produced by the Awagami papermaking company in Japan. I adopted it almost exclusively for my research. Kozo paper’s light weight and strength gives it qualities that warm to the touch of a reader’s hands, and a reader’s hands will respond to its qualities. This paper is able to convey to the readers touch the build-up of ink though multiple printings, this is of particular significance for the haptic reading of the indexical print, (I discuss this below). My choice of a heavier Western paper for curved folding folios also relates to the haptic touch that I address below.

The most ambitious of these strategies involve three that pursue what Deleuze intuited within the haptic, that is a literal touch that extends into the edges of making sense. This is a touch that independently of sight can inform cognitive perception exemplified by ocean swell wayfinding.
touching an indexical print - a haptic touch

Indexical signs are formed through a direct relationship with what they index. They are read independently of symbolic or iconic (optic) interpretation relying instead on an instinctual or even a tacit awareness that the sign is an effect caused by what is indexed. A footprint is an indexical sign. The effects of an island on an ocean swell are indexical. A relief print is an indexical sign, it refers to, is evidence of, is caused by the touch of the inked matrix to a substrate. Independent of any symbolic or iconic interpretation it can be instinctually read as the outcome of that touch. The nature of a relief print provides further evidence of that touch. The deposit of the ink on the substrate mirrors the surface area that touched the matrix and the material properties of that surface. This indexical quality of the print is very evident in my prints taken from the luan plywood. While they have an iconic element to them they are instinctually read as indexical of the plywood. The intimate touch between the matrix and the paper it is a relational touch, each affects the other. This touch can reveal material qualities of the matrix not visually evident in the matrix itself. For example the prints I took from the Luan ply reveal markedly different textual qualities in the plywood to those that are visually evident. As well as documenting the nature of a matrix the indexical mark also indexes the presence and actions of the mark maker.

Tim Mosely, Untitled, 2013, relief print from luan plywood on awagami kozo, 96 x 70 cm.
The absence of mimetic representation within my indexical prints of the rainforest plywood invites a haptic interpretation over an optic interpretation. Initially this is formed through the haptic touch of the eye. To extend this haptic interpretation into the literal touch I have employed bleed printing on all of my pages. Our tactile touch of the book commonly involves touching the edges of its pages. We may run our fingers over a printed text of a mechanically printed book but we are culturally trained not to touch anything on a page that appears to be art, is hand crafted or pasted in. I have introduced bleed printing into my books specifically to compel the reader to touch the art, This is illustrated in my book *from the deep*. In the act of turning a page in my books a reader must touch my plywood indexical prints. Their touch can sense indexical signs in the paper echoing the wayfinders touch of a swell interference pattern. The reader touches what has already been touched and is able to sense that they are touching art. Further to this they can sense the effects of that earlier touch in the way that layers of ink have effected the pages. This introduces the haptic touch into the reception and evaluation of that artists book.

Tim Mosely, *from the deep*, 2014, unique artists books, woodblock relief prints on handmade Kozo, single curved folding folio, single section case binding, 65 x 32 cm (open).
Curved folding can take a number of forms, the most common being developed within the realm of mathematics. Common to all of its forms is a reliance on touch more than sight to shape a curved fold. This touch is a haptic touch, it directly informs the shaping of a curved fold, it generates Deleuze & Guattari’s smooth space. I have yet to find a tangible description of how to fold a curved fold, it appears to be a skill that is primarily picked up tacitly. Some early examples of curved folding are evident in the syllabus of a preliminary course in paper studies at the Bauhaus. Curved folding has been mechanised, for example in industrial metal sheet fabrication. A translation of curved folding into striated space these processes force a fold rather than find it.

Scoring a substrate such as paper with a curve that then directs the shape of the curved fold is an act of Deleuze and Guattari’s directed smooth space. Introducing curved folding into my books has been a cautious move. It requires a heavier weight paper than the light kozo and reduces the life expectancy of a page. This is an outcome I am happy to accept particularly as the haptic is a counterpoint to the optic conservation practices of capture and control. I have limited the curved folding that I have gathered into my books to simple forms so as to keep them within reach of the reader. The response to these curves has been surprising. During the three artists book fairs in which I showed these books readers that embraced the folds significantly altered their reading of the book. Most initially sought to resolve the folds through sight before finding a resolution through touch. Some never embraced touch. Once folded however readers expanded their movement of and around the book to develop a sense of the shape they just folded, an element of haptic space and a movement towards smooth space. They put aside readings premised on renaissance perspective to engage with the sculptural page. This strategy introduces the haptic touch into the reception and evaluation of my artists books. The right hand panel in the illustration from the deep exemplifies a folded curve that a reader can form in my books.

**differentiation through the haptic touch**

In the book from the deep I first embraced the use of touch to answer perceptual questions about the content of the book. The book includes ten double-page spreads, most of which

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incorporate a horizon. The horizon is both a literal horizon established by the edge of a
bleed printed page and a representation of one established by a printed mark. Working on
the 60-gsm kozo paper, it is very difficult to differentiate between the page edge and the
printed horizon. During the three artists book fairs in which I showed this book, readers
quickly employed their touch to determine the difference. At each point that this strategy
was employed in the book, readers, still unable to differentiate the nature of the edge,
returned to their haptic touch of the page. This is difficult to illustrate in a two-dimensional
format; suffice to say that the horizon evident in the above image of from the deep is made
up from two pages and the reader’s touch is necessary to resolve what sight senses might
be but cannot determine. As a device that unhinges the reader’s sense of sight over an
elemental aspect of perception, the ground on which we stand, I sense in this strategy
indexical signs of more books. The Earth’s horizon underpins touch’s calibration of the
visual. It is the surface on which we stand and by which we establish, through our manifold
senses of touch, our relationship to the material world (specifically, the senses of
proprioception and kinaesthesia). I resolved from the deep late in my research and have
yet to develop this particular use of differentiation through the haptic touch.

I also employ this strategy in my artists book Kanage Pholu Wanda. In this book, the
reader must employ a haptic touch to differentiate ambiguous edges on its pages. They
can touch these edges directly or indirectly by extending their touch through the
manipulation of a page. The Kozo paper is very responsive to tensions applied to it by the
hand and fingers, and a reader is able to manipulate and curl a page as they turn it to
differentiate ambiguous edges. This employment of differentiation through the haptic touch
exemplified in Kanage Pholu Wanda and from the deep introduces the haptic touch into
their reception and evaluation.

**abstraction**

In his essay “The Print”, McLuhan contrasts two modes of interpretation that have been
applied to prints. One is a rational connected space through which prints are contained by
interpretation (an optic mode); the other is a diversity of spaces, each arising from a print
through which it is then interpreted (haptic modes). McLuhan describes how in 1905, after
centuries of movement towards the optic, Einstein's theory of relativity that “pronounced

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225 In McLuhan, Understanding Media, 170–77.
the doom of continuous or 'rational' space" opened up a space within which artists began to embrace abstraction and the metaphorical touch of the eye in an effort to reharmonise the senses.

Having established that I need to engender haptic interpretations into the reception and evaluation of my artists books, abstraction is an obvious strategy for my research. To build on the abstraction in my prints, I have also considered forms of the book that invite the haptic touch. All of my books depart from the common form of the book to varying degrees. One of the changes I have adopted is the use of 19mm felt as covers. The moment a reader touches these covers, their senses of touch are engaged. Their fingers literally enter the felt, and the felt shapes around their fingers. This is a haptic touch; it establishes from the reader's first touch of my books that the senses of touch contribute to their content.

While abstraction permeates this body of work, I also incorporate mimetic forms in it. I do this to quote a number of sources, including Gioacchino Assereto's painting *Christ Healing the Blind Man* (1640) Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio's paintings *The Taking of Christ* (1602) and *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* (1601), and Sir Stanley Spencer's *The Centurion's Servant* (1914). Having first appropriated them into linocuts, I quoted these paintings after reading the transcript of Derrida's seminars *Deconstruction Engaged*, where he addresses, among other concerns, a tendency within the West to define touch as the absolute sense. He points out that this tendency is very evident in the portrayal of the miracles of Christ within Western art. These quotes were drawn into my books during the extended period of time over which I gathered them.

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\[\text{\footnotesize \textsuperscript{226} Ibid., 177.} \]
\[\text{\footnotesize \textsuperscript{227} Patton and Smith, Deconstruction Engaged.} \]
conclusions

can the haptic inform the emerging critical field of artists books?

During the course of my candidature, I have made over thirty-three artists books both unique and editioned. The outcome of haptic production, these were gathered together from over 3,000 relief prints I made during my research. Further, I have supported my studio research by initiating a writing practice that contributes to artists book discourse. To position my research within the field, I have exhibited, attended artists book fairs, presented papers and talks in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Bristol, Dundee, Philadelphia and Salt Lake City.

Raising questions over haptic qualities of the book, Gary Frost identified a significant resource for the emerging critical field of artists books. Through my research, I have verified that it is imperative that the haptic be embraced by artists who make books and by those who engage in artists book discourse. Contemporary discourse on haptic aesthetics has identified a clear difference between the optic tactile touch and the haptic touch. While the tactile touch serves the visual and aural, the haptic touch enters the edges of making sense. As I have referenced, haptic concerns informed the work of a host of artists and poets, such as Futurists, Russian Constructivists, Dadaists and Surrealists, from the early-to-mid-twentieth century. Their investigations embraced the metaphorical haptic touch of the eye. Relying on optic modes of production, their books attract optic modes of interpretation. By contrast, my research concerns haptic modes of interpretation. As detailed in the previous pages, there were some books to come out of the early-to-mid-twentieth century that employed haptic production techniques, which similarly attract a haptic mode of interpretation. Our touch of books is primarily an optic touch that serves an optic interpretation. In pursuit of haptic interpretations, I focused my studio research on the haptic touch of books by artists. This focus shaped my final body of work, introducing the haptic touch into the reader's reception and evaluation of my artists books. Jess Berry's critical reception of my work has initiated their translation into artists book discourse. In achieving this, I demonstrate that Frost's interest in the haptic evaluation of artists books was warranted: the haptic can and must shape the emerging critical field of artists books.
As a critical focus that broadens the scope of debate within the field, the haptic can contribute to raising the significance of artists books to the broader fields of art and literature. For example, current debate in the field has touched on the relationship between the material and the phenomenal and where the book lies between these two. This issue has the potential to take on a polemic nature. The haptic introduces 'another approach' (to put it in the words of Claire Colebrook) that takes the debate into haptic aesthetics. The haptic will also activate debate over new methods of translating significant artists books into critical discourse. Moreover, the haptic criticism of Laura Marks models an application of Deleuze and Guattari’s theoretical tools that can inform that debate.
A fabric presents in principle a certain number of characteristics that permit us to define it as striated space. First it is constructed of two kinds of parallel elements; in the simplest case there are vertical and horizontal elements, and the two intertwine, intersect perpendicularly. Second, the two kinds of elements have different functions; one is fixed, the other mobile, passing above and beneath the fixed. ... Third, a striated space of this kind is necessarily delimited, ... which is determined by the frame of the warp; the necessity of a back and forth motion implies a closed space (circular or cylindrical figures are themselves closed). Finally, a space of this kind seems necessarily to have a top and a bottom; even when the warp and woof (waft) yarn are exactly the same in nature, number and density, weaving reconstitutes a bottom by placing the knots on one side. Was it not these characteristics that enabled Plato to use the model of weaving as a paradigm for "royal science," in other words, the art of governing people or operating the State apparatus?

Felt is a supple solid product that proceeds altogether differently, as an anti-fabric. It implies no separation of threads, no intertwining, only an entanglement of fibers obtained by fulling (for example, by rolling the block of fibers back and forth). What becomes entangled are the microscales of the fibers. An aggregate of intrication of this kind is in no way homogenous: it is nevertheless smooth, and contrasts point by point with the space of fabric (it is in principle infinite, open, and unlimited in every direction; it has neither top nor bottom nor center; it does not assign fixed and mobile elements but rather distributes a continuous variation).
Appendix 2


The sense organ which we use most frequently to take notice of external things is the eye. This organ shows us things merely as colored surfaces but never as impenetrable, material individual entities; it is precisely this optical perception which presents the external world to us as a chaotic mix. We possess certain knowledge about the bounded individual unity of single objects only through the sense of touch. Through touch alone we gain awareness of the impenetrable borders which enclose individual material objects. These borders are the tactile surfaces of things. Yet what we touch immediately are not extended surfaces, but only individual points. Only in the perception of single individual points following each other in quick succession, repeated beside each other on one and the same material thing, do we arrive at the conception of an extended surface with its two dimensions of height and width. The conception is not gained through an immediate perception of touch but through the combination of several such perceptions which necessarily presupposes the intervention of the subjective thought process. It follows, therefore, that the notion of tactile impenetrability as an essential condition of material individuality was achieved not merely on the basis of sense perception but also with the supplementary aid of the thought process.

The human perceptual relationship with the objective world, Riegl believed, was a production of the eye, the touch, and the mind. This relationship passed through historical phases, oscillating between an emphasis on vision (optic) and touch (haptic or tactile). ...

Both touch and vision enlisted the collaboration of the mind in transforming sense perceptions from isolated experiential units into a sustained awareness of the continuous contours and borders of objects. The fingers could transmit impenetrable points; the eye could convey isolated color stimulants. But only the mind could combine these immediate sense perceptions into an awareness of physical continuity and depth. Pure perceptual experience was pointillist; only subjective thought translated percepts into a unified, dimensional individual object, the immediate sense of contiguity into the perception of continuity. This operation was so basic to the act of perception that it passed nearly unnoticed.

In Riegl's historical account, the visual aspects of perception gradually came to mask tactile and mental contributions, a tendency that led to misunderstandings about the nature of empirical perception and the "unity" and "continuity" it affirmed.

The sense of touch is indeed indispensable in order to confirm for us the impenetrability of external things, but not in order to teach us about extension. Regarding this, it is far surpassed by the abilities of the visual sense. Yet the eye transmits only color stimulants, which, like the sense of impenetrability, are expressed in points. And we arrive at the notion of colored surfaces as multiplied points through the same process of thought used for tactile surfaces. But the eye executes the operation of multiplying singular perceptions far quicker than the sense of touch, and therefore it is mainly the eye to which we owe our notion of the height and width of things. As a result, the thinking observer arrives at a new combination of perceptions in consciousness: where the eye recognizes a coherent colored plane in one unified perception, there arises the notion of an enclosed material individuality, based partly on the experience of a tactile impenetrable surface. In such a way, very early on it could happen that optical perception alone was considered sufficient to produce certainty about the material unity of external things, without need of the immediate testimony from the sense of touch.

The apparent preeminence of vision belied the actual collaboration of sight, touch, and thought in the perception of physical unity.
Appendix 3

David Lewis, *We the Navigators* (Canberra; Australian National University Press, 1975), 89–90.

The return from Taumako to the Reef Islands was commenced an hour before daybreak. The course was west-south-west and a distance of 60 miles. The wind being south east, the "long Swell" from that quarter was much the most obtrusive and only occasionally could we feel the stern being lifted up by the following east-north-east 'Sea Swell'. Nevertheless Tevake bade me disregard the roll imparted by the former.

From approximately 06.00, when the clouds shut down we had to steer exclusively by the swell. A violent squall came in from the north around 08.30 and over the next five hours the wind veered suddenly from in turn to north-east, east-north-east, and finally south-east. Heavy overcast persisted with visibility remaining poor even between rain showers.

Tevake was piloting us by the east-north-east 'Sea Swell' from astern, he told me, but the steep northerly waves kicked up by the squall effectively prevented me from sorting out the pattern, and I only succeeded in doing so thanks to his repeated demonstrations. At each fresh wind change (which I by myself could not have detected at all) I became disorientated anew so that the laborious process of instruction had to be gone over again.

It was for eight solid hours that Tevake stood on the fore-deck with a plastic tablecloth decorated with roses or an umbrella palm leaf held over his head with a sopping lava lava flapping round his legs, gazing intently at the sea and only moving to gesture from time to time to guide the helmsman. Then around 14.00 something more substantial than mist loomed up through the fine murk on the port bow perhaps two miles off. 'Lomlom', said Tevake, with satisfaction. Very soon afterwards Fenualoa also became visible to starboard and it was apparent that Tavake had made a perfect landfall on the middle of the half-mile-wide Forrest Passage between the two, after covering an estimated 45 to 48 miles since his last glimpse of the sky.
Appendix 4

Jess Berry's catalogue essay for the exhibition Beneath the Surface. Available at: issuu.com/qcagri Griffith/docs/beneath_the_surface/9?e=3092855/6709987.

Tim Mosely: How Deep This Touch

Materiality of surface is central to Tim Mosely's conceptual artistic concerns. Like Craig, he manipulates surface for its experiential qualities, though specifically through texture rather than space. His body of work is particularly concerned with the haptic qualities of the print, evoking the confluence of touch with aesthetic experience. Mosely recognises that the art print has a sensual surface that invites the viewer to interact with it closely, a characteristic he emphasises by incorporating sculptural elements into some of his work. For example, his artist book From the Deep consists of curved undulations in paper, upon which the artist has printed iconography stemming from his childhood, when he lived with the Samberigi people in Papua New Guinea. This wave of texture and form is embedded in the book's surface, which is made up of thin leaves of paper, richly textured by cross-hatched lines. Shades of ultramarine, azure, and violet sinuously sweep across the surface, inviting the viewer's touch as they turn the page. Through his approach, Mosely highlights that visual content is only part of the experience of reading a book.

The artist's choice of printing material is conceptually driven; his use of Luan plywood, a medium whose surface combines both the natural patterns of rainforest wood and the mechanical markings of the industrial, is a conduit to express his concerns regarding illegal logging in the Semberigi's rainforests. This connection between the literal and conceptual surface of the wood is expressed visibly in A Haptic Touch of the Rainforest, a set of four relief prints that explore the rainforest as both visual experience and field for haptic perception. In these images, the dense clustering of trees and vegetation is contrasted with the experience of emersion in colour, texture, and form that Mosely poetically manipulates to create a sense of the rainforest up close.

According to Laura Marks, a criticism of the haptic is that it "tends to rest on the surface of its object rather to plunge into depth, not to distinguish form so much as discern texture. It is a labile, plastic sort of look." This observation could equally be applied to print's apparent obsession with the material surface through technique; yet, Mosely is able to overcome this by exploring the tensions between these two types of visuality. Through the layering of surface, viewers see the landscape itself contrasted with its form and texture along with barely there impressions of the forest fading into the paper's tooth and grain. As such, the viewer's look flickers between optical vision and haptic experience; they are never really sure as to what is on the surface and what lies beneath. It is only through absorbing their vision in this texture that viewers can visualise the watermark gestures of canopies and root systems hidden beneath the stratum of the processed wood's grains. This careful construction of surface confronts viewers with Mosely's conceptual concerns of disappearance and decline, the rainforest lost to destructive logging. Moreover, it reveals how the print's depth of surface can move beyond appearance to the experiential.
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