THE BOUNDED AND THE SYNOPTIC: THE ARCHIVE AND PHOTOGRAPHIC APPROPRIATION.

MICK FINCH

In this essay I will discuss my studio practice in the form of a series I have been working on since 2014 entitled *The Book of Knowledge*. This will be in relation to my wider studio practice that has impacted on my thinking. Important to this discussion is the art historian Aby Warburg's (1866-1929) use of photography, most famously in the form of the Mnemosyne Atlas which was a visual manifestation of what he called the pathos formula. I will also use aspects of Bruno Latour's (1947-) 1985 essay, *Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together*, as a conceptual counterpoint that unwittingly proposes an attitude toward collage in relation to methodologies related to photographic secondary material.[1] Most famously, Warburg's central interest was the transition from the pagan to the renaissance. To be more precise Warburg focused on pagan culture's nachleben[2] its survival, after-life, or metamorphosis in the renaissance and until the present day. He collected images of gestures of self-defence to represent a vast pictorial manifestation of social memory in relation to questions of survival. His research demanded essentially an iconological basis and the technical means to capture the flows and superimpositions of pictorial migration across panoramic timeframes. His methodology progressively moved from compilations of research material, in the form of final academic texts, to privileging alternative forms of image-led monstration, as was the case of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* (Fig. 1).

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[1] Bruno Latour, "Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together" in *Knowledge and Society Studies in the Sociology of Culture Past and Present* (Bingley: Jai Press, 1985), pp 1-40.

[2] Nachleben translates here as 'after life'.

Fig. 1. Aby Warburg, Panel 6 of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, 1928-1929, dimension unknown, Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, Hamburg.
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From the early years of the twentieth century until his death in 1929, Warburg identified the mobility and migration of images as the driving force of the renaissance that brought about a pagan afterlife. To explore this idea, he developed and managed an image-led methodology to focus on objects of cultural transmission. This activity in turn created a practice that used images to map relationships between works of art. This practice necessitated the means to produce photographic images at a technically advanced level. Even before the construction of the Kuturwissenschaftliche Biblitek Warburg (KBW), his own purpose-built library in Hamburg, he had not only established a considerable library but also a sophisticated technical

apparatus that facilitated the projection and production of photographic images. From the 1900s on he staged exhibitions which foregrounded photographs and other reproductions of key primary material where text took the back seat. This led to his largely unrealised *Mnemosyne Atlas* project, which was made in the last years of his life.

In "Visualistation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together" Bruno Latour discusses the divide between prescientific and scientific culture.[3] The emergence of the latter he attributes, in great part, to the emergence of inscriptions as "immutable objects". He says:

> …you have to invent objects which have the properties of being mobile but also immutable, presentable, readable and combinable with one another. More exactly, it is possible to overestimate the inscription, but not the setting in which the cascade of ever more written and numbered inscriptions is produced. What we are really dealing with is the staging of a scenography in which attention is focused on one set of dramatized inscriptions. The setting works like a giant "optical device" that creates a new laboratory, a new type of vision and a new phenomenon to look at…Boyle, for instance, in the fascinating account of his vacuum pump experiment… had to invent not only the phenomenon, but the instrument to make it visible, the set-up in which the instrument was displayed…[4]

A set-up here is analogous to a dispositive. Warburg's focus upon the migration of images in many ways necessitated the construction of dispositives whose function was as optical devices, in a way that can be equated with Latour's account. Like a seventeenth century scientist, Warburg is confronted by cascades of inscriptions of different modalities that are in turn recombinations of appropriated artefacts. This process of spoliation is central to Warburg's mapping of the afterlife of pagan culture. At its heart, it is the engrammatic transmission through the medium of the image that marks his methodology. Warburg was interested in the process in simple organisms as a metaphor for memory retrieval. The mapping of gestures between works is equivalent to recording mnemonic transmissions and transformations between images. Warburg's concerns differ from a scientific relationship to the

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[3] Bruno Latour, "Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together", pp **1-40**

[4] Bruno Latour, "Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together", pp **17-18**

"cascade of inscriptions" that Latour describes. Warburg is as much interested in the relationships and intervals between images and their clustering within cultural contexts. His concern is with transmission and migration as forces that underpin iconographic transformation as a complex form of cultural memory and agency.

   More precisely, not only photography became important to Warburg but the ability to organise several photographic images on a single plane became the important synoptic optical device. Synoptic here is the ability to see many things together. In this case, clusters of related images pertaining to a question or an idea. With the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, material was pinned onto black clothed covered boards, photographed, taken apart and reassembled to construct the next board. This, and Warburg's increasing uses of public lectures where he used photographs, book illustrations and prints as key material within a scenography, progressively became the dispositive that made visible and transformed his ideas. This optical device was as much at the heart of his working methodology as it was a means to present his ideas. He not only presented his ideas through the use of dispositives, he also began to think through his ideas by manipulating images using these means, technically in the dark room but also by the act of arranging images on the Atlas's boards. Often the images are of maps, diagrams, or charts. The synoptic aspect here has the characteristic of flattening different orders of representation within a single manipulable and navigable space. This brings to mind Leo Steinberg's (1920-2011) essay of 1972, "The Flatbed Picture Plane". He discusses the characteristics of a type of space that emerged in the 1950s where heterogeneous elements are brought together in a single space whose specificity he likens to the surface of a desk top, where likewise maps, photographs objects etc. come together in and on a single plane(an interesting aside to what Steinberg identifies here is that the user interface of the computer is a desktop which also gathers together a heterogeneity of elements). Robert Rauschenberg's (1925-2008) work is a strong example of how this operates. Of Rauschenberg's practice, Steinberg says:

   Rauschenberg's picture plane had to become a surface to which anything reachable-thinkable would adhere. It had to be whatever a billboard or dashboard is, and everything a projection screen is, with further affinities for anything that is flat and worked over—palimpsest, cancelled plate, printer's proof, trial blank, chart, map, aerial view. Any flat documentary surface that tabulates information is a relevant analogue of his picture plane–radically different from the transparent projection plane with its optical correspondence

to man's visual field. And it seemed at times that Rauschenberg's work surface stood for the mind itself—dump, reservoir, switching center, abundant with concrete references freely associated as in an internal monologue—the outward symbol of the mind as a running transformer of the external world, constantly ingesting incoming unprocessed data to be mapped in an overcharged field. [5]

The flatbed picture plain is analogous to the *Atlas'*s boards where the plane of organisation is essentially a plane of data and information.

Warburg was clear that the pathos-formula was a process of transmission catalysed by the movement and migration of images, a phenomenon that is akin to Latour's "cascade of inscriptions" within a scientific context. The eighty boards of Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*, photographed between August 1928 and October 1929, have the quality of a topology. Each board represents a bounded set of objects, addressing a particular thematic that bring together groupings of discrete heterogeneous images, exploring transformations, convergences and connectedness. The boards can also be viewed as typologies where the qualities of montage of the board's arrangements produce readings. The spacing between images is often like an interval that can be likened to jump-cuts in a cinematic sense. In short, as an apparatus the boards operate like a flatbed picture plane, oscillating somewhere between a field of vision and information. The photographic is manipulated in ways that can be assigned to collage and montage practices with allusions to cinematic forms. As data the board's material conceptually operates with overlaps between typologies and topologies. Georgio Agamben's (1942 -) thinking about apparatuses is also useful in this context:

> objects that belonged in some way to the gods were considered sacred or religious. As such, these things were removed from free use and trade amongst humans…While to 'consecrate' (sacrare) was the term that designated the exit of things from the sphere of human law, 'to profane' signified, on the contrary, to restore the thing to the free use of men.[6]

This seems to be appropriate as another possible description of Warburg's preoccupation with the pathos-formula and the transition from the pagan to

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[5] Leo Steinberg, "The Flatbed Picture Plane" in *Other Criteria*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp61-98.
[6] Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus*? (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p18.

the renaissance as the pagan's afterlife. The panels plot, represent and display displacements, transitions, migrations, circulations and continuities within a vast temporal, terrestrial and cosmological, heterogeneous panorama and are akin to schemas that map the profanation of objects, images and artefacts which were formerly consecrated to the gods. The pathos formula is in a sense a series of narratives of reprographic means liberating sacred objects to become free circulating entities. These are stories of the journey of images and their transition into inscriptions.

Warburg's methodology required a vast secondary archive of photographs. Aside from their status within the *Atlas*'s montages they are also manipulable in a manner akin to playing cards. Warburg constantly reordered image sequences as if they were autonomous thought experiments. Latour is again worth recalling:

> on paper, hybrids can be created that mix drawings from many sources. Perspective is not interesting because it provides realistic pictures; on the other hand, it is interesting because it creates complete hybrids: nature seen as fiction, and fiction seen as nature, with all the elements made so homogeneous in space that it is now possible to reshuffle them like a pack of cards.[7]

Playing and Tarot cards often recur as subjects of the *Atlas* as configurations of the cosmological world that are activated by shuffling the pack, laying them out and making readings and divinations. Warburg's methodology is in many ways a form of cartomancy and not simply because he historically references playing and tarot cards. The reduction of his primary sources into highly mobile secondary artefacts, as photographs and hybrids, indicates a similar mechanism to a deck of cards. He reordered and reshuffled them to divine new relationships and unfold new orderings. What strikes me as important here is the archive or data-base acting like a deck of infinitely combinable and re-combinable material. This has been a central aspect of my practice in the last five years.

The art historian/connoisseur Bernard Berenson (1865-1959) was a contemporary of Warburg's, who by 1900 had amassed a collection of 15,000 photographs, which by his death in 1959, had amounted to 150,000.[8] His

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[7] Bruno Latour, "Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together", **p8**
[8] Fiorella Superbi, 'The Photograph and Bernard Berenson: The Story of a Collection', in *Visual Resources*, Volume 26, number 3, p293.

early motivation for collecting and commissioning photographs of works of art was because they facilitated his attribution of works in his use of the Morelli system. This is a forensic system that identifies key characteristic of the "hand" of the artist derived by comparing the way, for example, ears are rendered rather than comparing more overarching aspects of a work such as composition. The increasing developments of the camera, its portability, and the developments in the quality of photographic reproduction were essential here. By the turn of the twentieth century the connoisseur's task could be executed remotely through the comparison of details of works in relation to the attribution of a work of art to an artist. In short, the forensic process could be accessed through the synoptic possibilities that a comprehensive photo collection provided. Berenson was extraordinary engaged in this endeavour, specifying in detail what he wanted photographed from specialist photographic studios as well as the high quality that he demanded from the resulting prints.[9] The prime objective of Berenson's investment in the apparatus of this secondary material was to monetise the knowledge it produced. Berenson's process's primary focus was what he called the "lists." This was basically the compilations of all the known works by a particular artist. Berenson would travel to see all the works that made up a list, as much to confirm whether their attribution seemed correct. As this practice developed, Berenson would photograph works himself or commission them to be photographed by a professional studio. This would entail not only the photographing the entire work but also key details and especially those that were crucial for the tasks of attribution. With photography it became possible to gather all the photographs of works by a known artist together, something that had not been possible in the same way before. This amounted to the synoptic potential of photography engendering an analytical apparatus the likes of which had not been seen before. Secondary material, in the form of photographs, increasingly became the currency of art history and more importantly of the connoisseur whose photographic archive was as much at the centre of their worlds than the works of art they were focusing on.

Berenson became the major authority for attributions of Italian quattrocento works of art and was central to the commerce it involved by advising the great American fortunes to amass their vast collections from the first decade of the twentieth century onwards. In a way, Warburg and Berenson's motives were reversed in relation to their photographic collections. Warburg

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[9] Fiorella Superbi, 'The Photograph and Bernard Berenson: The Story of a Collection', p296.

spent a part of his fortune to form his collection, while Berenson amassed a fortune as a product of his photographic collection. There is a power to knowledge involved here that characterises Berenson's project as speculative. Again here, there is a curious reversal in that Warburg used the accounting and speculative bureaucratic processes that he would have been familiar with, due to his family's banking background, in using datasets and ledger systems to arrive at a methodology of divination. Berenson, forensically instrumentalising comparable tools enters the banking system as an outcome of his method. To push this analogy further, Warburg enters through a back door of art history into a complex interdisciplinary field and Berenson becomes the connoisseur art historian who places the discipline at the centre of economic exchange, igniting an episode of the massive migration of Italian works of art into the great collections owned by the American industrial fortunes of the period. Perhaps it is simply clearer to see with Berenson that the photographic means and toolkit he used, that is comparable to that of Warburg's, was engaged within a wider apparatus, leading to power, esteem, notoriety and wealth.

The field of archaeology is another case in point, where different modes of visualization are at work and that are of interest in this context. This can be seen in the case of Flinders Petrie (1853-1942), who again in the first quarter of the twentieth century originated a systematic methodology, mainly in the form of typologies of mostly anodyne objects, such as modest ceramic pots (Fig 2).
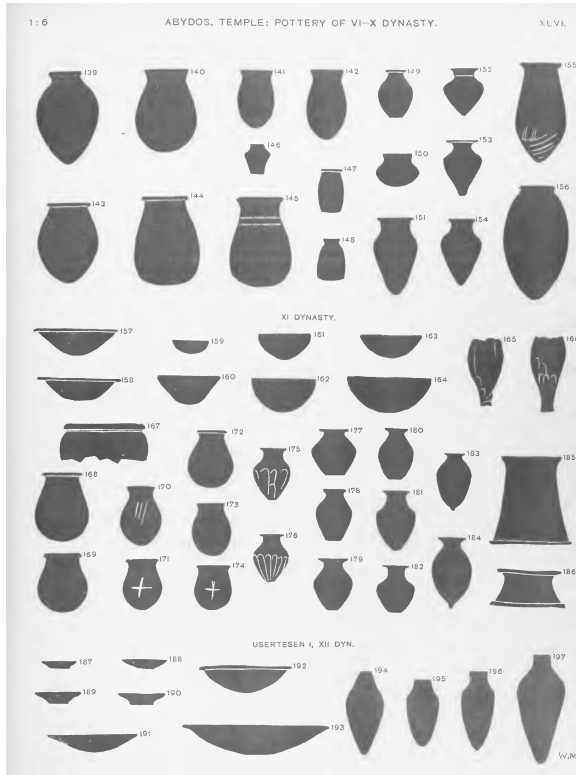
Fig. 2. Flinders Petrie, "Pot typologies", 1903, *Abydos*, part II, published by the Egypt Exploration Fund. Creative Commons

These typologies tracked the evolution of a generic object over a wide period, visualised as shape schemas. The direct product of this was a dating system but also a kind of evolutionary tracking of an object, not a pathos formula as such but more as a schematic biography of a class of objects. Petrie was a photographer. He photographed objects, on site, at excavations mainly for the Egypt Exploration Fund's publications that circulated findings and photographs to its member who were mainly museums and who would subsequently bid for individual objects. The visual material he used created intersections of time; the typological schemas of otherwise imperceptible temporal movements and the on-site images of the digs, snapshot collections of

what was unearthed from the excavations. These field photographs were a record of the objects that would later be dispersed geographically, finding their place in new collections, taxonomies and categories. In one sense, these site photographs are a record of a lived working space, their proximity in space prior to their displacement and dispersal.

This instance of photography intervening in the lives of objects and images, at the junctions within geographic transport has an opposing turn in Andre Malraux's (1901-1976) capricious *Musée Invisible* project from the 1940s.[10] Malraux's idea was that through photographic reproduction and the book form there was the possibility of assembling images of works of art as an alternative, or as competing, taxonomies to exhibitions of artifacts within the confines of an architectural structure. Malraux's proposition contrasts with what Warburg was putting to work in a more profound way and also with the example of Petrie's methodology that was imbedded in a discipline as an arguably unconscious force. However, the image of Malraux in his apartment, amidst photographs arranged on the floor is of interest[11]. The image is taken from above from the vantage point of a mezzanine space. This recalls the architecture of Warburg's Hamburg library building where a mezzanine was a part of the structure[12]. There are stories, possibly apocryphal, that Warburg arranged photographs on tables in the library and looked at them from this mezzanine space. There are also accounts of Warburg using something akin to a drafting table, where photographs would be handled and arranged and that could then be raised from the horizontal plane and into the vertical visual plane. This again brings to mind Steinberg's account of the flat bed picture plane where the horizontal is the plane of operation, and the vertical is the plane of the visual. The comparison of the image of Malraux dancing amongst images[13], laid out on the floor, and the famous images of Pollock[14] at work in his studio are compelling only in the sense of how the

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[10] Known in English as the *Museum Without Walls*.

[11] For the image of Malraux referred go to:
http://www.artnet.com/magazine/features/kuspit/kuspit4-14-4.asp

[12] For the image of the Warburg Haus go to:
https://warburg.sas.ac.uk/podcasts/tim-anstey-tenants-furniture-re-inscribing-warburg-institute

[13] Please go to this image:
https://slash-paris.com/en/evenements/dennis-adams-malrauxs-shoes

[14]Please go to this image:
 https://www.tate.org.uk/kids/explore/who-is/who-jackson-pollock

relationship between organizing and engaging with material, the visual field and the body, resonates in the picture plane being moved through two axes.

If Warburg and Berenson, as voracious users and collectors of photographs, are polar opposites it does beg the question of where Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) stands in relationship to secondary material and archives? His application of Kunstwollen[15] manifested in considering images not in relationship to things outside themselves but solely within their own structure. As Christopher Johnson says, when referring to Panofsky: "Briefly put, artistic volition must be dis-covered in the artwork, not outside it."[16]

Panofsky appears firmly rooted in the discipline of art history in contrast to Warburg that Agamben describes: "What is unique and significant about Warburg's method as a scholar is not so much that he adopts a new way of writing art history as that he always directs his research toward the overcoming of the borders of art history".[17] However, Agamben does not enter into a speculation about what the tools of that methodology are, that behind an iconology of the pathos-formula resides a series of archives, image production processes, visualisation dispositives–in short, a vast technical apparatus. As far as I can see, Panofsky's methodology did not involve such an apparatus unless it is simply a matter of accessing the resources of the museum and the university; the library, print collections and the slide archive that increasingly became at the centre of the discipline of art history (where slides were organised on a light box and packed into a projector's slide tray or carrousel)? This begs the question as to whether being passive to such institutional technical apparatuses determines them as technical silos, determining a discipline's methodology and possibly maintaining its borders?

In 2014 I began work on a series of works entitled *The Book of Knowledge* which I will later discuss in detail. It used all the images contained in an eight-volume set of encyclopedias of the same name that was published in the late 1950s. The working process for the series is *Photoshop* based digital collage which comes out of a wider engagement with painting. For much of my artistic life I have been a painter and there came a point when my work,

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[15] The idea of a free, autonomous realm for art.

[16] Christopher Johnson, *Memory, Metaphor, and Aby Warburg's Atlas of Images*, (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2012), p81.

[17] Giorgio Agamben, "Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science,"' in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p90.

that was nominally painting, ceased to be simply autographic painterly state-ments. Images entered my lexicon and I increasingly spent time in the studio projecting, tracing and masking images that I had digitally appropriated and transformed into 2D shapes. A good early example of this is the *Closer Than You Think* series from 1995/96 where combinations of images of Mickey Mouse and 1960s American Trellis camouflage were transcribed onto canvas to serve a visual critique of the insidious nature of ubiquitous Disney images that are activated by gestalt structures (Fig.3).
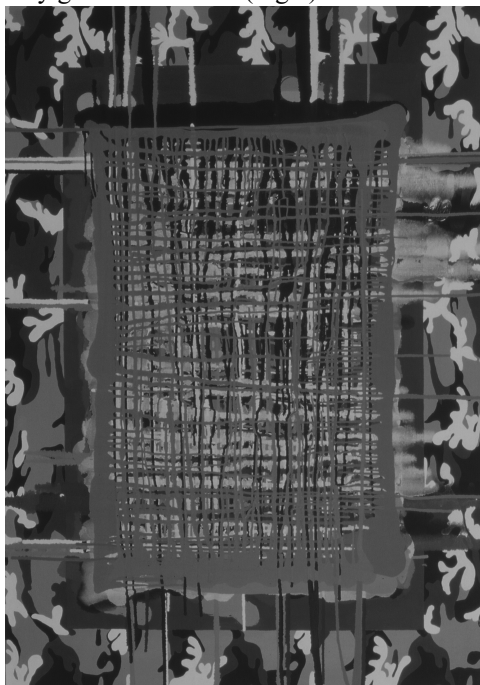

Fig. 3. Mick Finch, *Trellis (MM2),* 1998, oil on canvas, 162 x 114 cm.
Property of the artist © Mick Finch

Transcription was achieved by tracing and masking images from projected 35mm slides onto the picture surface. The slide's images were shot from drawings or from images in books. In *Sublimey*, a series from 2002–2004, the transcription process became much more complex.   Images were

appropriated either online, or scanned from printed matter and then processed in *Photoshop* into black shape forms to ease transcription (Fig.4).

Fig. 4. Mick Finch, *Sublimey 23,* 2004, oil on canvas, 198 x 114 cm. Property of the artist © Mick Finch

The shape forms were digitally printed onto transparent sheets for use with an overhead projector. They were masked with tape. The leak from the first coat of paint was integrated into the painting as a moment of transcription and palimpsest (Fig. 5). This moment of transfer was retained in later, subsequent series.
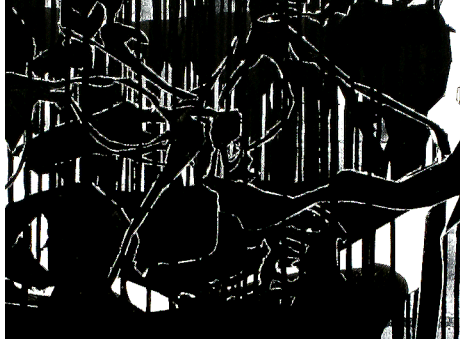
Fig. 5. Mick Finch, detail of *Sublimey 23,* 2004, oil on canvas,
198 x 114 cm. Property of the artist © Mick Finch

Technologies of projection became essential to the pictorial process of these works. For me, this became a subject in itself that I wrote about in an article from 2004 entitled *Night Shift* for Contemporary Magazine.[18] However, even as I was writing the article the technology that had become essential to my practice was the computer. The transformation of images as black shape forms, to facilitate their projection and transcription onto pictorial supports, generated a digital supplement to this activity which was the creation of digital archives organised in terms of categories and tags. The form of taxonomies that the archive often took were contrasted with the way the images were laid out on transparent hard copy printout of the images. These were used with an overhead projector, to project them onto the picture surface so they could be masked or traced onto the painting. Their aggregation was often in the form of a kind parataxis, to use a word that Jacques Rancière (1940-) adapted so well, that is a clustering where any single thing can be placed next to anything else.[19] This kind of egalitarian ordering, in the form of an image transfer tool, aligned supplementary qualities that arose from my transcriptive process with the topographies and typologies that I felt were at work with the Warburg's pathos formula (Fig.6).

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[18] Mick Finch, 2004 "Night Shift," in *Contemporary Magazine* No. 58, (London: Contemporary Magazine). This text can also be accessed at: http://mickfinch.com/thenightshift.htm.

[19] Jacques Rancière, "Sentence, Image, History," in *The Future of the Image*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2007), pp33–67.
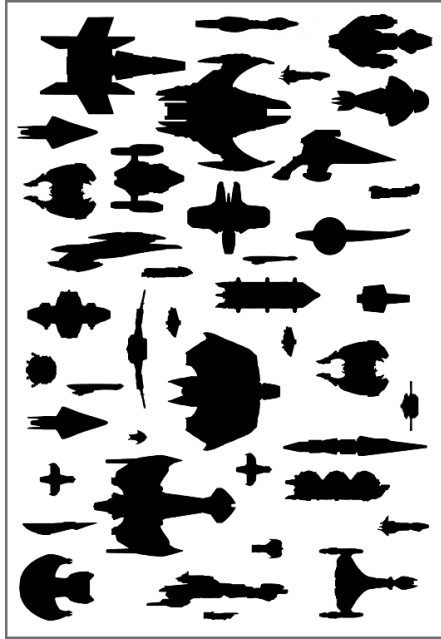
Fig. 6. Mick Finch, image shape template for over-head projection, 2005, digital file for A4 print out. Property of the artist © Mick Finch

In many ways this became the format for *Taken as Read*, a series from 2008 where grids and clusters of image shapes articulate the paintings as planes, sites and moments of transcription, as a kind of flatbed picture plane. These taxonomies, typologies and parataxis-grids took the form of paintings, as well as a publication. *Taken as Read*, in its book form, is a moment in a process where online appropriated images, having been transcribed onto canvas, that are then photographed and published, constitute the movement of images from 72 dpi to 300 dpi, from screen to hard copy. As an ecology of the image, the process of *Taken as Read* touches the edges of how images materialise in analogue and digital forms and as reprographic and auto-graphic expressions. Embedded in this series is a basic modus operandi that surfaced in *The Book of Knowledge,* which I will discuss later; that is how juxtaposition as an ordering of image is akin to a productive system.

The clustering of image shapes in *Constellation 3*, a print from 2008 (Fig. 7), marked the stage where the process of digital image appropriation stayed within a reprographic realm from image capture to manipulation and then output. In this way it is was the first step toward the basis of *The Book of Knowledge* as a process. It also served as a way of figuring the power relationship of the image, with the constellations, bounded by the profile of Elizabeth II, as a kind of tyrannical image of the sovereign. This owes a lot to Agamben's thinking in his book *Homo Sacer*, about sovereignty in relation to what he described as *states of exception*; spaces, for example, where marshal law is imposed.[20]

Fig. 7. Mick Finch, *Constellation 3*, 2008, archival digital print,
43.4 x 21.7 cm. Property of the artist © Mick Finch.

Since 2004 and the *Sublimey* paintings, I became interested in Warburg's methodology and its relationship to the technical apparatus of his purpose-

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[20] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Soveriegn Power and Bare Life*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

built library in Hamburg. What struck me was the way he juggled and balanced the power of the synoptic devices he was using, mainly the *Atlas*, with trying to plot almost infra-thin movements between the material used on the boards of the *Atlas*. It seemed as if the synoptic was a way for him to intuitively put a line around montages of material to focus on subtle relationships between the material. This was the general background that acted as a modus operandi for a series of work that I began in 2014 and are, as I write this, ongoing.

The Book of Knowledge is a set of encyclopaedias published by Waverly that was very much of its time. It reflected the aspirations and prejudices of post-war Britain. Empire, monarchy, parochial modernism and exoticism were just a few of the traits that masked a sense of catastrophe and ruins that haunt the pages of the encyclopaedias and the experiences of the generation that owned them, who had been caught up in war and whose experience of post war Britain was of a country in trauma. The volumes are illustrated mainly with black and white photographic images, maps and diagrams but they were also interspersed with colour images. At the beginning of the 1960s, that were the early years of television, as it was emerging as a mass medium, encyclopaedias were popular with children, and it was the images they were primarily consuming. They were a vivid memory from my early childhood. I acquired a set of its eight-volumes, published in the late 1950s to the early 60s, which correspond to the volumes I had known. I set out to scan the nearly 3000 images contained in its volumes to explore them digitally. My interest was not to embark on a memory project. Rather, I wanted to explore a body of material that is precisely inscribed, limited, locked in its time and its materiality as printed matter. What interested me was to have material that I was not only personally connected to but that was finite and bounded and did not have a readily accessible, on-line, digital life. My aim was to construct a dark archive. I chose to scan the material at 1200dpi so that the texture and the grain of the images, generated by the processes by which they were originally printed, could become integral to the work. The objective was to unpack both my own visual encounter, as a child, with the encyclopeadias in the early 1960s and more importantly to treat the material as a complex cultural, ideological and epistemological moment and artefact. The studio output of this series is so far more than two hundred prints.

I explored the material with working strategies using compositional structures that arose intuitively as the work progressed and in relation to my key research references. The compositional structures roughly break down

into five categories that I think of as *dispositives*, *juxtapositions*, *pathos-for-mulas*, *process and continuums,*

Dispostiives allude to a process or a mechanism. They have a relation-ship to production in a way that relates, all be it quite liberally, to Marcel Duchamp's (1887-1968) sense of circulation and production in *The Bride Stripped Bare*. In an image *Book of Knowledge 60*, this is expressed as a cruel balance between consumption and the natural world. (Fig. 8)

Fig. 8. Mick Finch, *Book of Knowledge 60*, 2017, archival digital print, 54.4 x 70.4 cm. Property of the artist © Mick Finch

Juxtapositions are simply the combining of two images, as in the case of a view of New York being joined to a view of Moscow in *Book of Knowledge 79* (Fig. 9). This work also demonstrates how the contact with historic ma-terial often coincides with feelings about the present. Here, in a perhaps overly binary reading of alleged Russian tampering in the election of Trump and the UK's EU referendum. There is also a theoretical parallel with Walter Benjamin's (1892–1940) idea of juxtaposition, here where an éclat is sparked, leading to an illumination in the form of a tertiary production of meaning. This dialectal movement is also present in the next strategy.

Fig. 9. Mick Finch, *Book of Knowledge 79*, 2018, archival digital print, 54.2 x 64.4 cm. Property of the artist © Mick Finch

The *Pathos Formula* category broadly refers to the methodology of grouping images side-by-side (Fig 10). I became intrigued by this through the methodology at work in Warburg's *Atlas*; that is the power of the images to generate visual links through juxtaposition and proximity and where qualities of movement, contrasts of spaces and places and compressions of temporalities are at work. These groupings of images produce readings more than express intentions or feelings in relation to my early encounter with the books when I was a child. They are simply improvisations with the material in real time.
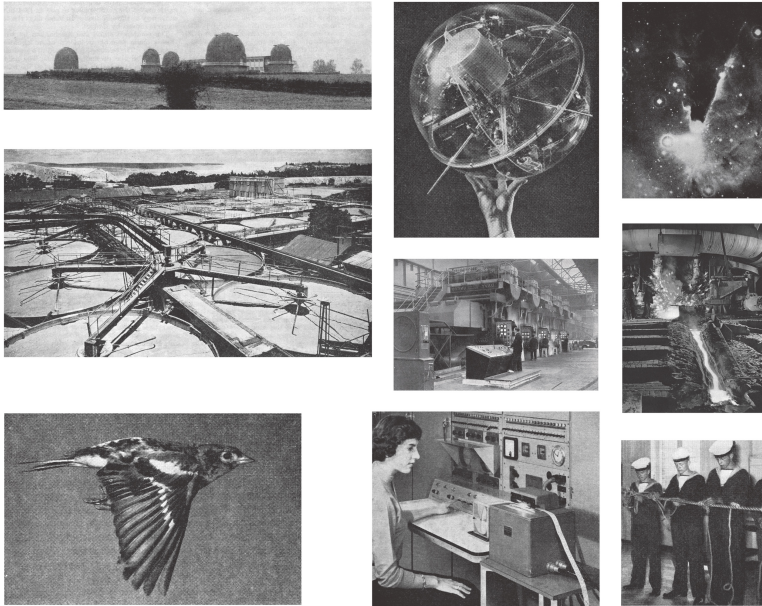
Fig. 10. Mick Finch, *Book of Knowledge 103*, 2018, archival digital print,
59 x 72.8 cm. Property of the artist © Mick Finch

Process are specific elements harvested from images, for example water, sky and grass (Fig.11). These elements serve as the material for pictorial composition, nominally having the characteristics of all-over strategies and images. They are also productive in terms of how a process generates a dynamic and an outcome. Most often this results in compressions of multiplicities of time and space. With both *Process* and *Pathos Formula*, the strategies that arise from the structures tend toward managing images as data. *Pathos Formula* structures are akin to typologies, *Process* tends toward topographical structures. These two structures are thus clearly derived from studying Warburg's practice and has parallels with my earlier discussion of the Atlas.
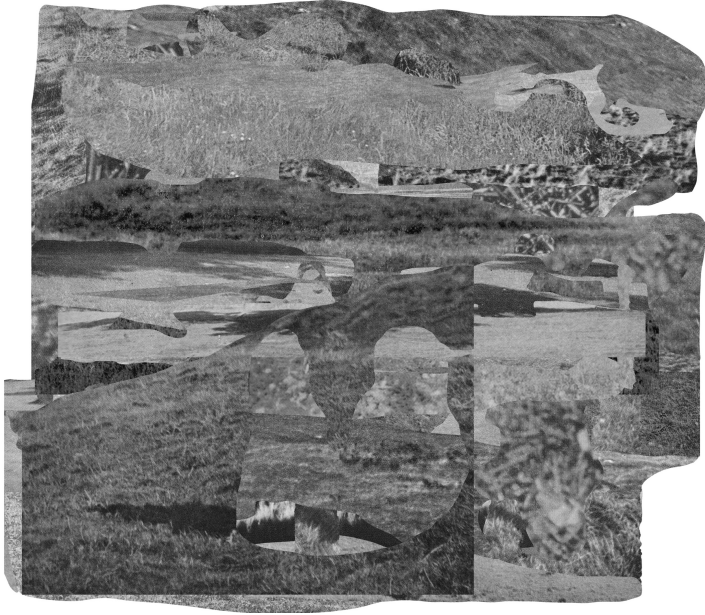
Fig. 11. Mick Finch, *Book of Knowledge 186*, 2021, archival digital print,
59 x 72.8 cm. Property of the artist © Mick Finch.

Continuums are structures where different images are combined into single, almost seamless spatial scenes (Fig. 12). This strategy is in contrasts to the other four. It is viewer based, uses perspectival tropes and can be interpreted as being conceptually in opposition to the other strategies. My motivation with this strategy was to explore the images atmospherically as if from the memory of the child and toward building up an aggregated world view.

Fig. 12. Mick Finch, *Book of Knowledge 48*, 2017, archival digital print,
60 x 79.1 cm. Property to the artist © Mick Finch

The influence of Warburg perhaps has been simply a pretext to make a body
of work. I feel he would have served me well if this was just the case. How-
ever, his influence has led me to assemble an archive and adopt working
strategies which have in turn led me to explore images in ways I could not
have previously envisaged. As already discussed, Warburg's influence has
also opened my thinking to other uses of photography and synoptic systems.
Berenson and Petrie are major examples of this and have influenced later
aspects of *The Book of Knowledge* series especially in terms of compositional
structures generated by typologies and typographies. I find this is akin to
thinking of data as a composition operation.

Warburg, Berenson and Petrie all share a dynamic relationship to visual
material and have an active relationship with the technical apparatuses that
produce and manipulate that material. Warburg stands out as using visual
methodologies as a way of conceptual framing and modelling his thinking

and not simply representing or facilitating it. In this way he can be considered as being in possession of a visual practice. For me, and many other artists, this is the reason his work holds a fascination and relevance. However, Warburg is not an artist. He is seeking to understand cultural production rather than being a producer of it. His preoccupation is knowledge production or this is simply an orthodox reading of Warburg's relation to disciplinarity? Just as Warburg's Atlas can be seen as cultural production, artistic practice can be thought of as knowledge production, especially if the question of research in relation to artistic production is foregrounded. Such questions seem important at this moment in time when we are witnessing a seismic shift in artistic terms toward cultural value (as opposed to simply conceptual or aesthetic value). I argue that the boundaries around which we synoptically focus upon material are akin to structures of composition. They are also akin to strategies that have both agency within the archive as the levers of analysis or as the means of control. In this way they are perhaps border objects, that are common across a range of practices and disciplines but are used to very different ends in each case. They are the significant means with which cross-disciplinarity moves across and between boundaries.

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Word count 6099