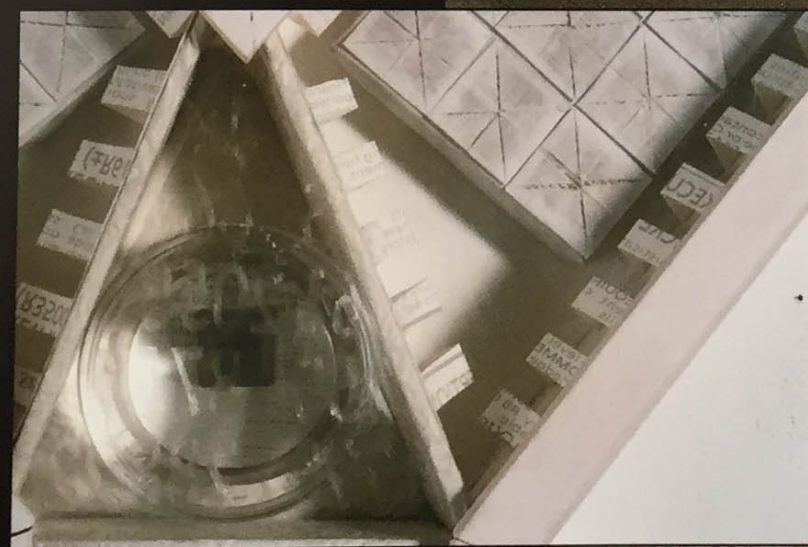


## CONTAINING EXCESS: CREATING A LEXICON FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF OBJECTS AND IMAGES

Over the past three years I have been engaged with production that references issues around current technology and information—its complexity and quantity. This has resulted in a number of series of works that are visually complex, consisting of many units, layers, surfaces and textures. The following four acts attempt in an appropriately loosely tangled manner to itemise parallels between my process and contemporary information networks and systems of transfer.

### collect

- \* Collecting is a means of controlling, ordering and manipulating the world. The creation of data files is a conscious act of collection and storage, while the accumulation of downloaded and book marked web-sites becomes not only a collection but a means of ordering a plethora of stimuli.
- \* Collection of information in the current technological environment is a haptic process rather than a conscious act and is mediated by access and availability.
- \* Collection is a means of attributing value through selection.
- \* Through the selection of the specimen a taxonomic system develops whereby assumptions and generalisations can be made about the whole system. **The unit becomes a sign that can be compared and juxtaposed with other signs.**
- \* **The collection requires a system of order.**



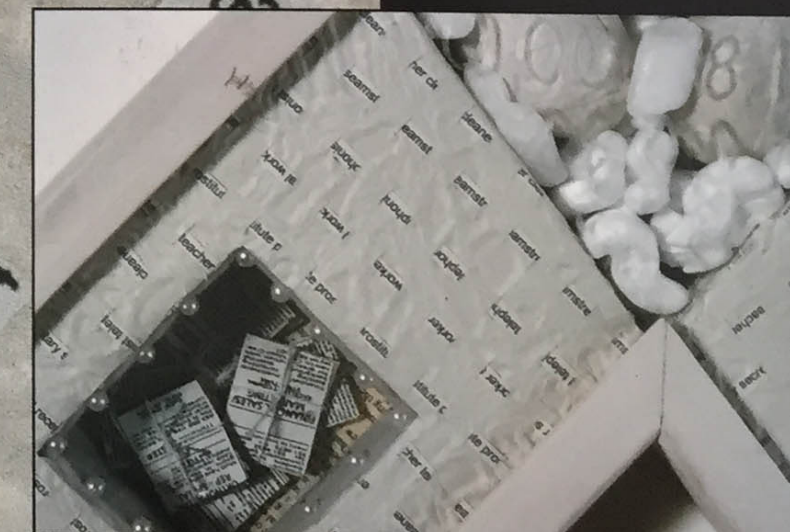
Fritha Langerman

Fritha Langerman  
*Basic equations* (detail) (1999)  
Screenprinting, xerography, found materials  
5 units: approx 500 x 500 mm

### order

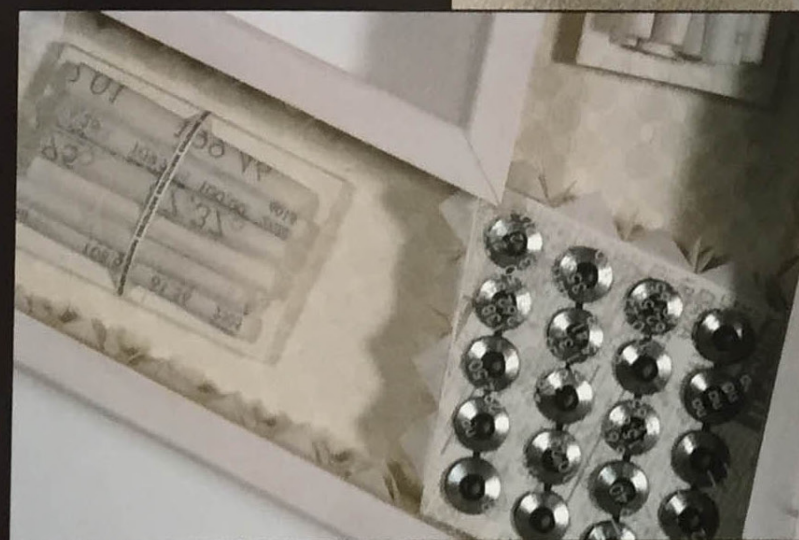
- \* **The work is contained within modular units that are subdivided into smaller sections containing prints, objects and paper forms. The units are constructed with a fore, middle and background, confining, defining and providing a natural order to the objects contained within. The contained objects and images conform to the dimension and geometry of the cases.**
- \* Exploration and navigation are key processes in finding a pathway through a labyrinth of images and texts. Through the creation of an effective interface, of recognisable images and forms, control and navigation are facilitated.
- \* **Repetition of forms and images (prints) act as links and facilitate movement between boxes. As in web navigation, images/icons form part of a code that allows access between pages—resulting in a loop through time and space. This encourages a sense of either cataloguing or browsing through the work.**
- \* In a space where knowledge and information are fluid, position is a priority to a site—where it is connected and how it is located. Home pages form the main unit of information management and direct process to some extent, creating a simulated sense of security of place. **My units offer no obvious starting point, enabling movement between rather than towards or from meaning.**
- \* The cross-referential nature of web texts means that interaction becomes about connections between—not only two participants, but a multiple connectivity. The information contained is secondary to the movement between them.
- \* Web communication is characterised by the fleeting exchange. The text is primary and self-referential as it operates within a contained, environment and links to other similar textual units.
- \* **Information is highlighted, prioritising certain shapes and forms through tonal and focal emphasis in the same way that key words and phrases are used to provide emphasis and order information. These formal emphases create visual links between the units.**
- \* **The ordered system needs a means of display.**

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## display

- \* The units take the form of recessed cases, sealed with a perspex covering that suggests the window or monitor. This containment sets up a relationship between interiority and exteriority. The transparent perspex denies the mystery of the interior and is by nature objective and inactive. It is both intimate and remote: hermetically sealing yet allowing access. It sanitises while insulating its contents.
- \* The cases present the active monitor while simultaneously referencing storage: latent information that remains static until accessed.
- \* Cyberspace has eroded notions of authenticity and the ontology of objects has been brought into question. Resulting anxiety has created a reliance on contained physical space to promote reality and order. **The use of the box consequently affords the works an authenticity, yet, although they enjoy this status the complexity and lack of focus within the units inverts the expectation of a fixed presence.**
- \* The use of the case references museum display and in so doing signs a system of representation that refers to something outside of itself. The glass cases of museum display provide safety to the cultural object while at the same time keeping it at a safe distance. **The boxes are invented collections with no didactic intention or entrenched power relationships. Found objects and images are decontextualised and reformed in their presentation. As such they lose their authenticity as true reflections of themselves.**
- \* It is the totality and complexity of the overall display that overrides the original context in favour of the present experience.
- \* The display needs to be read.



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## read

- \* **Forms and images are simplified: an abstraction.** They are elements that refer to wrapping, revealing, concealing, hermeticism and connectivity: a system of signs that have to be read. Juxtaposition of these signs encourages interactivity and the creation of meaning between the various stimuli.
- \* Assemblage and collage are means of presenting different fragments simultaneously and as such presenting multiple time frames. **Each unit is a fragment**, symptomatic of the electronic media, in which things occur concurrently rather than sequentially.
- \* The web has introduced a new relationship to text and information: it has become intangible and invisible. **Complexity leads to a lack of focus, not requiring a particular position or relationship to the work. Time and place are suspended and meaning becomes camouflaged by similar marks and familiar patterns.**
- \* The units are presented in linear or grid arrangements yet repetition between the units creates its own hypertext: cross-referencing of images allowing for an organic reading and denying the linear narrative. The units are pages that can be read in a dynamic way and a dialogue is established between them. This random access is a similar process to the functioning of a dictionary or inventory, however, as in web information, no directive is given as what to do with knowledge acquired.
- \* The units have an underlying numerical order, suggestive of a binary code that provides form while being non-present.

### Series of work: 1998 & 1999

- \* *Code*, 1998: 23 units
- \* *Select, Copy, Delete*, 1999: 24 units
- \* *'n Opening is ook 'n Skeur*, 1999: 25 units
- \* *Time remaining 00*, 1999: 35 units
- \* *Basic Equations*, 1999: 5 units

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5 units: approx 500 x 500 mm

Photographs: Geoff Grundling

