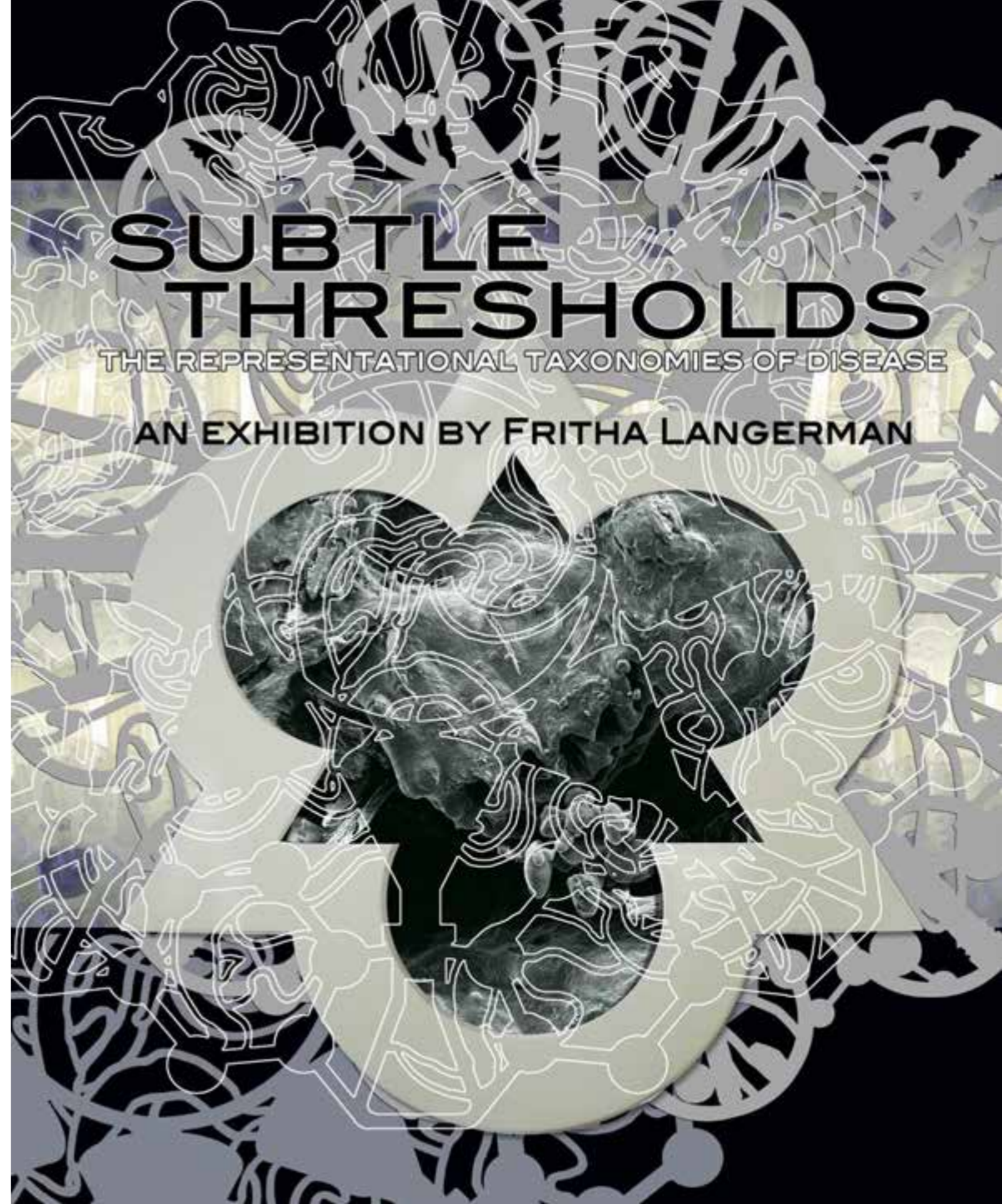


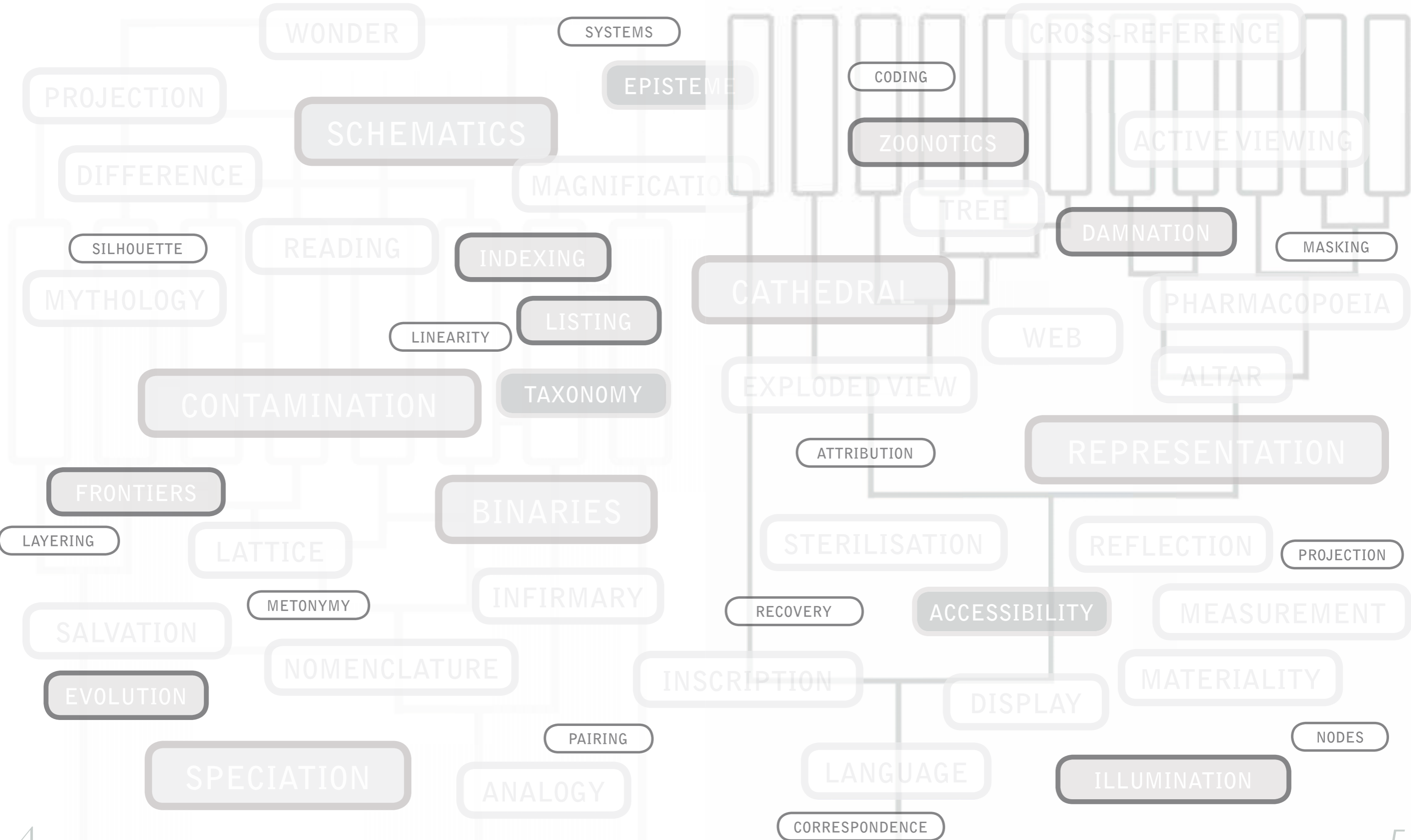
THE CENTRE FOR CURATING THE ARCHIVE
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South Africa

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THE CENTRE FOR
CURATING
THE ARCHIVE







Dedicated to Oscar, for whom nature is both magical and terrifying.

INTRODUCTION

Shrouded in subfusc tones that are interrupted by channels of light, natural history museums are staged as solemn performances - tragedies in which characters are timelessly cast, performing their roles as generic species. These are plays with limited dialogue. Bound not only by their glass vitrines, but also by their choreographed arrangement that best depicts speciation taxonomy, specimens rarely extend beyond their limited conceptual frame. This view of the natural world is one of tidy containment, in which everything has its place and, by reinforcing a sequential, progressive view of evolutionary development as well as presenting species as distinct, defined entities, exhibits tend to meet constituent expectation.

Contemporary curated exhibitions, however, have nothing of this taxonomic order. They are chimerical creatures. They are developed and conceptualised with multiple agendas and with multiple expectations. They evolve unseen over long periods, shape-shifting and morphing before being unleashed into the public realm in their imaginative and perhaps monstrous form. *Subtle Thresholds* is in this sense a project like any other. Initially intended as a critique of the visual politics within the representation of infectious disease, emphasis shifted to allow for a response to the context of the exhibition, the South African Museum. Thus, it is as much about the politics of display as it is about the medical body. It has long been argued that the South African Museum with its co-habiting social and natural history exhibits is, similarly to other museums of natural history throughout the world, essentially one that talks of the culture of science. Yet these two provinces lie in an uncomfortable proximity that has not been convincingly bridged. *Subtle Thresholds* is literally sandwiched in a gallery between social history and natural history displays and part of the intention of the exhibition has been to create a conceptual span between the two areas, inviting a two-way dialogue. While the 19th century saw a move towards themed museums, bound by finite disciplines in which categories of knowledge could be intricately ordered, the aim of much contemporary museum practice has been to make systems of classification self-consciously visible, and in so doing question the authority of these structures. There has also been an increasing tendency to integrate the polar divisions between museums of science and culture in a post-Snowdian acceptance that the two cultures mutually inform one another, and it is in this context that

my exhibition evolves. Furthermore, the development of critical museum studies together with artist interventions into the spaces of museums have reinvented museum practice. By uniting scattered collections and creating a 'community of objects', artists have been able to reflect on past practices as well as comment on contemporary concerns. The work of Joseph Kosuth, Fred Wilson and Mark Dion has been particularly significant in this regard.

The part museums have played within the colonial project needs no introduction. The development of museums is recognised as running parallel to the rise in nation states, as museums were seen as a means of actualising power through object wealth. Similarly, collections were used to reinforce ideological positions that collapsed science into forms of social control. Science museums also have a particular link to authoritative classification and valorised forms of knowledge as they have promoted an ideology of progress and mastery over nature as well as an appeal to notions surrounding beauty and discovery. In order to perpetuate a hierarchy of nature, the production of taxonomic scientific knowledge relies on the generalised example - the unit that stands for the whole community. One of my concerns has been the manner in which a particular type of museum display intrinsically perpetuates ascendancy¹ theories embedded within the iconography of evolution.² The 'crisis of representation' within museums has arisen precisely because it is acknowledged that museums have been complicit in perpetuating certain understandings of taxonomic knowledge and that the strong tropes which directed previous curatorial and display decisions can no longer interpret current theory. My contention has been that a shift of the conceptual and schematic model may allow for a shift in the nature of display and dissemination of content.

Subtle Thresholds concerns itself with representational taxonomies, taxonomy being a codification of this system of order based on difference. The word's etymology, from the Greek *taxis* (order or arrangement) and *nomos* (law or science) suggests this to be an inflexible system, and one that is ultimately hierarchical. Taxonomic thought has driven the visual presentation of biological collections and display, both within the book and museums, and it has developed persuasive visual metaphors to carry these ideas. The close alliance between schematics and ideology is evidenced in the medieval *imago mundi*,

which sought to represent a cosmology of the known world. The symmetrical geometry of the *imago mundi* is a development of an early Christian ordering system and world view - the Scala naturae - in which the tree was a genealogical analogue. Pre-empting Darwin's tree of life, *scala naturae* presented a divine order of nature, dividing animals and divine beings along 'evolutionary' lines of divine ascent. This presented an early system of binary taxonomy wherein belief was built on the oppositional states of order and chaos; heaven and hell; human and animal. Early museums were informed both by the legacy of the *imago mundi* - an encyclopaedic system of human knowledge - and by a pansophic philosophy, the idea of a comprehensive knowledge, evidenced through collections, and linking the natural, human and divine worlds.

The culture of biomedical and biological science is, in many ways, one of reading the visual, and in order to communicate bodies of knowledge these disciplines have often had to rely on analogy to carry complex ideas. These occupy a central role in the formation of public perception, and one of the most pervasive analogies is that of the evolutionary 'tree of life,' representing both a linear view of species and one of implied ascendancy. The topology of the tree provides a confident stability as the character of organisms (objects) as singular, reliable entities means that they may be compared and organised with predictable outcomes. The oppositional nature of taxonomy, built on similarities and difference, is currently believed to be contrary to speciation, which is both relational and contingent on space and time. In addition to this, recent developments in bio-informatics, and the rate at which genomes can be decoded, have allowed for complex interspecies comparisons to be made. In the past few years, the results of these comparisons have caused biologists to question previous evolutionary, phylogenetic models, particularly the iconography of the Darwinian tree. Lateral or horizontal gene transfer (HGT) observed particularly in microbes,³ suggests that species transfer genetic material between each other fairly regularly and that this is a fundamentally non-branching process, in contrast to the vertical de/ascent imagined by Darwin. HGT allows organisms to carry simultaneous attributions - a dual ontology. Although clearly the phenotypical expression and cultural understanding of individual species remain intact, their chimerical genotype undermines the belief that species evolve determinately from a single point. What this does is to dislodge the sanctity of coherent, independent entities, collapsing hierarchies and tipping

humans from their apex.⁴ In addition, this may allow for the possibility of representing other complex behavioural interactions that may influence speciation. The suggestion that a more appropriate visual model for evolution may be an interrelated network or web has implications for the interpretation of visual artefacts and visual knowledge bases, as in cladistic arboreal iconography each branch or node has two or more finite objects, whereas in web or net iconography, objects are fluid, subject to reattribution and change. Chains of reference are unravelled and objects and images become ambiguous and multi-referential. *Subtle Thresholds* has formally responded to this, suggesting a web of connectivity and correspondence of ideas. It co-opts layering and repetition of form through visual 'hyperlinks' to evoke a cosmology - a scattering of objects and images.

The title of the exhibition, *Subtle Thresholds*, suggests a narrow point of contact - the fuzzy-edged in-between spaces. Similarly, infectious disease provides a meeting point between species: human, animal and microbial, as disease is not something discrete and autonomous, but dependent on a relationship between a host and an organism in order to exist. Rather than acknowledging a continuous interaction with other organisms, cultural and linguistic codification has generated an understanding of humans as a distinct species, with unambiguous boundaries. Perhaps this ascendant bias and the denial of a constant biological dialogue with other species - both animals and microorganisms - may be held responsible for the prejudice and stereotyping that is endemic within much human interaction.

Disease has often been represented as singular content in exhibitions, and while contextualised, has offered a focussed viewpoint. Disease here is presented as biological, set within a complex network of cultural interpretations. The exhibition is located within a position that acknowledges the active nature of knowing, that knowledges are constructions and that the field of medical science is embedded within cultural narratives. It has received impetus from key texts on medical representation and episteme by Foucault, Gilman and Sontag and is concerned with the stigma surrounding infectious disease and the manner in which it has been imaged in both the popular imagination and medical literature. This has been expressed as a space of separation and difference: a reviled state wherein the patient becomes identified through and by their illness. This also relates to the language surrounding disease,

which relies on the binary oppositions of clean/unclean; known/alien; contaminated/sterile, as well as the history of epidemiology that interprets infectious diseases in the west as arising from outside European borders - as immigrant, foreigner and invader.⁵ *Subtle Thresholds* co-opts a visual strategy that appeals to the senses of wonder and beauty in an attempt to counteract the stigma and fear typically associated with disease. It references plague-altars, zoonotics, pharmacopoeias, 'sites' of contamination and bestiaries, and presents an exploded view of science - indicating an interconnectivity or slippage between organisms, world-views, science and mythologies.

Collecting is a practice deeply invested in ways of knowing and ways of perceiving, and reliant on a dialogical relationship between objects. It was precisely the physical proximity of massed objects within collections that allowed early biologists to reimagine the formal and conceptual relationships between them. The contiguity of the 16th century curiosity cabinet was the ultimate interdisciplinary collaboration - an intuitive arrangement of dislocated objects and specimens from unrelated practices. Physical proximity and tactility was encouraged in this type of display, as objects were handled and traded in non-rarefied environments. The move towards a system of order based on observation and the physical evidence of objects - comparative binaries of observable differences and similarities - ran parallel to the development of institutionalised spaces of collection. Objects were seen to receive meaning from their relationship to the rest of the collection rather than from their own intrinsic value and were contextualised by comparison with others. Difference thus became the centre of taxonomy and classification. *Subtle Thresholds* transgresses the typical display order of Cartesian inheritance, and allows objects from the South African Museum, the Wits Adler Museum collection and a series of new objects to be reattributed and redirected. The exhibition appeals to an encyclopaedic inventory that, in its visual complexity, creates a sense of disorientation. The system of cross-referencing necessitates an active (and physical) engagement with the layout of the exhibition in a search for linkages. Typically, museums present objects as discrete entities - as synecdochal specimens - within temporal or spatial sequences and supported by textual labels. In physically traversing between cabinets, the viewer becomes complicit within a sequential articulation of species. Knowledge acquisition within this exhibition is a discovery that requires participation. In

acknowledging the history of the relationships between images and text and museums and text, this project attempts to disaggregate object and image from text and label, allowing for a sensorial apprehension of the material alongside a more traditional reading of details within it, and it is this that is able to dislodge the certainty of interpretation.

¹The early 20th century inclusion of displays of indigenous populations within museums of natural history established race as a proxy for progress, situating Africa as a site of origins in opposition to progressive Europe.

²In popular imagination this is paired with the 'march of progress': forwards facing, single file, male species that demonstrate reduced hairiness, reduced pigmentation and increased vertical stature.

³Microbes dominate the evolutionary tree (Archaea and Eubacteria), whereas Eucaryotes make up a considerably smaller percentage of species.

⁴This apex is best typified by German biologist, Ernst Haeckel's tree of 1876 which traces a deliberate route from monera at the roots to menschen at the uppermost tips of the tree.

⁵This reinforces what Sander Gilman (1988) refers to as 'the fixity of disease as a constant other'.





512 lasercut hands derived from images of healing: 2500 BC - 2000 AD.



16 quatrefoils and trefoils of Scanning Electron Microscope images of animal excrement, 10 chromed steel plates of bacteria and parasites, 1 carrier pigeon, 1 dispensing scale, 10 rusted steel plates of bacteria and parasites, 4 percussion hammers, 63 metres of concordance ruler, 5 bats, 24 coordinate plates, 2 ophthalmometers, 4 rat skeletons, 40 framed mythological index cards, 220m² of shadow paintings, 1 jackal pelt, 1 pharmaceutical prescription book, 2 rolls of bandage, 220m² of schematic grid, 25 chalk texts, 4 zebra hooves, 10 viral light boxes, 4 auriscopes, 512 healers' hands, 1 pheasant, 22 wax moulding plates, 488 microbial test tubes, 1 parrot, 6 plague saint animals, 7 ophthalmoscopes, 7 rusted synonyms, 1 cockatoo, 2 medical cabinets, 6 autoclaves, 1 caracal pelt, 9 sterilisers, 40 metres ducting, 3 pneumothorax apparatus, 2 video projections, 3 coprolites, 1 marmot, 1 fox, 1 rabbit, 21 dental impression trays, 1 partridge, 1 foal, 4 hearing aids, 1 pig foetus, 5 snakes, 14 bottles, 7 retort stands, 2 pill makers, 1 snake bite kit, 50 small birds, 30 syringes, 14 cause of death reagent bottles, 25 dental moulds, 9 lion claws, 21 anaesthetic masks, 1 sheep skull, 20 surgical scissors, 50 ampoules, 2 UV lights, 3 trial lens cases, 10 stethoscopes, 1 zebra foetus, 40 syringes, 1 wax scabies model, 15 glass cupping devices, 2 mice, 1 baboon pelt, 2 oxygen masks, 3 monkey skulls, 22 glass slides, 5 pairs of antlers.



The wings are paired with the 'ex-voto' plague altar which uses the negative form of the hands as a screen, protecting six bandaged, taxidermied animals (surrogate plague saints) from the viewer. Plague doctor silhouettes run across the top of the screen, making further connections to the bird as a prevalent and ambiguous metaphor within the visual iconography of disease. Liberated from their dusty vitrines in the old mammal room, these bandaged animals occupy an ambiguous space somewhere between a zoo, infirmary and a confessional. Behind the animals the typical realistic diorama has been replaced by a chalkboard drawing of Celera Genomics' diagram of chromosomes 13 and 14.

Their bodies broke out in sores that became ulcers; sleepless and agitated, unable to bear the touch of clothes or bedding, they staggered naked through the streets, seeking water for their unquenchable thirst.

430 BC, ATHENS. Karlen 1995:59



S PLAGUE AFFLICTION CONTAGION
FECTION OUTBREAK PANDEMIC PEST
URGE
HT BR
REPT
R FIT
NFIRM
LINES
DITIO
ENT AP
CER SI
VALES
TURB
TRIBU
ALAISE PROSTRATION RELAPSE SEIZU
OLOGY
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ORDER
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LESS
INFIRM
CER SICKNESS INFIRMITY MALADY BU

CONTAMINATION



STERILISATION



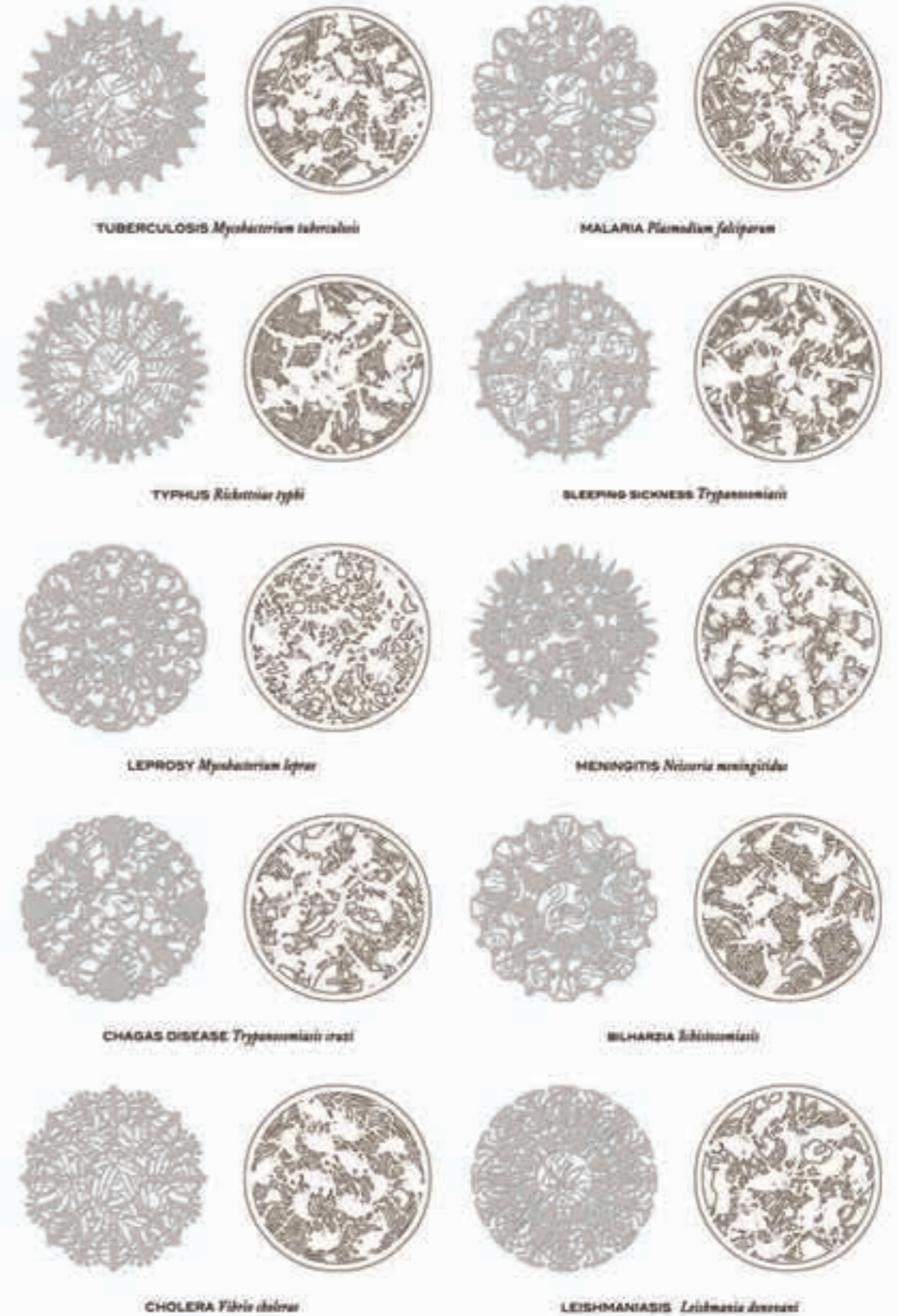
A low stage houses two steel medical cabinets from Groote Schuur hospital and a collection of sterilisers, autoclaves and fish hooks. The two cabinets contain ducting that, while reminiscent of bacterial forms, is simultaneously an agent of extraction and cleansing. Smothered in black Rockwell typeface with synonyms for pain and disease, the cabinets become 'contaminated by language'. The autoclaves, tethered or anchored to the cabinets, are filled with remnants of chalk, setting provisional knowledge against the authority of the black type.

CORRESPONDENCE

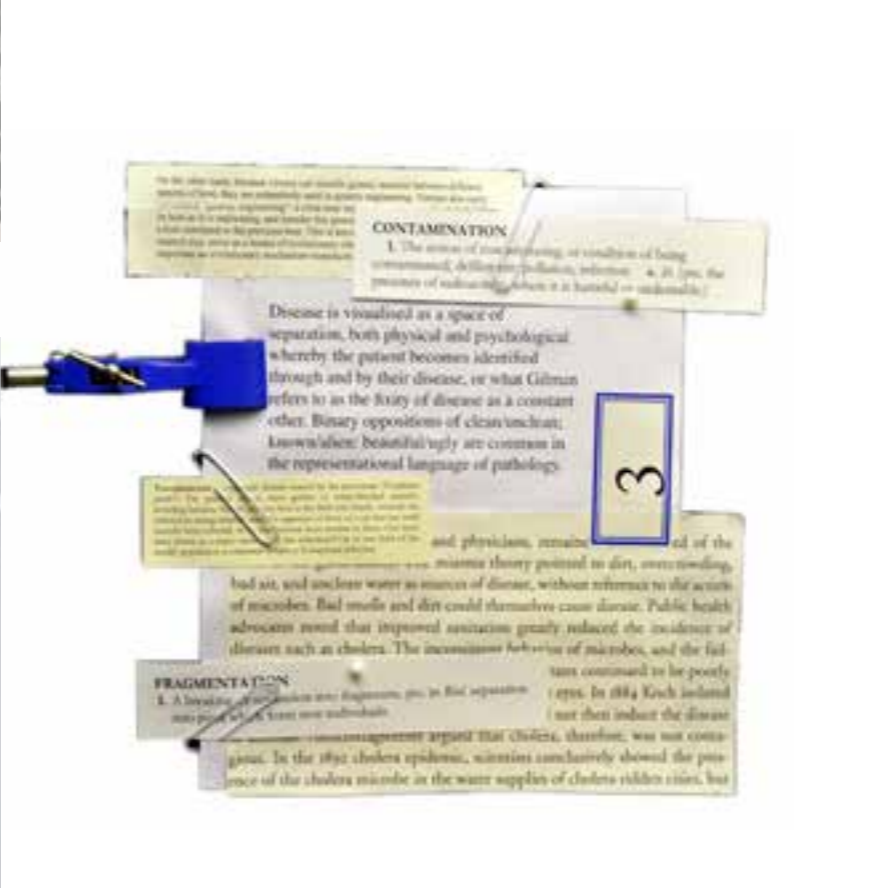
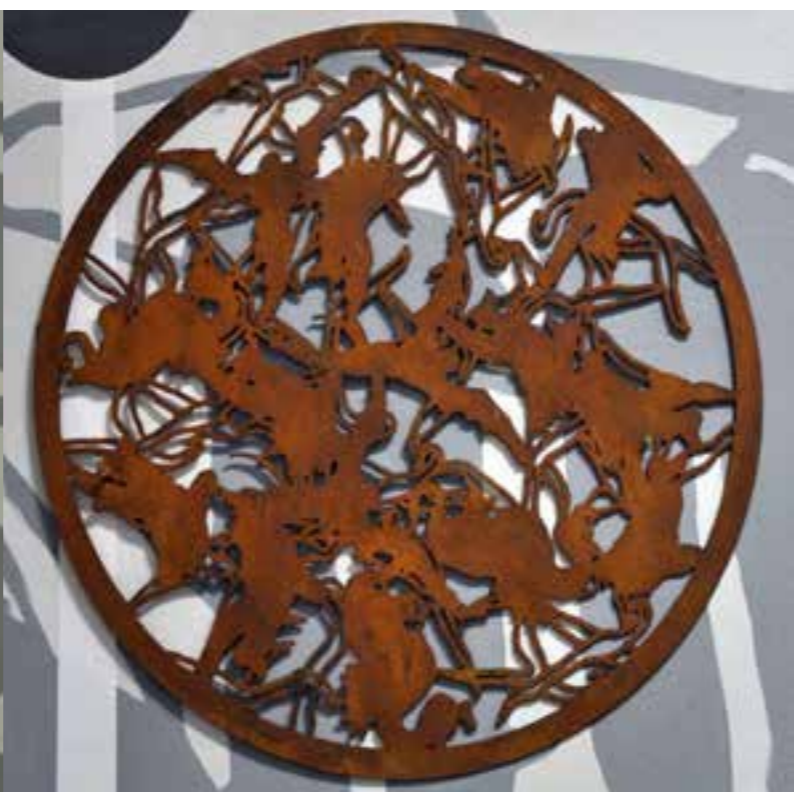


Chromed and rusted steel plates exist in two binary states: contaminated and sterile. The forms of the chromed plates are derived from pharmaceutical labware and parasitic and bacterial disease forms, while in the rusted plates, the disease forms are enlarged and populated with silhouettes of demonic images. This highlights the divisive and polarised positions of purity/impurity that construct much of the language of disease.

Erlenmeyer flasks, test tubes, beakers, syringes, measuring cylinders, reaction tubes, dropper bottles, specimen bottles, Oxford tips and images of hell and purgatory by Albrecht Dürer, Francisco Goya, Luca Signorelli, Hieronymus Bosch, Taddeo di Bartolo, Gustave Doré and Pieter Bruegel.



Erlenmeyer flasks, test tubes, beakers, syringes, measuring cylinders, reaction tubes, dropper bottles, specimen bottles, Oxford tips and images of hell and purgatory by Albrecht Dürer, Francisco Goya, Luca Signorelli, Hieronymus Bosch, Taddeo di Bartolo, Gustave Doré and Pieter Bruegel.



EXPLODED VIEW



56°
60°
Anthrax

51'N
36'E
1979

LANGUAGE

Yellow directional plates display the GPS coordinates of sites of major disease outbreaks in history. These are reminders of the levels of international infectious disease surveillance held on vast databases around the world. The plates are paired with a map in which geographical landform is determined by the incidence of ten major infectious diseases. Politics of access to medication and resources are made apparent by the relative density of continents.

... OF EGYPT, WHICH YOU KNOW, HE WILL PUT ON YOU, BUT WILL LAY THEM ON ALL THOSE WHO
A QUIET MIND IS THE LIFE OF THE BODY, BUT ENVY IS A DISEASE IN THE BONES. DEUTERONOMY
HE HOUSE AFTER HE HAS TAKEN OUT THE STONES AND AFTER THE WALLS HAVE BEEN RUBBED
PLAGUE OF LEPROSY; AND THE PRIEST SHALL EXAMINE HIM, AND PRONOUNCE HIM UNCLEAN. 1 CO
OD, BE LIFTED UP AGAINST ME AND AGAINST MY FAMILY, BUT NOT AGAINST YOUR PEOPLE. TO SEN
ONE. MARK 5:29 AND STRAIGHT AWAY THE FOUNTAIN OF HER BLOOD WAS STOPPED, AND SHE H
THIS IS WHAT THE LORD HAS SAID: HOW MUCH MORE WHEN I SEND MY FOUR BITTER PUNISHME
N THEN THE DISEASE HAD MADE A START AMONG THEM; AND HE PUT SPICES IN HIS VESSEL TO T
AND GREAT NUMBERS 14:12 I WILL SEND DISEASE ON THEM FOR THEIR DESTRUCTION, AND TAKE
THIS IS WHAT YOU ARE TO SAY TO THEM. THE LORD HAS SAID, BY MY LIFE, TRULY, THOSE WHO ARE
LEVICUS 13:42 BUT IF, ON HIS HEAD OR ON HIS BROW, WHERE HE HAS NO HAIR, THERE IS A RED AND
RE DISEASES. HIS PEOPLE MADE NO BURNING FOR HIM, LIKE THE BURNING OF HIS FATHERS. 2 SA
LE. JEREMIAH 38:2 THESE ARE THE WORDS OF THE LORD: WHOEVER GOES ON LIVING IN THIS TOW
AT THE GROWTH OF THE DISEASE HAS BECOME RED AND WHITE ON HIS HEAD OR ON HIS BROW WH
YOU WASTING OF THE LEGS AND DISEASE OF THE STOMACH; 1 KINGS 8:37 IF THERE IS NO FOOD IN
56 IF THE PRIEST LOOKS, AND BEHOLD, THE PLAGUE HAS FADED AFTER IT IS WASHED, THEN HE S
ED, OR A DWARF, OR ONE WHO HAS A DEFECT IN HIS EYE, OR AN ITCHING DISEASE, OR SCABS, OR
THE TIME OF HIS OLD AGE HE WAS DISEASED IN HIS FEET. JEREMIAH 44:13 FOR I WILL SEND PUNISH
HE HOUSE, BEFORE HE GOES IN TO SEE THE DISEASE, SO THAT THE THINGS IN THE HOUSE MAY N
DISEASE. LEVICUS 13:57 AND IF THE MARK IS STILL SEEN IN THE CLOTHING OR IN THE THREADS O
KING OF ISRAEL, CAME DOWN TO HIM, AND WEeping OVER HIM SAID, MY FATHER, MY FATHER, THE
THEIR SOUL FROM DEATH, BUT GAVE THEIR LIFE TO DISEASE. 1 CHRONICLES 21:12 THREE YEARS WHE
E LORD TAKING DESTRUCTION THROUGH ALL THE LAND OF ISRAEL. NOW GIVE THOUGHT TO THE
CUS 13:29 AND WHEN A MAN OR A WOMAN HAS A DISEASE ON THE HEAD, OR IN THE HAIR OF THE C
CUS 13:27 AND THE PRIEST IS TO SEE HIM AGAIN ON THE SEVENTH DAY; IF IT IS INCREASED IN THE S
ME TO HIS END THROUGH NEED OF FOOD AND DISEASE. 2 CHRONICLES 16:12 IN THE THIRTY-NINTH
ING HEAT AGAINST YOU, KEEPING BACK THE RAIN TILL YOUR LAND IS WASTE AND DEAD; SO WILL IT
MAKE CLEAR WHEN IT IS UNCLEAN AND WHEN IT IS CLEAN: THIS IS THE LAW ABOUT THE DISEASE
R BOWELS, UNTIL YOUR BOWELS FALL OUT BY REASON OF THE SICKNESS, DAY BY DAY. LEVICUS
S COME TO THEIR END BY DISEASE, THEY ARE NOT PUT INTO THE EARTH, AND THEIR WIDOWS ARE I
DISEASE ON THE KING AND HE BECAME A LEPER, AND TO THE END OF HIS DEATH HE WAS LIVING SE
VE GLORY TO THE GOD OF ISRAEL: IT MAY BE THAT THE WEIGHT OF HIS HAND WILL BE LIFTED FRO
HE ALTAR TO THE LORD. 1 CHRONICLES 21:22 THEN DAVID SAID TO ORNAN, GIVE ME THE PLACE WHE
THE LEPROSY SEVEN TIMES, AND SHALL PRONOUNCE HIM CLEAN, AND SHALL LET THE LIVING BIRD
K: AND HE SENT MESSENGERS, AND SAID UNTO THEM, GO, ENQUIRE OF BAALZEBUB THE GOD OF EKI
DISEASE," THEY SAY, "HE WAS AFFLICTED HIM. NOW THAT HE LIES HE SHALL RISE UP NO MORE." LEVIT
ST OF DISEASES. NUMBERS 14:37 THOSE SAME MEN WHO SAID EVIL OF THE LAND CAME TO THEIR D
DAVID. A FOOL SAID IN HIS HEART, "THERE IS NO GOD." THEY HAVE DONE CORRUPTLY, YEA, THEY HA
TER OF THE CHIEF OF MIDIAN, WHO WAS PUT TO DEATH AT THE TIME OF THE DISEASE WHICH CAME
AID, YOUR DISEASE MAY NOT BE MADE WELL AND YOUR WOUND IS BITTER. PROVERBS 12:4 A WOMA
R SEVEN DAYS MORE; JEREMIAH 32:36 AND NOW THE LORD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL, HAS SAID OF THIS
G FOR HIS SOUL OF ALL THAT HE DESIRES, YET GOD GIVES HIM NO POWER TO EAT BREAD, BUT AN ALI
SEND ON HER DISEASE AND BLOOD IN HER STREETS; AND THE WOUNDED WILL BE FALLING IN THE N
T SEVEN MORE DAYS. 2 SAMUEL 24:25 AND THERE DAVID PUT UP AN ALTAR TO THE LORD, MAKING B
ASE. HE WAS DESPISED AS ONE FROM WHOM MEN HIDE THEIR FACE; AND WE DIDN'T RESPECT HIM.
WILL BE THE FATE OF ALL THE MEN WHOSE MINDS ARE FIXED ON GOING INTO EGYPT AND STOPPING
T, AND KEEP YOU SAFE FROM WASTING DISEASE. ISAIAH 53:10 YET IT PLEASSED THE LORD TO CR
CH THE LORD WILL SEND ON ALL THE PEOPLES WHICH HAVE BEEN WARRING AGAINST JERUSALEM.
ER IN WHICH IS THE DISEASE, IS TO BE BURNED: FOR THE DISEASE IS BITING INTO IT; LET IT BE BUR
BY NEED OF FOOD AND BY DISEASE. ZECHARIAH 14:15 AND THE HORSES AND THE TRANSPORT BEAS
OF ALL THE EVIL AND DISGUSTING WAYS OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL: FOR DEATH WILL OVERTAKE
M, AND SAID, THY SON BENHADAD KING OF SYRIA HATH SENT ME TO THEE, SAYING, SHALL I RECOVE
WHO KEEPS IN THIS TOWN WILL COME TO HIS DEATH BY THE SWORD AND THROUGH NEED OF FOOD
BEEN MADE CLEAN, NUMBERS 16:50 THEN AARON WENT BACK TO MOSES TO THE DOOR OF THE TEN
ENT AFTER THE MAN OF ISRAEL INTO THE TENT, DRIVING THE SPEAR THROUGH THE TWO OF THEM,
AND WHILE HIS WRATH WAS BITTER AGAINST THE PRIESTS, THE MARK OF HIS DISEASE CAME
VIOLENT DEATH WILL GO THROUGH YOU: AND I WILL SEND THE SWOR
ISHMENT ON THAT NATION, SAYS THE LORD. BY THE SWORD AND NEED OF FOOD AND BY DISEASE, T
R AND GREAT ICE-DROPS, FIRE, AND BURNING. PSALMS 106:15 AND HE GAVE THEM THEIR REQUEST,
THEY SAID, THE GOD OF THE HEBREWS HAS COME TO US: LET US THEN GO THREE DAYS' JOURNEY IN
SE WITH HOLLOW STREAKS, GREENISH OR REDDISH, AND THE APPEARANCE THERE OF BE LOWER TH
AND DISEASE AND NEED OF FOOD; AND I WILL SEND YOU WANDERING AMONG ALL THE KINGDOMS OF

Itching skin eruptions first appeared on the breast and stomach and soon spread all over the body. When such an eruption was scratched, a multitude of these insects burst forth. The tissues were slowly eaten away and the insects emerged from many small holes in the skin.⁵⁰ BC, AFRICA. Bondeson 1997:5



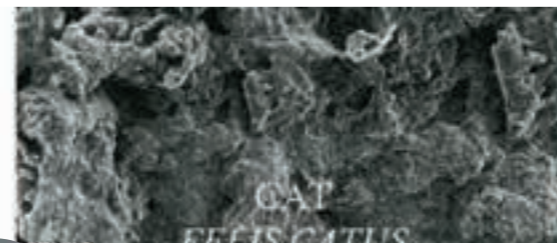
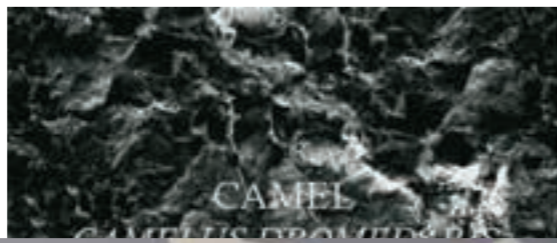
MYTHOLOGY



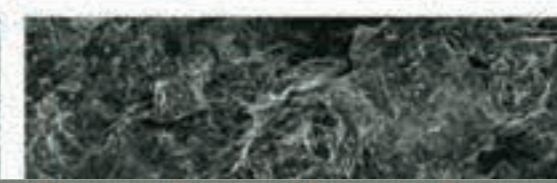
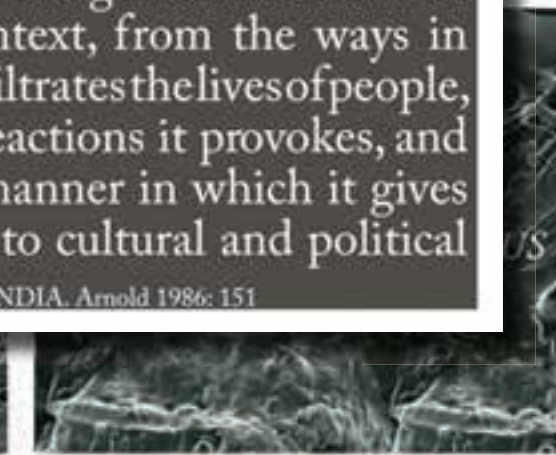
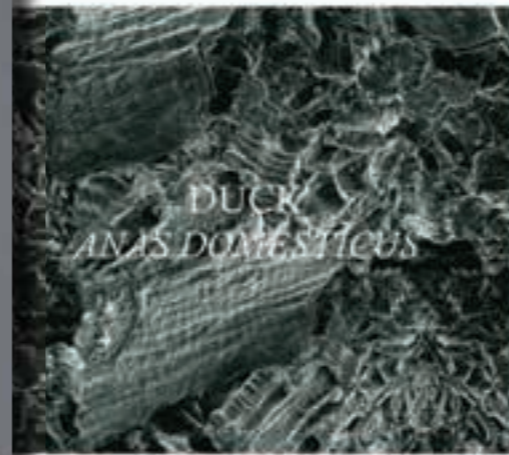
READING

The exhibition received impetus from key texts on medical representation and episteme by Foucault, Gilman and Sontag and self-reflexively makes these quotes part of the visual content. One of the many layers on the walls takes the form of 24 chalk texts that quote personal, mythical and philosophical readings of the diseased body. Contained within a schematic layout that spans 220 m² of wall space, the use of chalk speaks to the didactic and yet fugitive nature of the material. Similarly, the authority of the Times Roman script is undermined by its translation as handwritten inscription.

LATTICE



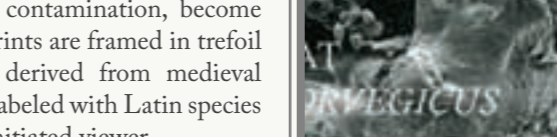
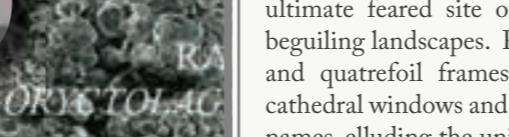
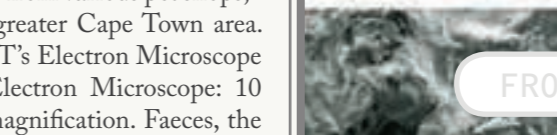
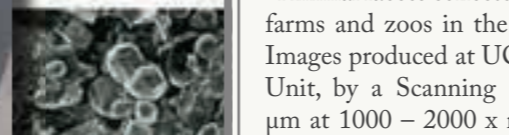
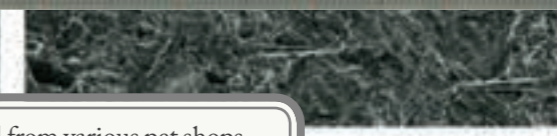
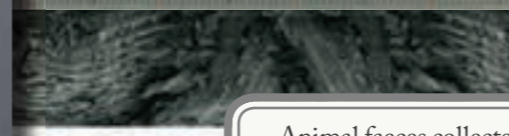
[Cholera] like any other disease, has in itself no meaning: it is only a micro-organism. It acquires meaning and significance from its human context, from the ways in which it infiltrates the lives of people, from the reactions it provokes, and from the manner in which it gives expression to cultural and political values. 1980, INDIA. Arnold 1986: 151

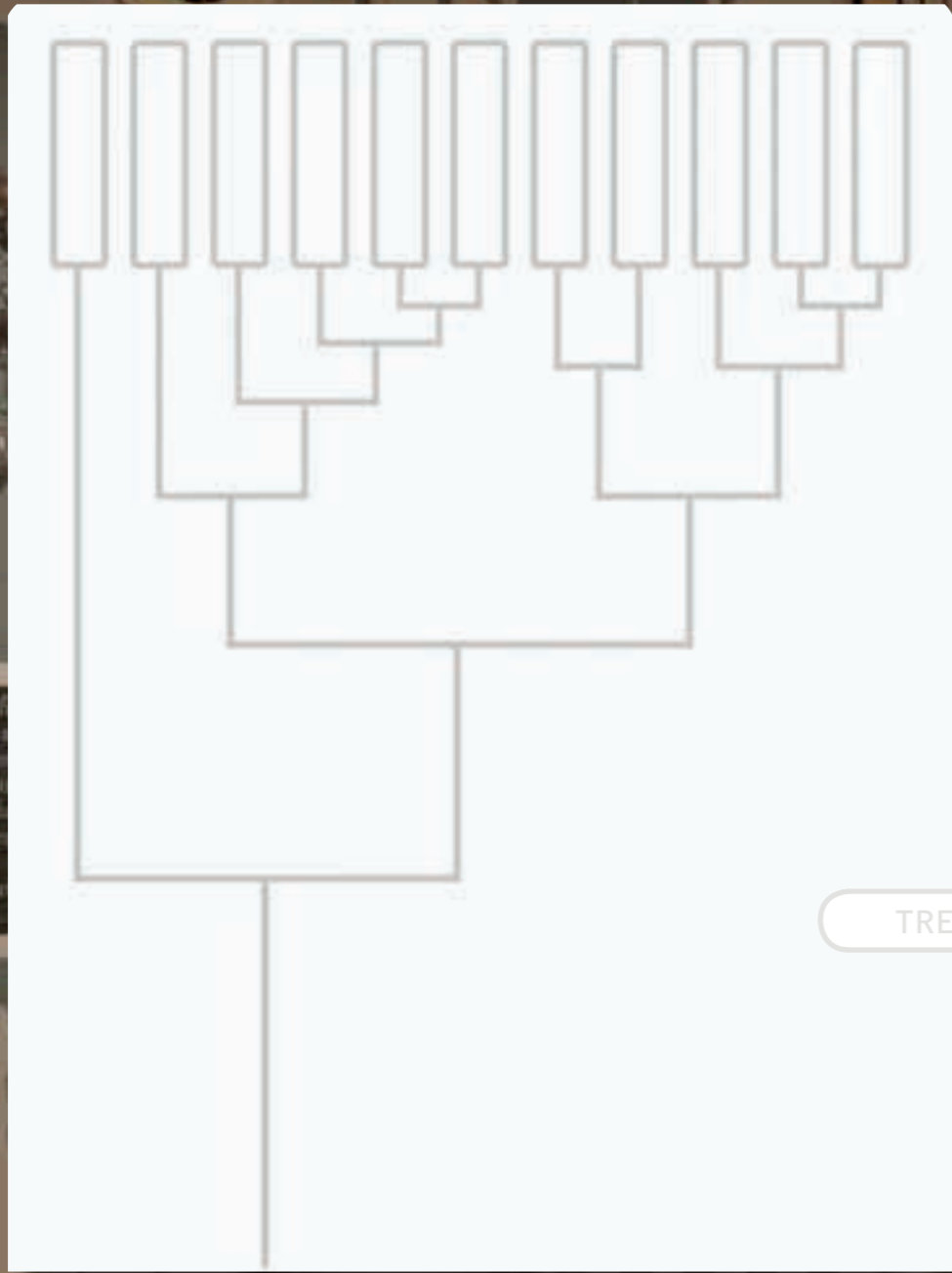
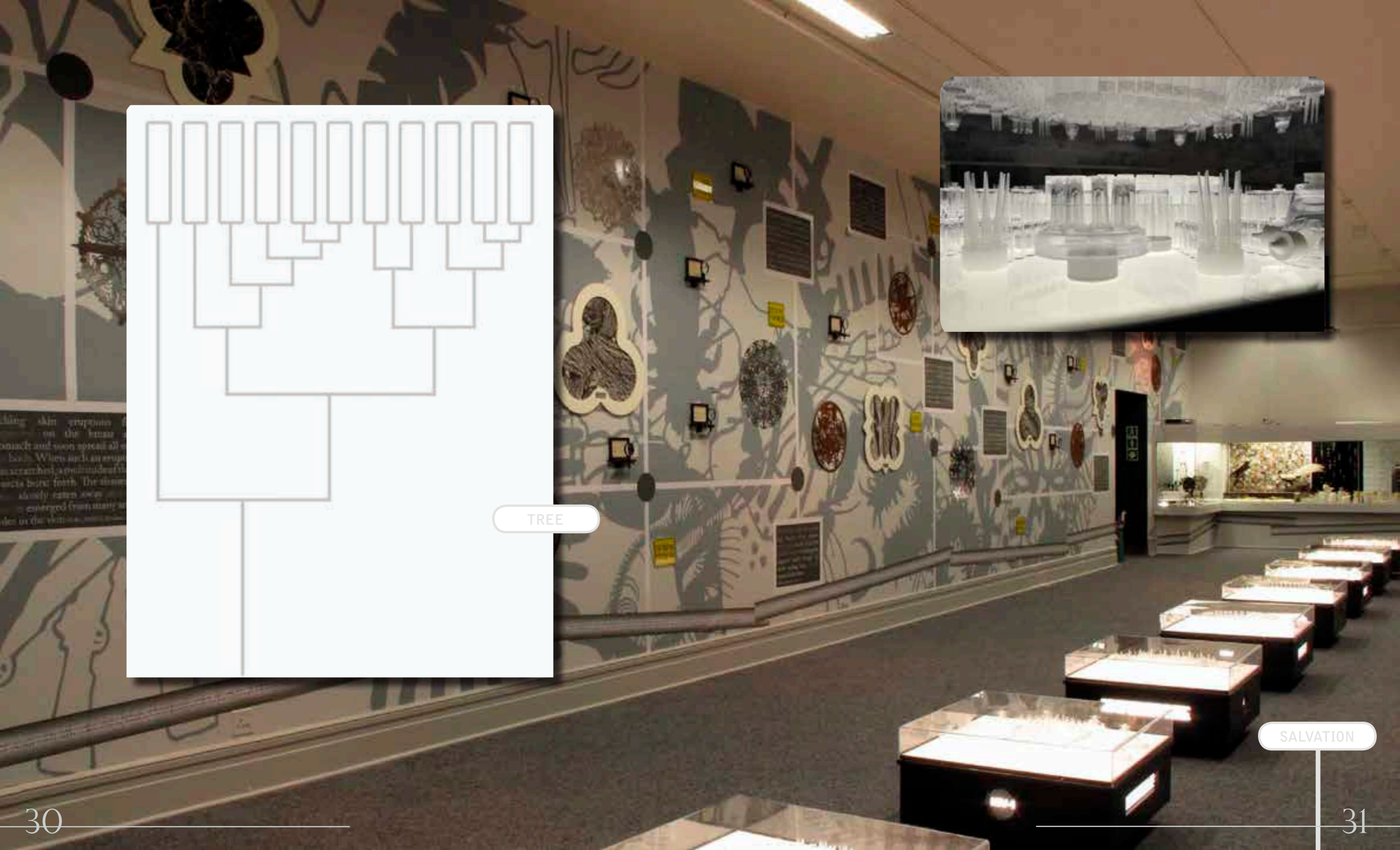


Animal faeces collected from various pet shops, farms and zoos in the greater Cape Town area. Images produced at UCT's Electron Microscope Unit, by a Scanning Electron Microscope: 10 µm at 1000 – 2000 x magnification. Faeces, the ultimate feared site of contamination, become beguiling landscapes. Prints are framed in trefoil and quatrefoil frames, derived from medieval cathedral windows and labeled with Latin species names, eluding the uninitiated viewer.

EXCREMENTUM
Callithrix jacchus

FRONTIERS

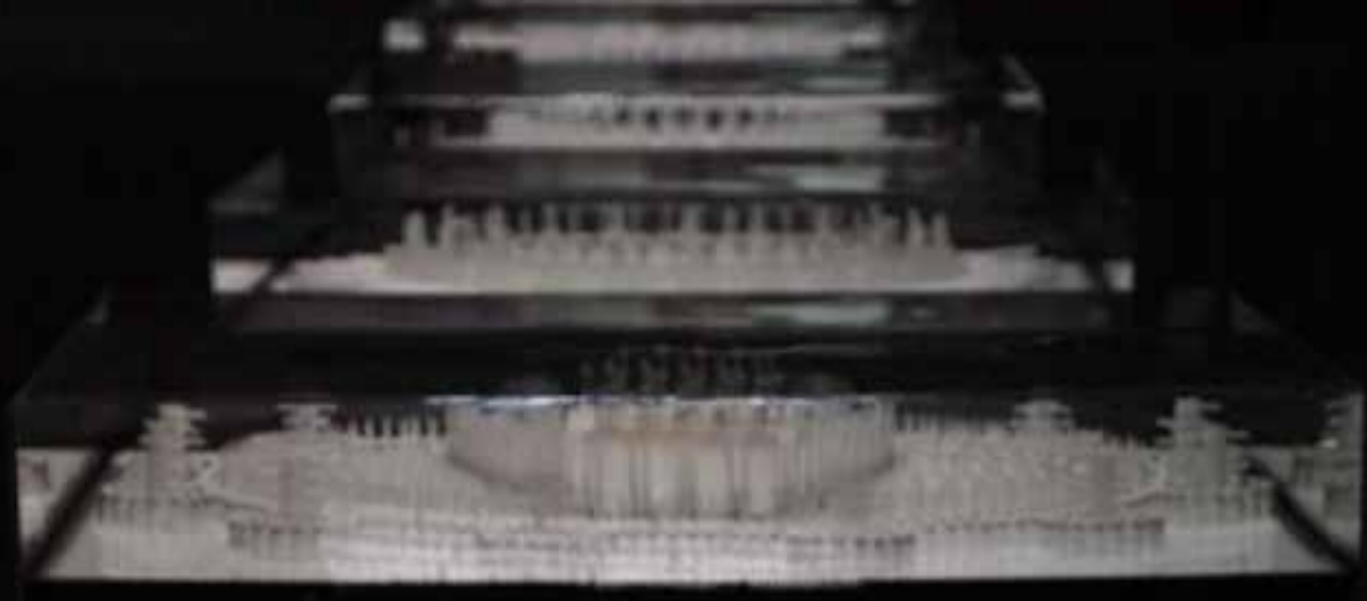




TREE

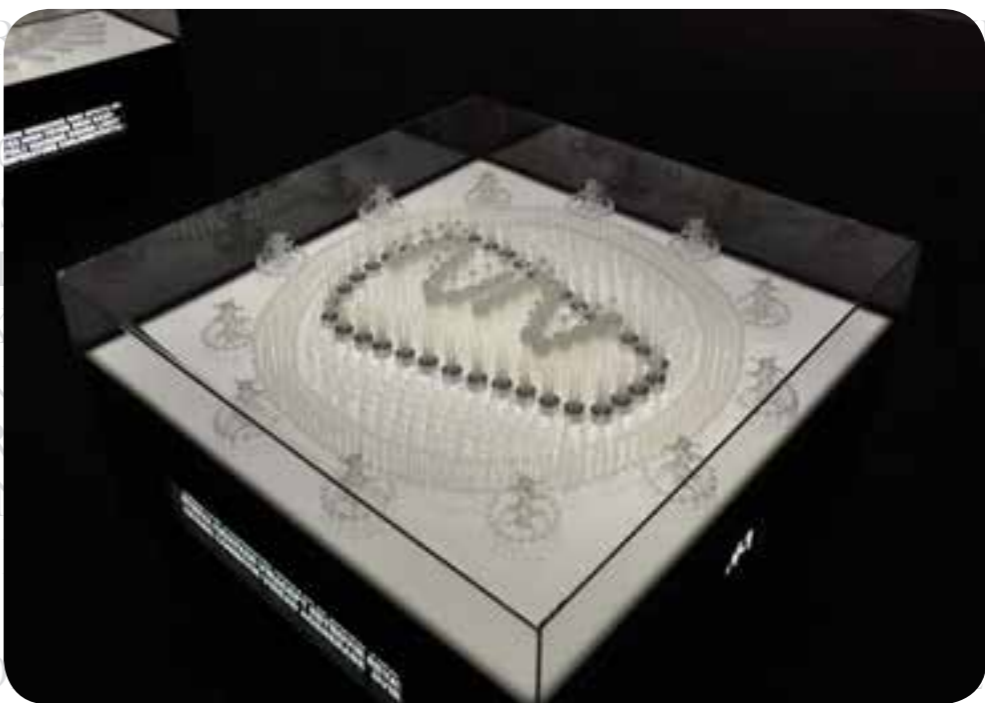


SALVATION



INDEXING

**SWOLLEN LYMPH GLANDS PAINFUL BLISTERS
HEADACHE MUSCLE ACHE FEVER GENITAL
DISCHARGE URETHRA INFECTION BACK PAIN
SMALL RED BUMPS IN THE GENITAL AREA**



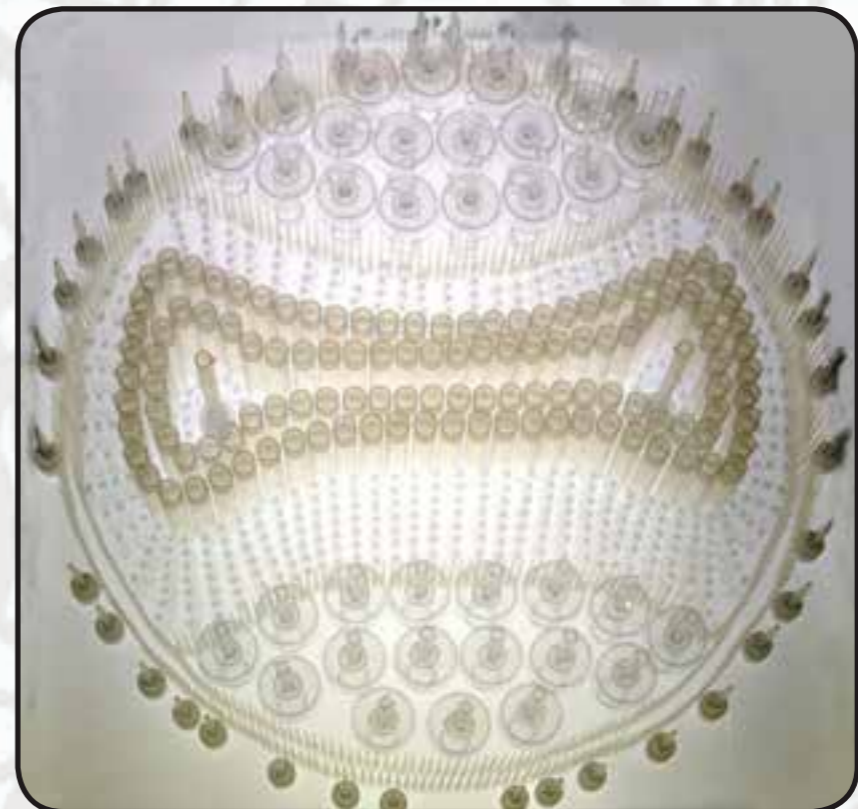
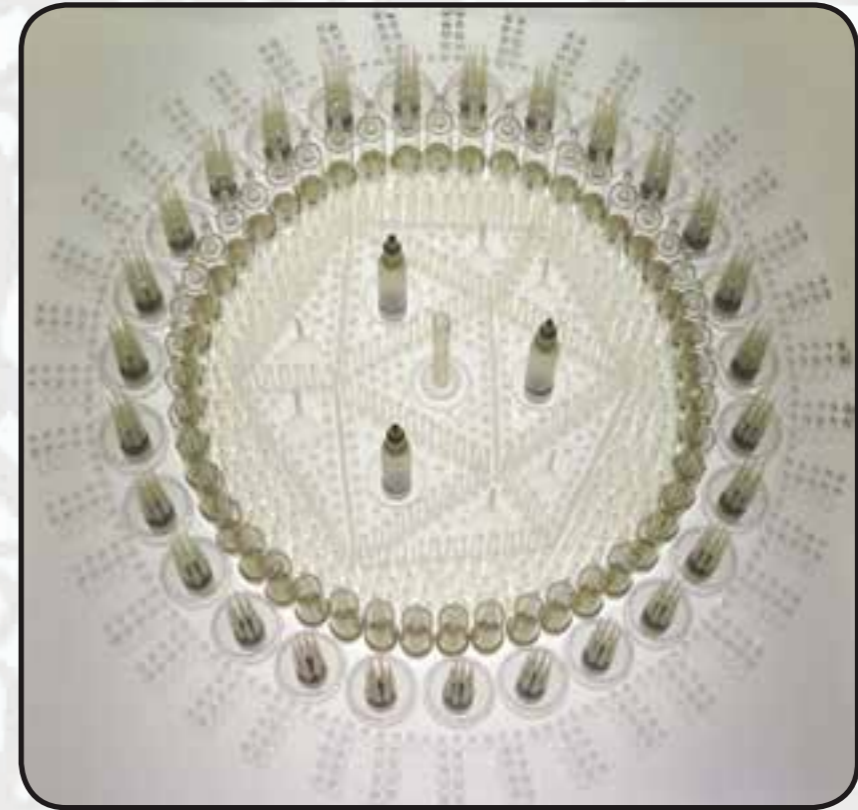
DISPLAY

Ten light boxes or vitrines contain representations, in pharmacological labware, of ten viral forms known to cause disease. The labels confound the uninitiated viewer, as they refer to international disease codes, taxonomy codes, medications and symptoms, without naming the diseases. The disease, by implication, can in certain frameworks only be read through the discipline that constructs it.

NOMENCLATURE



In order to disrupt the stigma and fear typically associated with disease, the exhibition co-opts two curatorial strategies: wonder and layering. The light boxes and complex lattice defer to Stephen Greenblatt's well-quoted notion of wonder as the 'power of the displayed object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention' (Greenblatt 1991: 49).



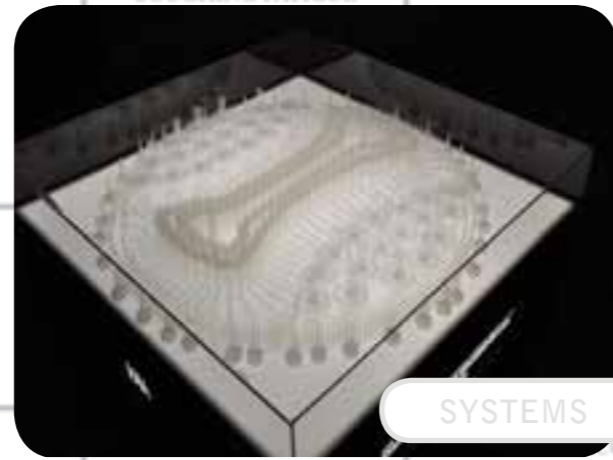
AVIAN FLU

AIV

J09

HIGH FEVER VOMITING
WATERY DIARRHOEA
COUGHING FATIGUE

TAMIFLU RELENZA
AMANTADINE



SYSTEMS

B03

SMA

XPAC
OLONE
EDROL
DIAPRED

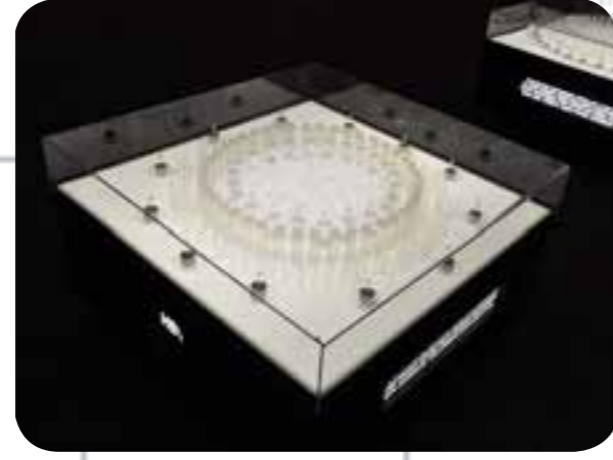
CHICKEN-
POX

HHV - 3

B01

HEADACHE FEVER SORE
THROAT MALAISE RASH
SYMPTOMS BLISTER-LIKE
RASH ITCHY BLISTERS
SCALP BLISTERS MOUTH
BLISTERS THROAT BLISTERS
GENITAL BLISTERS
SCABBING OF BLISTERS

ASPERGUM EQUAGESIC
MICRAININ AGGRENEX
FIORINAL FIORMOP
AXOTAL TRILISATE
MAGSAL MOBIGESIC
ROBAXISAL NORGESIC
ORAPRED PEDIAPRED
PRELONE CYTADREN
FERIN
COTRIN
OVIRAX
MICORT
MUNE



B06

RUI

M-R II
MMAR

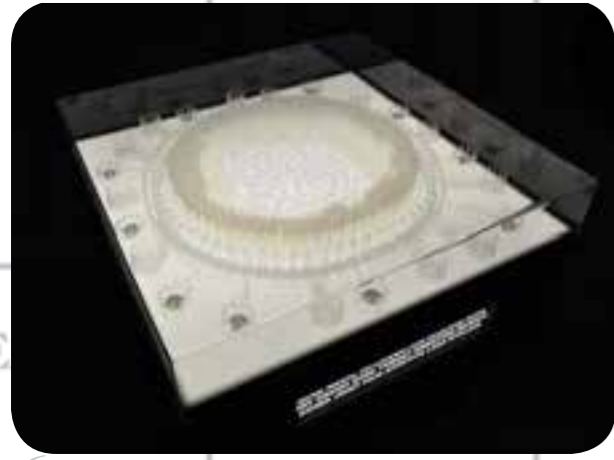
HEPATITIS

HBV

B15

MILD FEVER HEADACHE
MUSCLE ACHES FATIGUE
LOSS OF APPETITE NAUSEA
VOMITING DIARRHOEA

HEPSERA COMVAX
HAVRIX VAQTA ENGERIX-B
RECOMBIVAX HB REBETOL
COPEGUS RITUXAN
DRAZID
TRIZIVIR
ATAZ
TRUVADA
ASTAN
RON N
RON A
MBIVIR
MUNE
ETRON



B05

ME

OCORT
CPC-
ORON
LUREX
SOLU-
ORAPRED

COUGH LIGHT SENSITIVITY

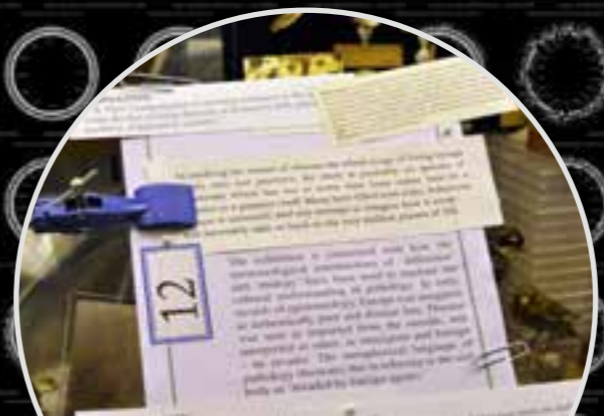
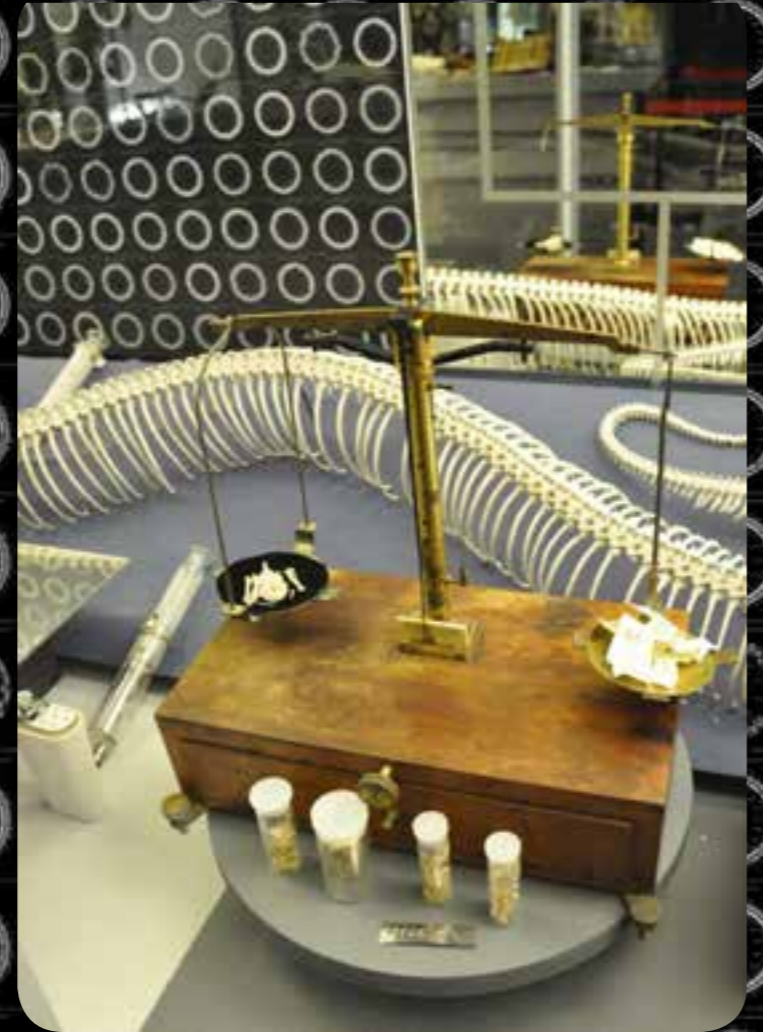
PEDIAPRED PRELONE
GAMASTAN GAMMAR
FLOVENT ROTADISK
FLONASE FLOVENT GEMZAR



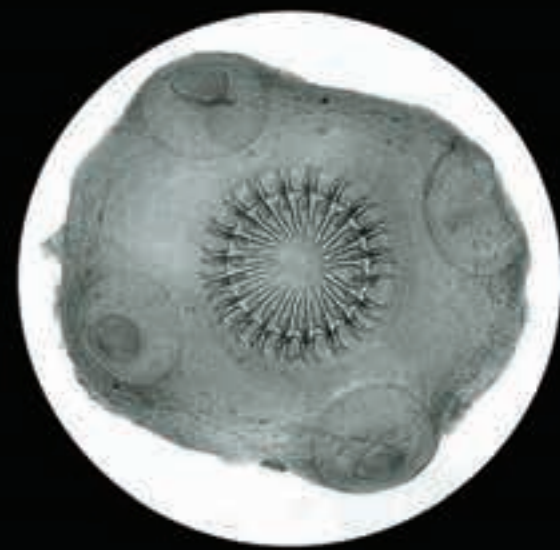
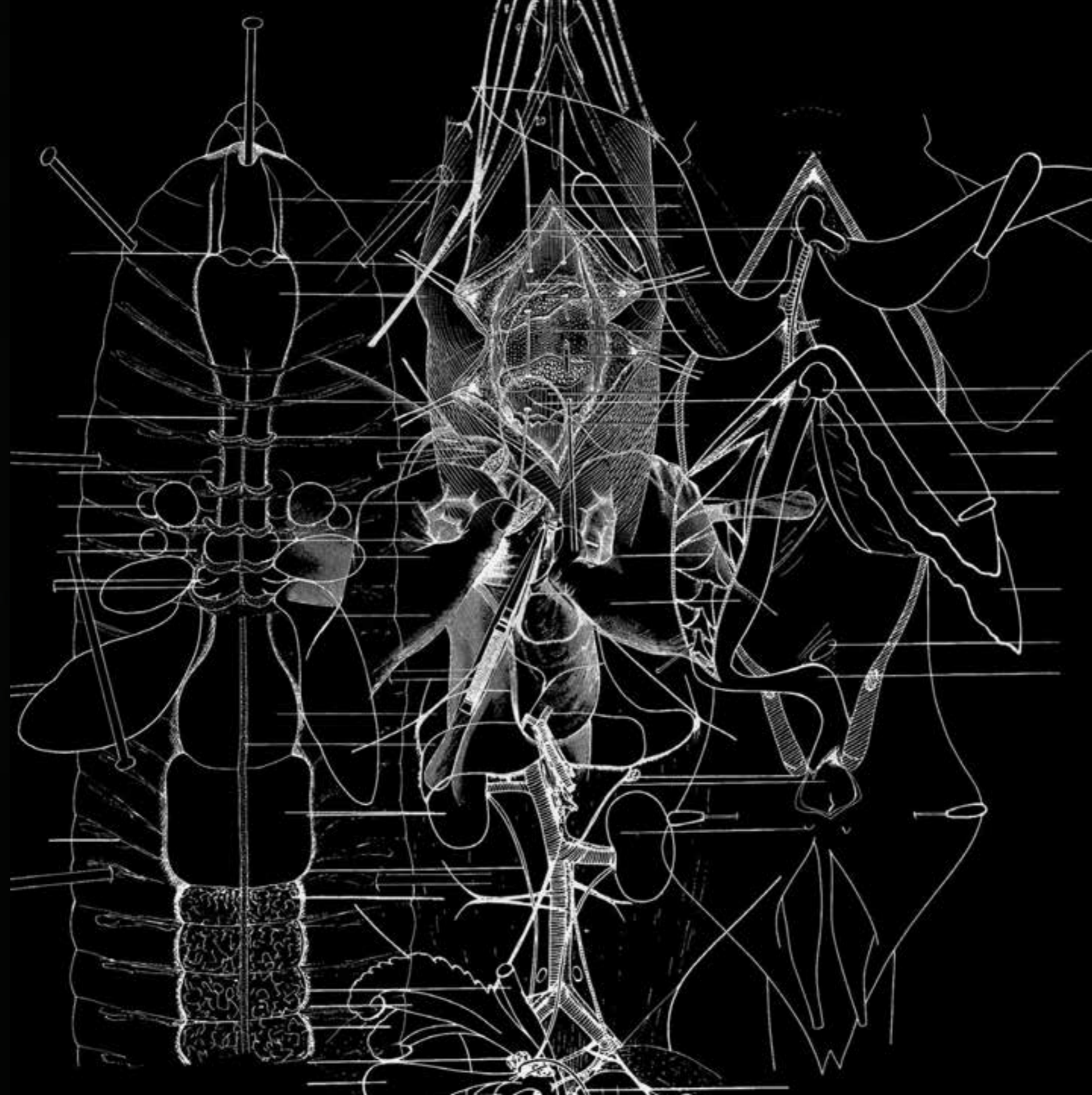
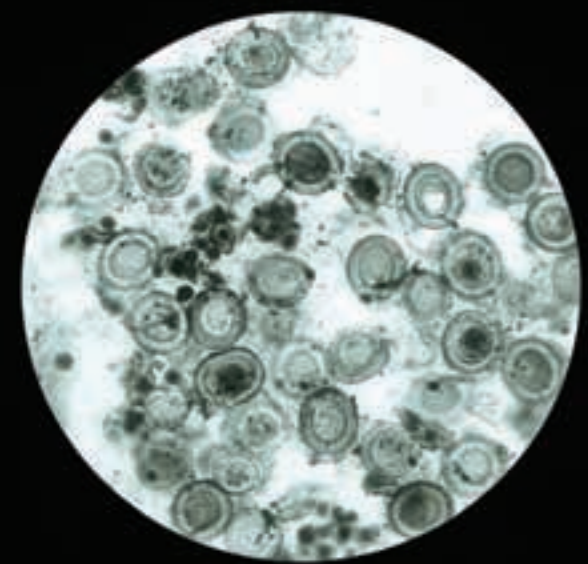
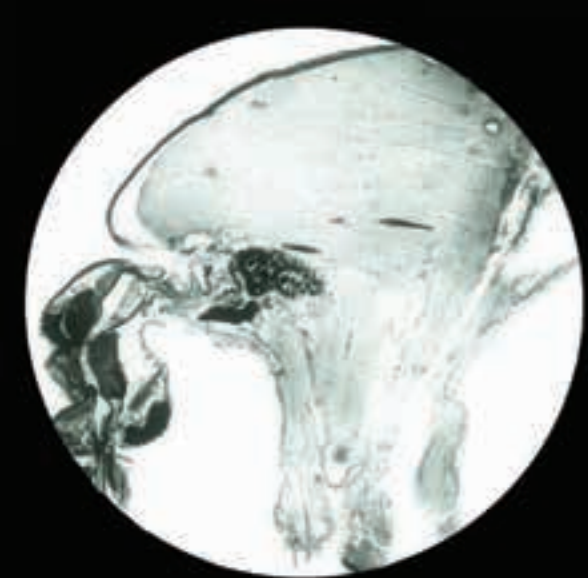
WONDER

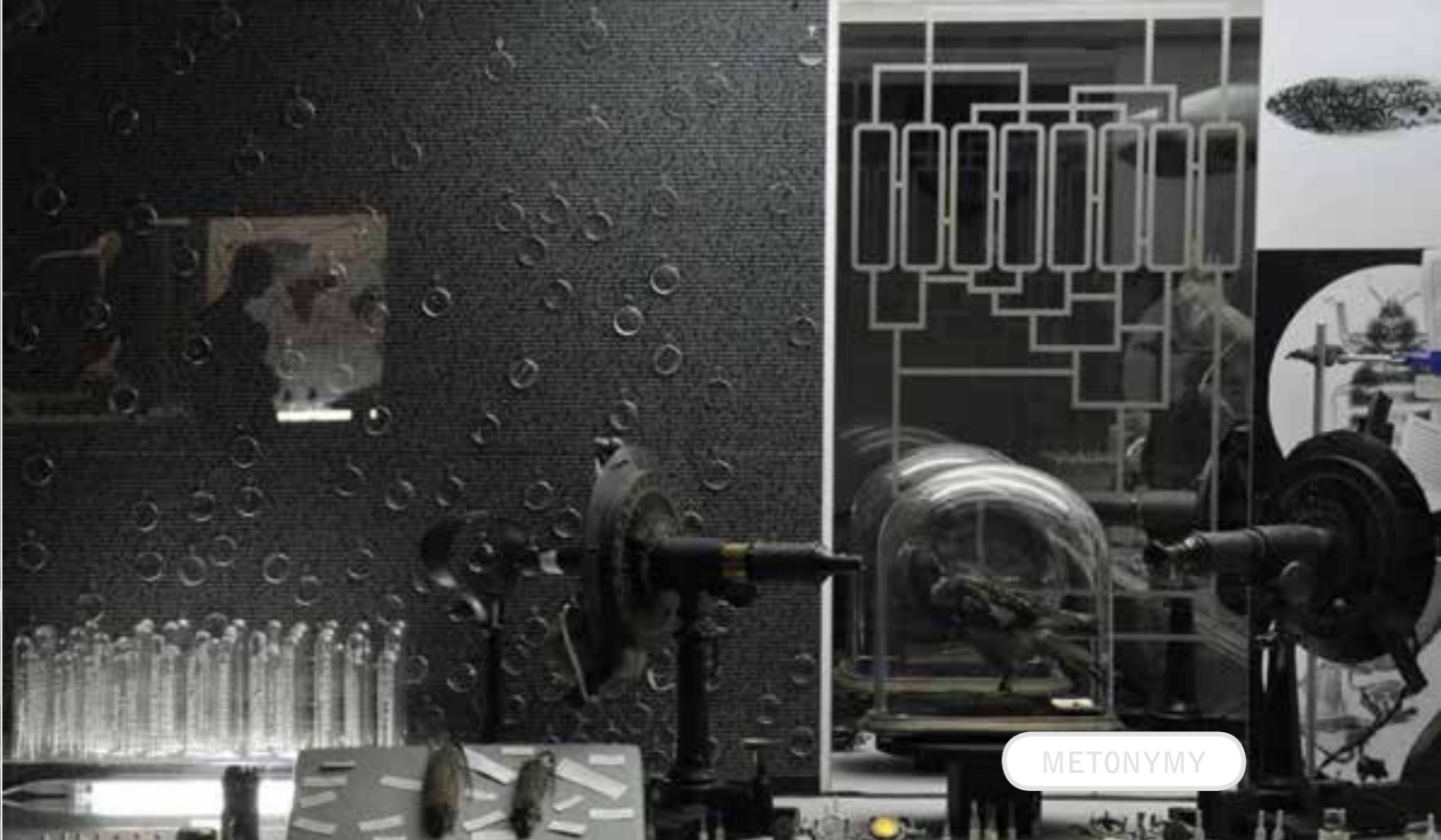


CROSS-REFERENCE

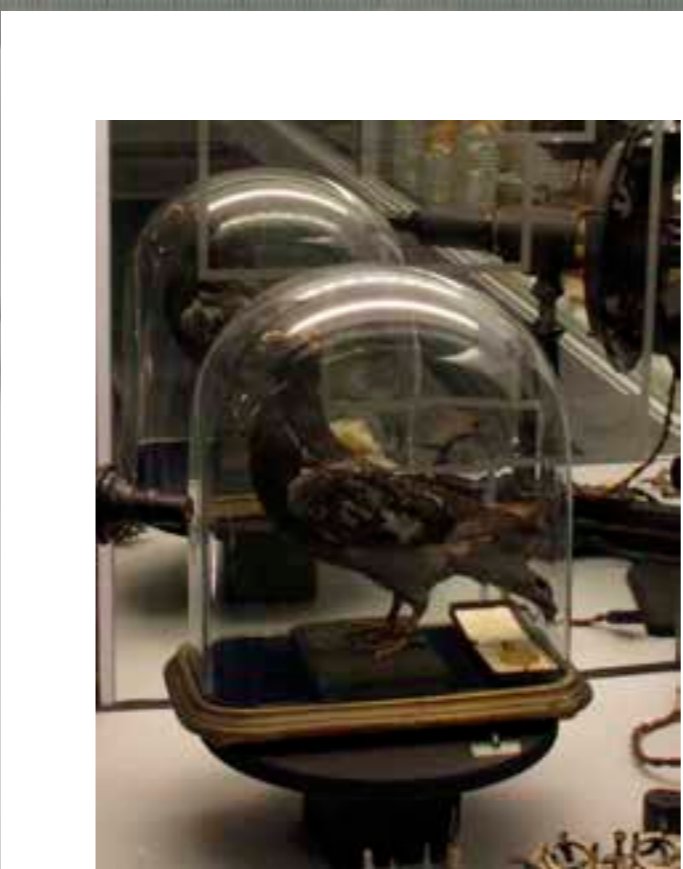


Two videos draw attention to the space above the cabinets. In the hierarchical space of control, they illustrate two ways of reading and interpreting the hidden body; the first through dissection (layered frog, fish, rat and human dissections) and the second through genomic mapping (1000 bacterial genomes flashing in a loop).

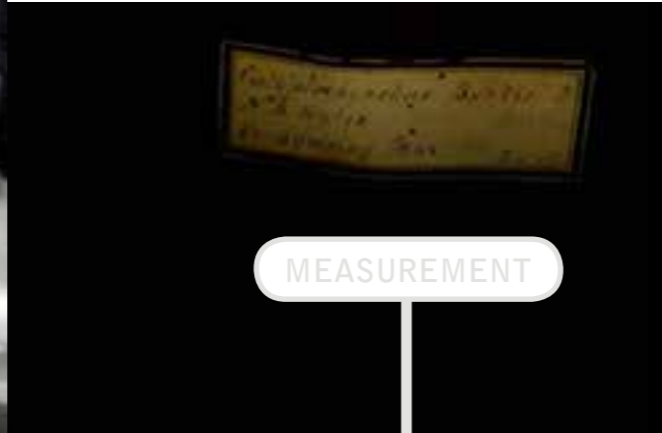




1847 BRITISH FORCES DISTRIBUTE SMALLPOX-INFECTED BLANKETS AMONG AMERICAN INDIANS 1877 THE MENINGITIS VACCINE IS DEVELOPED 1885 PASTEUR DEVELOPS THE RABIES VACCINE 1896 FRAENKEL DISCOVERS PNEUMONIA 2007 A DENGUE EPIDEMIC IS REPORTED IN MARTINIQUE 1735 LINNAEUS'S SYSTEMA NATURAE IS PUBLISHED 2009 A SWINE FLU EPIDEMIC BREAKS OUT THERE WILL BE GREAT EARTH-SHOCKS AND OUTBURSTS OF DISEASE IN A NUMBER OF PLACES, AND MEN WILL BE WITHOUT FOOD, AND THERE WILL BE WONDERS AND GREAT SIGNS FROM HEAVEN, LEVIATHANS 13 22 AND IT IS INCREASING ON THE SHIP THE FISHES WILL EAT THE FISHES THAT HE IS UNCLEAR IT IS A DISEASE I SAMPLED 25 28 THE LONG BENT DISEASE ON NABAL AND



“Believing that it is always best to study some special group, I have, after deliberation, taken up domestic pigeons.”
Charles Darwin



MEASUREMENT

ACCESSIBILITY



480 test tubes labelled with names of bacterial species.



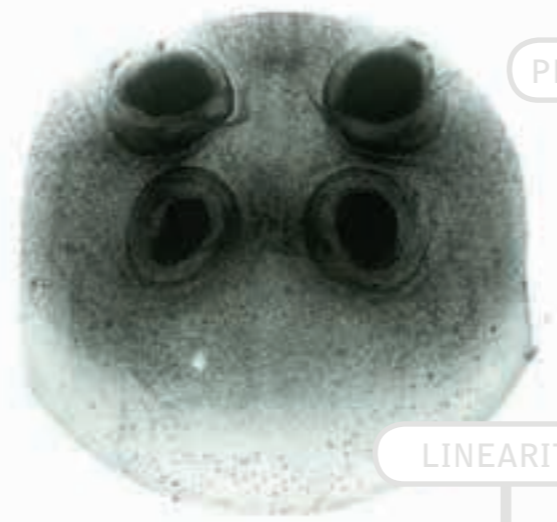
10 EXPLODED VIEW
 is exploded view drawing or assembly showing is a diagram, picture or technical drawing of an object, that shows the relationship or order of assembly of various parts.¹¹

The act of representation is highly politicised. Representation of disease and of the medical body has been subject to the same cultural ideologies as all other areas of social dialogue and to racial and sexual discrimination. This exhibition does not actively depict the human form, yet this does not excuse it from politics raised in this exhibition are located within a post-structural position that acknowledges the active nature of knowing, that knowledges are constructions and that the fields of biological science are embedded within cultural narratives and subject to those constructions. In addition, it accepts that biology is a discursive and that the idea of organisms and objects emerges from a discursive process.

REPRESENTATION
 1. n. The action of placing a fact, etc., before another or others by means of discourse, a statement or account, esp. one intended to convey a particular view or impression of a matter in order to influence opinion or action.
 2. n. The fact of thinking for, or in place of, some other thing or person, esp. with a view to substituting it for in their account, or substitution of one person for another.

with the metaphor of fire, little fuel or if it is too thinly spread, though simplistic, is basic. It is a syncretic permiss only if the animals to humans and thrive only if the people form a superherd. Once from hold several thousand people, they can support most present-day herd diseases. That first happened in the ancient Middle East.

Disease follows the obscure, but necessary ways of tissue reactivations. But what now becomes of its visible body, that set of phenomena without secrets that makes it entirely legible for the clinician's gaze: that is, recognizable by its signs, but also decipherable in the symptoms whose totality defined its essence without residue. Foucault 1975:59



PHARMACOPOEIA

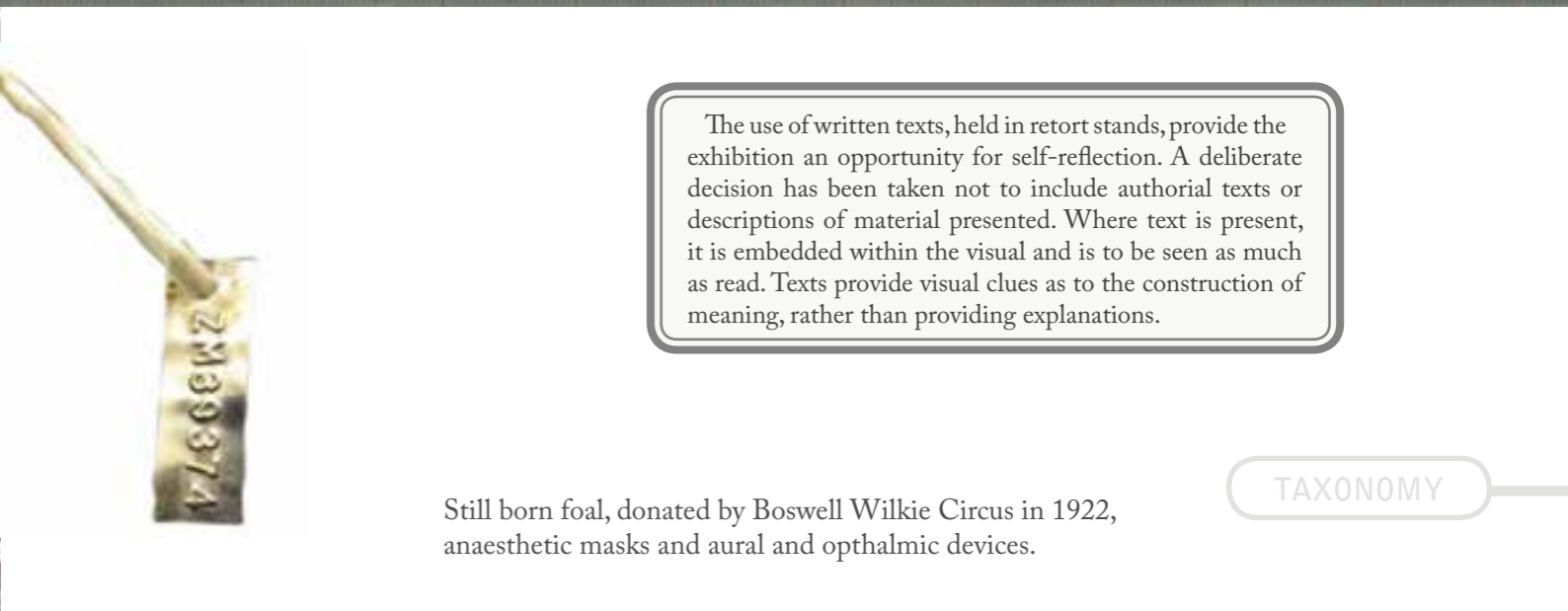
LINEARITY



1803 BRITISH FORCES DISTRIBUTE SMALLPOX-INFECTED BLANKETS AMONG AMERICAN INDIANS 1875 THE MENINGITIS VACCINE IS DEVELOPED 1885 PASTEUR DEVELOPS THE RABIES VACCINE 1890 FRAENKEL DISCOVERS PNEUMONIA 2007 A DENGUE EPIDEMIC IS REPORTED IN MARTINIQUE 1735 LINNAEUS'S SYSTEMA NATURAE IS PUBLISHED 2009 A SWINE FLU EPIDEMIC BREAKS OUT THERE WILL BE GREAT EARTH-SHOCKS AND OUTBURSTS OF DISEASE IN A NUMBER OF PLACES, AND MEN WILL BE WITHOUT FOOD, AND THERE WILL BE WONDERS AND GREAT SIGNS FROM HEAVEN. LEVIATHAN IS 22 AND IT IS INCREASING ON THE BANK. THE FLEET WILL BE TAKEN THAT HE IS UNCLEAN. IT IS A DISGRACE. I THANK YOU FOR THE LONG SILENT DISEASE ON NABAL, AND



EVOLUTION



The use of written texts, held in retort stands, provide the exhibition an opportunity for self-reflection. A deliberate decision has been taken not to include authorial texts or descriptions of material presented. Where text is present, it is embedded within the visual and is to be seen as much as read. Texts provide visual clues as to the construction of meaning, rather than providing explanations.

Still born foal, donated by Boswell Wilkie Circus in 1922, anaesthetic masks and aural and ophthalmic devices.

TAXONOMY





CHAGAS DISEASE - CHOLERA - EBOLA - BORNA DISEASE
 MARBURG VIRUS - WEST NILE VIRUS - INFLUENZAVIRUS
 SPONTANEOUS LARVA MIGRANS - GIARDIA LAMBLIA - OCULAR
 DEER TICK VIRUS - ENCEPHALITIS - LEPROSY - TUBERCULOSIS
 BRUCELLOSIS - LYMPHOCYTIC - CHORIOMENINGITIS - OROPOUCHE
 FEVER - CREUTZFELDT-JAKOB DISEASE - CRYPTOSPORIDIOSIS
 SCHISTOSOMIASIS - HANTAVIRUSES - KYASANUR FOREST DISEASE
 LASSA FEVER - MYCOBACTERIUM AVIUM - CAMPYLOBACTERIOSIS
 EASTERN EQUINE ENCEPHALOMYELITIS VIRUS - WESTERN EQUINE
 ENCEPHALITIS VIRUS - VENEZUELAN EQUINE ENCEPHALITIS
 HENIPAVIRUS - ST. LOUIS ENCEPHALITIS - BORRELIA
 YELLOW FEVER - HIV AIDS - TYPHUS - BARMAN FOREST VIRUS
 DENGUE FEVER - MALARIA - HERPES B VIRUS - COWPOX VIRUS
 RABIES - YERSINIA PESTIS - LEISHMANIASIS - TUBERCULOSIS
 M. TUBERCULOSIS - CRIMEAN-CONGO HEMORRHAGIC FEVER
 CRYPTOSPORIDIOSIS - ESCHERICHIA COLI - Q FEVER -
 RUSSIAN INFLUENZA - LEPTOSPIROSIS - RIFT VALLEY FEVER
 HERPES - MENINGITIS - CHICKEN POX - LYME DISEASE
 AVIANTUBERCULOSIS - BAYLISASCARIS PROCYONIS - ASPERGILLOSIS
 POLIOMYELITIS - SMALLPOX

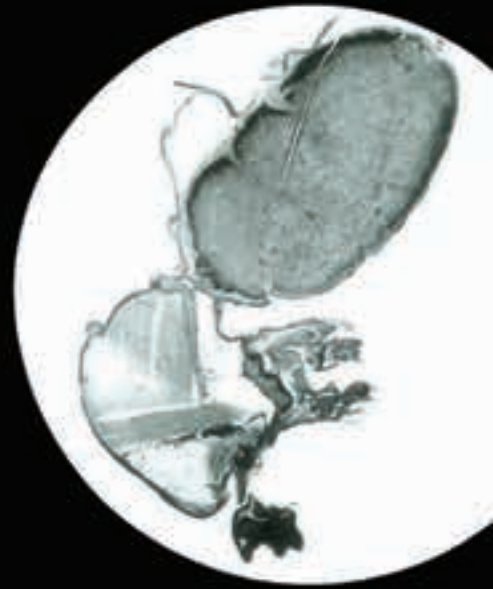


"The observing gaze refrains from intervening: it is silent and gestureless. Observation leaves things as they are; there is nothing hidden to it in what is given. The correlative of observation is never the invisible, but always the immediately visible, once one has removed the obstacles erected to reason by theories and to the senses by the imagination." Foucault 1975: 107.



PROJECTION

I experienced an attack and it deserves no less a name of the *Benchuca*, the great black bug of the Pampas. It is most disgusting to feel the soft wingless insects, about an inch long, crawling over one's body. Before sucking they are quite thin, but afterwards they become round and bloated with blood. 1835, ARGENTINA. Charles Darwin



Glass slides of parasites from UCT's Medical Microbiology collection.





INSCRIPTION

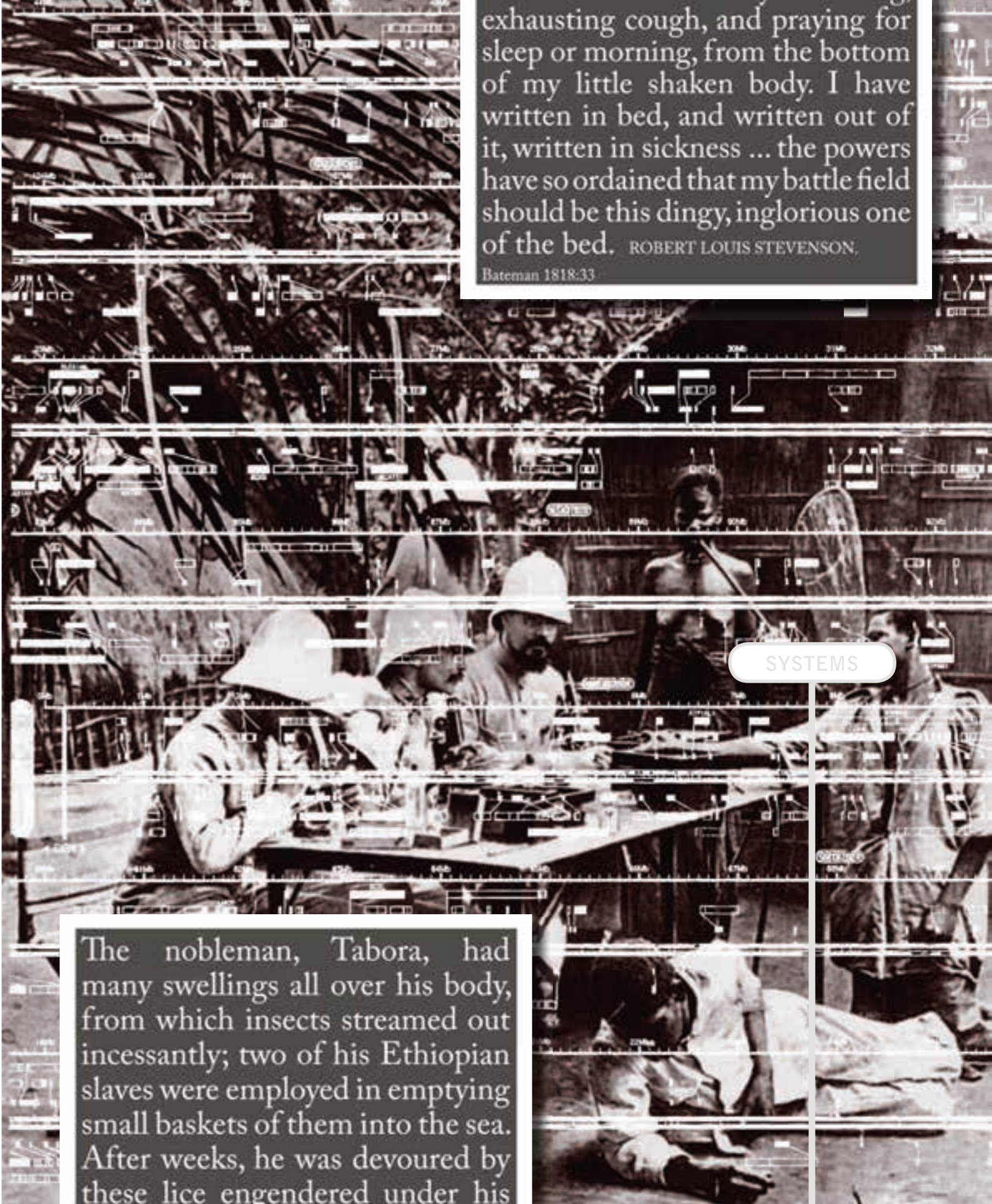
“By taking us back up the Darwinian ladder of evolution to the associative origins of human thought, analogy offers a non-algorithmic technique for binding our perceptual system to our cognitive systems, expressed in terms of similarities and antithesis. Learning, in this development scheme, does not spring from a chain of reasoning, but from a dynamic back-and-forth motion among choices that embrace the entire universe in their scope.” Stafford 1999: 176-7.

LISTING





exhausting cough, and praying for sleep or morning, from the bottom of my little shaken body. I have written in bed, and written out of it, written in sickness ... the powers have so ordained that my battle field should be this dingy, inglorious one of the bed. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, Bateman 1818:33



SYSTEMS

The nobleman, Tabora, had many swellings all over his body, from which insects streamed out incessantly; two of his Ethiopian slaves were employed in emptying small baskets of them into the sea. After weeks, he was devoured by these lice engendered under his





Wax moulding plates and dental impression trays from the Adler collection, together with parrot bones, antler and lion's claws from the SAM collection.

ZOO NOTICS





GEORGES CUVIER

(1769 – 1832)
COMPARATIVE ANATOMIST

CAUSE OF DEATH
CHOLERA

ALFRED WALLACE

(1823 – 1913)
NATURALIST

CAUSE OF DEATH
RECURRENT MALARIA

CHARLES DARWIN

(1809 – 1882)
NATURALIST

CAUSE OF DEATH
CHRONIC CARDIAC FAILURE POSSIBLY
CAUSED BY CHAGAS DISEASE

CAROLUS LINNAEUS

(1707 – 1778)
TAXONOMIST, ZOOLOGIST, BOTANIST

CAUSE OF DEATH
STROKE

COMTE DE BUFFON

(1707 – 1788)
NATURALIST

CAUSE OF DEATH
POSSIBLE KIDNEY FAILURE

CHARLES LYELL

(1797 – 1875)
GEOLOGIST

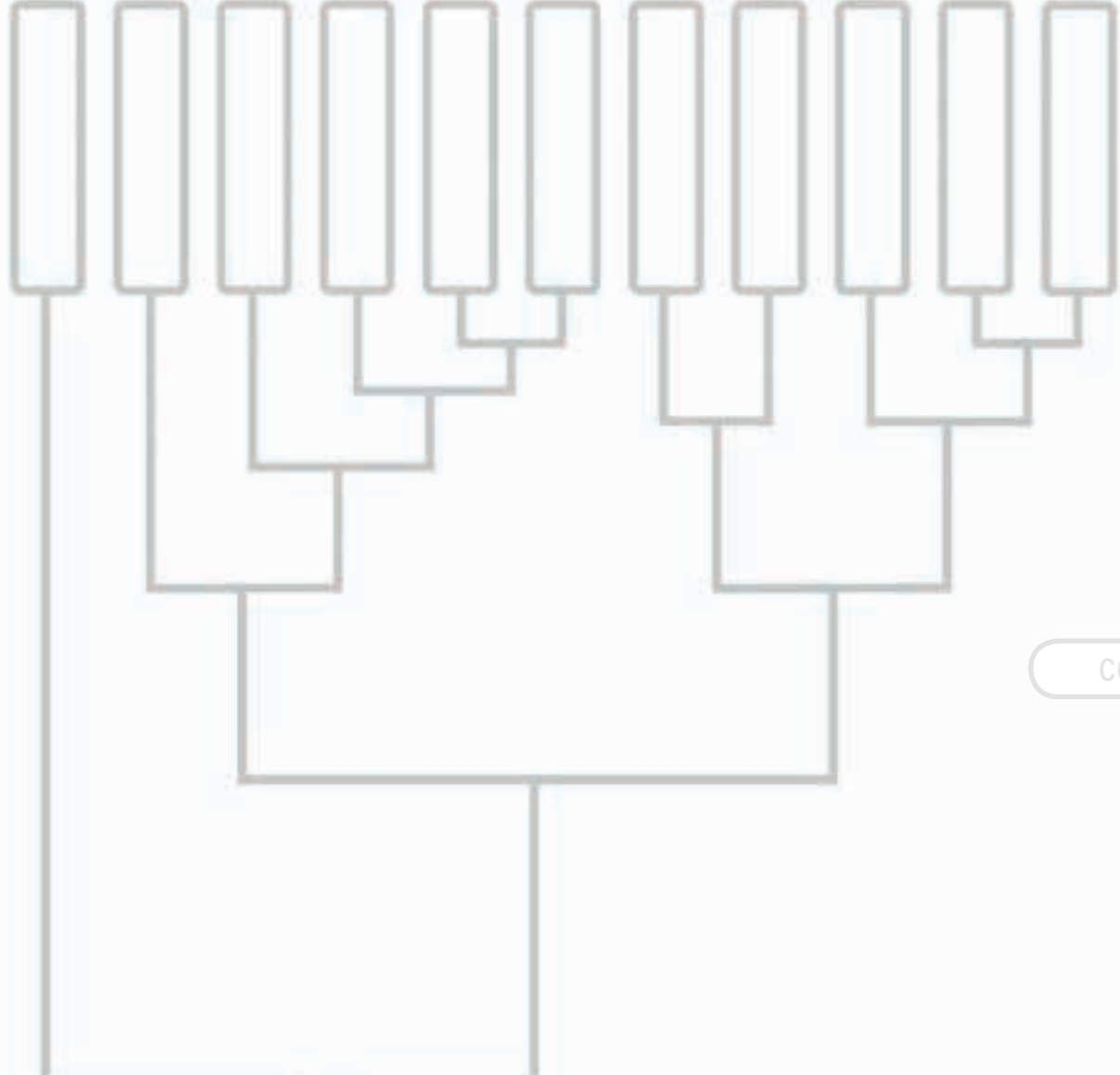
BY A FALL DOWN STAIRS



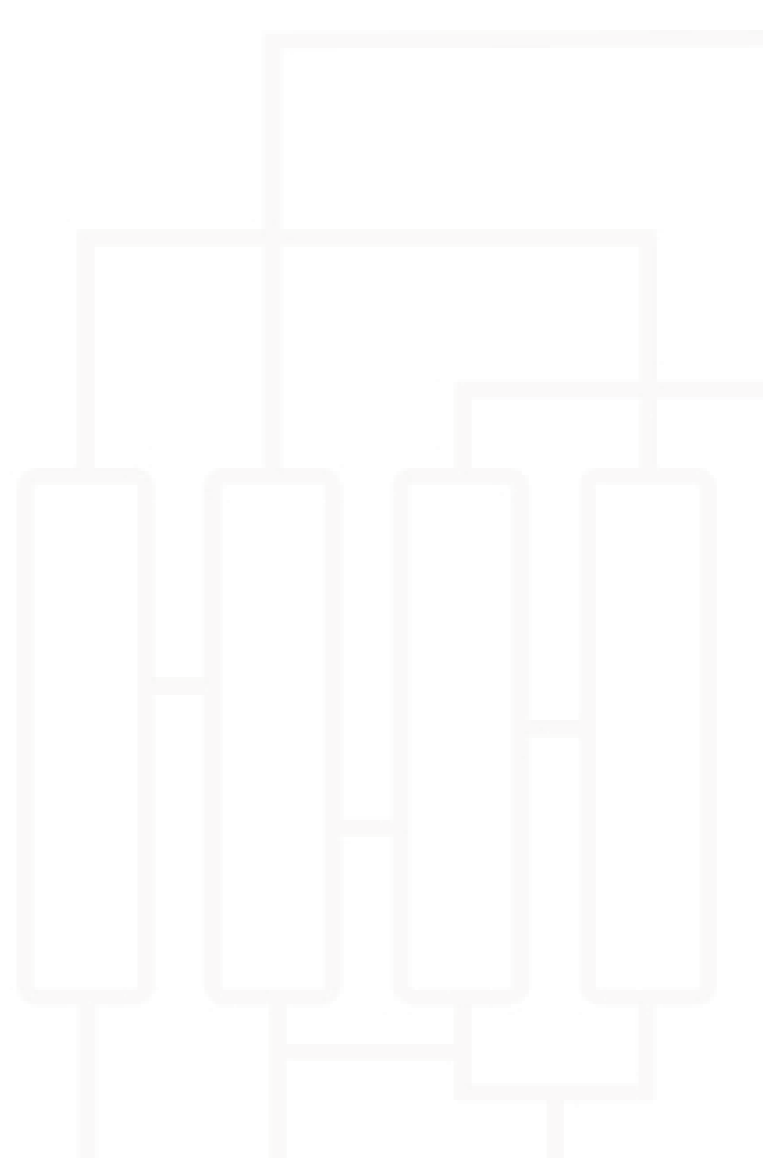
REPRESENTATION



14 reagent bottles labelled with the cause of death of 14 naturalists.



CODING



ACTIVE VIEWING



“There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the Ichneumonidae with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars or that a cat should play with mice... On the other hand, I cannot anyhow be contented to view this wonderful universe, and especially the nature of man, and to conclude that everything is the result of brute force. I am inclined to look at everything as resulting from designed laws, with the details, whether good or bad, left to the working out of what we may call chance.”

Darwin Letter to Asa Gray
(22 May 1860).



1 Wed	0 Sh: 0 Dr.	Well very, two very slight fits of fl (no eruption 4 to 6 fits, otherwise good night)
2 Th	Sw: Sh: D: Dr.:	Well very 3 slight fits of fl
3 Fri	Sw: Sh: D Dr.	Well very 2 very slight fits of fl
4 Sat	Sw:	low separate eruct
5 Sund	Sh.	which 2 Or 3 bad
6 Mon	Sw:	at 6 fits of fl not v
7 Tuesd	Sw:	fits of fl
8 Wed	0 S	Of which on badc
9 Th	Sw:	
10 Friday	Sw:	afterwards, 4 or
11 Sat	Sw:	ight bad oppresse
12 Sund	0 S	t fit of fl; night h
13 Mon	Sw:	of fl; night very g
14 Tuesd	Sw:	e occas separate
15 Wed	Sh.	morning, terrible
16 Th	Sw:	retching up with
17 Fri	Sw:	e bad sickness,
18 Sat	Sw:	. In evening little
19 Sund	Sh.	al much fl
20 Mond.	Sw:	od
21 Tued	Sw:	fair
		t heazy
		early night much
22 Wed	0 Sh. 0 D Dr.	good afterwards. Well almost very 3 fits of fl of wh. One longisl night good, often wakeful
23 Th	Sw.Sh. D Dr.	Well very no fits of fl & but very little occas.
24 Fri	Sw. Sh. D. Dr.	Well very do some rather uncomfortable feels- right need



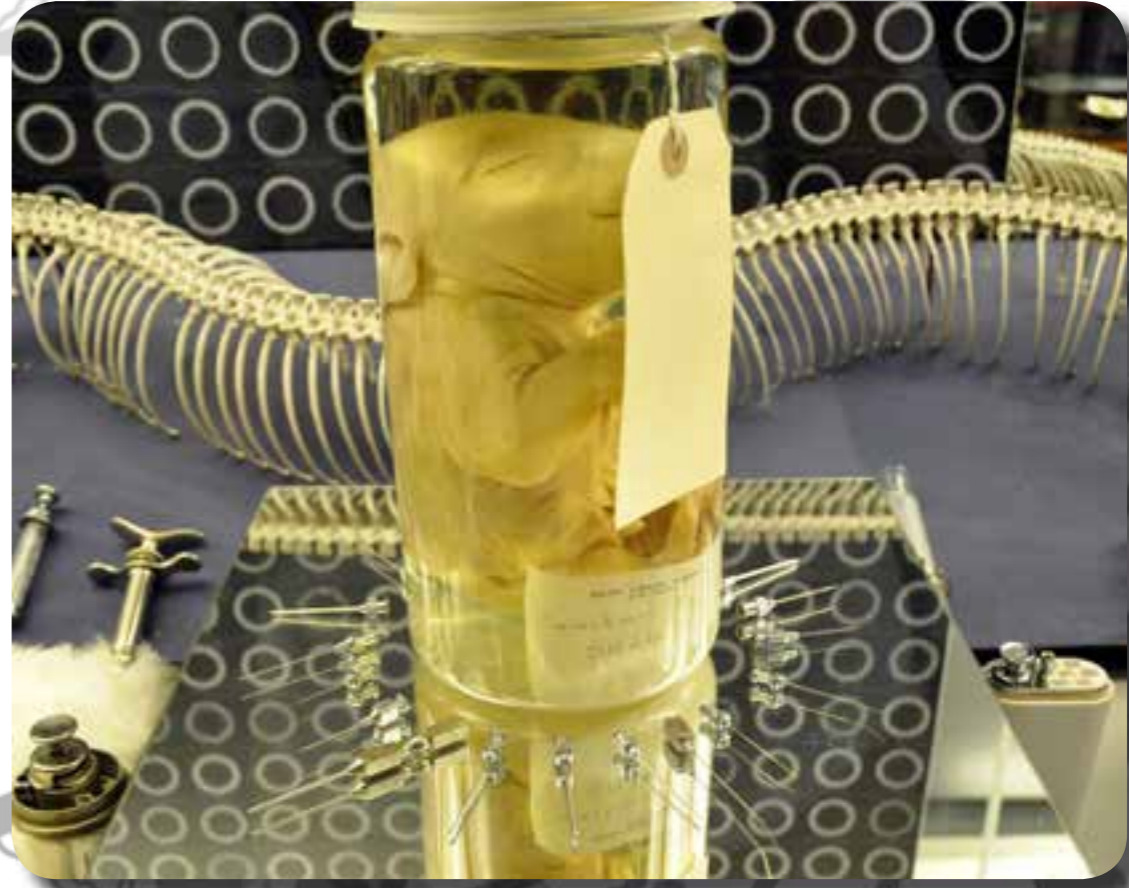
SUBTLE THRESHOLDS
 THE REPRESENTATIONAL TAXONOMIES OF DISEASE
 AN EXHIBITION BY FRITHA LANGERMAN

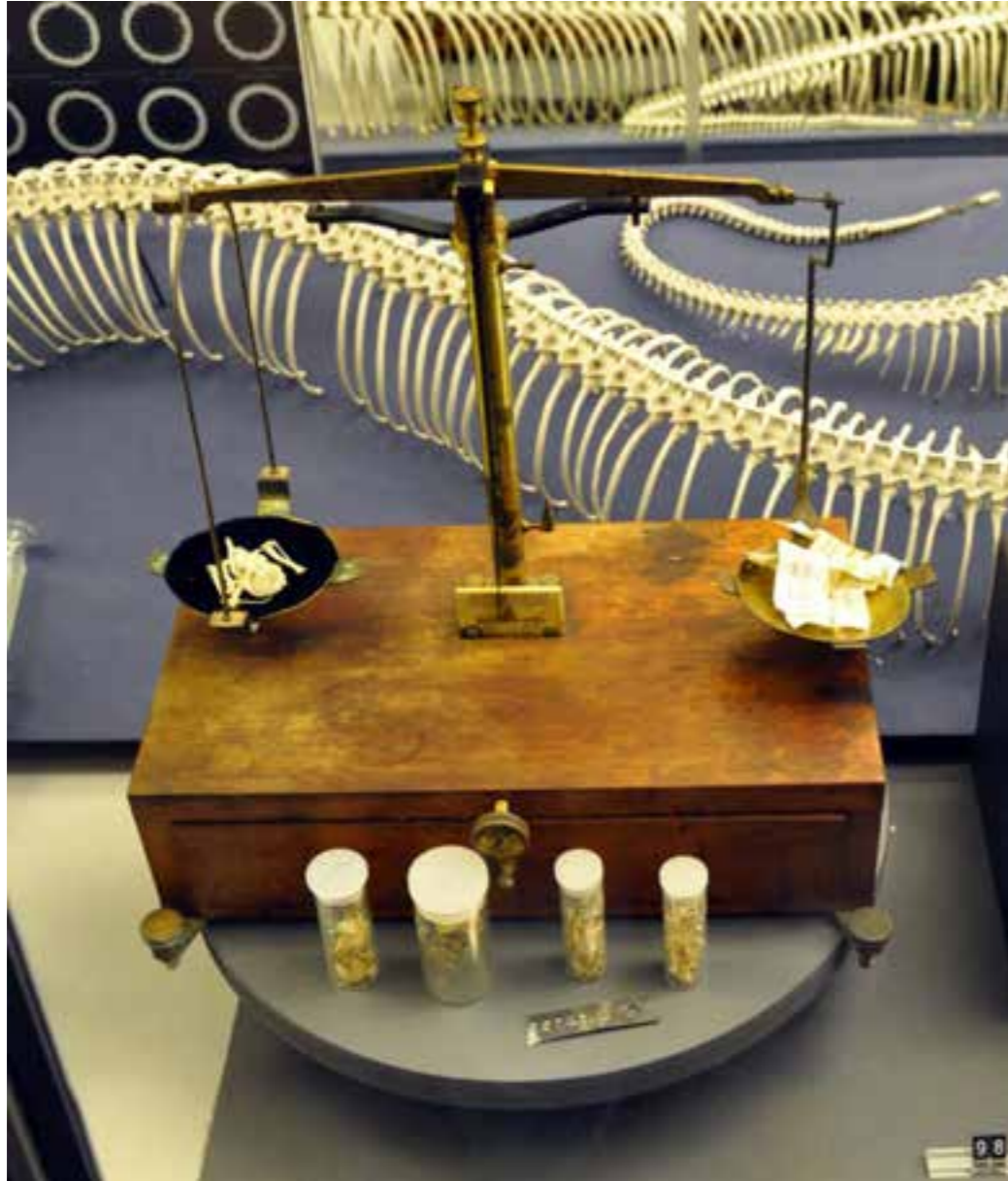
25 July 2009 - August 2010
 Iziko South African Museum

Pneumothorax apparatus and ampoules (Adler collection) together with selection of birds from the SAM collection.



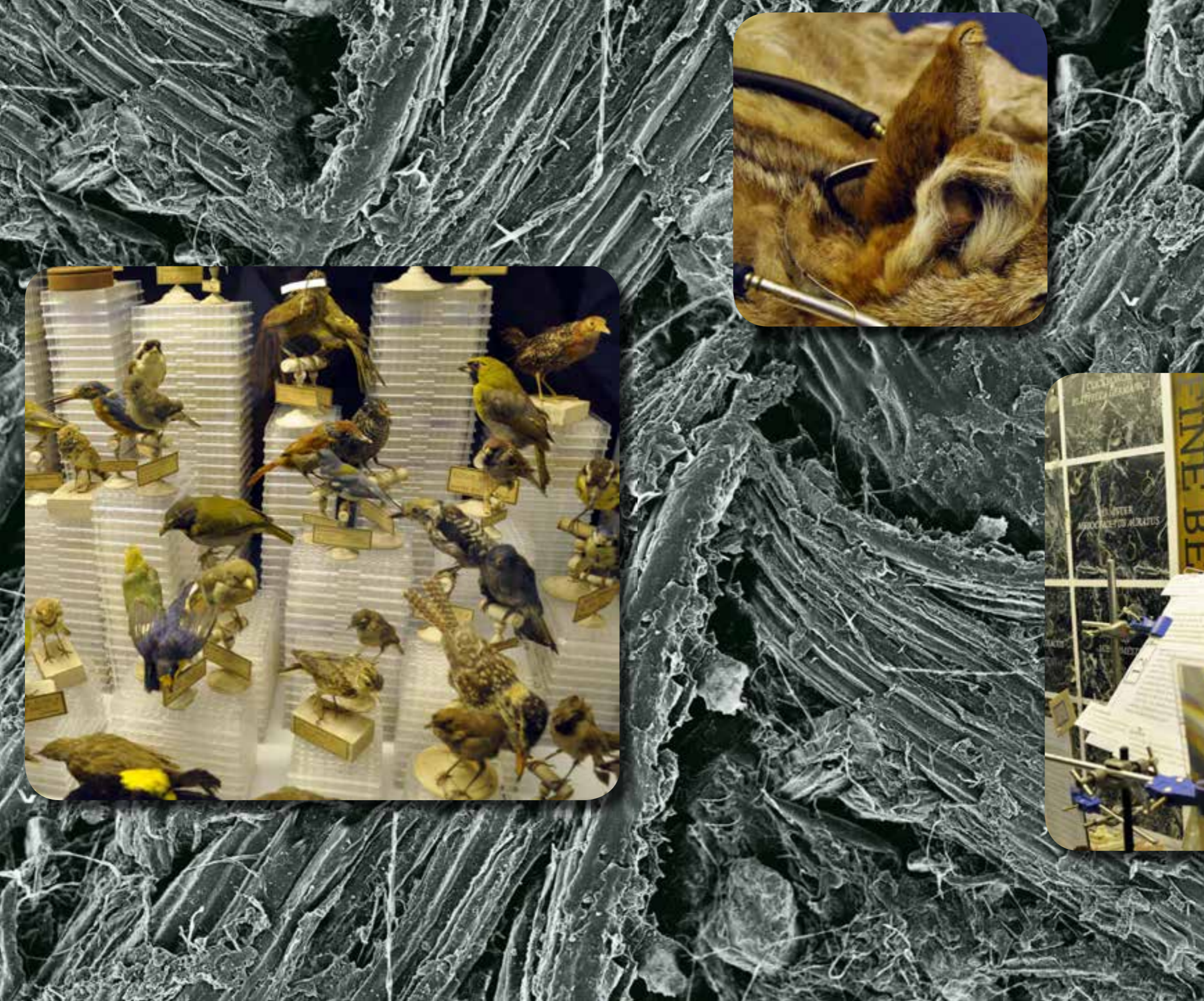
REFLECTION





Rat bones (SAM collection) on a dispensing scale (Adler collection).





NODES

ILLUMINATION

Timelines are devices used to provide orientation and guidance, yet they often present a decontextualised chronology - the chosen inclusions often reflecting relationships of power. In this exhibition, the 'timeline' is in the form of a ruler, circumscribing 68 metres and including a biblical concordance of disease, literally running counter to a more conventional microbial history. The ruler measurements are indicated by a chordate species list, incrementally divided by microbial species in red.



Early vertebrate coprolites (SAM collection).



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FRITHA LANGERMAN is an Associate Professor at the University of Cape Town where she teaches printmaking and drawing at the Michaelis School of Fine Art. She trained at the University of Cape Town (BAFA and MFA, printmaking) and is currently registered for a PhD in Fine Art. Her research is of an interdisciplinary nature and research interests include curatorship, scientific representation of the body and the display and ordering of information. Her first solo exhibition, *The dissection* (Castle of Good Hope 1996) focused on biomedical visual representation and authorship of the human body. She has exhibited nationally and internationally and has produced a number of public commissioned works, including the 3rd Cape Town Public Sculpture Commission in St George's Mall and a sculptural installation in the Pharmacology Dept, UCT. Her awards include a Sasol Wax Merit award (2003), an ABSA Atelier Merit award (1999), UCT Junior Fellow's Award (2007) and UCT's Creative Works Award (2010). Her last solo exhibition, *Of symmetries and oxymorons: the knowledge chambers (2007-8)*, exhibited in Johannesburg and Cape Town, reflected on visual knowledge systems through the use of historical and contemporary print methodologies. She has curated a number of exhibitions including *Lexicons and labyrinths: the iconography of the genome* at the South African Museum (2003) and *Curiosity 175* (with Pippa Skotnes and Gwen van Embden) at the University of Cape Town (2004). This is her eighth solo exhibition.



“Many of the views which have been advanced are highly speculative, and some no doubt, will prove erroneous; but I have in every case, given the reasons which have led me to one view rather than to another.

False facts are highly injurious to the progress of science, for they often endure long, but false views; if supported by evidence, do little harm, for everyone takes a salutary pleasure in proving their falseness.”

Charles Darwin

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