Paul Emmanuel

DP: 'Being Digital' could imply that what you are making for the show is not a book at all. In what way does your work, promote the idea of 'bookness'?

PE: For me, the viewer-'book' relationship is an interactive one: physically, emotionally and conceptually.To experience a 'book' one is enticed to engage with separate revealed 'stations' or parts, not the entire object all at once, as one would experience a single image. I also feel that in the 'book' experience, this engagement is initiated by the viewer. I have chosen to use a touch-screen monitor as the 'interface' between viewer and 'book', each 'page' being revealed in response to the viewer's touch.

DP: The Artist's Book employs and often subverts image/text relations. How does your work explore the relationship between image and text?

PE: The images in this work are photographs of different parts of my body, blind embossed with the names of men who died in the Frontier Wars fought in the Grahamstown area in the 1820s and 50s. The names were set in lead type and then pressed directly into my skin. When withdrawn after a few minutes, a photograph was taken quickly before the remaining impression disappeared. It was a painful process. After touching the screen, a new 'page' is revealed and the remaining impressions of these names slowly fade away.

DP: If the Artist's Book is an interrogation of the qualities of a book, in what way does your work attempt to emulate or maintain any of the codex's materiality, structure, shape and literar ystructural conventions?

PE: Materiality and Structure: The touch sensitive screen replaces the 'page' of a traditional book. By touching the screen, the page is 'turned'. The tactile quality of paper is often used to 'talk' about the subject matter of an Artist's Book. I wanted to use the cold unforgiving surface of a glass screen to talk poignantly about intimacy and alienation, the body being soft

The Lost Men Project (Grahamstown) (detail) | 2006 | digital program, touch-screen monitor on pedestal | size variable (photograph: Andrew Meintjes)

The Lost Men Project (Grahamstown) (detail) | 2006 | digital program, touch-screen monitor on pedestal | size variable (photograph: Andrew Meintjes)

and warm to the touch.

Shape: At the moment, anything in digital form has to be engaged with through an "interface mechanism" – usually a processor of some sort i.e. a computer and its monitor, a DVD or CD player or projector something to conver t ones and noughts into energy forms that can be processed by the five senses. These items of hardware still determine the physical manifestation or 'shape' of 'digital artworks'. I have chosen to conceal the computer processor and keyboard. None of these physical forms emulate traditional books directly, apart from hopefully enticing the viewer to engage, much the same way as a book's cover would compel the reader to open....

The Lost Men Project (Grahamstown) (detail) | 2006 | digital program, touch-screen monitor on pedestal | size variable (photograph: Andrew Meintjes)

CLICK HERE to activate the pages of *The Lost Men Project*
Format: FLASH; size: 5.3mb