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UNFOLDING *CARTE* *D'IDENTITÉ*

MASTER'S THESIS ABOUT THE READING
PRACTICE OF THE ARTIST'S BOOK *CARTE*
D'IDENTITÉ (2017)

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ABSTRACT

When reading the complex artist's book *Carte d'identité* (2017) by Patrizia Meinert the reader is invited to participate in the book: to unfold pages and connect words with zones of the body. This participation establishes a tangible relationship between the reader and the book, which extends to the artist herself through the map that carries an imprint of her body. This relationship is enforced by medium specific elements of the medium book, such as text, structural and material elements, that furthermore influence the reader's perception of the book. In order to explore the relation between the exploration of the medium book and its reading practice the following research question is answered in this thesis: How does Patrizia Meinert's exploration of elements from the book medium in her artist's book *Carte d'identité* (2017) influence its reading practice? In order to answer this question first a framework is created that consists of parallels and differences in the oeuvre of Meinert, which results in the analysis that in her books the elements of text, materiality and structure are interwoven, strengthen each other's meaning, invite the reader to engage with the book, and thereby influence the reading practice. In the second chapter the function of text is investigated, and in chapter three the function of structure and materials, which lead to the understanding of the book as a corpus, which the reader touches and harms. In the fourth chapter the implications of the tangible connections for the reading practice are examined by the analysis of agency. Instead of the focus on either the author or the reader as the sole actor in the book, the book is regarded as a site for an exchange between the artist, the book, the world and the reader. This exchange is centred on the way we perceive, approach and read books and (female) bodies and challenges these notions at the same time.

Keywords: Patrizia Meinert, artist's books, book medium, medium specificity, reading practice, author, reader, contemporary art, literary and culture sciences, appropriation,

TABLE OF CONTENTS	
ABSTRACT	1
INTRODUCTION	3
CHAPTER 1 - MAPPING MEINERT'S BOOKS	13
1.1 From artisan to artist	14
1.2 Space and time <i>t=turning the page</i>	18
1.3 Carte d'identité & Flatland	25
1.4 Conclusion	26
CHAPTER 2 - FUNCTIONS OF TEXT	28
2.1 Integration of text (and numbers)	28
2.2 <i>Les cinq sens: philosophie des corps mêlées</i>	30
2.3 <i>Carte d'identité</i>	35
2.4 Conclusion	47
CHAPTER 3 - FUNCTIONS OF FORM AND MATERIALS	48
3.1 Paper	48
3.2 Imprint of the body	51
3.3 The body made flesh	55
3.4 Folds and cuts	59
3.5 Conclusion	65
CHAPTER 4 - A SHIFT IN AGENCY	67
4.1 Concerning agency	68
4.2 "The Book happens all alone"	69
4.3 Barthes' murder	70
4.4 Mallarmé: the distribution of agency	71
4.5 Distribution of agency in <i>Carte d'identité</i>	75
4.6 Distribution of power and agency	86
CONCLUSION - BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE	88
BIBLIOGRAPHY	91
ILLUSTRATIONS	94
APPENDIX	104

INTRODUCTION

“Meine Arbeit dreht sich um, ist inspiriert durch, denkt, hinterfragt und erforscht: das Buch.”¹

“As an artist who works with books, I’m interested in exploring the reader’s assumptions in order to gain a deeper understanding of what a book is.”²

- Patrizia Meinert

These two quotations from the contemporary German book artist Patrizia Meinert (Freiburg, 1983) tell us two things: first of all, that Meinert investigates and challenges the medium book through artworks, and secondly, exploring the reading practice of books helps her to understand what a book is. Books and reading are two aspects that are inextricably linked to each other: in order to understand a book we have to read the text inside of the book. But what if the book does not contain a wholesome text, but instead only includes lists of words, without narrative, like in Meinert’s artist book *Carte d’identité*, published in 2017 (fig. 0.1). This artist’s book consists of a folder that when unfolded displays lists of words. A letter and a number follow each word, forming a coordinate system (fig 0.2). Moreover, the folder holds a folded map, which can be unfolded and carries an imprint of a body (fig. 0.3). On the left side of the map the letters A-H are printed and on the bottom of the map the numbers 1-6 are printed. The words in the lists connect to zones of the body print by means of these letters and numbers. Our standard reading practice (from left to right) will not help us to understand this book. Instead, we are invited to actively engage with the book by connecting the words to the corresponding zones of the body print. In order to do this, we have to become a participant of the book. We have to turn and unfold the pages with our fingers in order to connect the zones and observe the map. While we engage with the book, however, we become aware that we have to be very careful: the map is made of very fragile paper. Therefore, our attention shifts towards the way we touch and engage with the book. Touch, therefore, seems to play a fundamental part in our reading practice. How do we ‘read’ this book, then? And can it still be considered a book, when we cannot read it in a conventional way?

If we turn for an answer to the broader artistic field of artists’ books, it is noteworthy that *Carte d’identité* is not the only artist’s book that questions the book as object and its reading practices. Within the field of artists’ books, these elements are in fact placed at the

¹ Pol Michel 2016, from: <https://moi-toi.de/blog/2016/8/22/schere-stein-papier> (last accessed on 15th of March 2020).

² *Kaleid Sunday reading*, no. 5, 2016, from: <http://www.kaleideditions.com/product/simultaneite/> (unfortunately, this website is not active anymore).

foreground of the investigations of the book as art form, especially ever since the arrival of the digital era. The digital age was believed to herald the end of the book. Knowledge was disconnected from paper and is able to travel faster and cheaper via the World Wide Web. Every year the amount of E-books rises drastically, presumably at the expense of the printed book. However, with every change, a counter-movement emerges, and thus when physical objects were transformed into pixels, material dimensions of objects were being reconsidered. The interest in materials and objects increased because of their tangible characteristics through which they can be considered part of the world we live in, and therefore testify to our existence, in contrast to virtual objects.

While the new media are investigated for their communicative capabilities, the book medium is being investigated for its own specific qualities, which entail its materials, text, design and formal structures. This re-investigation of the book often takes place in the art field of the artists' books, in which artists from a wide variety of disciplines engage in centuries-old debates about books and their functions. No other artistic field is more qualified to conduct these discussions and to investigate the book: the book as object is centred and is explored as a meeting place between book and reader; book artists experiment with structures of the book; investigate the use of letters; mess with conventional narratives; and pay attention to reader's expectations. In doing so, book artists often embark on the critical investigation of the book as art form, contribute new conceptualizations to these debates, and thereby revive this old medium.

Perhaps if we turn to these medium specific elements of the medium book, we can learn something about the required reading practice of *Carte d'identité*. In order to investigate this relationship between the medium book and its reading practice, I propose the following research question: How does Patrizia Meinerts' exploration of elements from the book medium in her artist's book *Carte d'identité* (2017) influence its reading practice?

By answering this question I expect to find that in *Carte d'identité* form, materials and content are deeply interwoven. Therefore, these aspects strengthen each other's meaning and potential, and that of the tangible relations it creates. Furthermore, this artist's book explores the book as an object present in our world that we get to know through our tangible relationship with the object, in contrast with conventional books, in which reading texts accounts for the main source of knowledge. Although, exploring the element of touch in artists' books is not necessarily new, in *Carte d'identité* artist, reader and book connect intimately because of the element of touch, whilst letting us reflect on this relationship at the same time – and that is what makes it a special work of art.

Additionally, by answering this question I hope to understand the ways *Carte d'identité* lets us reconsider our relationships with books as objects, but also the connections books are able to create. By reflecting on the way this artist's book investigates elements of

the book medium, I think that it will bring new perspectives on our experience of reading and engaging with books.

Relevance

The young art scene seems to embrace artists' books by organizing book fairs,³ workshops, and lectures, but unfortunately artists' books do not yet have a more structural role in the traditional art world. Curators, art historians and other academics spend limited attention to this field, therefore the coverage of artists' books in art criticism is modest: I rarely find an article on artists' books in art journals or magazines that consider the art form in their own right and explore elements of structure and materials. This makes the critical reflection of *Carte d'identité* certainly more difficult: without good examples of critical investigations of an artist's book, the questions "where to start?" and "how to?" are relevant. I will return to my methods in a subsequent section of this introduction. This difficulty, however, points also the relevance of this thesis, as Roos van der Lint proposed in her critical essay 'Een boek in de kunst': "De kunstwereld dreigt voorbij te gaan aan een schat van kennis over de kunst van nu die in de boeken ligt besloten en het medium loopt een kritische reflectie mis."⁴ By paying attention to artist's books in my thesis I hope, like Van der Lint, to expand and attribute to potential critical reflections of this medium.

While Meinert's artworks are purchased by various prominent academic and art institutions, such as Harvard University, MoMA, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University, Chelsea College of Art, German National Library, The Basel University Library, criticism of her work within the academic and art scene, however, remains limited. The recent development of the art form, which came into being in the twentieth century, could be an explanation. The libraries of these institutions do organize small exhibitions that are only focussed on books, but by exhibiting artists' books in library settings alone emphasizes the idea that this art form is not of the same calibre as the art in the rest of the museum and that it is regarded as a book – not so much as an art form in its own right. By circulating in the same scenes (libraries, art fairs, book related galleries) it becomes difficult for book artist to gain interest in the more traditional art world, and to gain the attention their work deserves. By paying attention to the work of Meinert I hope to prove that her work, and that of book artists

³ In 2004 the New York shop and artists' books organisation 'Printed Matter,' established by amongst others Sol LeWitt and Lucy Lippard, the New York art fair, and in 2013 the Los Angeles art fair, which have become the largest venues for the "distribution, investigation and celebration of artists' books." Source: Printed Matter, 'Mission and History,' from:

<https://www.printedmatter.org/about/mission-history> (last accessed on March 15th 2020).

⁴ Lint, van der (2016): freely translated as: "the artworld is at risk of ignoring a myriad of knowledge about art confined in books, whereas the medium, in turn, misses out on critical reflections."

in general, is part of an art form in its own right and deserves its spot amongst other artworks in museums.

With this thesis, I furthermore hope to prove that Meinert's books – and *Carte d'identité* particularly – form a very interesting contribution to the critical reflections on artists' books, books, reading practices, and more general notions, for instance human bodies and their traditional representation in art, and therefore deserve more attention.

The artist's book

In order to answer the research question, it is helpful to get an understanding of the phenomenon artists' books. Defining artists' books appears to be rather difficult. It is not that the art form has not been defined – in fact there are numbers of definitions – instead the attempts of defining the genre have caused confusion and other difficulties, for a couple of reasons: first of all, the attempts of defining the artists' books⁵ created different terminologies: *livre d'artiste*, art books, book objects, artists' books or artist's books, and so on, which try to categorize the books by sets of characteristics.⁶

These various terms and their characteristics, however, have often been used inconsequently, resulting in unclarity. Moreover, the interdisciplinary, flexible and varying character of the field does not really help with bringing the different types of books in rigid classifications, and the question rises if this would even be desirable considering the hybrid characters of the books. Nonetheless, many writers and scholars attempted to define the field, resulting in definitions that often exclude artworks and artists that can be considered artists' books and book artists, but are secluded because of the rigid classification and definitions. These definitions therefore create a distorted overview of the genre. The difficulty of defining the art form, moreover, results in attempts which describe the artist's book by its negative: it is not a conventional book, a catalogue, nor a book about art or artists, it is not a monograph, and not just a sculpture. These 'definitions' remain vague, and do not really help understanding how the genre can be described.

Additionally, these publications often have a geographical bias: works of American and European artists are considered most often. Artists from other locations are underrepresented; this means that considerations of artists' books – including mine – are based on the American and European artists' books. Furthermore, while interest in the art form is gaining rapidly through book fairs and the accepting of the genre as a legitimate art form, academic and theoretical approaches of artists' books remain limited. Publications

⁵ I use 'artists' books' here as an umbrella term for all the different sorts of books produced by artists.

⁶ In this thesis I will employ the term 'artist's book', 'Meinert's book', 'book', 'artwork', 'Meinert's artist book' for the singular book, and for the plural or multiple of 'artist's book' I use 'artists' books.'

about artists' books often spend a considerable part of their introduction on their definition of the genre, which leaves little space for in-depth analyses of artists' books.

In this thesis I will not attempt to solve this problem by presenting a new definition of artists' books, because this is not desirable, nor relevant for my research. Instead, I will rely on the description from *The Century of Artists' books* (1995) written by book artist and scholar Johanna Drucker in order to clarify the genre. Drucker's *The Century of Artists' books* is a comprehensive account of artists' books of the twentieth century, in which she provides the reader with an overview on the development of artists' books. Drucker's book is one of the first comprehensive and therefore most referenced investigations of the art form. It describes the tremendous diversity, and varied characters of these books and their approaches to the investigation of the book as art form. Drucker does not define artists' books in a rigid or definitive way, or in its negative form, but tries to give an overview of the genre that is based on an intersection of a number of different characteristics, disciplines, fields, and ideas, such as independent publishing, socially and politically motivated art, conceptual art, poetry, digital art, illustrated books, and performance art, rather than its limits. The most important characteristics are: that these books investigate the book as an art form and are conceived as artworks in their own right. This art form is not restricted to the codex form, but has many forms. They are almost always self-conscious about the structure and meaning of the book as a form.⁷ Moreover, artists' books are a hybrid medium, and form a connection between the reader and the book.

Drucker's approach is useful for this thesis, because understanding the book as an art form helps to reflect upon the properties of the medium itself, and allows me to investigate the varying character of *Carte d'identité* (is it a book, a map, a portrait, a personal document, etc.?) without having to exclude elements of the book that are not considered book-ish enough. Furthermore, it allows me to think of the book as an instrument that connects the book and reader.

Drucker also comments on the way the development of the field is described by scholars and critics. Depending on which definition one uses, scholars and critics map the history of the field in a variety of ways. Some starting points within this history have become a cliché, and are used to make a distinction between different stages or types of artists' books: *livre d'artiste*, on the one hand, is used as a point of origin for the artists' books. This genre focussed on deluxe publishing of works by visual artists and poets and came into being at the end of the 19th century and was developed further in the twentieth century. On the other hand, *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations* (1962) by Ed Ruscha is used as point of origin for the new conceptualization of artist's books in the nineteen-sixties that conceived the artist's book as

⁷ Drucker 1995, 4.

solely the product of an artist. Both ‘points of origin’ seem to be too arbitrary to be definitive. Drucker notes that both the *livre d’artiste* and Ruscha’s book did not just appear out of nowhere and cannot be credited with the invention of the genre, because this approach to history is a rather old-fashioned one, in which these supposed founding fathers have excessive influence on future artists.⁸

Again, my goal is not to describe the development of this artistic art form in this thesis. Moreover, I will not try to contextualize Meinert’s oeuvre against the backdrop of a detailed description of the development of the art field, because this would be beyond the scope of this thesis and leave little room for the analysis of *Carte d’identité*. However, this does not mean that I think Meinert’s work exists outside the field of artists’ books. Rather than considering her art as autonomous and completely ‘original’, I employ an object-oriented approach in my thesis, which will allow for visiting various prominent theories about books that *Carte d’identité* refers to and therefore places *Carte d’identité* within the field of artists’ books.

Unfolding

Carte d’identité is a very complex book. When I started the writing process, and before I had outlined the subject in a more or less definite way, I knew I wanted to focus on artists’ books that questioned more than just the medium itself. I wanted to focus on artists’ books that challenged traditional ideas that we think of as normal, such as dominant ideas of identity, gender and sexual orientation. When the Librarian of the Van Abbemuseum – Willem Smit – kindly pointed my attention towards *Carte d’identité*, I knew this was one of the works I wanted to explore in my thesis besides a few other artists’ books. But the more time I invested in *Carte d’identité* the more I became aware that this book deserved my full attention. Therefore, I adjusted the direction of this thesis and decided to zoom in on fundamental characteristics of *Carte d’identité*.

I decided to explore *Carte d’identité* from the perspective of the book as medium, because the book is defined as artist’s book, but does not resemble a book: it has no narrative, no codex-form, no sequential page order, and instead consists of a map which carries a body print. What remains of the bookish properties in this book? The book presents itself as a book, whilst at the same time, challenges our conceptions of books. Furthermore, Meinert began her career as a bookbinder, and when I came across the quotation in which she identified her work as being about the investigation of the book medium (“Meine Arbeit dreht sich um, ist

⁸ Drucker 1995, 11.

inspiriert durch, denkt, hinterfragt und erforscht: das Buch.”⁹), the question was raised what the relationship between the book as object and *Carte d'identité* was, and how one should read such a book?

In the process of writing, I try to unfold the different ‘layers’ of the complex work, similar to the peeling of an onion, which will hopefully enable me to make conclusions.¹⁰ Each of the different layers form the outlay of the three chapters and the fourth is centred on the most fundamental part of the book: the reading practice. In the first chapter ‘Mapping Meinert’s books’ I try to find an entrance to *Carte d'identité* by contrasting it with Meinert’s oeuvre. I aim to find certain parallels and differences in her oeuvre by means of a formal analysis, which in turn will help to understand *Carte d'identité*.

In the next two chapters I intend to focus on the before-mentioned medium specific qualities of the book medium, such as text, materials and formal structures. I handle text and the material and formal structures of the book separately: these elements are explored in two subsequent chapters – chapters two ‘Function of text’ and three ‘Functions of form and materials’. Because these elements are intimately interwoven and strengthen each others’ meaning and potential, these elements return in every chapter. In the second chapter I will turn my attention to the integration of text in *Carte d'identité*, which is mostly borrowed from the French philosopher Michel Serres’ *Les cinq sens* (1985). In this chapter I will try to answer the question “how does text function in *Carte d'identité*?” I will try to answer this question by creating an image of Michel Serres, and after I explore his arguments in *Les cinq sens*, I turn my attention to the significance of the references in *Carte d'identité*. Additionally, I will briefly note a reference to the French poet Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898), but I will explore this subject in the third and fourth chapter in more detail. It is important to note that the references to Serres and Mallarmé in *Carte d'identité*, invite the reader to consider the artist’s book in relation to these thinkers.¹¹ I want to stress that my considerations of Serres and Mallarmé are just a part of the analysis and that investigation of the book, therefore, does not solely exist of a reading of *Carte d'identité* in relation to these references. Instead, I use these references as instruments to peel off different layers in the work, hopefully resulting in a deeper understanding of the book.

As mentioned before, the function of material and formal structures of the book is the subject of my third chapter. By unfolding the book fold-by-fold, starting with the cover and ending with its last envelopes, I will take a closer look at the implications of the certain

⁹ Pol Michel, 2016, from: <https://moi-toi.de/blog/2016/8/22/schere-stein-papier> (last accessed on 15th of March 2020).

¹⁰ The unfolding of these layers refers to the symbolical layers of the book, not to the actual paper folds.

¹¹ This idea is further emphasized by the references in *Carte d'identité* Meinert described in interviews.

elements from the medium book that are explored in *Carte d'identité*. Elements such as the printing process, paper, folds, and structure, are visited with the reader's experience in mind. As mentioned before, the textual, material and formal elements are interwoven in *Carte d'identité*, and by analysing the material and formal aspects with the textual in mind, I hope to peel off another layer and establish a very intimate relationship between the reader, the artist and the book.

Finally, I will try to define the connection between the reader, book and artist the final chapter 'A shift in agency.' In order to describe and understand this relationship I will use theories borrowed from Literary studies, which focus on agency and authorship. More specifically, I will adapt notions from Mallarmé to analyse this relationship. In this last chapter, textual, material and formal elements all play an important role.

All in all, my research is not practiced from a conventional art historic method, but more from an interdisciplinary field that is on the intersection of Art history, Literary (semiotics and agency) and Culture studies. This has something to do with the lack of examples of critical analyses of artists' books, which lead me to pursue the elements of the book that I thought of as of relevant. By peeling off the layers off the artwork, I immediately discuss the elements that come to the surface. It is an intuitive method, based on my own experiences as reader. By discussing the elements that I encounter, I combine an object-oriented analysis, with a theoretical approach, the reader's experience and the (reading) practice. Both theory and practice are fundamental to my analysis and not often covered side-by-side in academic approaches of artists' books. The possibility to investigate *Carte d'identité* from diverse perspectives, testifies to the diversity of the artist's book, which is the result of the hybrid art form itself, but also of the diverse and complex subjects that are touched upon in the book.

Notes before reading

Before reading the rest of this thesis, I have to make some remarks. The first is centred on my sources of information. I mentioned before that not many scholars or curators cover Meinert's oeuvre. I could find three entries of Meinert's work in overviews of artists' books: in the German publication *A book is not just a book* (2015), the American publication *Freud on the couch: psyche in the book* (2018) and the German *Omnivore / Alleskönner Buch. Das Medium der Potentiale* (2018), but unfortunately I was not able to gain access to these entries due to limitations in travel possibilities. However, there are other sources of information that will enable me to answer my research question. First and foremost, an interview with Patrizia Meinert conducted by Claudia Brancato. In this twofold interview Meinert talks about her

career as book artist and about *Carte d'identité*. Unfortunately, the interview was removed from her website a while ago.¹²

This brings me to my second source of information: Meinert's website. On her website information about the artist and her books is listed. Her artist's books nearly all have an individual page on her website, which includes photographs of the book and a short text with information about the book and its production. Moreover, I was able to find two internet articles about her work as artist: one is a blog, and is called 'Schere, Stein, Papier: Ein Portrait sollte man fühlen, nicht nur sehen'¹³ (2016) and is presented as an short interview with the German blogger Oliver Pol Michel (Moi-toi), and the other is a short introductory text about Meinert's work *Simultanéité* as part of the Kaleid 2016 Oslo artists' Book Exhibition and Seminar.¹⁴

Furthermore, I took the liberty to e-mail Patrizia Meinert and was able to ask questions about her work, to which she very kindly responded multiple times. She even suggested meeting each other, which we did in the summer of 2019. For me, this was a very inspiring meeting: we talked about her career and I could observe some of her books. Via mail Meinert sent me her essay *t=turning the pages*, which helped me to create an image of her artistic practices. Additionally, Meinert sent me the contact information of Susanne Padberg of Galery Druck & Buch in Vienna, who represents Meinert's work. She sent me Meinert's artist statement of *Carte d'identité* and an English translation of the text in the book.¹⁵

The remark I want to make about these sources is that artists' books demand the presence of the reader in order to participate and engage with the three-dimensional object. Unfortunately, it is difficult for me to get access to Meinert's books, because they are printed in small editions and have been purchased by institutions from over the entire world and as a student I, unfortunately, have limited resources to travel to these institutions. Therefore, the formal analysis of the first chapter in which I try to establish differences and parallels in Meinert's oeuvre, is almost entirely based upon information (text and photographs) from Meinert's website and lacks the experience that direct physical contact would ensure. Therefore, the analysis of the first chapter is not as conclusive, as I want it to be. Fortunately, I was able to gain access to and engage with *Carte d'identité*, *Play* and *Simultanéité*.

A final remark: the problem of the lack of reader's participation is one of the greatest difficulties of the genre. Therefore these books cannot be fully experienced, read or touched

¹² This interview can be made available upon request.

¹³ Pol Michel, 2016, from: <https://moi-toi.de/blog/2016/8/22/schere-stein-papier> (last accessed on 15th of March 2020).

¹⁴ Unfortunately the latter cannot be accessed due to a technical problem.

¹⁵ See appendix.

when being viewed through locked glass cabinets, as is often the case in museums and galleries. These problems are greatly discussed within the medium, but final solutions remain to be found. Many book artists turn towards digitally exposing their work, but then miss out on the important element of tangibility.¹⁶ This thesis is not focused on finding a solution for this problem, but it must be noted that my experience of *Carte d'identité* can be very different than that of readers who view the book from a distance or from the website. Even if we would have the same conditions in which we would read the book, reading experiences are not universal but rather individual. In this thesis, therefore, I will not present 'the one and only way to read *Carte d'identité*,' but I rather try to take you with me in my reading process, in order to provide tools for your own individual reading experience of *Carte d'identité*, and possibly other artists' books. Hopefully, I will inspire other readings of *Carte d'identité*, and in turn initiate an open-ended dialogue about *Carte d'identité* and the fantastic field of artists' books.

¹⁶ I am aware that, again, my aim to gain more attention for the medium within the context of more traditional institutions can be considered paradoxical, because museums often do not allow for interaction with artworks. Artists' books are of great importance in challenging the ways artworks are experienced and perceived, and I hope that traditional institutions are willing to show these kinds of investigations of art forms, by allowing interaction in museums.

CHAPTER 1

MAPPING MEINERT'S BOOKS

In this first chapter I will examine eleven artist's books (including *Carte d'identité*) produced by Patrizia Meinert.¹⁷ By taking certain characteristics of the book medium into account, I hope to explore parallels and variations within Meinert's oeuvre and to get a better understanding of the ways in which Meinert explores elements of the medium book in her artist's books and in turn can connect this to the reading experience of the books. These characteristics are: the subjects of the book, their formal structures, their materials, the designs of the books, and their reading practices. Moreover, attention is paid to their significance for *Carte d'identité*. In this way, I want to create a framework that will help to understand the ways in which the artist explored elements of the book in *Carte d'identité*.

An excerpt from the interview with Meinert conducted by Claudia Brancato in December 2018 provides an interesting model for approaching the development of Meinert's work:

In Abgrenzung dazu [Meinert's career as bookbinder] ging es mir dann im Anschluss erst einmal um das Freimachen von Konventionen. Es gab anschließend eine Zeit unter dem Einfluss der US-amerikanischen Buchkunst, in der ich mich sehr vom Buchraum ausgehend an der Untersuchung von dessen Körperlichkeit abarbeitete. Schließlich rückten zunehmend Typografie und Arbeit mit Text in den Fokus.¹⁸

Following Meinert's reflections on her own career in this interview, three different phases can be distinguished in her work: first, her shift from bookbinding to making 'art'¹⁹ and the accompanying desire to break with conventions. Secondly, her interest in the investigation of the physicality of the book space, under American influence. And finally, the development of her interests in typography and textuality. In the following paragraphs, the works of Meinert will be discussed in the context of these phases or shifts, without forcing them in one of the

¹⁷ Because of restrictions in time and words, I have not included her book designs in this analysis. Another reason for me, to exclude these books from this analysis, is because these books are commissioned and not, like the other artist's books, the 'product' of the artist (perhaps not even artist's books). Moreover, I did not include Meinert's artist books *Crippled symmetry* (2016) and *Photographs published from negatives not returned to Mrs. Moholy* (2019). These books are very interesting and but I was not able to perform the same formal analysis on these books and therefore could not capture their complexities in this chapter, in the way I desired.

¹⁸ Brancato & Meinert 2018.

¹⁹ For the time being I argue that there is a difference between making art and craftsmanship, because it identifies a shift in her career, but I think that crafts can be considered art as well. This is a complex discussion, however, which can be considered arbitrary, and therefore I will not spend more attention to it.

three categories. The phases will merely serve as an instrument to approach her artistic career in a structured and orderly manner.

1.1 From artisan to artist

Before Meinert started making artist's books, she studied to be a bookbinder from 2005 until 2008 at the Universitätsbuchbinderei Castagne in Kiel. Meinert stated in the 2018 interview that her book art always departs from the book medium: "Wenn ich vom Buch ausgehe, dann bedeutet das, dass ich mich in erster Linie als Buchkünstlerin verstehe. Das heißt ich gelange nicht über ein anderes Medium wie die Fotografie oder den Text zum Buch."²⁰ This means that Meinert sees herself first and foremost as a book artist that arrived at the medium book through her work with books -as bookbinder- and not through another artistic medium, such as photography or literature. That she started as an artisan, "hat sicher prägenden Einfluss," Meinert states, but what kind of influence?²¹

In this quote, she implies that she does not think of herself as bookbinder or "Handwerkerin" anymore, but as an artist.²² For Meinert, there is a difference between the two professions, which explains the first change in her career and her aspiration to 'become' an artist. In the same interview with Brancato, Meinert described her desire to participate in the current debate about the medium: "Es geht darum, diesen Raum nicht als selbstverständliche plattform anzunehmen, sondern seine Mitwirkung an dem, was gesagt wird, mitzudenken – das ist das, was mich am Büchermachen interessiert."²³ By participating in the discussions about the medium book, Meinert is able to break with conventions of this medium – which I considered to be part of the first phase of her career.

As a book artist, the book becomes both the stage and the object of her work, Meinert has said, arguably more than it did when she was a bookbinder.²⁴ So Meinert decided to continue studying, still in the field of the book, but now with a focus on book art. From 2011 to 2014 she studied Book Art at the Burg Giebichenstein Kunsthochschule in Halle. In these years as a student she was able to visit the Facultad de Belles Artes Alonso Cano in Granada and the Oregon College of Art and Craft in Portland for semesters. The first three artist's books from Meinert that I want to discuss, *Lorca: Poemas* (2011), *Play* (2012), *Ophelia* (2012), she made during her period at Halle and all have a prominent literary text – or poems in the case of *Lorca* - as the basis of the book. For *Carte d'identité* Meinert also used a text by an author: *The Five Senses* of Michel Serres.

²⁰ Brancato & Meinert 2018.

²¹ Brancato & Meinert 2018.

²² Brancato & Meinert 2018.

²³ Brancato & Meinert 2018.

²⁴ Brancato & Meinert 2018.

Lorca: Poemas

This artist's book consists of six selected poems from the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca (1898-1936). Shortly put, Lorca was a member of the Generation of '27²⁵, and was known for his left-wing critique on totalitarianism, which he expressed in romantic poetry with a social undertone. Not coincidental, Meinert made *Lorca* during her semester at the Facultad de Bellas Artes Alonso Cano in Granada in Spain. Like all her other works, *Lorca* is published in a small edition with signed and numbered copies. This first book was published in an edition of 30 copies. The poems are placed in a closed leporello.²⁶ This print form reappears in different modified versions in the work of Meinert; *Carte d'identité* can also be considered as a modified leporello.

Lorca consists of a small, rectangular grey folder that functions as protection and gives access to dust jacket of an offset printed colour gradient of yellow and white, which in turn protects a book with a black cover. Figure 1.1 shows the order in which the book is unpacked. The book can be unfolded into a three-dimensional leporello, which can stand vertically on a table (figure 1.2). In its unfolded state, the poems that are printed on the outer pages of the work become visible. When the works are closed again, holes with a diameter of 3,8 cm created by a small punching tool are revealed on the cover through which the title of the work can be seen (fig. 1.3). These punched holes are repeated throughout the work on several pages (fig. 1.4). When the book is closed, they serve as tabs or a register; the holes show the reader the title of the poems and allow the reader to browse through the unfolded print. When the book is placed in its unfolded state and the reader views through these holes, the reader is able to see the 'interior' space of the book. These holes, therefore, open up to a yellow and white gradient coloured space, which is created and at the same time bordered by type of binding.

Meinert created a special connection between *Lorca* and Lorca's poems: the rectangular yellow and white gradient space on the inside of the book, created when the structure is unfolded, is a visual reference to the caves of Sacromonte in Granada, which are part of the Flamenco culture and described in the poems of Lorca.²⁷ Meinert explained that these caves function as the place where these dancers and musicians meet and play their music. The walls of the caves are often painted white, while at the same time, "a very special, warm atmosphere prevails." Meinert further notes that "to visit these places as a stranger, however, only allows a small insight into this world, which will never be completely revealed

²⁵ Generation of '27 was a group of Spanish poets and artists who introduced European avant-garde art, like surrealism, futurism and symbolism, in the Spanish art circles between 1923 and 1927.

²⁶ A leporello is a print that is folded using the concertina fold, also known as the zigzag or accordion fold.

²⁷ E-mail from Patrizia Meinert received on the 27th of March 2020.

to the visitor.” Meinert tried to capture a similar ambience and insight in *Lorca*, through the type of binding, the holes, and the yellow and white gradient space it creates: “[...], the chalk-white cave world of the Granadinian Flamenco guitarreros reveals itself to the visitors – like mere fragments.”²⁸

Carte d'identité and *Lorca* share a number of elements, such as the use of a text as a basis, the leporello print that allows browsing and (un)folding, and the minimalist design. In both works Meinert's interest in the way the reader perceives the book as a physical object is prominent. In both cases the reader conceives the book as a fragmented space (due to the punched holes in *Lorca*, and the fragmented body print in *Carte d'identité*) and the act of reading can be considered physical because meaning is constructed not just reading the text. By unfolding the pages the reader gains entrance to the interiors of the books: in *Lorca* to the Flamenco culture, and in *Carte d'identité* to interior of the body print, which I will elaborate on in the next chapters. Because in *Lorca* poems are included, the reading practice is not as non-linear as in *Carte d'identité*, where only words are included.

Play

Meinert's second book *Play* appeared in 2012 in an edition of 30 signed and numbered copies (fig. 1.5) This work was partially made in Portland, where Meinert studied for a semester at the Oregon College of Art and Craft.²⁹ A second version of the work was published in 2017, just after *Carte d'identité* was made. This edition was not made with the same time-consuming and intensive techniques, such as pochoir and photopolymer cliché, as the first edition, but mostly made with digital printing techniques and could therefore be published in a larger edition of 100 copies (fig. 1.6).³⁰

Similar to *Lorca* and *Carte d'identité*, *Play* is based on literature: the text 'Play' of the American author Gertrude Stein (1874-1946), which was published in the book *Portraits and prayers* in 1934. Gertrude Stein is known for translating Cubism, which was mostly represented in painting and sculpture, into literature and poems.

The first edition of *Play* consists of two different versions: numbers 1-10 are published in a bright yellow cardboard folder containing the leporello with the pochoir graphics and text on it, and numbers 11-30 are published in a transparent envelope.³¹ Besides

²⁸ Patrizia Meinert, 'Lorca: Poemas,' from: <https://patriziameinert.com/Lorca> (last accessed on the 13th of December 2019).

²⁹ Patrizia Meinert, 'Expertise-CV,' from: <https://patriziameinert.com/Expertise-CV> (last accessed on the 1st of April 2020).

³⁰ Although the second edition of *Play* is also very interesting, this thesis will focus on the first edition of *Play*, and will presume that while the production process and used materials are different, it will suffice for this analysis to just look at the first edition.

³¹ Patrizia Meinert, 'Play' from: <https://patriziameinert.com/Play-details> (last accessed on the 13th of December 2019).

practical reasons, the variation in design can be related to what Meinert sees as the subject of Stein's text: "In a playful yet serious way, Gertrude Stein examines the several levels of meaning in the word ›Play‹ by using it as the key element of her text."³² Yellow rubber bands hold the leporello together when it is outside its folder (fig. 1.7). The first page of the leporello functions as a dust jacket and has small punched holes in it. Through these punched holes the word 'Play' is visible for the reader (fig. 1.8). Just as with *Lorca*, the holes in this book allow the reader a glimpse into the book. The holes provide the reader with fragmented pieces of information about the place and prevalence of the word 'Play' on the following page. Moreover, the leporello creates a stencil for other words that continuously reappear throughout the text (every / day / and/ always or away / remember). In these ways, the reader is invited to actively 'play' with the book in order to construct meaning.

With *Play*, Meinert plays with the visual structure of the text. It is clear that Meinert based the design of the work on the text that the work encloses, and not on the editions of the works that are sold in bookstores. Text and form are thus intimately linked, as is the case with *Lorca* and with *Carte d'identité*. The books are not designed as traditional books and are not just the vehicles of the words inside them. Rather, these artists' books explore the book as art form. For a part they are visual interpretation of the texts they refer to, but they are in no way mere illustrations of the texts. Instead, they create a space in which the reader explores the texts they refer to through in a physical way, and challenge conventional reading practices by experimenting with material, form and content. In doing so, these books are artworks themselves.

Ophelia

In the same year, Meinert created *Ophelia*, the result of her interpretation of Shakespeare's play *Hamlet* written between 1600 and 1602. The book appeared in an edition of ten signed and numbered copies and was awarded the Von Taube Juniorpreis in 2012. On the cover of the book Meinert printed the letter 'O' (fig. 1.9). The book is bound in four separate text fragments with three illustrations in between. These illustrations are the result of manipulations or mutilations of the paper, which Meinert relates to as Ophelia's wounds, varying from a scratch to the mutilation of the surface in such a way that a pattern of fish scales appears (fig. 1.10).

In *Ophelia*, Meinert printed excerpts of the play on hand-dyed blue paper. Next, Meinert painted over these excerpts in white, thereby erasing them. Just the lines spoken by Ophelia remained visible for the reader (fig. 1.11). The words the queen speaks after

³² Patrizia Meinert, 'Play' from: <https://patriziameinert.com/Play> (last accessed on the 13th of December 2019).

Ophelia's death were also untouched, and create the end of the book. The "paper wounds" mentioned before, "visualize Ophelia's ordeal on the paper surface."³³ Unlike the first two books, *Ophelia* is not a regular leporello, but instead pamphlets are sewn to the leporello. The leporello therefore functions as a spine and therefor visually resembles a small booklet. The English translation of the book is attached to the book as leporello.³⁴

Once more, Meinert used transparent (hand-dyed) paper and cuts to allow the reader to see through the book. Similar to *Carte d'identité*, in *Ophelia* Meinert emphasized the body of the book as a 'real' body of a woman, in this case Ophelia's, and paper represents her skin. In chapter three I will explore the relationship between skin and paper in relation to *Carte d'identité*. *Ophelia*'s material and structural properties visually represent the content of the book, and allow the reader to explore Ophelia's suppressed body through a tangible relationship. By erasing the majority of the original text, Meinert even emphasizes the importance of tangibility: reading is not just achieved by reading text, but by engaging with the book. In *Carte d'identité* a similar reading practice is required.

With *Ophelia*, Meinert turned away from the traditional reading of *Hamlet* and centred her own reading of the literary classic that she visualized through the design of the book. Appropriating and altering dominant texts and ideas is something Meinert continues to do in her later work, and is also very prominent in *Carte d'identité*. In the latter, Meinert explored the text *The five senses* by Michel Serres as one of the many 'ingredients' of her book, and in doing so, stepped away from the traditional interpretations or 'meaning' of this text. I will return to the way Meinert explored this text in *Carte d'identité* in the next chapters.

The three works discussed above all show an unconventional approach to the medium book, similar to *Carte d'identité*, which centres the relationship between text, the physical presence of the book and the reader. In this way, Meinert breaks with conventions and participates in debates about what a book is and can be.

1.2 Space and time | *t=turning the pages*

The next artists' books to be discussed forms a series called *t = turning the pages* that was published in 2014, and was Meinert's graduation project from Halle (fig. 1.12). Her already present interest in the space of the book that is visible mostly in *Lorca* and *Ophelia*, becomes a more pronounced occupation, as shown in the physical dimensions and architecture of the book. Meinert developed this interest through her research on time and movement in books,

³³ Patrizia Meinert, 'Ophelia,' from: <https://patriziameinert.com/Ophelia> (last accessed on the 1st of April 2020).

³⁴ Patrizia Meinert, 'Ophelia,' from: <https://patriziameinert.com/Ophelia> (last accessed on the 1st of April 2020).

which resulted in this series.³⁵ This series consists of an edition of three signed and numbered boxes that each contains five specifically arranged artist's books. These artist's books engage with the phenomenon of time in books, which is further revisited in the accompanying essay titled '*t = turning the pages* Das Phänomen Zeit im Künstlerbuch' that serves as the starting point for Meinert's thesis.

This series is, just like the books mentioned before, based on text; in this case, that of the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941). The design of the book is the series' cornerstone to embody Bergson's concepts on time: each book (*Durée*, *Intuition*, *Temps*, *Simultanéité* and *Mémoire*) focuses and embodies one particular conception of time by Bergson. The books from the series form not just a series thematically, but also and foremost stylistically. When displayed together and closed, the books share their minimalistic design, with their titles embossed on the covers on the books. Except for *Temps*, all of the books consist of two parts: a box, folder or slipcover that protects the booklet, which is located in the inside of this box, folder or slipcover. The colours and shapes of the books differ: they are either black or white and the shapes range from rectangular with a broad spine, to flat and square. The shapes of the books, the use of the folder/slipcover and the colours are all recurring qualities in the work of Meinert. In the following paragraphs, each of the works will be shortly examined.

Durée

Durée is the flat white book, shaped in a broad rectangle (fig. 1.13). On the cover of the thin, white folder, the title is embossed. When taken out of its folder, a thin, unbound pamphlet appears, made of transparent paper called mylar. In the centre of the sheet a black circle consisting of distributed pixels is silkscreen printed upon the mylar.³⁶ The pages are folded through the centre of page that runs through the centre of the circles. When the reader unfolds the first page of the pamphlet, the left half of the circle of the first page connects to the right half of the circle of the second page: by means of unfolding the circle the two different halves create a whole circle.

In her essay *t=turning the pages* Meinert wrote that with the concept of *durée* Bergson created a concept of time that focuses on the subjective experience of time. In doing so, Meinert writes, he contrasts the mathematical and scientific concept of time (*temps*) with an idea that describes this inner sense of time as a stream of consciousness that is in constant

³⁵ Patrizia Meinert, 'Artist Statement – Carte d'identité', 2017.

³⁶ Patrizia Meinert, 't=turning the pages,' from: <https://patriziameinert.com/t-turning-the-pages> (last accessed on the 13th of December 2020).

reorganization. The way we talk and think about time does not resonate with our experience of time.³⁷

By presenting this concept as a continuous circle on a transparent paper, the reader is able to predict what is on the next page, and in a certain sense, the future. The succession of pages and circles announces the following condition and contains the preceding one within itself. Thereby, past, future and present penetrate each other, and create a new form with the unfolding of the new page. The constant reorganization of time therefore becomes tangible within the reading practice of the book. While my explanation of this, and the other book(s) in the series, do not reflect Meinert's complex translations of the concept of time into (the experience of) books as thoroughly as it deserves, for now the most important point to make is that with this book, and with this series in general, Meinert once more proves her interest in the reading practice of books. Additionally, Meinert deploys medium specific elements of the book, such as material and structure, as an invitation for the reader to participate in the book and experience different concepts (of time).

Intuition

Intuition consists of a rectangular black book in a white cardboard slipcase, which leaves the wide spine of the book visible. On the upper and lower part of the spine small vertical lines of nylon thread have been sewn that serve as the binding (fig. 1.14). The paper used for the cover of the book is called Napura Kephera and is not monochrome black, but has white speckles.³⁸ The cover is hard, and when opened, white pages shaped as multiple circles of different sizes appear. These circles are not assembled as pages in a conventional book, one by one, but seem rather disorganized (fig. 1.15).

In her essay Meinert described that for Bergson *intuition* is a means of grasping the *durée*, and is a philosophical method of cognition. Through *intuition*, Meinert writes, we are able to discover the fundamentals of what we perceive, which we are denied by the limitations of our mind. This is because knowledge is relative and the intellect works selectively in order to make things we perceive understandable and describable.³⁹ Perhaps this explains why Meinert stepped away from the conventional book and does not allow conventional reading practices; there is no text, no logical sequence of pages, no continuity, and therefore the way we read and perceive this book is relative and not restricted by our intellect, which instead would have directed us towards a conventional reading practice. In *Carte d'identité* the fragmented map also results in a different reading practice, which is not similar to our conventional reading methods.

³⁷ Meinert 2014, 62.

³⁸ E-mail from Patrizia Meinert received on the 27th of March 2020.

³⁹ Meinert 2014, 62.

Temps

The cover of *Temps* consists of the same black paper that is used for the cover of *Intuition*. The book has a rectangular shape and is 2,5 centimetres wide (fig. 1.16). The cover is folded four times (twice at each side) creating a cover or case that protects the interior pages. The front of the cover falls over the last (right) part of the cover. On the front, the title is embossed and painted white. In its folded state, five grey leporello's are visible, which are horizontally attached to the middle of the inside of the cover (fig. 1.17). The five leporello's are equal in height and length and fold out to the right. On their left, five rectangular pieces of the same paper, height and length as the leporello's in unfolded state, are placed. These paper fragments carry numbers and words printed in white. The leporello's also have white text printed on them, originated from Old High German and each section also has small numbers printed on them in black.⁴⁰ The reader can unfold all the leporello's or browse through the leporello's one by one.

In her essay, Meinert described the notion of *temps* as our conventional and chronological understanding of time, which originates from intellect. *Temps* corresponds to the scientific idea of time, which presents itself to us as a quantitative succession, translated into seconds, minutes, hours, days. Meinert notes that according to Bergson, this isolation of individual states is only an abstraction and has nothing in common with reality.⁴¹

In her book, Meinert conveyed this idea of time for the reader by presenting the book as presented from multiple timelines (each leporello represents a timeline), on which individual points are linked in a chronological sequence. By creating the timelines as leporello's consisting of equal parts, Meinert represented this concept of time spatially. When the reader unfolds the leporello's, one by one at different paces, this spatial representation allows the reader to measure the distance between two points on the timelines. The leporello, cut into equal fragments, and the use of numbers and letters to refer to these fragments, are characteristics that return in *Carte d'identité* as well. While in *temps* they present linearity, in *Carte d'identité* they confuse our understanding of linearity and sequences.

Mémoire

For *Mémoire* Meinert used Napura Kephra paper in order to create a square sleeve. On the inside, a white square booklet is held with thin, almost transparent paper. This is the only book that includes text by an author, namely the following quote of the English author Thomas de Quincey (1785-1859) is printed in a black font: "What else than a natural and

⁴⁰ In the E-mail I received from Patrizia Meinert on the 27th of March 2020 she explained that these words are included because the Old High German words precede our contemporary notions of time.

⁴¹ Meinert 2014, 63.

mighty palimpsest is the human brain? ...Everlasting layers of ideas, images, feelings, have fallen upon your brain softly as light. Each succession has seemed to bury all that went before. And yet in reality not one has been extinguished.” This quotation is situated on either the first or last page of the book (fig. 1.18). Other pages of the book include fragments of these quotations (fig. 1.19).⁴²

In her essay, Meinert writes that according to Bergson, every moment of our lives is based on the combination of two elements: perception and memory. The totality of our present and of what we are, results from the constant mixing and reshaping of perception and memory.⁴³ Bergson’s concept of memory seems to relate to the way De Quincey described the layers of ideas, images and feelings: the past constantly accumulates and contracts, and remains enclosed in the present at the same time. By using translucent paper and repeating the quote of De Quincey, the reader anticipates what the following page (the future) brings, and is able to keep the blurred past in mind as well. As mentioned before, in *Carte d’identité*, Meinert also used fragile paper with translucent qualities, with the result that the reader will be conscious of their location inside the book: the past and future remain visible.

Simultanéité

The last book of the series, *Simultanéité*, has a white, hardcover, square-shaped clamshell box. The title is embossed on the cover. Inside the box, a white folded, leporello with a transparent circle (made of tracing paper) becomes visible. In its folded state, the collective of the subsequent mountain folds of the leporello forms this circle (fig. 1.20). The reader can either browse through the leporello like a book, turning page by page, or unfold it (fig. 1.21). Unfolded, multiple circles are visible, but viewed from one angle and placed in standing position, they form one circle (fig. 1.22). This folding technique with the circle completed by the collective of the subsequent folds, is reminiscent of the circle in *Durée*. Similar to *Carte d’identité*, the whole (the circle in *Simultanéité* and the body print in *Carte d’identité*) is interrupted by the folds.

In her essay Meinert described *simultanéité* as the borderline between *durée* and *temps*. The following quotation from Bergson that Meinert used in her essay helps to clarify this conceptualization: “Wir stellen unsere Bewusstseinsvorgänge so nebeneinander, dass wir sie simultan apperzipieren, und zwar nicht ineinander, sondern nebeneinander.”⁴⁴ Similar to the circles, our consciousness is placed next to each other, which refers to simultaneity as a physical manifestation that takes up space. By creating a leporello, Meinert visualized the

⁴² From the photographs on Meinert’s website I also identified the following fragments of the quotations of De Quincey: “images, upon your brain” and “Ideas, feelings, softly.”

⁴³ Meinert 2014, 62-63.

⁴⁴ Meinert 2014, 62.

idea of simultaneity as a line, whose parts touch but do not mix. This notion of time is no longer successive, but instead past, present and future happen simultaneously.

In the same year, *Simultanéité* was re-published in a separate edition. In both editions of *Simultanéité*, text is absent. In most of the other works of this series text also remains on the background. In *Lorca*, *Ophelia*, *Play* and even *Carte d'identité*, the text seems to be chosen for its poetic qualities. Excerpts of these texts refer to the text itself and can be decontextualized and placed in a new context in order to challenge the original text (*Ophelia* and *Carte d'identité*) and visualize elements of these texts through the use of certain materials and structures (*Lorca*, *Ophelia*, *Play* and *Carte d'identité*). They have in common that they invite the reader to engage with the texts in an active way by creating a tangible relationship.

With *t=turning the pages*, on the other hand, no excerpts of the texts of Bergson are used. Except for the titles, the series has no textual references to Bergson. Meinert used these texts as ingredients for her investigation of time in books, because these concepts clarify for her certain inherent characteristics of the medium book. This specific series is not about a visualisation of language in the structure of the book, as in *Play*, or creating an atmosphere or ambience, as evoked in *Lorca*, neither does it revisit a classic literary text from a new perspective, as in *Ophelia*; *t=turning pages* is about how to make the rather abstract principle of time tangible in artists' books. The aspect of time in books will return in the third chapter of this thesis.

Makulatur

In 2016, Meinert published *Makulatur* in an edition of fifty signed and numbered copies (fig. 1.23). This work seems different as compared to the earlier books, and can be viewed as part of the second and the third phase of Meinert's career (her interest in the investigation of the physicality of the book space, and the development of her interests in typography and textuality). The title translates as waste paper: the work is composed of by-products from the making of art books, which "no longer serve any purpose."⁴⁵ As such the work is an "homage to that which is left over."⁴⁶ The by-products, or ready-made fragments, are scanned in their original size and are included in the book as digital prints in the first pamphlet (fig. 1.24). In the second pamphlet, photographs of dummies and paper scraps are included, some of which can also be seen in the first pamphlet (fig. 1.25). On the inside of the cover, information about the by-products is written (fig. 1.26). In this way the by-products are thoroughly documented and become art products themselves. The snippets, failures and dummies of the process of

⁴⁵ Patrizia Meinert, 'Makulatur,' from: <https://patriziameinert.com/Makulatur> (last accessed on the 28th of March 2020).

⁴⁶ Patrizia Meinert, 'Makulatur,' from: <https://patriziameinert.com/Makulatur> (last accessed on the 28th of March 2020).

making art become art, and are converted from purposeless to purposeful. In this way, Meinert questions what art is and what causes something to be seen as 'art'. Furthermore, Meinert exposed a part of the process of manufacturing artists' books that is often not known by or shown to the public, and, as such, this process is not regarded as a part of the art form. By including these by-products in the artist's book, Meinert makes the process part of the artwork.

The yellow spine of the work is folded six times and each end is attached to one of the two pamphlets. At first glance, the outside of the first pamphlet seems to be the cover of the work, but when unfolding the work, the cover with the title, name of the artist and ISBN-number is located between the two pamphlets, at the centre of the book. The book is turned inside out, thereby opening its structure and disclosing information about the work. This information becomes accessible for the reader when unfolding the pages and interacting with the book. These two elements of the book not only return in *Carte d'identité*, but also in all of Meinerts earlier works, in which the reader is allowed insight into the structures of the books through the use of holes, folds, transparent paper, etc.

Makulatur, *t=turning the pages* and *Carte d'identité* also share another characteristic: they make the relationship between fragment and whole a central feature of the work. In *Makulatur* this feature appears due to the contrast of the two printing techniques used in the two pamphlets: the first being digital prints of by-products, which shows these materials as flat, and the second being photographs of these by-products where their three-dimensional properties becomes visible.

In *t = turning the pages* the feature between fragment and whole also returns, in multiple ways: the series as a whole with each book is a fragment of the whole, but more specifically, in most of the books, the individual pages contributes to the visible shaping of the specific dimension of time it visualizes. In *Carte d'identité*, this contrast is embodied in the specific and separate zones, marked by folds and words and the map, in its completely unfolded state, as a whole. I will return to this subject in the subsequent chapters.

Yet another element that Meinert used multiple times in *Makulatur*, but also in the other books, is the use of ready-made materials. In *Makulatur*, it is very apparent in the use of the by-products. In her other works, including *Carte d'identité*, it is not so much a by-product that is used, but the texts that are appropriated in her art, from Federico García Lorcas, Gertrude Stein, Shakespeare, Serres, and Thomas de Quincey.

So far, elements of *Makulatur* have been explored that would classify the work within the first 'phase' of her career. But it is clear that Meinert was also playing with typography in this work. Here, text is not absent, but plays a different role than in her first three works. It seems as if text is only used for its informative qualities. The text on the cover informs the reader about the meaning of the word 'makulatur' and its history. On the inside of the spine,

information about the used by-products is printed. Looking at the digital prints of the by-products themselves, text plays a role as well. Considering the placing of the pages of the first pamphlet, it seems that Meinert used the difference in typography as a tool to make the work diverse and playful.

1.3 Carte d'identité & Flatland

Carte d'identité

In 2017 Meinert published the book *Carte d'identité* in an edition of 26 signed and numbered copies. *Carte d'identité* consists of two components: a brown folder made of cardboard (15 x 32 cm) and a folded map that has been placed inside the folder. On the outside of the folder, the title of the work, the name of the artist and the following words are visible: 'Küsten oder Kaps, ganz Privät, Schuppenflechten, Begierden, eintätowiert, Vorgebirge und Falten, Buntschillernd.'⁴⁷ On the inside of the folder, lists of words are printed (fig. 0.1). A capital letter and a number, or multiple letters and numbers follow almost every word. Together these words, letters and numbers form a coordinate system that refers to areas on the map. In its closed state, the map consists of eight folded fragments numbered A-H (fig. 1.27). Because of the folds, only parts the body print are visible in this state of the map (just parts of the A-H 1). In its unfolded state (87 x 125 cm), the map reveals the print of the front and back of Meinert's own body from the shoulders to the calves (fig. 0.3). In this state, all of the numbers (1-6) on the horizontal bottom row of the print are visible as well. Through the coordinate system, the reader is able to connect the words from the lists in the folder to the connected zones on the body print. The reader is also able to engage with the work in the closed or partially unfolded state of the map: the structure of the map, to which I will return in more detail in the third chapter, allows the reader to browse through the map or visit specific areas of the body print without the need to unfold the entire map (fig. 1.28) Lastly, I would like to remark the red edges of the two inner flaps of the folder, which are hardly visible for the reader. I will come back to this element more elaborately in the next chapters (fig. 1.29).

Flatland

A year after publishing *Carte d'identité*, Meinert published *Flatland* in an edition of fifteen signed and numbered copies. In this book Meinert's third interest, in typography and its employment, is clearly visible. The cover of the small rectangular book is inspired by a

⁴⁷ These words are translated as 'coast and capes, entirely private, psoriasis, desires, tattooed, promontories and folds, variegated.' I received this translation from Susanne Padberg of Galerie Druck & Buch in Vienna, who represents the work of Meinert. Meinert translated the words from the German edition of Serres herself to English herself, so they do not always align with the English translation of *Les cinq sens*. All of the words on the cover of the folder return in the lists on the inside of the folder.

classic French binding: the blue cover has no visible hinge (fig. 1.30)⁴⁸; the cover is protected by a dark blue *chemise* with white text printed on it (fig. 1.31); and on the outside of the book a white cardboard slipcase with a read illustration printed on it, protects the book (fig. 1.32).⁴⁹ On the cover of the book is a picture printed of a white linen cloth, and the blue cover fabric itself has been exposed to sunlight. Each edition is different because of this process of exposure. The title, the linen cloth on the cover and the process of exposure to sunlight refer to “Bleichplanes:” an area on the grass where the laundry used to be spread out in order to be bleached. It is used here as a bibliophilic metaphor: „Sie steht für die Sehnsucht nach der weißen Seite, die alle nur denkbaren Möglichkeiten bereithält, und dem Wunsch, wider besseren Wissens alles Geschriebene zu tilgen, um noch einmal von ganz vorn zu beginnen.“⁵⁰

The book itself consists of white pages with scattered text, with references to Stéphane Mallarmé, and personal memories.⁵¹ The words and text are not just printed anywhere, at random, but it is very clear that Meinert thought carefully about the placement of the text. Conventional reading practices are challenged in this way.

Similarities between *Carte d'identité* and *Flatland* are the reference to Mallarmé and the representation of ‘absence.’ In *Flatland* this absence is visualized through the *Bleichplane*, which represents the white page, but also the erasure of traces. Interestingly, in *Carte d'identité* traces are not made absent, but rather very present. I will come back to this in the third chapter. Absence in *Carte d'identité* is, however, visualized through the body print: something that, or rather somebody who, was present earlier is absent when reading the book.⁵²

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Meinert has explored different elements of the medium book in her artist’s books. Some derive from her earlier career as bookbinder, and others have resulted from an engagement with the medium of the artist’s book. The use of binding techniques, or the lack thereof, the investigation of text and typography, the digital printing, the use of illustrations and ready-mades, her anticipation of the reaction from and interaction with the reader, and the use of specific materials, are all examples of these elements of the

⁴⁸ Hinge describes the inside portion of the flexible area where bookcover meets the book spine.

⁴⁹ Meinert described her inspiration of the French binding in mail correspondence of March 27th 2020.

⁵⁰ Patrizia Meinert, ‘Flatland,’ from: <https://patriziameinert.com/Flatland> (last accessed on the 1st of April).

⁵¹ There could be other references in the book, but I had only access to the photographs of Meinert’s website, on which one page is photographed with these references.

⁵² Considering the title, *Flatland* could also refer to the book *Flatland: a Romance of Many Dimensions* (1884) by Edwin Abbott Abbott, but unfortunately I did not have the time to investigate this as possibility.

medium book that Meinert has employed in the creation of her work. Some of the elements recur multiple times and others are only used once. Her interest in the physical dimensions of the book, in the placing of text, folding techniques, and materiality stand out and play an important part in all of her books.

When we consider the texts Meinert used and referred to in her books it stands out that all of these writers question and challenge more traditional notions of reading (Stein, Lorca, Shakespeare, Mallarmé) and of our experience of life in general (Bergson, Serres). More importantly Meinert, and this brings me to another important recurring element in Meinert's work, does not integrate these excerpts without reason, but challenges or reinforces these notions proposed in the texts by appropriating them into the book medium. Additionally, these references are integrated to help her explain certain inherent elements of the medium book. Material, content and structural properties of these books are intimately interwoven, and thereby enable the reader to experience Meinert's interpretation of the important properties of the book medium in a tangible way. The participation of the reader is required in each book and the reader is stimulated to act through playing, and puzzling, but most of all through touch.

As a final remark: the employment of the three phases as structuring principle for the exploration of her books has been fruitful, even when the phases were not clearly distinguishable and in some books seem to be all present at once. In the next chapter, the function of text in *Carte d'identité* will be explored.

CHAPTER 2

FUNCTION OF TEXT

Books are often viewed as the bearers of characters and words that are placed in a specific order to create and pass on meaning to the reader. Therefore, books have a function as transporters of text and often use the most recognizable way to transport the meaning of the text: narrative, chronological order, and linearity contribute to the ‘readability’ of a book. Book artists, however, explore other ways of reading, by for instance, eliminating or challenging texts. As we have seen, Meinert incorporates, with nearly every work, text or typography in her artist books, as well as in *Carte d’identité*. The question arises how text functions within *Carte d’identité*, in which tangibility in the reading practice is emphasized. This chapter will examine in what way the text is integrated in *Carte d’identité* and how it functions in the book.

2.1 Integration of text (and numbers)

Carte d’identité consists of a folder and a map, and is as such a physical and factual object that exists, takes up space and, most importantly, can be touched. Besides the physical and material presence of the book, *Carte d’identité* refers to elements outside the book, which are manifested in multiple ways. Think of the use of the specific colour for the folder of the book, which refers to flesh; the use of Japanese paper, which refers to non-western bookbinding techniques, the structure of the work, which refers to a map, etc. It can be argued that the element that refers most dominantly to something outside of *Carte d’identité*, is its text.

Meinert integrates words in various ways and places, each having different functions in the book.⁵³ On the cover of the folder, for example, the text functions as title and as an indicator of what is inside. When the folder is unfolded once, we find a quote from the French philosopher Michel Serres (1930-2019): “Die moirierte, etwas fließende und gleichsam elastische Karte unserer identität folgt der zarten Karte des Tastsinns,” and information about the scale of the map (fig. 2.1-2).⁵⁴ Unfold the right side of the folder once more, and the reader will find the colophon, which gives information about the creation of the book. Furthermore, two lists of words become visible that are each marked by a capital letter and a number (fig. 2.3).⁵⁵ If the folder is in its unfolded state, each of the four lists or words can be viewed (fig. 2.4). As mentioned before, the letters and numbers recur on the map. In this way,

⁵³ See appendix for the English translation of the colophon and the words.

⁵⁴ Translation: “The shimmering, vaguely fluid and, as it were, elastic identity card, obeys the tender map of touch” – excerpt from Serres 2008, 25-26.

⁵⁵ See appendix for the English translation of the colophon and the words.

the organization of letters and numbers functions as a coordinate system, through which the reader is able to connect the zones of Meinert's body to the different words.

Except for the information in the colophon, Meinert's name on the cover, and the letters and numbers that are part of the coordinate's system, the text used in *Carte d'identité* originates from Michel Serres' essay *Les cinq sens* (1985). As we will see, the title of the book, the words on the cover of the book, the quote, and the words in the lists are all borrowed from *Les cinq sens*. By incorporating text fragments from Serres' essay, Meinert created a relationship between her own book and Serres' text. It is not a hidden reference, one that has to be unravelled by the reader's analysis of the 'different layers' of the text, which is so often the case in modernist, structuralist or post-modern literature. Instead, Meinert is explicit about the sources of inspiration in her art. She referred directly to *Les cinq sens* or Michel Serres following the above-mentioned quote and in the colophon.⁵⁶ Furthermore, in the recent interview with Meinert conducted by Claudia Brancato, Meinert said: "Im Buch [*Carte d'identité*] beziehe ich mich hauptsächlich auf die Kapitel Tätowierung und Leinwand, Hülle, Haut [of *Les cinq sens*]."⁵⁷ On the page of her website regarding *Carte d'identité*, Meinert referred to Serres as well, by quoting from *Les Cinq Sens*:

So komplex und ein wenig beängstigend bietet sich die Karte unserer Haut dar, buchstäblich als Karte unserer Identität, als carte d'identité, wie ein Personalausweis. Jeder trägt seine eigene bei sich, unverwechselbar wie ein Fingerabdruck oder ein Gebiß; keine dieser Hautkarten gleicht der anderen.

— Michel Serres⁵⁸

Additionally, Meinert incorporated the following quotation in the first paragraph of her Artist Statement, which originates from the first chapter of *Les cinq sens*: "The skin is a variety of contingency: in it, through it, with it, the world, and my body touch each other, the feeling and the felt, it defines their common edge. Contingency means common tangency: in it the world and the body intersect and caress each other."⁵⁹

The relationship between *Carte d'identité* and *Les cinq sens* is therefore impossible to deny. What is the nature of this relationship? In the above-mentioned interview, Meinert explained: "Mir geht es mit der Arbeit keinesfalls um die Untermauerung dessen, was Serres als Philosoph schreibt, wenngleich man vielleicht schon sagen kann, dass eine Art Plädoyer

⁵⁶ Meinert referred to the German edition of the *Les cinq sens*.

⁵⁷ Brancato & Meinert 2018.

⁵⁸ Patrizia Meinert, 'Carte d'identité,' from: <https://patriziameinert.com/Carte-didentite> (last accessed on the 13th of December 2019).

⁵⁹ Patrizia Meinert, 'Artist Statement – Carte d'identité', 2017.

für die Sinne / subtil Empfundenes entstanden ist.”⁶⁰ Although Meinert referred to *Les cinq sens* in *Carte d'identité*, it was not her goal to support the philosophical arguments of the essay. As with her other artist books, Meinert did not want to illustrate the text she used as a source of inspiration. Furthermore, Meinert appropriated ideas from other thinkers that allowed her to think about certain aspects of the medium book; by appropriating texts of Lorca she explored the ways books could transmit space and ambience of the caves in Granada to the reader, by appropriating *Hamlet* Meinert challenged stereotypical gender roles and found a way to visualize the hurt body as a book, by using Stein Meinert found a way to visualize language and its games in a book-structure, and through Bergson she was able to conceptualize time as a space in artist's books. The question rises what the function of Serres' text is. In order to understand the relation between *Carte d'identité* and its intertext, and the way the texts functions in the artist's book, I will first describe some of the significant concepts explored in *Les cinq sens* for this thesis, and afterwards connect the two through a reader-orientated analysis of the text in *Carte d'identité*.

2.2 *Les cinq sens: philosophie des corps mêlées*

Michel Serres was born in 1930 and died in 2019. Serres studied at the École Navale (Marine Academy) and studied philosophy from 1952 at the prominent École Normale Supérieure in Paris. After a short career as naval officer, he received a doctorate in 1968 with a dissertation on the work of the seventeenth-century German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Serres is often categorized as a science historian and as philosopher, *Les cinq sens* (1985) demonstrates that he does not perfectly fit into one of these boxes. Nonetheless, he presents his book as a philosophical text, of which the subtitle is *A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*. In *Les cinq sens* Serres advocates that human knowledge is not only manifested through language, but that the exploration of all the senses plays a very, perhaps even the most, important role in establishing this knowledge. For Serres, the development of language has disturbed our knowledge and experiences through the five senses. Paradoxically, he presents his plea through language, but as we will see, Serres is very aware of this problem.

Les cinq sens was first published in 1985 in French and was awarded the Prix Médicis in Paris.⁶¹ The German translation, *Die fünf Sinne. Eine Philosophie der Gemenge und Gemische*, was published in 1993 and the edition Meinert used for her text fragments is from 1998.⁶² It was not until 2008 that the first English translation, *The five senses, a philosophy of*

⁶⁰ Brancato & Meinert 2018.

⁶¹ A French literary award.

⁶² Based on the title of the book she refers to in her colophon/website: Michel Serres, *Die fünf Sinne – Eine Philosophie der Gemenge und Gemische* 1998. For the English translation of her work she used the 2009 edition.

mingled bodies, was published. The English translators Margaret Sankey and Peter Cowley wrote an introduction to this translation, in which they try to identify the reasons for this belated translation and the relative unpopularity of Serres in primarily the Anglo-American academic world. One of the reasons they identify is that in 1985, with the publication of this essay, Serres did not enjoy the same academic prominence and popularity with the general public he achieved later on in his career.⁶³ Another reason for this belated acknowledgement of Serres is, according to Sankey and Cowley, that Serres wrote about many diverse topics, such as ecology, identity, the body, and language, which has made it difficult to categorize within the academic philosophic tradition. As we will see in the following discussion of *Les cinq sens* not only his oeuvre but also the texts themselves are rather difficult to categorize due to their interdisciplinary characteristics. Yet another reason the translators identify is that Serres “declines the rules of engagement that govern academic theory, which seem to constitute knowledge as an agonistic space of conflict, hostility and critique.”⁶⁴ This argument immediately finds resonance when reading *Les cinq sens*. In this essay, Serres seems to turn against these academic rules, through the deliberate absence of footnotes, by staying away from placing the text in a philosophical tradition (he does not make many or explicit references to other philosophers or their ideas) and - most of all – through his poetic and personal writing style, which is full of metaphors, and paraphrases, and in which Serres often takes the stance of the first-person narrator who evokes memories from his past (as naval officer, as professor etc.), and addresses the reader directly.

For Serres, developing formal languages is not the goal of philosophy. At the same time, he does not think logic is useless; it can help to comprehend philosophical knowledge as sensory experience. In his writing, for example, he uses techniques of system and information theory (“hardware” vs. “software”)⁶⁵, and expresses their philosophical implications with the help of fables, anecdotes and myths.

Serres tries to warn the reader of their bodies’ addiction to language and attempts to save this body from it by signalling to the importance of gaining knowledge through the senses. The body, for Serres, is not just the body, or simply an extended body, but an ‘intermingling’, ‘mixing’, and ‘hybrid’ body that mixes with the outside world, and with the reader: “I mix with the world which mixes with me.”⁶⁶ But the body itself, the boundaries inside the body, are blurred as well.

Serres is not one to just simply state these ideas, but he turns them into a metaphorical argument, which he implements in the structure and style of his text. So while one might

⁶³ Serres 2008, ix.

⁶⁴ Serres 2008, 8.

⁶⁵ Serres 2008, 113.

⁶⁶ Serres 2008, 80.

expect that the five chapters of the book each represent a separate sense, this is not the case. In and with these chapters Serres represents the interconnectedness of the senses. A brief description of the chapters will help to understand his metaphorical argument.⁶⁷

Serres considered the sense of touch in the first chapter 'Veils'. Serres is constantly inviting the reader to experience this sense by addressing the reader and writing anecdotes that call for strong emotions, such as an attempt to save himself from death. In this chapter, Serres reacts to a presumption within the traditional research of the senses, that is, to the consensus that there are a finite number of senses. Serres argues, after Aristotle, that there is something like a *sensus communis*, a sixth sense that mediates between the other senses. Serres identifies this as the skin. The skin is for Serres the place on the body where identity is formed by the skin tissue that "folds in on itself" and the touching of the exterior world.⁶⁸

The second chapter, 'Boxes', is focussed on the sense of hearing. In his discussion of the effects of sound, Serres argues that we have become addicted to the noise of language ('drunk on words').⁶⁹ Language shapes the experience we have. Sensory experiences are of second importance and thus we become numb and forget who we are ("who am I, made up of language").⁷⁰ Again, he critiques philosophy, in which language dominates: "The philosopher drinks endlessly from the cup of hemlock, from the crater of words."⁷¹ But there is hope: the world is not dependent on language, he writes. Serres directs his attention to silence: "solitude releases silence from the control of language."⁷²

Through the evocation of the tasting of a glass of wine, Serres turns his attention to taste and smell in the chapter 'Tables'. These senses are the most influenced by language: "Smell and taste differentiate, whereas language, like sight and hearing, integrates."⁷³ The tongue is a receptor that can be awakened from the numbness of language by tasting. Smelling and hearing also form direct contact points with the physical world. By eating, one traces a map of the food/drink on the tongue, and that has traces of other maps: of the weather while harvesting the grapes, etc. The senses lead us to an understanding that the verbal rejects and thus can, help to "return to the immediacy of the senses."⁷⁴ When eating, one should taste, and not read the label.

In the fourth chapter, 'Visit,' Serres discusses space and traveling. The sense vision is also treated here as part of a complete multisensate body. Serres treats seeing only with the

⁶⁷ For the analysis of *Carte d'identité*, the first chapter of *Les cinq sens* is of most importance.

⁶⁸ Serres 2008, 22-25.

⁶⁹ Serres 2008, 92.

⁷⁰ Serres 2008, 92-93.

⁷¹ Serres 2008, 98.

⁷² Serres 2008, 90.

⁷³ Serres 2008, 156.

⁷⁴ Serres 2008, 169.

eye, without visiting or experiencing a place, as pure theory and thus language.⁷⁵ Serres also explains that human beings are never static: we travel and move as the earth moves, the galaxy rotates, etc.⁷⁶ Serres opens the final chapter ‘Joy’ with a list of movements or joys experienced through the senses, such as running, swimming, breathing, jumping. Serres emphasises – after the death of language – the reborn subject with a mingling, mixed body of sensations.

In *Les cinq sens*, the senses are not separated or autonomously represented, but are interconnected, mingled and mixed throughout the book. The skin, as *sensus communis*, mediates between the chapters and maintains the network-like structure of the book. This is a metaphorical structure, because for Serres the senses are nothing but the mixing and mingling of the body – and as such they overflow their borders. They do not form separate islands, but interfere with each other. Through the structure of the book, Serres demonstrates his views on the senses, which he at the same time makes evident through the use of language. He makes his arguments *sensible*. He demonstrates that the separate treatment of the senses is impossible, because they are indeed inseparable.

By means of the employment of this metaphorical argument, Serres reacts to another presumption within the traditional research of the senses: that the senses form a hierarchy, according to which vision is represented at the top.⁷⁷ It is for this reason that Serres begins his book with the skin and touch, and not with the eye. For Serres, ‘the skin is a variety of our mingled senses,’ and is the place where the traces of your own past are located.⁷⁸ The skin thus presents the aforementioned *sensus communis* and “intervenes between several things in the world and makes them mingle.”⁷⁹

2.2.1 Hybridity, mixture and (inter)mingling

By using the structure as a metaphorical argument, Serres demonstrates his arguments. To emphasize his views, Serres employs stylistic and linguistic metaphorical arguments as well. Hybridity, intermingling and mixing are not just key words in the text, but form the base of these stylistic and linguistic devices.

Firstly, the interdisciplinary essence of the text stands out. As mentioned before, Serres’ text is quite difficult to define, even though it presents itself as a ‘philosophy’. Through the employment of personal anecdotes, paraphrases, metaphors, puns, etymology, variegated lists, and the rejection of footnotes, what normally would be an academically

⁷⁵ Thomas Kavanagh, ‘Review: Michel Serres, *Les cinq sens*,’ *MLN* 101 (1986), 4, 940.

⁷⁶ Jacob Pearce, ‘Review: Michel Serres, *The Five Senses: A philosophy of Mingled Bodies*,’ *Perspectives: International Postgraduate Journal of Philosophy*, 91.

⁷⁷ Serres 2008, 2-3.

⁷⁸ Serres 2008, 52.

⁷⁹ Serres 2008, 80.

written philosophical text becomes a rather poetic and literary text. The integration of associations in his discourse occur as allegories and metaphors that refer directly or indirectly to European music, science, philosophy, literature, fables, fairy tales, myths, visual arts, and architecture. Serres refers to Don Juan, Montaigne, Descartes, Leibniz, Plato's *Symposium*, Bonnard, Leonardo's *The Last Supper*, Orpheus, and *Cinderella*, and many more. Together these references form a network of connotations, and an interdisciplinary text.

Serres believes in interdisciplinary research that does not operate in one field of knowledge alone. This is similar to his belief that language is only one of the fields that establishes knowledge, and has interfered with the knowledge that we learn through the senses. Due to these metaphors and references it becomes difficult for the reader to grasp the arguments made in the text. Yet, the use of these metaphors and references prevents the use of abstractions. Serres resists abstractions, because he does not want to construct "a palace of abstractions", which would overlook the sensory experience of the reader.⁸⁰

Serres' personal writing style – in which he performs the stance of the first-person narrator that evokes memories from his past and addresses the reader directly – also contributes to the interdisciplinary and hybrid character of the essay. The nature of his dialogue with the implementation of his own sensuous experiences structure the text, and in doing so he demonstrates the importance of the senses in the manifestation of human knowledge, rather than logical development.⁸¹

Other aspects that demonstrate his arguments are the linguistic games Serres employs. One is the so-called 'Serresian variegated list,' and existing of lists of words that are characteristic for his texts (for example "It burns, stings, bites, crackles, stinks, dazzles, and quickly springs up everywhere, incandescent, to remain in control").⁸² Rather than searching for *le mot juste*, Serres introduces series of words in the text.⁸³ The idea is that the variety of variegating words by means of the different associations they evoke, together form the meaning of the sentence Serres is searching for. The centre of the sentence is not determined by just one word, but is located in the mingling and mixing of the variegated list.

Another stylistic technique Serres employs is the 'fan'.⁸⁴ Here, Serres uses a word that he keeps referring to at other places in the text. The term is not located in one point in the text, but spreads across the book and appears in various contexts. In these ways, he addresses the senses of the reader, but also demonstrates the way he thinks the senses work. Again, Serres uses language to perform his arguments about the senses, which is paradoxical. Serres,

⁸⁰ Serres 2008, 26.

⁸¹ Serres 2008, xiii.

⁸² Serres 2008, 17.

⁸³ Serres 2008, 5.

⁸⁴ Serres 2008, 5.

however, seems very conscious of creating this paradox. He uses language to demonstrate his arguments *and* to combat the limitations of language.⁸⁵ In this way, the arguments made in the essay and the style of the essay, mingle, mix, and support each other.

2.3 Carte d'identité

As we have seen in the introduction of this chapter, Meinert did not try to hide the relationship between *Carte d'identité* and *Les cinq sens*. The title, quotation on the inside of the folder, and the list of words all directly refer to *Les cinq sens*. In the introduction to this chapter, I briefly discussed that Meinert did not integrate these fragments of *Les cinq Sens* in her work to illustrate Serres' philosophical arguments. After the description of Serres' arguments and instruments in *Les cinq sens*, it is now easier to understand the relationship between *Carte d'identité* and Serres' text. In this paragraph I will explore the textual references in *Carte d'identité*, and the function of the incorporation of these text fragments.

Let us first take a few steps back, and ask ourselves what it is we think of when we read the title 'Carte d'identité' on the unopened cover. Translated to English, *Carte d'identité* means: 'identity card', in German it is *Personalausweis*. According to the Cambridge dictionary, the definition of the English word is: 'an official document or card with your name, date of birth, photograph, or other information on it that proves who you are.'⁸⁶ Although the details of the definition of 'identity card' can differ per nationality, generally it can be argued that an identity card documents one's identity. In order to do so, it contains information about the subject, such as a picture portraying the head, a surname followed by initials, an autograph, the date of birth and height of the subject, an identity number that is unique for every person, and each card requires its own unique number.

Therefore, it is very likely to expect that *Carte d'identité* deals with subjects and themes such as identification, personal information, documentation, objectivity etc. When exploring the artist's book, however, these subjects are not immediately recognizable: the folder does not contain a photograph, but a print of a (headless) body. It is not an official document, but a booklet made by an artist that is exhibited in museums and galleries. The folder contains terms that do not give an indication of the height, gender or date of birth of a specific person, but refer to nature ("Baumrinde," "Berge und Meerengen," "Eiskristalle") parts of the body ("Daumen," "Gebiss"), colours ("Rot mit anderem Rot," "Weiß"), etc. For the reader, the relation between the title and the work is, therefore, not immediately visible, but the title and the associations it evokes allow and invite the reader to engage with the work

⁸⁵ Serres 2008, xii.

⁸⁶ Cambridge Dictionary, 'Identity Card,' by the Cambridge University Press: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/identity-card> (last accessed on the 13th of December 2019).

and reconsider the relationship between the artist's book and a personal identification document.

Not knowing that the title refers to *Les cinq sens* does make this more difficult. Even if one would be familiar with *Les cinq sens*, it would be challenging to connect the title to this text, because the title and other text fragments are removed from their original context and placed in a new one in *Carte d'identité*. When the reader notices the quotation inside the folder "Die moirierte, etwas fließende und gleichsam elastische Karte unserer identität folgt der zarten Karten des Tastsinns – *Michel Serres*", and reads in the colophon that the printed text fragments in the folder originate from the German edition of *Les cinq sens*, it is likely that the reader wonders if the title also stems from this text. Knowing or guessing that the name of the author (Michel Serres) is French and suspecting that his text would therefore also be written in French, would make the reader more likely to connect the title and *Les cinq sens*. The above-mentioned quote supports this relation because here the "Karte unserer identität" is introduced.

At this moment, the relation between the title (and other text fragments) and *Les cinq sens* is established, but rather than understanding the relationship between the title and the personal identity card, it diffuses our idea of what this *carte d'identité* is exactly. The identity card we thought of earlier is not elastic, shimmering or fluid, but rather fixed, immobile and printed on a piece of plastic or paper. The outward physical appearance of *Carte d'identité* resembles that of common identity card, not that of the elastic or shimmering card that Serres refers to. The second part of the line "der zarten Karten des Tastsinns" is even more difficult to signify. What would Serres mean with this identity card and what is the relation with *Carte d'identité*?

2.3.1 Tattoos

In order to understand more about this relationship and the possible meaning of the title, it is informative to look at the above-mentioned quotation in the folder ("Die moirierte, etwas fließende und gleichsam elastische Karte unserer identität folgt der zarten Karten des Tastsinns") and try to contextualize it. The quotation originates from the first chapter, 'Veils,' of *Les cinq sens* and is part of the section 'Tattoos.' As I have mentioned before, in this chapter Serres explores the sense of touch and describes that he considered the skin as the sixth sense that mediates between the other senses. For Serres, the skin bears traces of the past that are created by sensory experiences. Serres called these traces 'tattoos'. Contact with yourself (skin on skin for example), and with the exterior world, forms these traces. The printed quotation is part of the following paragraph:

I have only described tattooing in order to show the traces of the soul and those of the world. We always believe that we know something better when we have seen it, or that we can explain better by deploying shapes and displaying colours. To be sure, seen and visible tattoos, imprinted with a hot needle, have their origin in this gaudy thing that is the soul, a complex labyrinth of sense striving alternately towards the internal and external, and vibrating at the limits of each. But I have drawn, coloured or painted tattoos only in order to reveal the tangible: an abstract picture of the sense of touch. Abstract insofar as it abandons the visible in order to rejoin the tactile. The shimmering, vaguely fluid and, as it were, elastic identity card, obeys the tender map of touch. It favours topology and geography over geometry. Neglecting point of view and representation, it favours mountains, straits, footpaths, Klein bottles, chance borders that are formed through the contingencies of contact. [...] The map on the epidermis most certainly expresses more than just touch, it plunges deeply into the internal sense, but it begins with the sense of touch.⁸⁷

The identity card stands in close connection to these tattoos: the bearers of traces and touches on the surface of the skin. For Serres the skin is the place where your identity is formed. When you touch something, you are able to identify your body and the exterior world. At the same time: “exchanges are made,” making it difficult to tell where your body ends and where the things, or bodies, you make contact with begin.⁸⁸ There are no strict borders between your skin and the “skin” of the object or body that you touch. Serres finds it more accurate that by touching everything mingles and mixes.⁸⁹ This means that identity is not fixed, but always changing and mixing. The ‘shimmering’, ‘vaguely fluid’, and ‘elastic’ identity card, might refer to this shifting identity. But what is this ‘card’ Serres’ refers to?

Now we enter an interesting territory. In *Les cinq sens*, a few pages before the above-printed excerpt of ‘Tattoos’, Serres introduces this identity card by addressing the reader and giving them an instruction. He wants us to draw a map of the body:

Let us now draw or paint. Isolate, if you can, the chance encounters of corners or folds, the small secret zones in which the soul, to all intents and purposes, still resides. Then isolate as well, if possible, the unstable zones which are able to play at souls with one another as if playing ball. Surround also the balls or blocks, which only become subjects in the presence of objects, the dense or compact regions which always remain objects or black, soulless deserts, in themselves, or in relation to those

⁸⁷ Serres 2008, 25-26. In this paragraph the word ‘soul’ stands out. The identification and description of the concept of the soul is a central to *Les cinq sens*. Serres locates the soul on the skin, and thus parodies the Cartesian question of the location of the soul. I have not mentioned the importance of the soul before, because I do not think it is of primary importance for the analysis of this thesis.

⁸⁸ Serres 2008, 80-81.

⁸⁹ Serres, 2008, 23-26 & 80-81.

zones which explode, burst forth and escape along narrow corridors, form passes and chimneys, pathways, passages, flames, zigzags and labyrinths. Observe on the surface of the skin, the changing, shimmering, fleeting soul, the blazing, striated, tinted, streaked, striped, many-coloured, mottled, cloudy, star-studded, bedizened, variegated, torrential, swirling soul. A wild idea, the first after consciousness, would be to trace delicately and colour in these zones and passages, as a map.

Tattooing: my white, constantly present soul blazes up and is diffused in the unstable reds which exchange with other reds; deserts lacking a soul are black, and fields where the ochre, mauve, cold blue, orange and turquoise soul very occasionally settles are green ... This is what our complex and somewhat frightening identity card looks like. Everyone has their own original card, like their thumbprint or dental record, no map resembles another, each one changes through time. I have made so much progress since my sad youth and bear on my skin the tracks and paths traced by the women who have helped me in the search for my scattered soul.⁹⁰

The map Serres wants us to draw closely resembles the map in *Carte d'identité*. It is as if Meinert read this paragraph and afterwards made the body print as a map. Indeed, Meinert described in her Artist Statement: "When I came across Michel Serres' *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*, I knew it [*Carte d'identité*] had to be a map."⁹¹ In the interview of 2018 Meinert explained: "Die Idee der Haut als einer Art Landkarte, die gleichzeitig Träger der Spuren des Erlebten ist, hat mich fasziniert."⁹² Although Meinert expressed that she was fascinated by the idea of the skin as a map, she never mentioned this specific instruction of Serres' in interviews or on her website. She did, however, refer to it by integrating quotations from the paragraph 'Tattoos' in her book ("Die moirierte, etwas fließende und gleichsam elastische Karte unserer Identität folgt der zarten Karten des Tastsinns") and on her website. Additionally, she used the term "Tätowierungen" to refer to area B5 on the map. On her website, the following quotation is placed in German and English beside the photographs of *Carte d'identité*: "This is what our complex and somewhat frightening identity card looks like. Everyone has their own original card, like their thumbprint or dental record, no map resembles another, each one changes through time."

Again, Meinert removed the quotation from its original context, making it difficult for the reader to understand what this identity card is. It seems however, that the reader's curiosity is rewarded: when you take the extra step, look at her website, and place the quotations in their original context, it will clarify what Serres means with this "der Karten der unserer Identität."

⁹⁰ Serres 2008, 24.

⁹¹ Patrizia Meinert, 'Artist Statement – Carte d'identité', 2017.

⁹² Claudia Brancato & Patrizia Meinert, 'Interview zum Künstlerbuch,' December 19th 2018, (last accessed in September 2019).

Shortly put, this identity card, is a map of the body that shows the ‘tattoos’ (“Tätowierungen”), the traces of the senses and of encounters with the world. This map is more abstract for Serres, and is located on the skin- or can be seen as the skin itself. The skin carries the marks of past touches, which you can paint or single out. Meinert followed Serres’ instructions and approached them in her own artistic manner. She covered her body in ink and rolled her body on the sheets of paper that lay on the ground. In doing so, the body print shows the imprint of painted body hair, shows the differences in amounts of paint left on the body, the differences of the pressure of her body against the paper, and the textures of her skin that were printed on the paper (fig 2.5). In this sense, the print represents the “traces of her past,” which would normally be hidden. Through this process Meinert engages in a procedure that alternately can be characterized by alternately revealing and concealing: coating her body in ink can be viewed as concealing, while creating an imprint of her body can be regarded as revealing. Furthermore, body hair is often shaved, but Meinert did not, which can be seen as an act of concealing. By printing it, however, she reveals it. This process will return in many of the features of the book.

In a more metaphorical sense, the print shows these traces of her past, because Meinert connected these terms to areas on her body, connecting them with memories and associations. She thus coloured “these zones and passages, as a map,” in her own way by assigning different zones, and connected terms to them by means of the coordinate system.

2.3.2 Küsten oder Kaps, ganz privat, Schuppenflechten, Begierden, eintätowiert, Vorgebirge und Falten, Buntschillernd

Meinert made her own identity card by printing her body on sheets of paper and assigning terms to the zones of her body. These terms, which partly return on the cover of the book, originate from *Les cinq sens*. With most of these terms we are now familiar: a great deal of them appear in the paragraph ‘Tattoos’ in *Les cinq sens*. When looking at these terms, three things stand out that concern the choice of words and the way they are presented to the reader. First of all, the words Meinert printed in her book are relatively impersonal terms i.e. they do not inform us about Meinert or her personal life. Instead, the words refer to things such as colours (‘Weiß’), landscapes (‘Seen’, ‘Pfade’), textures (‘raue Oberflächen’), body parts (‘Daumen,’ ‘Gebiss’), ambiances (‘ganz privat’), materials (‘Wolle’), etc. The way she chose the terms can, however, be viewed as personal. Additionally, the act of printing her body on the surface of the paper can be viewed as intimate. Here we encounter a tension or interaction between intimacy and openness or the impersonal that is constantly present - in multiple levels - in *Carte d’identité*.

In the 2017 interview Meinert explained the reason for her to use *Les cinq sens* and the particular words:

Bewegt aber hat mich vor allem das Poetische des Textes und meine Wahl fiel auf ebendiese Worte, die meiner Meinung nach die besondere Stimmung des Textes ausmachen. Dabei finde ich vor allem die Mischung aus Landschafts- und Naturbegriffen, Beschreibungen der Haut, Farben, Stoffe, Adjektive, die Strukturen benennen, so eingehend.⁹³

This poetic nature of the text that Meinert refers to is part of Serres style that demonstrated his arguments. As we have seen, Serres deployed this style in order to address the sensuous experience of the reader. The choice of the terms for her make up the poetic nature of the text: “Der Körperdruck ist ja meine ganz persönliche Landkarte, der ich die Begriffe zugeordnet habe. Insofern betrachte ich letztere als herausgelöst aus dem Serres-Kontext und als zum Ausdruck gebracht durch ebendiese ganz persönliche Aneignung.”⁹⁴ Meinert indicated that she assigned the terms to her personal corporal map, disconnected them from the Serrisian context and experienced this as a form of personal appropriation.

Why then did she choose these terms and not more personal terms? The act of choosing these terms is already very personal for Meinert, because she made the decision to use these exact terms, because they appealed to her, formed for her the poetic nature of the text, and correlated to zones of her body. She appropriated these terms and, in doing so, she removed the terms from Serres’ text, and placed them in her own work without the ‘Serrisian’ context. The terms are not integrated in the artist’s book with footnotes, and are not annotated. Meinert did, however, mention *Les cinq sens* multiple times in various ways and places: in the colophon of the artist’s book, on her website, in the Artist Statement, and in the recent interview in which she stated: „Im Buch beziehe ich mich hauptsächlich auf die Kapitel Tätowierung und Leinwand, Hülle, Haut.“⁹⁵ Most of the words Meinert borrowed originate from the first chapter of Serres’ book. More specific, on page 24 of *Les cinq sens* many of these words appear, such as: “Tätowierungen” (tattoos), “Narben alter Wunden” (scars from wounds), “verhärtete Stellen” (caluses), “Runzeln und Furchen” (wrinkles and furrows), “Maske” (mask), “eintätowierte Geschichten” (historiated skin), “Flecken” (blotches), “Eiskristalle” (ice crystals), “Flammen” (flames), “Ikonen” (icons), etc.

⁹³ Claudia Brancato & Patrizia Meinert, ‘Interview zum Künstlerbuch,’ December 19th 2018, (last accessed in September 2019).

⁹⁴ Claudia Brancato & Patrizia Meinert, ‘Interview zum Künstlerbuch,’ December 19th 2018, (last accessed in September 2019).

⁹⁵ Claudia Brancato & Patrizia Meinert, ‘Interview zum Künstlerbuch,’ December 19th 2018, (last accessed in September 2019).

[...] every epidermis would require a different tattoo; it would have to evolve with time: each face requires an original tactile mask. Historiated skin carries and displays a particular history. It is visible: wear and tear, scars from wounds, calluses, wrinkles and furrows of former hopes, blotches, pimples, eczema, psoriasis, birth-marks. Memory is inscribed there, why look elsewhere for it? And it is invisible: the fluctuating traces of caresses, memories of silk, wool, velvet, furs, tiny grains of rock, rough bark, scratchy surfaces, ice crystals, flames, the timidity of a subtle touch, the audacity of aggressive contact. An abstract drawing or painting would be the counterpart of the faithful and honest tattoo in which the sense impressions are expressed; if the picture imitates readymade illustrations, icons or letters, everything is reduced to a mere reflection of the social. The skin becomes a standard bearer, whereas it is in fact imprinted.⁹⁶

It seems as if this quotation, and even this page, was important for Meinert. Basically, this excerpt describes what Serres means with the afore-mentioned tattoo of the historiated skin. These terms refer on the one hand directly to the text, and on the other hand they immediately blur this direct link because they are removed from their original context.

By removing the original context and meaning of the words, Meinert created room for the reader to interpret the work and create meaning. By using these displaced terms that are both broad and specific and that many people are familiar with, the book becomes more accessible for the reader to engage with to assign meaning to the terms and zones of the corporal print, without being acquainted with the philosophy of Michel Serres. One might even argue that in this way Meinert placed language in the background in order to create possibilities for the reader to engage with the work, and in doing so employed a similar strategy as Serres in *Les cinq sens*, where he used poetic language in order to stimulate the associative and sensory experience of the reader. In order to establish associations or ‘meaning’, the reader is invited to participate in *Carte d’identité*. Again, this earlier-mentioned interaction between intimacy and openness in the form of the participation of the reader, surfaces here.

When studying these terms, the second element that stands out is the form in which Meinert printed the terms, because it brings the aforementioned Serrisian variegated list to mind. Meinert placed the words in alphabetical order and printed them on the pages of the folder (fig. 2.4). Not only are the terms printed in the form of a list, but it is also striking that some terms are assigned to several area’s (for example, “Begierden,” which is assigned to E5-6, F2-3 and “getigert,” which is assigned to F1-6, G1-6, H1-6), and that other areas have multiple terms assigned to them (area A2-3 has for example five terms ascribed to it), so that it functions as a variegated list. It is as if the particular areas have multiple meanings and as if the meaning cannot be defined by just one or the other term, but lies somewhere in between.

⁹⁶ Serres 2008, 24.

This reference is more metaphorical than the integration of the words, but might be more distinct than the used and displaced terms. Distinct in the sense that, with the incorporation of the list, a very similar method to Serres is employed by Meinert, whereas the terms do not have the same meaning as the terms in *Les cinq sens* (because they are removed from their context and new meaning can be ascribed to them).

Serres implemented the variegated lists when he was not entirely sure that one word could grasp what he meant – as a critique on language and an emphasis on the importance of sensuous knowledge. Can this also be the case in *Carte d'identité*? Meinert mentioned that her work could be interpreted as a plea for the senses: „Mir geht es mit der Arbeit keinesfalls um die Untermauerung dessen, was Serres als Philosoph schreibt; wenngleich man vielleicht schon sagen kann, dass eine Art Plädoyer für die Sinne / subtil Empfundenes entstanden ist.“⁹⁷ Meinert seems very aware of the way the reader perceives her art. She gives the reader a possible interpretation, but at the same time she tries to leave these interpretations open. By using the words “wenngleich man vielleicht schon sagen kann” Meinert leaves the reader in control of the construction of meaning. Another important and fundamental element of Meinert’s work (and her oeuvre) comes to light here: the importance of leaving interpretation possibilities unanswered.

2.3.3 Text and image

In the mail-correspondence with Meinert, she described her thoughts on the making process of *Carte d'identité*: “I remember that in the beginning I was thinking about spreading Serres’ fragments on the print. I used to make lots of little dummies to evaluate my thoughts and ideas. Here the procedure finally prompted me to handle text and image separately.”⁹⁸ Although Meinert separated text and image in this work, they do not exist autonomously. The words and the body print are connected through the coordinate system. When the reader engages with the book and connects these terms with the areas on the map by using the coordinate system, consequently the reader has to put in effort in order to understand the relation between the two. As mentioned before, the terms describe both broad and very specific things, landscapes or bodies, such as textures, materials, ambiances, and other phenomena. Terms she used are for example: “Abdrücke,” “angrenzende Raume,” “Berge und Meeringen,” “Buchstaben,” “chiniert,” “Eiskristalle,” “empfindlich,” “enge Gänge,” “Flecken,” “flüchtig,” “getigert,” “gewagte Berührungen,” “Nachbarschaft,” “Pelze,” “Rot

⁹⁷ Brancato & Meinert 2018.

⁹⁸ E-mail from Patrizia Meinert received on the 7th of July 2019.

mit anderem Rot,” “Schuppenflecken,” “Tätowierungen,” “Vorgebirge und Falten” “wild wirbelnd,” “Zickzacklinien.”⁹⁹

When analysing these terms and the zones they are connected to, a few things stand out. The first thing I want to point out concerns the reading practice of the book: it is up to the reader to either unfold the map partially or fully. When the map is out of the folder, but still unfolded, the reader is able to immediately engage with the map by browsing through the envelopes. Consequently, the reader can only access a limited area of the map: A-F1 and therefore perceives a fragmented body print (fig. 0.1). When unfolding the map horizontally, the reader can access the areas A-F 1-6 by browsing through the envelopes, but the reader again perceives the body print as fragmented (fig. 1.28). The reader can, lastly, unfold the map vertically as well. Now, the reader is able to see the body print as a whole, but cannot browse through the envelopes anymore, as they are all unfolded (fig. 0.3).

These different approaches influence the accessibility and understanding of the folder. When looking at the fragmented map, it is difficult or even impossible to make sense of the connected words to the areas, because the reader cannot fully grasp what this area is. When looking at the fully unfolded map, the element of touch is placed on the background, because the reader is not able to browse through the folds anymore. Furthermore, the map itself does not make physical contact with itself anymore. With this, I mean that through the folds, the layers of paper were pressed upon each other, making it touch itself. This element of touch will be explored further in the next chapter.

2.3.4 Words and their functions

Other elements that stand out when observing the map concern the way that the words connected to the area function.¹⁰⁰ There are words included in the list that describe textures or patterns, such as “Flecken,” “fleckig,” “gerieft,” “getigert.” These descriptive words are very broad and could be connected to many areas on the map, because the print consists of many of these characteristic traits, such as spots (“Flecken,” “Fleckig”¹⁰¹) or patterns (“gerieft,” “getigert”). It remains unclear to me why Meinert chose these specific areas to describe with these words. The words could have a metaphorical relation to the area they describe, or refer to areas on the artist’s body itself that can be associated with these terms, and that due to the print from body on to the paper these characteristic traits were not transferred, only visible for Meinert herself, and not for the reader.

⁹⁹ See appendix for the translation of the text in *Carte d’identité*.

¹⁰⁰ I have not included all the words from the lists, but have just highlighted a few that are in my opinion either exemplary for other words or are worth exploring because of their singular function.

¹⁰¹ “Fleckig” refers to area A2-3 of the map, which does not carry ink, but instead is unprinted.

It could also be the case that similar to “Zickzacklinien,” which is connected to area F5, the words have a self-referential function. When we look at the referred section of the map, we do not see ink that is printed on the paper, but just unprinted paper. It seems as if “Zickzacklinien” thus refers to the paper itself: to the folds that are visually similar to zig-zag lines. In this sense, the book is self-referential and describes itself as being folded, and thereby the book draws attention to the medium, its formal elements and materials, and is able to draw attention to elements of the medium that are often placed on the background in conventional books. With the terms “Abdrücke,” “Träger von Spuren,” “Promontories und falten,” parts of the production process and the map itself and the map are described, creating a self-referential function.

The word “Leinwand” connected to zones A-H, 1-6 (complete map), has a similar self-referential function, and a metaphorical meaning as well. On the one hand, it refers to the paper as a canvas, on which the body of the artist is printed and serves similar to a brush, yet “Leinwand” can also be explored in a more metaphorical sense. Then, the body of the artist itself functions as a canvas, whilst being covered in ink, and is printed on the paper. Furthermore, the paper sheets in the artist’s book can be understood as the skin of the artist, because of the material connotations, but also because the paper presents the imprint of the skin. These relations will be explored further in the next chapter.

The relation between text and image sometimes stays close to the text of Serres and its original context, for example with “eintätowierte Geschichten,” which is connected to the whole map (A-H, 1-6), and the above-mentioned “Leinwand, ” is a different example of this. At other times, a whole new meaning is attributed to the words within the context of *Carte d’identité*. The following section seems to be focussed on the reading practice of the book, and therefore has a self-referential function as well. These words all have in common that they refer to the map or book as a body, and at the same time refer to the body printed in the map. Moreover, these words have sexual connotations, and therefore describe the reading practice as a sexual act.

Let me start this process, by highlighting two words that refer to the map as presenting a human body, such as “Eczema” and “Schuppenflechten.” Interestingly, both these words are followed by a ‘0’ in the lists. Therefore, there seems to be no connection between these words and the zones of the map. Why, then, did Meinert include these terms? I argue that these words create at least two elements that contribute to the understanding of the map as a body. First of all, the words refer to skin conditions. By situating these words in the folder, but not on the map, the folder is identified as the exterior of the map; the skin of the body, while the map can be seen as the interior of the body. I will return to this distinction between exterior and interior later on. Secondly, by including these words, the body print

becomes more realistic. These words have a self-referential function, not to the book medium, but to the human body.

There are other words that also refer to the human body and do have coordinates, such as “Gebiss,” “Daumen,” and “Zungen.” These words refer to body parts that have not been printed on the map. One might think that they refer to areas on the print that correlate with these descriptions, but this is not the case, because the print covers the area from the calves to the shoulders, without hands, head and feet. “Gebiss,” for instance, is connected to area A2-3. If Meinert would have included her head in the body print, it would probably have been the area where it would be visible. Because her head is absent in this print, the coordinates mark this absence. For “Zungen” it would make sense to expect the same coordinates as with “Gebiss.” Instead, “Zungen” refers to area C1-3 on the map: the area on the print beneath the breasts. The hands are not included in the print, but “Daumen” does not mark this absence as with “Gebiss,” but refers to area E-2: a part of the print of her genital zone. The relation between “Daumen” and this area is hard to identify, but might refer to certain connotations such as sexual pleasure, or the fingers of the reader that touch these zones when unfolding the book. In this light “Zungen” could also have sexual connotations: the act of licking the part of the body beneath the breasts, perhaps even performed by the reader.

There are also words that have a more visual or metaphorical relation to the body. The word “Ikonen” and “Kugeln und Knoten,” for instance, both refer to the area that carries the breasts (fig 2.6). This could be viewed as having a visual relation to the body, similar to “Flammenförmig” which refers to the printed body hair of the genital zone on the map, and more metaphorically can refer to the “danger” or “seduction” the female reproductive system poses in stereotypical gendered ideas about the female body. These terms describe parts of the female body in a way that indeed brings these stereotypical portrayals of the female body as seen by man to mind. Not coincidentally, Meinert appropriated these terms from a man that writes about the experiences of human bodies, as if to challenge these male dominated notions about the female body.

2.3.5 The violence of reading

The combination of words “Rot mit anderem Rot” (B2-3, E2-3), “Ganz privat” (E2-3), and “Weiß” E1-6, “Grenzen” (B2-3), have a metaphorical relation to the body, as well. Together, these words and areas on the map form a reference concerning the private area of the body print: area B2-3 carries the print of the breasts, and the coordinates E2-2 refers to the area on the map that carries the print of the body’s genitals. The combination of ‘Weiß’ and ‘Rot mit anderem Rot’ marks a coloured section, which remind of the red inner flaps of the folder that

are hardly visible for the reader (fig. 1.29). Meinert explained the following about the coloured section:

Der Farbschnitt markiert tatsächlich den Eingangsbereich in eine doch recht intime Zone, hier fallen sozusagen die letzten Hüllen. Allem voran ist es eine Referenz an Mallarmé, die man an dieser Stelle nicht zwingend sehen muss. Dieser bezieht sich zwar auf das Aufschneiden der noch geschlossenen Druckbogen, doch als eine Analogie zur Brutalität, die das Eindringen in das Buchinnere hat, schien es mir nicht ganz unpassend: ‚The unopened virginal book, moreover, ready for a sacrifice from which the red edges of ancient books bleed; the introduction of a weapon, or page cutter, to establish the taking of possession.‘ Vielleicht ist es auch eine Art zu sagen: Ich habe mich geöffnet, veröffentlicht sozusagen aber: Hier! Wer genau schaut, bemerkt eben doch, dass es ein privater Raum ist, der betreten wird. Genau um diese Spannung geht es mir auch; sie setzt sich in der Faltung fort, in die man sich mit den Fingern wühlen muss.¹⁰²

By removing the original Serresian context of these words, Meinert is able to create a new reference in her work: by referring to Stéphane Mallarmé she describes the act of reading as sexual violence. The reader is placed in the position of perpetrator that harms the body (of the book) and trespasses the outlined “Grenzen” in order to reach an area (with their “Daumen”) that is “Ganz Privat.” The implications of this position will be explained in the next chapters, in which more information about Mallarmé will be presented as well. By creating the analogy between the flaps of *Carte d’identité* and the red edges of these ancient books, Meinert underlines the fore-mentioned analogy of the folder as the skin, and the map as the interior of the body. At the same time, the coloured section on the map itself and the paper of the map, complicate this analogy, because these aspects contribute to the understanding of the map as the skin. Instead of having a clear understanding of what can be viewed as the exterior, and what can be regarded the interior, these two elements of the body seem to ‘mingle,’ similar to what Serres described. The tension between exterior and interior and between revealing and concealing is present here as well. Furthermore, Meinert appropriated not only the words of Serres, but also that of Mallarmé, in order to describe the reading practice of a (female) body, which results in the challenging of their notions, as I will argue in the next chapters.

¹⁰² Brancato & Meinert 2018.

2.4 Conclusion

In the introduction to this thesis I mentioned that I think of the investigation as a somewhat similar practice as the peeling of an onion: by peeling off the outer layers, which are most visible and easier to peel, I try to reach a deeper layer. In this case, I started my investigation with the formal analysis of Meinert's oeuvre, which led me to investigate the function of text in *Carte d'identité* in this chapter. The text of the book is very present when reading it, but the more I investigated the functions of the text, the more complexities I encountered, which in turn help me to peel of the following layer. In this chapter I have argued that an important consequence of the incorporation of text for *Carte d'identité* is that it refers to something outside of the physically present book itself. After some searching and puzzling, I described that every text fragment in *Carte d'identité* was borrowed from *Les cinq sens*, apart from the text in the colophon and the name of the artist on the cover of the folder. As a result, a relationship is established between these two texts that I have tried to explore in this chapter.

Through the investigation of this relationship I am able to point out various functions of the text. Most importantly, the text invites the reader to engage with the book, through the coordinate system, but also through the words that are used that are impersonal and familiar for the reader. Moreover, because of the coordinate system, text functions as a way to focus the reader's attention towards the map and the book medium. This is underlined by the fact that some of the words are self-referential. Another, more complex, function of the text is that it creates the analogy between the book and the body. The reader's position is changed into that of the perpetrator, because of the interplay between text, material and structure.

Text, thus plays an important role in the establishment of a tangible connection between reader, book, and body of the book, and the body (print). In the previous chapter I formulated a relation between text in Meinert's book and their intertext: Meinert does not create mere illustrations of the texts she refers to, but rather appropriates these text in order to challenge conventional reading practices, discussions about the medium book, and the text themselves. In this chapter, I ended with a similar outcome: the text functions as a reference to existing text, which propose dominant theories about the book medium and the human body, which Meinert appropriates and challenges resulting in the re-positioning of the reader. Moreover, the establishment of the connection between reader, object and body print through touch, finds resonance in Serres' ideas about sensory experiences that result in the 'mingling of bodies'. Meinert used Serres' and Mallarmé's texts as instruments for the visualisation of conceptual ideas about reading practices. Because text, form and materials are closely linked in this book, I expect that I can explore Meinert's appropriation and act of re-positioning the reader even further in the next chapters, where I investigate the function of material and structural elements in *Carte d'identité*.

CHAPTER 3

FUNCTIONS OF FORM AND MATERIALS

In the previous chapter I have described that the text in *Carte d'identité* attracts the reader's attention on the book medium and invites the reader to engage with the book. Thereby text functions as a facilitator for the establishment of a tangible connection between reader and the object. But without the physical manifestation of the work, the text itself would have limited significance. Without the text, however, the corporeal map would not be readable, and the coordinate system would not function properly. Therefore, it can be argued that the textual, material and structural properties of *Carte d'identité* are interwoven and all contribute to the way we read the book.

In order to investigate the reading practice further – to peel off another layer of the book – I will try to answer the following question: in what way are material and formal elements of the medium book, such as paper, binding and folds, linearity and time, adopted in *Carte d'identité* and how do these elements function in the book?

3.1 Paper

In order to present textual and pictorial elements in a book, the desired information has to be printed on a carrier, usually made of paper. The paper is bound together and protected by a cover, forming a *codex*. Made from a set of bound pages the codex form is conventionally made with standard-size pages. The codex was invented later than paper, because the codex needs the thin qualities of a carrier, like paper, in order to bind the sets of carriers together. Before paper was common, papyrus and skins were often used for the production of parchment to make scrolls. Throughout the early Christian era and until the years of the invention of printing, parchment made of vellum (calfskin) was commonly used for book production in Europe.¹⁰³ Paper was invented in China, in the first or second century A.D., but was only first used in the 12th and 13th century in Europe (in Spain and Italy). Nowadays, other materials than paper, papyrus and animal skins, are often used in the production of artists' books. Almost every material imaginable has been used to create a codex-form. As Johanna Drucker puts it: "[...] there are neither rules or limits in the use of materials in artists' books."¹⁰⁴

In *Carte d'identité*, two different types of paper are used that each have a different function. On the one hand, the book exists of the carton folder that encloses the map. The folder carries the words of the coordinate system, the colophon, the title, the quotation, and

¹⁰³ Drucker 1995, 121.

¹⁰⁴ Drucker 1995, 122.

the name of the artist as well. The carton is rough, firm, tear-proof, not easily creased, and has a light beige-greyish colour. In the previous chapter I have discussed that the folder could be seen as the skin, the exterior, of the body of the book. The cardboard material of the folder certainly creates the function as cover or a shell that encloses and protects the map. At the same time, the folder invites the reader to access the map by evoking the reader's curiosity: what does this folder hold? What does the title 'Carte d'identité' refer to? When the reader opens the folder and finds the lists of words, the interest to continue reading is even more stimulated.

The map is printed on paper that has entirely different characteristics. In order to create the body prints, Meinert chose a very specific type of paper that had to meet a number of requirements. First of all, the paper had to be large enough to create a body print on a 1:1 scale. Therefore, the paper had to be thin as well, because Meinert wanted to fold the large sheet multiple times in order to fit it into the folder, and to create a map that the reader could browse through. The paper thus had to have a low grammage,¹⁰⁵ but could not be too thin, because it had to be tear-proof when imprinting the body on the surface, and folding and cutting it afterwards. Meinert found these elements in Japanese paper and bought large rolls of Japanese Kozo paper from a workshop in Bavaria, where it is used to make *shōji* doors. Kozo paper is traditionally used to make *washi*, a Japanese paper, made from the inner bark of the mulberry tree. The paper is thicker than conventional writing paper, but is still very light, translucent, and fragile. In Japan, *washi* is used to create all kinds of art objects, such as *origami* and *shodo*, but *shōji* doors, walls and windows as well.¹⁰⁶ Because of the soft and translucent qualities of this paper, its function in Japanese culture, and the fact that it is conventionally not used to create books (neither in Japan nor Europe), Meinert's choice to use this paper is significant for the analysis of *Carte d'identité*.

3.1.1 The Japanese home

The relation of *Carte d'identité* to Japanese house architecture can be explored further. In the Japanese home, there is no clear distinction between the exterior and the interior. Instead, the house is an intermediate area, often consisting of three key elements: a formal entranceway, a veranda, and various dividing devices. These components all link indoor with outdoor, creating a space that permeates nature, and is protected from it at the same time.¹⁰⁷ The dividing devices are of greatest interest for this study, and therefore my focus will be on this element. In traditional Japanese home architecture, there is a difference between exterior and

¹⁰⁵ Grammage describes the areal density of a paper product: mass per unit of area. This quantity is expressed in terms of grams per square meter (g/m²).

¹⁰⁶ Wu 2015, 40.

¹⁰⁷ Yagi 1986, 9.

interior dividing devices. The exterior constructions are the shōji screens mentioned-above: their primary function is to divide the interior from the exterior. The panels that are used inside the house are called *fusuma* and are used as closet doors and to divide rooms from each other. Like the shōji, the fusuma screens are not fixed, but movable, and when removed or fully opened, create a bigger room. Instead of the thin, translucent paper that make up the shōji screens, the fusuma panels consist of opaque paper, such as cardboard or cloth, on both sides of a wooden framework.¹⁰⁸

Both paper materials used in *Carte d'identité* (cardboard and Kozo-paper) form an essential part of Japanese house architecture. I have already commented on the intermediate function of these elements in Japanese architecture. This intermediate element can also be found in *Carte d'identité*, which – as I have mentioned earlier – plays with the intersection between open and closed, between exposure and intimacy, between interaction and privacy, and indeed between exterior and interior. The reader is invited to engage with the book, to fold and unfold it. The material dimensions of the book can be viewed as the intermediary between the reader and the artist. When the folder and the map are unfolded completely, the fragmented envelopes give way to the body print. Therefore, the act of (un)folding produces continuity, just like with the shōji and the fusuma screens, which, when opened, create a continuity between spaces. On other levels of *Carte d'identité* these tensions or interactions recur as well. Just like the shōji and the fusuma panels, the folded envelopes of the map create a grid-like structure that form the intermediary between part and whole. Furthermore, the folder manifests itself as a ‘hard’ cardboard exterior, and the map as the interior, made of soft, translucent paper that literally shines through. Additionally, the printed map on the paper is an imprint of the author’s body, which makes it personal, whilst the words that make up the coordinate system are relatively methodical and impersonal, taken from the writing of Michel Serres. Lastly, the body print presents the surface or exterior of the body, as a sort of ‘skin,’ and at the same time reveals something that would under normal circumstances be concealed (interior).¹⁰⁹ These tensions will all be discussed in the course of this chapter.

In the dividing devices, the element of the intermediate creates a paradox. The translucent paper lets light shine through the delicate, soft shōji screens, whilst at the same time the panels function to create privacy and to ‘cover’ certain areas. Through its thin and translucent characteristic, the paper will never be fully opaque or block sound or shapes. Therefore the screens only deliver minimal privacy. Furthermore, the valuable material has the function of protecting people from elements of nature, while it is also easily damaged due to its fragile and delicate materials.

¹⁰⁸ Yagi 1986, 54; Tatsui & Kyjoko 1963, 25.

¹⁰⁹ The metaphorical relation between paper and skin further accentuates this idea.

The paradoxes created by the element of the intermediate can be found in *Carte d'identité* as well: publishing such a highly personal document, which the reader, in order to understand it, has to unfold and engage with, means that what is usually considered as private and intimate becomes transgressed, as I argued in the previous chapter. While the folder is created of cardboard which protects the “Ganz privat” map, the use of the Kozo paper for the map paper results in translucency, which undermines this privacy: as I argued in the first chapter, the use of transparent paper in artists’ books, such as *Play*, *Ophelia*, *Durée*, *Mémoire*, *Simultanéité* and *Carte d'identité*, stimulates the reader’s curiosity and provides the reader with some insight in the book.¹¹⁰ Translucent paper, therefore, allows a connection between the exterior and the interior in artists’ books. Engaging with this fragile document also entails the risk that it will be damaged, which proposes the question whether the book is meant to be touched at all, like Meinert described in her essay *t=turning the pages*: “Der bewusste Einsatz eines extrem fragilen Papiers beispielsweise evoziert beim Betrachter eine bestimmte Vorsicht im Umgang, die ihn zwingt, sich Zeit zu nehmen, um nichts zu zerstören. Vielleicht führt die Fragilität des Materials auch dazu, dass der Betrachter das Buch wieder aus der Hand legt.”¹¹¹

3. 2 Imprint of the body

After the investigation of the material implications of paper in *Carte d'identité*, I want to shift my attention towards one of the fundamental functions of paper in *Carte d'identité*: it carries the imprint of Meinert’s body. In order to explore the connection between the reader, the book, and the artist, in this paragraph I will analyse the body print as a visual sign.

3.2.1 Indexical & iconic

A theoretical instrument that helps to analyse Meinert’s body as a visual sign, is that of the *indexical* and *iconical* sign. Linguist and semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) coined the concepts iconicity and indexicality as an alternative model for the semiotics of the Swiss structuralist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). Peirce developed a theory of the sign and described a number of characteristics of this sign.¹¹² Most influential of these ideas, and applicable for the analysis of the body print as a visual sign, is the relation between the sign and the object it refers to. Peirce characterized the relation that he called indexical as a kind of signification to the world that is predicated on physical contiguity.¹¹³ In other words, the

¹¹⁰ Another strategy of Meinert to provide insight for the reader is by creating holes and cuts, as is the case in *Lorca*, *Play*, *Ophelia* and the series. I will return to this strategy in a subsequent paragraph.

¹¹¹ Meinert 2014, 50.

¹¹² Atkin 2015, 132

¹¹³ Saltzman 2006, 12 ; Atkin 2015, 132

index is a trace of touch and a trace of the past. It is a physical sign that is removed from its object, temporally and/or spatially. The classic example of the indexical sign is that of the footprint: a footprint in the sand represents the absence of a person.¹¹⁴ It is a sign that has a causal relationship with what was there, because the person that made the footprint pressed his foot in the sand, leaving an imprint.

Similar to the footprint, the body print is the result of a relationship that involved touch. Meinert used linocut ink to cover her naked body and pressed the front of her body on the vertically placed paper on the floor. Then she rolled with her body to the right and pressed the back of her body on the paper. This act resulted in an imprint of the front and back surface of her body – from her shoulders to her calves. The print was created through the touch of skin upon the paper, and can therefore be seen as an indexical sign. This unusual printing technique furthermore allowed to print textures of the skin on the surface of the paper. While the footprint resulted from direct touch (pressing of the foot in the sand), in the case of *Carte d'identité* ink serves as a mediator between skin and paper. Without the ink the indexical sign would not exist.¹¹⁵

The indexical sign has another quality besides creating a relationship with its object. The sign informs us of the objects that created the sign. The sign testifies to something that was present earlier, and therefore to the existence of this object, or person in the case of *Carte d'identité*. This body print can be removed from the person it refers to: both spatially and temporally. In the first chapter of this thesis I explained that in the book *Flatland* absence is also a central feature: as the erasure of dirt, of traces, on clothes on the *Bleichplanes*. In *Carte d'identité*, however, absence plays a different role.

When the reader browses through *Carte d'identité*, Meinert herself is not present. She is not standing besides us when we read the book, and when we open it, Meinert is not lying on the pages. Instead, a print of her body is. Even though Meinert is not present, the print seems to create the possibility to analyse the thing it refers to (the maker): we can estimate the height of Meinert by looking at the surface of the print. However, we are not provided with many clues about the maker. This absence creates curiosity: who is this person that made the print, and what does she look like?

The way Meinert portrayed her body is not similar to that of a conventional portrait. In a conventional painted portrait, the painter paints the model in a way that resembles the painter's creative idea of the model. The painting is not an indexical sign of the model and the

¹¹⁴ Atkin 2015, 132.

¹¹⁵ Here the question arises whether the print can be understood as an indexical sign. I would argue that it is possible to see it as an indexical sign: although the ink creates the possibility of the visual sign, the print itself derives from the touch of the skin on the paper. Additionally, the ink has not been equally spread or divided on her body, resulting in areas on the print where the skin touched the paper, without the ink on it.

model did not cause the painted picture to be imprinted on the painting. The model does not have a direct physical relation to the painting. The painting, however, is not inseparable from the model. This relationship is called an iconic sign and consists of a pattern that physically resembles what it stands for. It is a mode of representation in which the sign can be received as resembling or imitating the object it depicts.¹¹⁶ Because these terms are not mutually exclusive, the map of *Carte d'identité* can also be understood as an *iconic* sign. The body print resembles the body of Meinert. Therefore, the body print is iconic *and* indexical.

3.2.2 The absent body made present

The print allows the imagination of the reader to run wild, resulting in the print getting a body of its own – detached from Meinert's body, independent of its owner. Therefore the sign creates a paradox: on the one hand the print testifies to the absence of Meinert's body which is enacted as a trace, on the other, the print creates a body of its own and functions as a supplement of the body of the artist. Now we have two 'bodies': one original body that is absent, and one two-dimensional body turned into a three-dimensional one that is *made present*. The former has a head, hands and feet, for the latter we depend on our own imagination to add head, hand and feet. The skin-tone of the former is unknown, while in the latter the colour of the print is dark greyish, leaving us to guess at the skin colour of the maker. Overall, the 'original' Meinert remains invisible, and anonymous. Other than her name, the outline of her body, and her skin's characteristics, not much is known about her. In doing so, Meinert has limited the degree of iconicity of the index. The term "Maske" to which Meinert connected the coordinates of the entire map (A-H, 1-6) emphasizes this idea: the map is as a mask, an exterior concealment, which keeps the reader at distance.

At the same time, it can be argued that the iconicity of the index is not limited at all: by pressing her skin on the paper, she created a visual relationship that is more precise than would have been possible if she would have drawn or painted it. In that case, she would have relied on her own perception of herself to create an accurate or creative representation. Nonetheless, we learn nothing more about the maker and are kept at distanced. While for the reader the idea is suggested that the coordinate system could inform them about the maker, the appropriated words are impersonal, and therefore will not inform the reader about Meinert. Moreover, by incorporating the coordinate system, Meinert used a systematic and distanced method to represent the body print, thereby limiting the influence of her own creativity in this process once more.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Peirce 1991, 141-143; Sadowski 2018, 12, 24.

¹¹⁷ Meinert's *Carte d'identité* reminds me of Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document*, which is a deeply personal project that is concerned with documenting the events of the first three years in the life of her son. The project creates a deeply scientific and impersonal impression, because Kelly reports the (*vervolg voetnoot*)

These methods distance Meinert from her work. The indexical relation, however, is not influenced by this concealing-practice. The connection to the maker creates an effect of immediacy and becomes more powerful. The print captured her body in a way that would limit her own vision, but also that of chance. Think of how difficult it must have been to land the body on the same location of the paper for each copy, to cover the body in the exact same amount of ink, the possibilities of hesitation in her movements while pressing her body at different areas at different times, etc. Through the exact repetition of her acts, thereby systemizing the production process, Meinert tried to minimize these chance elements:

I printed myself on a larger sheet and then cut it to make sure that the small sectors show the same body parts in every copy of the edition. I did all the folding by hand with the help of large cardboard pieces that works as a kind of fence to guide the bone folder. Then I cut out small stripes of paper to make sure the material does not squeeze within the valley folds.¹¹⁸

In the interview conducted by Claudia Brancato Meinert explained: „Ich bin mit meinem Körper ja nicht immer an der exakt gleichen Stelle gelandet. So konnte ich nachher so zuschneiden, dass die beim Falten entstehenden Segmente immer in etwas den gleichen Ausschnitt zeigten und schließlich die Zuordnung mit den Koordinaten übereinstimmte.“¹¹⁹ Although, this detailed procedure tries to prevent chance outcomes in the execution of the work, it is inevitable that chance will be present. The variety of traces and marks left by the ink on the paper of the prints, determine the structural and textural elements of the print, and therefore make every print of *Carte d'identité* different.

The exploration of the imprint in *Carte d'identité* as a visual sign helped to understand the connection between the imprint and the artist. The iconic indexical signs serve as instruments that tell us something about the object they refer to. In *Carte d'identité* the print informs us about its absent maker - whether it is real or imagined. The print becomes a trace of Meinert, and depending on the imagination of the reader, perhaps a 'real' body. In *Carte d'identité*, the effects of both iconicity and indexicality are combined, not to tell us anything about the author, but in order to create an image that invites the reader to engage with the map and stimulate their senses. It is clear that Meinert did not create the map to tell us something about herself, but rather about the human body, the book, and the (bodily)

development of her son through diagrams and objects. The project primarily demonstrated that the mother's feelings were absent from the (Freudian psychoanalytic) theories around child development and thereby challenged these notions from a feminist approach (nowadays often commented on because of its essentialist implications). The relation between Kelly's project and *Carte d'identité* is that they both are highly personal documents, while both reveal very little about the personalities of the artists and instead concentrate on the representation of relations in a more structural manner.

¹¹⁸ E-mail from Patrizia Meinert received on 7th of July in 2019.

¹¹⁹ Brancato & Meinert 2018.

experience of the book. In order to understand more about the implications for the reading practice of the book because of this absent artist made present, in the following paragraphs I will turn my attention to the reader's experience of the material and structural elements of the book.

3.3 The body made flesh

The absence of the maker allows us to consider the print as a sign of an already existing body – one that we imagine. Hereby we make the absent body present in our imagination. However, this body can never really be fully present. This imagined body has implications for the interpretations of the book. When considering the multiple references to *Les cinq sens* and Mallarmé, for instance, the act of touching becomes very real, and places the active reader in a different position than when this reader does not interact with a 'real' body but just with paper. Other references in the materiality of *Carte d'identité*, further establish the imagined body as a body made 'flesh.' The implications of these textual and material references will be revisited and explored in this paragraph.

The folder of *Carte d'identité* has a light beige-greyish colour, with a slight pinkish undertone. Therefore, the cover is reminiscent of the colour of flesh. Meinert herself actually resisted this interpretation by saying:

Bezüglich der Kartonmappe war es hauptsächlich die Entscheidung für eine offene, leicht raue Oberfläche und eine Art Unfarbe; ich wollte einen Ton, der nicht ganz gefällig ist. Mir ist bewußt, dass er auch als eine Spielart des Inkarnat verstanden werden könnte. Wichtiger ist mir aber die Assoziation des Natürlichen; der Farbton des Kartons wird vom Hersteller als »Stein« bezeichnet.¹²⁰

Meinert explained that although she is aware of the connotations of the colour of the cover, which resemble the embodied, she was searching for an uncoloured surface that could be associated with natural elements. Meinert found this to be the colour called "stone" by the manufacturer. Of course, we can ask why the colour of the flesh would have natural associations. If it is regarded stone, the folder further underlines the tension between exterior and interior, by becoming literally an exterior made of 'stone' that is hard and has a rough surface. When thinking of the folder as 'flesh,' the rough surface of the cardboard can also be understood as a textured surface of the skin, like that of dry skin, or a recently shaven skin, or the touch of calluses.¹²¹ This idea contrasts poetically with the soft Kozo paper, which has a material resemblance with the softer parts of our skin. Returning to *Les cinq sens*, where

¹²⁰ Brancato & Meinert 2018.

¹²¹ Meinert included the term "verhärtete Stellen" in her list, and refers to area B5 of the map.

Serres advocated for the mingling and hybridity of exterior and interior, of nature and man, both the connotations of stone and flesh make sense.

Other analogies between skin and paper can be found when looking at the production of paper and books. I have mentioned above that parchment was often made of vellum. This means that historically skin was used for the production of paper. It is not very surprising that many literary scholars and authors have associated paper and skin, and therefore also the book and the body. This means that the physical object of a book is seen as a body.

Together, the content and the materiality of the book form the body of the book. When the paper is viewed as skin, another dimension of the reading experience of the book is of interest here, namely the act of opening the folded pages with a knife, before reading. The French poet and literary critic Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) described this act as follows: “The virginal foldings of the book are unfortunately exposed to the kind of sacrifice which caused the crimson-edged tomes of ancient times to bleed. I mean that they invite the paper-knife, which stakes out claims of possession of the book.”¹²² In the second chapter I have briefly mentioned that Meinert herself created a strong analogy between her own body and the body of the book by referring to Stéphane Mallarmé in the interview with Brancato. In this interview she quoted a section from Mallarmé’s text ‘Le Livre: instrument spirituel’ from 1897. Additionally, I argued that the red inner flaps of the map and the incorporation of the terms “Rot mit anderem Rot” and “ganz privat” in *Carte d’identité* refer directly to this act of cutting, which she described in the following way:

Der Farbschnitt markiert tatsächlich den Eingangsbereich in eine doch recht intime Zone, hier fallen sozusagen die letzten Hüllen. Allem voran ist es eine Referenz an Mallarmé, die man an dieser Stelle nicht zwingend sehen muss. Dieser bezieht sich zwar auf das Aufschneiden der noch geschlossenen Druckbogen, doch als eine Analogie zur Brutalität, die das Eindringen in das Buchinnere hat, schien es mir nicht ganz unpassend: „The unopened virginal book, moreover, ready for a sacrifice from which the red edges of ancient books bleed; the introduction of a weapon, or page cutter, to establish the taking of possession.”¹²³

With the coloured section, Meinert refers to both the inner flaps of the folder and the area E2-3 of the body map, the intimate zone, or genital zone, marked by terms, such as: “Rot mit anderem rot,” “Pfade,” “Zonen,” “Chaotisch,” “ganz privat,” “Labyrinth,” “Buchstaben,” “Flammenförmig,” “Daumen,” “Straßen und Küsten.” The terms “Weiß,” referring to zones

¹²² Mallarmé 1982, 83.

¹²³ Brancato & Meinert 2018. The differences in translation can be explained by the use of a different translation of Mallarmé’s text: Stéphane Mallarmé, ‘The Book, Spiritual Instrument by Stéphane Mallarmé,’ in: *The Book, Spiritual Instrument*, ed. Jerome Rothenberg & David Guss, New York, Granary Books, 2001.

E1-6 of the body print, and “Rot mit anderem Rot” mark this entrance area. This analogy creates the idea that we enter a discrete interior space: one that is normally closed and that cannot be opened without our fingers. This results in an image of an intimate interior space, not just of the book, but of the body as well. Words such as “ganz privat” emphasize the intimate area that the reader enters when unfolding these envelopes. “Rot mit anderem Rot” then refers to the bleeding that occurs when cutting, the trespassing of this area. “Chaotisch,” “Straßen und Küsten,” “Pfade,” and “Labyrinthe” could refer to the printed patterns of that area of the body print. This is the only part of the print where body hair is visibly imprinted on the paper, consequently forming this interesting pattern. More metaphorically, this area marks the paths that the reader takes to ‘enter’ this private area of the body print. In light of Mallarmé ‘entering’ can be understood as ‘penetrating’ and the reader engages in an act of violence: the taking possession of the body. The phallic symbol of the paper cutter is replaced by the fingers of the reader, which unfold the envelopes. In turn, this area creates another ‘entrance’ from the exterior to the interior. The cutting also refers to another step in the production process of books: the trimming of the pages. Interestingly, the trimming of the Kozo sheets resulted in a headless body. I will visit this element later on this chapter.

However, there is no real cut: “Interessant ist auch, dass es ja keinen wirklichen Schnitt gibt, auch keinen in die Haut. Man bleibt auf ihrer Oberfläche,” Meinert stated.¹²⁴ When looking at the skin in terms of *Les cinq sens*, it can be viewed as a surface where the mingling between the interior and the exterior world takes place. Sensual experiences do not remain on the surface of the skin, but are experienced on the inside of the body as well, where they are processed:

The skin is a variety of contingency: in it, through it, with it, the world and my body touch each other, the feeling and the felt, it defines their common edge. Contingency means common tangency: in it the world and the body intersect and caress each other. I do not wish to call the place in which I live a medium, I prefer to say that things mingle with each other and that I am no exception to that. I mix with the world which mixes with me. Skin intervenes between several things in the world and makes them mingle.¹²⁵

This quotation applies to both the reader, the body of the book, the imprint of Meinert’s body and the imagined body. By touching this body we mingle with the ‘other’ body, yet also establish a border between our interior and exterior world. It seems as if Meinert understood

¹²⁴ Brancato & Meinert 2018.

¹²⁵ In her Artist Statement Meinert included this quotation that can be found on page 80 of *The five senses* 2008.

this paradox when she identified the skin as "Membran, als Übergangs- und Transitbereich."¹²⁶ Meinert described that here "die blutige Analogie des Sezierens der Schicht, die Sinneseindrücke aufnimmt, filtert und zur Verarbeitung weitergibt."¹²⁷ Paper and the skin are not presented as a boundary, but rather a site for connections. Furthermore, the membrane can be regarded as a sign of physical openness to others and allows relationships between the self and the other through these connections.

Returning to the analogy of the knife that penetrates the folds of the paper, it follows that the surface of this absent body made present by means of the print and in the imagination of the reader is dissected by the touch of the reader. Zone E2-3 marks a place where exterior and interior are combined. Meinert explained: "Vielleicht ist es auch eine Art zu sagen: Ich habe mich geöffnet, veröffentlicht sozusagen aber: Hier! Wer genau schaut, bemerkt eben doch, dass es ein privater Raum ist, der betreten wird."¹²⁸

As a result of the analogy between paper and skin, the body print becomes a body made flesh, which places the reader in a difficult position. Through touch we get to know this other body, but only somewhat (Meinert conceals information about her body). The reader, now feels the immediacy created by the indexical relationship between Meinert and the print, by touching the surface. Following *Les cinq sens*, through touching we become aware of what we touch, and of who we are. At the same time, the act of gazing at this print, imagining it, and touching it, while the body print itself remains passive, and even bleeds while you touch it, perpetuates the idea that the reader is doing this other body harm. That we are doing something that is unwanted. We are no longer just voyeurs that just look at the print, but we 'penetrate' the body.

The analogy between the paper and the skin allows for the investigation of the (body of the) book in an unconventional way. In *Carte d'identité* material elements of the book are implemented in order to pay attention to the physical dimensions of the book that are normally overlooked. Furthermore, this analogy creates the possibility for the reader to reflect on his or her own position when reading the book. In the next chapter I will explore this relation between reader and book further, and its implications as well. First I will address another aspect of the material realm of the artist's book, namely that of the fold.

¹²⁶ This analogy of the skin as membrane can be found on page 22 of *The five senses* 2008.

¹²⁷ Brancato & Meinert 2018.

¹²⁸ Brancato & Meinert 2018.

3.4 Folds and cuts

3.4.1 Falk fold

As I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, conventionally paper is organized in a sequence to form a *codex*. The pages are then bound together with glue, thread or other materials.¹²⁹ Arguably, the absence of multiple pages bound together is what creates the biggest visual difference between *Carte d'identité* and conventional books. Both the folder and the map are folded and cut out of a single sheet in order to create two codex-like forms. In *Carte d'identité*, the outside (folder) and the inside (map) are not connected through a binding technique, as is the case with conventional books, but cannot be understood as separate objects either, because of their co-dependent relation in content and material: the folder cannot be understood without the map, and *visa versa*. This artist's book has to be viewed as a whole, and therefore as a variation of the *codex*. Furthermore, the Kozo-sheet is organized in evenly sized fragments to create a certain sequence, when unfolding.

After Meinert printed the body print on a 1:1 scale on the Kozo sheet, the sheets were folded to create a smaller size that could fit into the folder, and in order to realize a less fragile and more stable character of the map, as well. Meinert chose to create a zigzag structure that is called a *leprello*, a *concertina* or an *accordion* (fig. 3.1). This is not an uncommon technique in artists' books in general, nor for Meinert. She used it in other works as well: in *Lorca*, Meinert used a closed *leprello*; in *Play* a *leprello* was used; the translation of *Ophelia* is a *leprello*; and in the series *t = turning the pages* this fold recurs, as well in the books *Temps* and *Simultanéité*. However, *Carte d'identité* does not consist of an ordinary *leprello*, but of an adjusted version, because – just as in *Temps* – Meinert cut certain folds, creating a structure or fold that is called the *Falk fold*. This fold is often used in cartographic maps.

The German cartographer Gerhard Ernst Albrecht Falk (1922-1978) patented the *Falk fold* in 1951. In the patent report Gerhard Falk noted that the fold “has for its purpose to bring such maps into a handy shape.”¹³⁰ From one sheet of a large size, a reduced size can be created by means of folds and cuts. The structure of the *Falk fold* is similar to that of a *leprello*, and has at the same time a book-like form, because the *leprello* has transverse pleats which can be turned over, are situated at intervals from each other, and are cut down to the plane of the map (figure 3.2). This structure allows the map to be folded in such a way that a certain section of the map – which one wants to read – is exposed, and other parts remain unfolded. This way a reader can browse through certain sections of the map, without

¹²⁹ Drucker 1995, 121.

¹³⁰ Gerhard Ernst Albrecht Falk, ‘Method of folding maps and the like,’ United States Patent Office, patented on 23rd of October 1951, 2.

having to unfold the entire, large sheet. Another characteristic of the *Falk fold* is that the fold allows the map to be unfolded without difficulty, and can be placed easily again into its folds.¹³¹

The use of the *Falk fold* in *Carte d'identité* allows the tension between fragment and whole to surface on multiple levels. First of all, the folds and cuts create a rigid sequence in the map that only allows the folding and unfolding of the map to take place through the folds that are already there. The map cannot be folded outside of these folds without creasing the paper. The *Falk fold* structure creates the possibility to browse through certain sections of the map, without having to unfold the entire map. One can thus unfold the map and look at it fully opened, as a whole, or one can browse through the map, leaving certain areas unfolded, creating a fragmented perspective of the body map.

Additionally, the horizontal and vertical folds of the map create a grid-like structure, which fragment the Kozo-paper, and therefore the body print as well. Because the body imprint was printed on the sheet before the folds were made, the print remains a whole, linked through continuity. Here, the cuts and folds create a tension: on the one, hand the grid creates individual fragments, which can be unfolded and viewed singularly due to the structure of the *Falk fold*. On the other hand these fragments fall into a larger pattern that is created by the use of the body print as internal structure, as a whole. This tension causes a certain degree of curiosity: what do these folds hide and what happens when we unfold the map?

This relationship between whole and fragment forms an important difference with the codex. In the codex, pages are separated spatially, and therefore have continual interruptions. With this artist's book, however, the folds allow the book to be browsed through while always remaining in a physical relation of contiguity. When seeing the body print as an iconic indexical sign of the body of Meinert, as an imprint or a *Doppelgänger*, the folds of the paper are reminiscent of a fragment of *Les cinq sens*:

I touch one of my lips with my middle finger. Consciousness resides in this contact. I begin to examine it. It is often hidden in a fold of tissue, lip against lip, tongue against palate, teeth touching teeth, closed eyelids, contracted sphincters, a hand clenched into a fist, fingers pressed against each other, the back of one thigh crossed over the front of the other, or one foot resting on the other. I wager that the small, monstrous homunculus, each part of which is proportional to the magnitude of the sensations it feels, increases in size and swells at these automorphic points, when the skin tissue folds in on itself. Skin on skin becomes conscious, as does skin on mucus membrane and mucus membrane on itself. Without this folding, without the contact of the self on itself, there would truly be no internal sense, no body properly speaking, coenesthesia even less so,

¹³¹ Gerhard Ernst Albrecht Falk, 'Method of folding maps and the like,' United States Patent Office, patented on 23rd of October 1951, 2.

no real image of the body; we would live without consciousness; slippery smooth and on the point of fading away.¹³²

I have already discussed in chapter two that Serres sees the skin as the space where identity is formed through touching the exterior world. The folding of the skin itself creates consciousness, which for Serres forms identity as well.¹³³ When Meinert folded the Kozo sheets during the production process, she created contact with the exterior world (the sheet of paper), and at the same time with the 'skin' of her own *Doppelgänger*. This is not where the act of folding resides. Due to the folds, the print itself folds on itself, and creates contact with itself. Finally, the reader unfolds and folds the map as well, making contact with the exterior world (the body print), and at the same time always with oneself. Due to this act of folding, the mingling of bodies that Serres refers to in the subtitle of *Les cinq sens* becomes a central theme of *Carte d'identité*. The folding adds another layer to the immediate relationship between creator, object and reader. Because for Serres, the folding creates consciousness that in turn helps to form identity, it could be argued that the folding also contributes to the body print becoming 'real' or flesh. It is interesting to see that, although the body print remains the result of Meinert's touch, the print seems to distance itself from the maker when folded by the reader, because it becomes flesh.

The cuts, however, create a different analogy, with mere hostile connotations in mind. The cuts are the only element that interrupts the above-mentioned relation of contiguity. These cuts are made vertically and are situated at intervals from each other. The cuts dissect the body print into gaps that cannot be made whole again. This cutting has not only taken place in the map itself, but more metaphorically in the body of the map as well. When Meinert cut certain folds of the body print in order to create the map, she metaphorically cut into her own 'skin'. In this way, it is not just the reader that evokes an eerie air of danger when unfolding the map, but Meinert herself also endangers the corpus in a way that can be understood as self-destructive. In *Ophelia*, Meinert made cuts as well in a book that had the analogy of Ophelia's body, but these were not in the print of her own skin. In this light, the choice to leave out the imprint of her head, hands and feet, can again be viewed as a macabre choice: that they were cut off the pages, and of the body.¹³⁴ In another way, this tells us something more: by causing these demarcations herself, Meinert stays in control of the portrayal of her own body. The folds and cuts will invite us to open or close the pages

¹³² Serres 2008, 22.

¹³³ Serres 2008, 22-25.

¹³⁴ In the interview in august 2019 Meinert explained that this was not a conceptual decision, but a practical (did not want ink on her face) and aesthetical (did not like the looks of the hands on the print) decision.

according to Meinert's desires. The reader is obliged to follow the folds and cuts that she created. In this sense, we enter the body print on Meinert's terms entirely.

3.4.2 Fold by fold

The act of folding and unfolding that follows a certain structure reminds me of an aspect of Mallarmé's book project *Le Livre*, or *The Book*. 'Quant au Livre' is one of Mallarmé's most famous *divagations* – a part of his prose collection published in 1895 that consisted of critical poems; a mix between poetry and essays.¹³⁵ In the essays 'Action Restricted,' 'The Book: A Spiritual Instrument,' and part of 'Quant au livre' he described the project of The Book. The Book can best be understood as a metaphysical project that focused on the realization of form through the book. The Book was to investigate an encounter with the cosmos through poetic expression. Concepts as ontology, form, beauty, social relations and language were subjected to this investigation and answers were to be found in The Book.

Mallarmé viewed *Le Livre* as a cosmic textual architecture: an extremely flexible structure that would reveal the pre-existing relationships between everything. It would be removed from the subjectivity of the author, and would present the total of all books.¹³⁶ Although, this *Grande œuvre* never reached realization and remained in its conceptual phase, Mallarmé created a detailed analysis of the structural and material elements related to the publication of *Le Livre*. *Le Livre* would be made of loose leaves that could be read successively or independently. They could be reconstructed and reassembled in any order by the reader and as a result would avoid a reading practice that Mallarmé described as the "successive, incessant, back and forth motions of our eyes."¹³⁷

Conceptually, these ideas find resonance in *Carte d'identité*, in which the reader can indeed explore the fragments of the map independently or successively. Although the reader cannot fully reconstruct Meinert's print, the print can be re-ordered in multiple sequences. Unlike conventional books, the reader cannot read the map in a linear way, page by page, but can open and browse through the folder in a variety of ways. It is important to note, however, that the map does have a starting (closed) and ending position (unfolded). This does not mean that the reader always has to end his/her engagement of the book with the unfolded map, but it does create two points that are almost inevitable when exploring this book. Another linear element of *Carte d'identité*, is that the words of the coordinate system are placed in an alphabetical order. At the same time, the coordinate system emphasizes the non-linear character of the map by addressing different zones with different terms. Similar to the *shōji* panels, mentioned earlier in this chapter, where the sliding of the screens produces continuity

¹³⁵ Lübecker 2019, 368.

¹³⁶ Mallarmé 1982, 81.

¹³⁷ Mallarmé 1982, 81; Drucker 1995, 36.

between two spaces, the act of (un)folding in *Carte d'identité* produces continuity and therefore linearity between the exterior and interior of the folder.

The French composer and conductor Pierre Boulez (1925-1992) was inspired by the work of Mallarmé and created a composition called *Pli selon pli* (1960) referring to two poems and three sonnets of Mallarmé, including *Le Livre*. Another poem Boulez refers to in *Pli selon pli* is *Remémoration d'amis belges*, in which Mallarmé described the way the mist gradually disappeared from the Belgian city Bruges, revealing its architecture. Similar to this poem, Boulez revealed a portrait of Mallarmé through five movements in the composition.¹³⁸ In *Carte d'identité*, a similar (un)folding takes place: fold by fold the body print develops and becomes visible for the reader. The unfolding of the pages is not similar to the turning of the pages of the conventional books, because the latter depends on linearity, while the former is, as we have seen not dependent on a fixed sequence.

The tension between linearity and non-linearity in *Carte d'identité* is emphasised by the seamless continuous surface of the map that allows for a uninterrupted flow (minus the cuts) similar to a scroll, while at the same time, functioning as a book through the transverse pleats that can be turned over and that makes it possible to access the work at any point. Additionally, the folded and fragmented surface of the body print, create the idea that the space is liquid, or transformative, while at the same time the coordinate system is strict and rigid. That this strict system is carried by soft paper emphasizes this tension between text and print, between linearity and non-linearity, and between flow and rigidity. Additionally, this tension is accentuated by the print that crosses the boundaries of the fragments created by the folds. The folds and cuts, that can be viewed as the before mentioned knives of Mallarmé, dissect the continuity of the print, creating a fragmented portrait. These created fragments are irreversible: the memory of the pages as a whole is lost. Even when the map of *Carte d'identité* is entirely unfolded, it will never be as continuous as it was before the folds and cuts were made.

3.4.3 Fixed yet flexible

The folds and cuts create a degree of three-dimensionality: the surface of the sheet bends and pleats and will never be as flat as it was before the folding. The different angles do not create a monotonous effect, but more an optical effect of the printed corpus, that again underlines the fragmentation. Similar to the tattoos that Serres described in *Les cinq sens*, the folds create a memory, a trace in the skin that remains visible. In this sense the print wears its own history, inscribed as an imprint onto its surface.¹³⁹ Interestingly, Meinert stated: “The folding allows

¹³⁸ Roriche 2006, 316.

¹³⁹ Serres 2008, 24.

for the intimate exploration of the skin's surface, its structure and marking.”¹⁴⁰ The print and its history are closely linked through the immediacy created by the indexical relationship. When Meinert places her ink-covered body on the surface of the sheets, the imprint will always represent Meinert's body of that particular moment. The imprint thus represents a very specific moment in time that is fixed.

When we look at the body print, we look at an imprint of a body made in the past. When we unfold pleats we ‘dig’ into the past. But we can only enter this one specific moment in time, there is not ‘more’ past available. The reader stands with one foot in this moment in the past, and with the other in the present, and therefore oscillates between these two moments. When reading a conventional book, a seemingly similar idea of time exists: a text written by the author is placed in a specific context, and unfolds the story through a development in time. When readers read the text, they find themselves, on the one hand, within the realm and time of the book, whilst on the other hand, always stay in the present. With these books, the absorption into the time of the text is interrupted when the reader has to turn the page. Through the seamless structure of *Carte d'identité* however, the reader does not necessarily break with this ‘past’ presented in the book. As a consequence here comes another important difference with the conventional book to mind: while in texts there is often a linear development of time, in *Carte d'identité* there is just one moment depicted and no linear development of time. Through the structure of the map this moment in time can be explored at once (when the folder is unfolded entirely), or in a more fragmented manner (due the ability to access and unfold the work in different ways), leading to the exploration of this moment from multiple perspectives.

The representation of the body on the paper only presents that particular moment in the past. If Meinert would create a new body print moments, months or years later, the outcome would represent a different moment in time. Therefore, each print of the 27 body prints represents different moments in time, separated from each other like a sequence. This contributes to the idea that the 27 body prints are unique. Together, the prints form a series that represents a brief history of Meinert's body. The addition of the coordinate system is for all the prints identical, and as I have mentioned before, minimizes the element of chance. The series is therefore separated in time, but not by text.

The fixed characteristic of the imprint and coordinate system that capture a specific moment in time stands in contrast with the flexibility and transformative structure of the map itself. That is to say that because the reader is able to browse through the map, and fold and unfold the areas independently, the appearance of the map itself is not fixed, but flexible. This

¹⁴⁰ Patrizia Meinert, ‘Carte d'identité,’ from: <https://patriziameinert.com/Carte-didentite> (last accessed on the 13th of December 2019).

tension between a specific moment and flexibility created by the folds and cuts, can be understood as the representation of the fixed, and at the same time, changing body. This representation remind me of “The shimmering, vaguely fluid and, as it were, elastic identity card” of Serres.¹⁴¹ The sentence ‘vaguely fluid’ could refer to a state that is not entirely fluid, and has fixed characteristics as well. When we look to the following quotation once more, this idea might be emphasized: “This is what our complex and somewhat frightening identity card looks like. Everyone has their own original card, like their thumbprint or dental record, no map resembles another, each one changes through time.”¹⁴² In this sentence we find a paradox: on the one hand the identity card changes through time, but on the other hand it resembles a thumbprint or dental record. Both the thumbprint and dental records are iconic indexical signs that in fact do not change. These are signs that are used to identify a person, and can inform about ones identity, because they do not change. This supports the idea as the body being both fixed and ever changing.

3.5 Conclusion

The tension between flexibility and fixedness can be compared with an element mentioned in chapter two concerning Meinert’s awareness of the perception of the reader. The reader can, as we have seen, engage with the work, imagine the body, and even touch the body, in a variety of ways. Although Meinert herself delivers the framework for the reader to participate with, the reader is able to create different outcomes. The interpretation of this work is therefore not entirely fixed, and dependent on the artist’s intentions, but is flexible and can be transformed.

The material properties of the work (the use of the unconventional printing technique, the unconventional paper, and the folding) support this flexibility by removing itself from the conventional production process of the medium book. Conceptual, personal, practical and aesthetic decisions, visible through the appropriation of conventional ideas about the book and the body, lead to the definitions of this artwork as a book, a map, a personal document and an art object. This interdisciplinary character of *Carte d’identité* is accentuated by the recurrence of the mingling and mixing in the book’s materials and structure – from the *shoji* screens to the folds.

Meinert used the body print as an internal structure of the book. The map takes the codex page and put it in a new arrangement, functioning as a dynamic whole. In this way Meinert works within the conventions of the codex and used the object-character to both a conceptual and physical end. The play with conventions helped to embody the codex and to adapt the

¹⁴¹ Serres 2008, 25.

¹⁴² Serres 2008, 24.

structure into a corpus. As a result, the reader is able to imagine this body as a corpus made of flesh. By addressing the self-referential qualities of the work through interplay between text and materials (think of describing the folds in the map as “*Zickzacklinien*” and “*Vorgebirge und Falten*”), the reader’s attention is attracted to the book as the body of a book. The reader, therefore, becomes aware of the unconventional and active reading practice this book requires, which results in a re-positioning of the reader.

This re-positioning results from the physical relation of touch between the book and the artist, the reader and the book and the reader and the book, which is formed by a direct relationship with the absent artist. The iconic indexical sign creates a tactile experience for the reader and lets us wonder whether the print is more than just a representation of a body. With our imagination and active engagement it becomes a body made flesh that we can even ‘enter.’ Firstly, this puts us in quite an awkward position. Furthermore, it accentuates the fluidity and mingling of our bodies, with the imagined body, and with its interior and exterior. The latter proved to not be an indisputable divide, but more as a mixing and mingling. After this realisation it seems as if the reader is placed in this position for a reason: in order to understand what this somewhat naïve mingling and mixing means, and what the consequences are: that it is very easy to transgress the borders of the person we are becoming close to, leaving marks that cannot be unmade.

Together the body print, *Les cinq sens*, and the *Falk fold* form the tree ‘main ingredients’ of *Carte d’identité*. These elements together form the connection between the book, the reader, and the artist. The position of the artist and its implications for the reading practice of *Carte d’identité* will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

A SHIFT IN AGENCY

So far, I have regarded Meinert as the artist of *Carte d'identité*. I have also referred to Meinert as the author, the creator, and the maker of *Carte d'identité*. I have already mentioned in the introduction that whilst these terms are not interchangeable, I do use each of them to describe Meinert. When observing Meinert's name on the cover of *Carte d'identité*, her autograph on the inside of the cardboard folder, and Meinert's body print printed on the surface of the map, these three elements produce the idea that Meinert is in fact the person that created this book from scratch. The name and the autograph seem to tell us: 'Patrizia Meinert made this book,' and the body print: 'Patrizia Meinert was here.' But why do we, when seeing these elements, automatically think of Patrizia Meinert as the artist, maker and author of this book? Is the person we imagine when exploring the book the same person as Patrizia Meinert? What does it mean to be an author, a maker or a creator? Does this suggest that this person makes an 'original' work? Does this person have authority over the interpretation of the work? Is the person that came up with the idea the author? Or is it the person that printed the text and illustrations on the paper? Or the person that is in charge of other parts of the production processes, such as photography and binding? Or, as Johanna Drucker puts it, are all the persons that worked together responsible for the creation of the book, and thus have all to be taken into account when speaking of the author?¹⁴³ When taking the latter definition into account, Lars Förster has to be considered as maker of *Carte d'identité* as well, because he was responsible for the silk printing within the production process. What about the text in *Carte d'identité* that derives from *Les cinq sens*? Has Michel Serres to be taken into account as an author as well? Arguably, Serres comes closest to being the 'author' of the work, because all the text in the work derives from him. But if this is the case, then why is the autograph of Serres absent?

These are just some of the questions that arise when exploring the complex concept of agency (who creates the book and who 'acts'?). Terms such as author, maker and creator are not at all unambiguous. Defining the 'author' of a book is a rather difficult task. It is not without reason that the concept of the author is an element of the medium book that has been discussed thoroughly in the literary sciences, and can therefore not be overlooked in this thesis. In the last two centuries alone, the author was celebrated as a genius, declared dead, and brought back to life again. These discussions do not only influence the analysis of the

¹⁴³ Drucker 1995, 2. While Drucker speaks of the 'maker,' I have decided to use the term author from now on, because the definitions of the maker and author are very close to each other when speaking of artist's books due to the interdisciplinary elements of the art form. To not cause any confusion, and in order to implement the literary theories of Mallarmé and Barthes concerning authorship more easily, I decided to employ the term author.

aspect of the ‘author,’ ‘maker,’ and ‘artist,’ in *Carte d’identité*, but also that of the reading practice. In this chapter I will explore these implications of authorship and agency in *Carte d’identité*, particularly for the reading practice.

4.1 Concerning agency

The artist “must be everywhere felt, but never seen.”¹⁴⁴

Somewhat similar to the proposition of the French author Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880) in a letter of March 1857 that the artist “must be like a God in his creation,” meaning “invisible and all-powerful,” or indeed “everywhere felt, but never seen,” the author of *Carte d’identité* is absent (through the print left by her once present body) and at the same time felt.¹⁴⁵ Felt not in the sense that Flaubert spoke of, but instead in a the literal sense of the word: touching the body print creates the literal feeling of the absent author, who is made present by the print and in our imaginations (and turning her image into flesh), as we have seen in the previous chapter. By referring to this absent author, I will argue i.e. that in *Carte d’identité* the idea of authorship as it was introduced in the eighteenth century in European culture is being challenged; that is, the solitary romantic figure who was viewed as a genius, a sovereign, an expressive intellect whose intentions contain the meaning of the book and therefore controlled the interpretation of the work.¹⁴⁶ By making this authoritative author absent, but not entirely eliminating her presence (the name on the cover and the autograph testify that there is indeed an author speaking, and the print shows the residue of this person), the agency in *Carte d’identité* seems to shift away from this genius author. The question is: towards what or who?

In this paragraph I will explore this shift in agency and try to articulate it more precisely, through the consideration of a selection of ideas concerning agency and authorship of Stéphane Mallarmé from the 1890’s.¹⁴⁷ I have already introduced Mallarmé in the previous chapters as a prominent thinker about the book medium. Additionally, Mallarmé is viewed as a prominent figure in the discussion of authorship and agency. The ideas concerning authorship and agency that he formulated in the critical poems *Divigations* (1897) are still very influential within the field of Literary studies. The French semiotic Roland Barthes (1915-1980) is one of the many scholars greatly inspired by Mallarmé’s theories. His concept

¹⁴⁴ Flaubert quoted in Bennett 2005, 67.

¹⁴⁵ Bennett 2005, 67.

¹⁴⁶ Bennett 2005, 4.

¹⁴⁷ I am aware that there are many more interesting and useful theories concerning authorship and agency that I could use for my analysis. Instead, I have chosen not to consider these in this thesis, but rather to focus on Mallarmé (and shortly visit Barthes’ ideas), because his theories prove themselves very useful for this thesis, and I am afraid that if I visit other theories that I will deviate too much from my thesis subject.

concerning ‘The Death of the Author’ (1967) that will be visited in the following paragraph relied on the interpretation of Mallarmé’s ‘Le Livre, instrument spirituel,’ which is an essay from *Divagations*.

The contemporary literary and film studies scholar Nikolaj Lübecker also investigated theories of agency in Mallarmé’s work in the essay ‘Mallarmé’s instruments: the production of the individu-livre,’ (2019) but in a very different way, as we will see. I will oppose Barthes’ and Lübeckers’ arguments in order to clarify their different approaches towards agency, and to illustrate why the concept of Mallarmé as understood by Lübecker proves itself to be more useful to answer the questions concerning agency and authorship in *Carte d’identité* mentioned above than Barthes’.

4.2 “The Book happens all alone”

In his article Lübecker investigated what Mallarmé’s idea of the book as an instrument means and in what way this instrumentality can be considered pragmatic.¹⁴⁸ In short, Lübecker explored the socio-political and aesthetic dimensions of the Book as articulated by Mallarmé, and considered the way in which authorship and agency play a role in Mallarmé’s idea of the Book. After analysing these three theorizations of the Book, Lübecker examined what this practice of writing and reading entails for Mallarmé. In the end, Lübecker applied notions of the philosophy of Gilbert Simondon (1924-1984) to form an answer to the question what this instrumentality suggested for the agency of the book.¹⁴⁹ For the conceptualization of agency in *Carte d’identité* I will draw inspiration from Lübecker’s analysis of Mallarmé’s description of agency in the book, because it allows to move beyond the more traditional approach towards agency, namely focussing on the author and/or the reader. Furthermore, this approach allows for an examination and deeper understanding of the elements of agency and authorship in the medium book between the four actors of *Carte d’identité* (author, book, reader and environment).

In the essays ‘L’action restreinte’ and ‘Le Livre, instrument spirituel’ from the before-mentioned *Divagations* Mallarmé proposed that the Book would contain “all earthly existence.”¹⁵⁰ The book would bring the pages and the universe together. In order to make such a book, one needs to be a genius. Surprisingly, Mallarmé did not think of himself as this genius. In doing so, Mallarmé denounced his own agency – the agency of the author. I will return to this element in a while. He goes on by saying that the book can be without a single author – it could exist without connection to an author. Instead, it “happens all alone; made,

¹⁴⁸ Lübecker 2019, 368.

¹⁴⁹ I will not conceptualize his arguments concerning Simondon in my thesis, because that would shift the focus to far from the subject.

¹⁵⁰ Mallarmé 1982, 80.

being. The hidden meaning stirs, and lays out a choir of pages,”¹⁵¹ referring to the book as a space that has the power to make us think. In this sense, the book can be understood as an instrument, a practice, which turns the reader, who was previously characterized by their barbaric, phallic act (“The virginal foldings of the book are unfortunately exposed to the kind of sacrifice which caused the crimson-edged tomes of ancient times to bleed. I mean that they invite the paper-knife, which stakes out claims of possession of the book”¹⁵²), into a more active reader through a process of intellectual engagement. Immediately after the articulation of this ‘barbaric’ act in ‘Le Livre’, Mallarmé wrote the following, which further emphasizes reading as an intellectual endeavour: “Yet our consciousness alone gives us a far more intimate possession than such a barbarian symbol; for it joins the book now here, now there, varies its melodies, guesses its riddles, and ever re-creates it unaided.”¹⁵³

Here, Mallarmé described the relationship between reader and book as an interaction, through which the reader and the book both become active participants. In the previous chapter I have explained that the book that Mallarmé described has no ground other than itself, through its emphasis on the letter. Lübecker described this absence of ground as a good thing, because it allows the reader to participate in the game of constructing fiction.¹⁵⁴ Because of this absence the reader is once more invited to engage with the book. Lübecker argued that Mallarmé’s notion of beauty (beauty proves that an artwork has general interest) invites people to participate with the book as well.¹⁵⁵

4. 3 Barthes’ murder

As I have mentioned above, Mallarmé described in the introduction of ‘Le Livre’ that a book needs a genius, and while the reader could fit this description, it is rather more complex than to simply transfer the agency from author to reader as the French semiotic Roland Barthes did in his essay ‘The Death of the Author’ (1967). Lübecker notes that this complexity has something to do with the intellectual endeavour of the reader, but more importantly, with the attention focused on the book itself.¹⁵⁶ To gain a deeper understanding of the difference between Barthes’ shift in agency from the author towards the reader, and Mallarmé’s attention on the book as an active object, defining it as an actor within the field of agency as well, I will now explore Barthes’ reading of Mallarmé’s proposal.

Roland Barthes interpreted Mallarmé’s proposal of the birth of the self-consciousness reader by opposing the author: “la naissance du lecteur doit se payer de la mort de

¹⁵¹ Mallarmé 1982, 80.

¹⁵² Mallarmé 1982, 83.

¹⁵³ Mallarmé 1982, 83.

¹⁵⁴ Lübecker 2019, 370.

¹⁵⁵ Lübecker 2019, 371-2.

¹⁵⁶ Lübecker 2019, 373.

l'Auteur.”¹⁵⁷ For Barthes, the text could work independently from the author.¹⁵⁸ Barthes wanted to subvert power structures that are imbedded within the relation between author and the reader.¹⁵⁹ Barthes’ resistance to the author was based on the eighteenth and nineteenth century idea of the author, which denotes the author as a genius and god-like figure, because this individual was responsible for the creation or invention of an ‘original’ text and therefore associated with the inventor of all nature (God).¹⁶⁰ This author was regarded as expressive, autonomous and original, and therefore had control over the interpretation of his ‘original’ work.¹⁶¹ Barthes and many other thinkers from the twentieth century, challenged notions of originality, autonomy and individual expression, because, shortly put, people cannot always be fully conscious of and knowledgeable about their words, meanings and intentions. Furthermore, every person is subjected to ‘external’ forces of ideology; and subject to ‘internal’ forces of the unconscious. Additionally, this author could even lack agency because they are being controlled by ideology.¹⁶² Barthes answered the question “who speaks?” by stating that the language itself speaks due to the disappearance of the poet’s voice, referring to Mallarmé. Hereby Barthes displaced the authority from the author towards language. In this sense, writing is without an origin: language itself produces the effect of meaning. By shifting the meaning from author to text, Barthes was able to argue that readers will be liberated from the authoritative author that controls the meaning. Methodologically this means that instead of searching for the authors’ intentions, intertextuality is analysed.¹⁶³ Barthes’ arguments are often interpreted incorrectly: the reader then uses the absence of the author to justify every interpretation of a single work. This is not the case; there still remains a core of meaning in a text, but this can be found in the language and its systems of references itself.¹⁶⁴

4.4 Mallarmé: the distribution of agency

Lübecker argued in his essay that the most important critique on Barthes’ notion of ‘The Death of the Author’ for the understanding of Mallarmé’s ideas is that a certain subjectivity is replaced by another, resulting in an approach that considers just the author and reader as actors of agency. When exploring the texts ‘L’action restreinte ’ and ‘Le Livre, instrument

¹⁵⁷ Roland Barthes 1984, 67.

¹⁵⁸ Bennett 2005, 11

¹⁵⁹ Bennett 2005, 12-13.

¹⁶⁰ This idea of the Author reminds me of Flaubert’s idea of the author, because of the egocentricity of the author who was presented like a creator of a universe over which he has control. But this idea is different from the Romantic author, because Flaubert insisted on the impersonal author, whereas the Romantic author was felt and seen.

¹⁶¹ Bennett 2005, 57

¹⁶² Bennet 2005 8.

¹⁶³ Bennett 2005, 15-17. Intertextuality meaning that text is seen as a plurality of meaning, referring each time to other texts, none of which are understood to be original.

¹⁶⁴ Bennett 2005, 15-16.

spirituel' it seems that Mallarmé was far more careful with shifting the attention from author to reader. Rather, Mallarmé referred to the Book as a space that has the power to make us think. One aspect of the Book that gives it this power is because the book has no ground beyond itself, meaning that the value of the book is not given by a God or other transcendental power, but by the letters in the text itself ("happens all alone; made, being. The hidden meaning stirs, and lays out a choir of pages"), inviting the reader to participate in order to construct value or meaning in the book and in this way the Book remains open for future rewritings.¹⁶⁵ Therefore, the reader engages intellectually with the book. Barthes' notion of the absence of the romantic author and instead focussing on the text itself, finds resonance in this idea of the Book having no ground other than itself. Instead of shifting the agency from the author to the reader, Mallarmé proposed that the book itself becomes the site for social relations between reader and book, therefore becoming an instrument for establishing these connections.¹⁶⁶

Another method through which the book established these social relations is by meeting certain 'beauty' standards. Meeting these beauty standards make that the work becomes of general interest. Because of this general interest, Lübecker argues, the book becomes "more than a private fancy."¹⁶⁷ Through its democratic type of beauty, the book more effectively invites individuals to participate in the construction of meaning in the book, and individuals, in turn, engage more easily with the book. Beauty, therefore, proves that an artwork has general appeal and therefore can bring the collective together.¹⁶⁸ As a result of the Book's elements of ungroundedness and democratic beauty, Mallarmé viewed the book as an instrument, and a practice that facilitates social relations and turns the reader into an active participant in a process of intellectual engagement.¹⁶⁹

4.4.1 Closing the gap between book and world

As mentioned before, the book Mallarmé described would bring the book and the universe together and would contain "all earthly existence."¹⁷⁰ The interwoven Book and world allow each other to make sense, so that we can make sense of the "immaculate grouping of universal relationships" in the book.¹⁷¹ As I have mentioned before, to understand these relationships between the book and the universe, the book asks for a kind of 'genius' that can

¹⁶⁵ Mallarmé 1982, 82; Lübecker 2019, 371.

¹⁶⁶ Mallarmé 1982, 82; Lübecker 2019, 370-371.

¹⁶⁷ Lübecker 2019, 371.

¹⁶⁸ Lübecker 2019, 372.

¹⁶⁹ Lübecker 2019, 372-4.

¹⁷⁰ Mallarmé 1982, 80: The universe can be understood in a spiritual sense, Mallarmé being a symbolist, but Lübecker also identifies this universe as the environment, which is more usable for my thesis.

¹⁷¹ Mallarmé 1982, 80; Lübecker 2019, 372.

close the gap between the universe and the world. Lübecker argued that instead of defining this genius and thereby offering agency to the reader or author, Mallarmé proposed: “Not personalized, the volume, from which one is separated as the author, does not demand that any reader approach it.”¹⁷² It does not mean the book should not be read, Lübecker wrote following French philosopher Jacques Rancière (1940), but that before a reader takes it up, the book becomes a place for the “grouping of universal relationships.”¹⁷³ Rather than shifting the agency towards the reader, Lübecker considered a more complex reading of Mallarmé’s conception of agency, and argued that Mallarmé presented the book as both place and event: “You should know that as such, without any human accessories, it happens all alone; made, being. The hidden meaning stirs, and lays out a choir of pages.”¹⁷⁴ Lübecker noted that this ‘happening’ of the book should be understood as a very active description, as ‘taking place.’ It entails the question how the world can express itself through the book, and how this book can stimulate and influence writers.¹⁷⁵ In this way, the universe, the object, the book and the author interact together. Instead of shifting the agency from author to reader, as Barthes does, Mallarmé gives the author the task to create this object of general interest as a space that permits the (social) relations between book, universe, reader and author.¹⁷⁶

The relation between world, book and individual is created through the practice of writing and reading. Mallarmé considered these to be creative practices that clarify the relationships between the writer, reader, world and book. Through the practice of reading and writing, the reader and author replace initial meaninglessness (the blank pages and the white in between words) for meaning (through reading and writing letters that are interfered by white spaces, the letters transform into meaningful words bordered by these white spaces, and as a result the initial meaninglessness of the white spaces become meaningful as well), and thereby decipher relationships between the book and world. Through a word-for-word procedure the author writes and the reader follows a sentence as it unfolds, and both learn to understand the correlation between book and universe.¹⁷⁷ In this sense, reading and writing can be viewed as way of mapping the structures of the world.¹⁷⁸ The book and universe must be brought together in such a way that they allow each other to make sense, and make sense of “grouping of universal relationships.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷² Mallarmé 1982, 80.

¹⁷³ Mallarmé 1982, 80; Lübecker 2019, 372.

¹⁷⁴ Mallarmé 1982, 80.

¹⁷⁵ Lübecker 2019, 374.

¹⁷⁶ Lübecker 2019, 374.

¹⁷⁷ Lübecker 2019, 374-5.

¹⁷⁸ Lübecker 2019, 376.

¹⁷⁹ Mallarmé, 1982, 80.

4.4.2 DIY-aesthetic

Together, the author and reader help to close the gap between book and the world. By mapping the world, the mapmaker is allowed to interact intimately with the world, and create his or her own understanding of the world, as a sort of simplification of the world.¹⁸⁰ Lübecker argued that through the process of reading and writing, the individual learns to understand itself as part of the structures of the world they are mapping and their position within this environment. Lübecker compared this engagement to a form of “DIY-aesthetic,” a form of assemblage created by creative appropriation, and links this to Mallarmé’s poem *L’Anglais récréatif* (1870), in which Mallarmé focused on twelve different aspects of the English language through illustrating a flower and a butterfly. The poem requires a new reading practice, leaving behind linearity and focussing instead on spatial structures through movement and interaction with the page. The idea is that through playing and interaction, the student learns to understand English grammar. In this sense, *L’Anglais récréatif*, mapped certain structures of the world (of English and French grammar) in a way that they become clear by reading (and participating in) the book. The student is invited to learn about these structures through a process of interaction and a word-for-word reading-procedure, which help to explain the structures included in the book. As a result, the student learns about the different relationships between the book, the world, and their own position within this subject when reading this book.¹⁸¹ By creating this book, Mallarmé facilitates the space for these connections.

Throughout his text Lübecker notes that Mallarmé understands the human being as being caught up in the structures of the world, and that the book can help to clarify our position within this world. Through reading and writing the individual learns about the universe, the book, the inter-relations between the parties, and the way in which we are integral to this process of exchange. This is why all the parties have an active role in this process of understanding that takes place within and outside of the book: an exchange between universe, book and writer/reader takes place through and in the Book. Lübecker concludes that Mallarmé’s instrumentality and view on the Book could therefore not be captured in the more traditional approach of agency that is focussed on either (or both) the author and the reader. Such an approach would diminish the role and the interconnectedness of all the parties involved. Instead, each party takes an active part in the process of the Book.¹⁸² Lübecker’s approach to Mallarmé’s writing allows an understanding of these

¹⁸⁰ Lübecker 2019, 376.

¹⁸¹ Lübecker 2019, 377-8.

¹⁸² Lübecker 2019, 381.

processes as a form of becoming, instead of being and distributes agency between the situation (the book), the world, the reader and the author.¹⁸³

4.5 Distribution of agency in *Carte d'identité*

In the previous chapters, I came across recurring elements of *Carte d'identité*, of which hybridity, mixing and mingling are the most central to this work. These elements surface on various layers in the book: the interdisciplinary character of the work (it combines elements of the medium book, map, sculpture, portrait, and document); through the reference to Serres (who writes about “mingled bodies”); the use of Japanese paper that I argued refers to the exchange between interior and exterior; the analogy between skin and paper, which allows for an understanding of the skin and thus paper as membrane, a site for exchange; the folds of the paper create a connection between exterior and interior; and most significantly for this chapter, the interaction the work requires between reader, the book, and the body of the book (the map), which resembles Serres’ “mingled bodies.” Moreover, through the immediacy that results from the indexical relation between author and body print, the book facilitates an intimate connection between reader and author. Because of the importance of touch within the elements of mixing and mingling of *Carte d'identité*, Lübecker’s conceptualization of Mallarmé’s notion of the new reading practice and distributed agency as a process of exchange between interrelations, can be considered both suitable and fruitful for the investigation of agency in *Carte d'identité*.

Before exploring the distribution of agency as described by Lübecker in *Carte d'identité* any further, it is important to note that both Mallarmé and Barthes did not conceptualize their new reading practices with artist’s books such as Meinert’s in mind. Barthes’ new reading practice was specifically intended for the reading of literary texts, and not for artist’s books, in which elements such as touch and different visual approaches towards books (required by non-linearity, experimentation with materials and media, etc.) were not included. Instead, it was focused on an intellectual practice of reading that regarded language as the primary focal point. While Mallarmé’s new reading practice, as Lübecker described in his article, is focused on reading as an intellectual endeavour as well, Mallarmé was also concerned with formal aspects of the book, such as typography, lay-out, folding of the pages, non-linearity, and even elements such as touch and movement, as we have seen in *L’Anglais récréatif*. For Mallarmé, touch and movement are part of or useful for the maintenance of this intellectual process. In *Carte d'identité*, however, elements of touch and tactility are central and not just part of a process of intellectual engagement, but can be regarded, like in *Les cinq sens*, as being part of a new reading practice in which touch is

¹⁸³ Lübecker 2019, 375.

viewed as a source of knowledge. Because Mallarmé's reading practice is also concerned with different ways of reading other than just focussing on language and text, his reading practice might be regarded as an early conceptualization of the reading practice focussed on tactile elements of the book, like *Carte d'identité* and many other contemporary artist's books require. By distancing himself from traditional ways of reading, Mallarmé's ideas allowed for the development of more experimental reading practices, and had a widespread influence on the conceptualization of artist's books.

4.5.1 On the border of the book

The gap between Barthes' new reading practice and that of *Carte d'identité* would be bridgeable, but as I have mentioned before, there are other considerations that justify exploring agency in *Carte d'identité* through the notion of distributed agency, instead of through the concept of the absent author. The most important argument being: while the absence of the author in *Carte d'identité* can be viewed as the removal of the author, it seems unlikely that the author is dead, because traces of the author are still present (the name, autograph and body print).¹⁸⁴ Although, the author is present, she is reduced in size and situated on the border of the book. As a result, her presence is not that dominating that she will weaken the agency of the reader, but instead creates space to facilitate an exchange between the reader, book and environment. As we have seen, Mallarmé considered the book an instrument: a means that helps to achieve social relations between the environment, the reader, and the author. The position of Meinert, on the border of the book, is perfect for the achievement of this task.

Instead of shifting the agency from author to reader, Lübecker pointed out that Mallarmé proposed that the book itself is active: it takes place and "happens all alone." This book has the power to make us think through a process of interaction.¹⁸⁵ Similar to Mallarmé's notion of the Book, in *Carte d'identité* the reader is invited to participate in the book to construct meaning through the process of connecting the words in the folder to the zones on the map by means of the coordinate system. In this way, the reader engages in an intellectual process when reading *Carte d'identité*. The book, therefore, becomes a site for the connection between the book and the reader. Because the body print is an imprint of the author's body, the author is involved in these social relations as well. Furthermore, the reading process does not remain intellectual, but becomes very tactile: by unfolding the folder

¹⁸⁴ Although, the relationship between the author and her name, autograph and body print can be challenged as well by arguments based on individuality and originality, each of these elements introduce elements of information about an author, be it Patrizia Meinert or not. So instead of entering an entirely different debate, that is also a very prominent part within the discussion of authorship, I argue that these three elements function as signs that refer to an author.

¹⁸⁵ Mallarmé 1982, 82; Lübecker 2019, 371.

and the map, the reader touches the skin of the presented body. In an interview in 2016 Meinert stated the following about her work as book artist: “Fantastisch an diesem Medium ist die Bandbreite der menschlichen Regungen, die das Buch anspricht. Es kann sinnlich und zugleich intellektuell, emotional und zugleich konzeptionell sein.”¹⁸⁶ This phrase demonstrates the importance of both the reader’s intellectual and sensory experience engagement with the work, but also the emotional relationship, to which I will return later on in this chapter.

4.5.2 ‘General’ beauty as a means

For Mallarmé these social relations are stimulated by a certain beauty standard that prove the book has general interest and therefore can bring the collective together.¹⁸⁷ On the one hand, *Carte d’identité* can be considered as portraying a certain kind of beauty, namely the naked female form, which is often regarded as the traditional representation of beauty and therefore would be in possession of the element of general interest. At the same time, Meinert challenges this conceptualization of the naked female form by showing that this interest is not universal or general, but in fact produced and maintained by a dominantly white male public that excludes representations of the body that do not fit their constructed description, and oppress and engage in harmful ways with the other body. As a result, bodily experiences with oneself, the world and others, as portrayed by this dominant perspective are also being questioned in *Carte d’identité*. Surprisingly, these perspectives are not challenged by simply dismissing them, but in fact receive a lot of attention. I will argue that by referring to and appropriating these dominant and ‘general’ perspectives the book becomes more accessible, and therefore creates greater possibilities for the reader to understand and experience the harmful consequences of these perspectives on and positions in the interaction and practice with the body and the body of the book. In order to investigate this process of appropriating and challenging dominant ideas about the bodily experience, I will first investigate the ways in which these ‘general’ ideas are implemented in *Carte d’identité* and facilitate a connection between book and reader. Secondly, I take a closer look to the reading practice and its consequences for this connection.

The map in *Carte d’identité* represents a body that is recognizable as a body for anybody precisely because it presents the female body in a way (naked, passive, sexually available, seemingly objectified) familiar for the reader. For a long time this has been the dominant way to represent female bodies. As a result, it might become more natural for the reader to engage with the book and imagine the body of the book becoming flesh.

¹⁸⁶ Pol Michel 2016, from: <https://moi-toi.de/blog/2016/8/22/schere-stein-papier> (last accessed on 15th of March 2020).

¹⁸⁷ Lübecker 2019, 372.

Furthermore, by presenting this version of the naked female form hidden under layers of paper and folds, Meinert stimulates the reader's curiosity, which is followed by attraction and desire. The structure of the map created by the *Falk fold* invites the reader to engage with the book as well: the reader will be familiar with the map from vacations or city-trips and feels invited to unfold the pages, and to explore the presented body-landscape as a body-tourist. By translating the already existing dominant and gendered idea of the traditional representation of the female body into a map-like structure, which the reader is familiar as well, Meinert makes the book more accessible and attractive for the reader to engage with.

The depiction of this recognizable female form and the *Falk fold* are not the only instruments *Carte d'identité* has, to attract readers and be more accessible for the reader's interaction. Another method is, for instance, the use of the appropriated terms from *Les cinq sens* that are printed in *Carte d'identité* without a clear relation to their original context. I have argued in the second chapter that these terms do not inform the reader about anything personal or intimate of Meinert. The terms are either very specific or general, but never really personal, which distances the author from the book and withholds her from controlling the interpretation possibilities.¹⁸⁸ In turn, this distance and the use of these familiar words, make the book more accessible for the reader to engage with and to assign meaning to the terms and map, without having to be acquainted with the philosophy of Michel Serres or with Meinert herself.

Rather than explaining the connections between the words and their connected zones on the map, which would make it more straightforward for the reader to understand these relations, the reader is invited and stimulated to create possible relations between the print and the words through their own interpretative process. Additionally, these words do not inform the reader about personal characteristics of the author, but might instead be meaningful for any-body, making the work more accessible for the reader. Again, the reader is stimulated to engage in an intellectual process with the book in order to construct meaning. This reading process also requires a physical engagement of the reader, who has to fold and unfold pages, in order to construct interpretation possibilities. Touching the paper of the map, which I related to the skin of the body in (or of) the book, connects the reader, the book, the author, and the imagined body made present in the imagination of the reader.

4.5.3 Getting to know some-body

In the description of the previous paragraphs of the depiction of the 'general' body and the 'familiar' terms that describe this body, a process of concealing and revealing takes place. On

¹⁸⁸ Meinert even stated in the 2017 interview that some of the references are not necessary to find, and that her work can be interpreted in various ways. As an artist, Meinert is very engaged with the reader's understanding of her work and does not want to influence the reader's interpretation or experience.

the one hand, the image of this body is familiar and recognizable, thereby enabling the reader's engagement with the book and the process of imagining this body. On the other hand, the body is concealed: it lays hidden under the folds, and the words do not allow the reader to gain personal information about the author. The alteration within the reader's reading practice between getting to know this body fold-by-fold, and being kept at distance, creates curiosity, fascination and excitement in the reader, who will be attracted to learn more about this mysterious body.

Other elements within the material and formal aspects of *Carte d'identité* contribute to this process of concealing, revealing, and curiosity as well: the ink that covered the body before being pressed on the surface of the paper, reveals the imprint of a body in a state that is often considered private; the folds that fragment the body print, keep it hidden, while at the same time reveal the body print in a fragmented way when unfolded, and prevent the perception of the body as 'whole'; the cardboard folder that covers the map, while inviting the reader to open it and engage with it at the same time; the cutting and framing of the print making the body anonymous (the head is absent in the print), whilst the indexical relationship created by the imprint identify Meinert as the author (who also claimed ownership through the use of her autograph).

Every time the body in/of the book is distanced from the author, or is impersonified, the reader is invited to interact with the book and fill in this absence in their imagination. On top of that, the minimized presence of the author and the unveiling process of the body in/of the book, produce curiosity, because they offer the reader some 'input' to wonder about. This input does not stimulate fantasies about a legendary human being, but instead the reader's imagination and interpretation possibilities are refrained, producing ideas of the body as recognizable, of 'general' interest, and therefore once more make the book more accessible for the reader. This idea is underlined by the fact that the body print refers to a human being who captured her own body on paper, creating a connection between reader, author and book as being part of the same world. Furthermore, the imagined author or body cannot take on legendary proportions, because her body is printed in 1:1 scale, producing the idea that this person is life-sized, and therefore has a relation to the reader's real-life experience. With terms describing it, such as "Schuppenflechten" (psoriasis) and "Ekzeme" (eczema) the book represents the body as a body that has its history, 'imperfectness' and deficiencies, and is therefore not unrealistically perfect, but ordinary.

The alternation between the processes of revealing and concealing creates the chance for the reader to interact with the book, while stimulating the reader's curiosity and excitement at the same time, thereby allowing for the reader's possibility to engage with this book and think about the absent body as present body. The mystery produced by the concealment is not too distancing: the print remains in reach because of its 'general'

characteristics, which create the image of the body that is recognizable and familiar, and could therefore be any-body.

4.5.4 Fatal attraction

Mallarmé's idea that the beauty of the Book proves it has general interest, is in *Carte d'identité* translated into the body of the book. On first sight this body lives up to this idea of 'general' interest by portraying the body as a body that people are familiar with, in order to make it more accessible to engage with the book. While the reader interacts with the book, something happens, and the reading practice shifts into the next phase of challenging, reflection and change.

When reading the book, unfolding the pages, and connecting Serres' words with the connected locations on the map, the reader is confronted not with a three-dimensional 'whole' body, but with a fragmented trace of a body that hides under layers of paper; that has been cut on multiple places; of which the head is slashed off; and that has been suppressed in a grid-structure formed by the *Falk fold*. In the third chapter I have argued that the cuts in the paper sheet that carries the body print can be interpreted as self-harm inflicted by Meinert, but could also be read as the reader's harm of this body. Through the interplay between concealing and revealing the reader becomes curious and fascinated ("Begierden"¹⁸⁹), resulting in the desire to unfold each layer of the print, until the last envelopes are explored, demonstrated by Meinert's phrase that I quoted in the previous chapters as well: "Ich habe mich geöffnet, veröffentlicht sozusagen aber: Hier! Wer genau schaut, bemerkt eben doch, dass es ein Privater Raum ist, der betreten wird. Genau um diese Spannung geht es mir auch; sie setzt sich in der Faltung fort, in die man sich mit den Fingern wühlen muss."¹⁹⁰ Now, the reader is placed –through the reference to Mallarmé - in the position of a sexually driven perpetrator who crosses the borders that Meinert folded – and therefore closed – in order to take possession of the body resulting in blood ("Rot mit anderem Rot"). The reader even 'penetrates' the body of the book, becomes part of the book, and as a result creates a connection between the book, the reader, the author, and the imagined body. This might not be the fruitful intellectual exchange Mallarmé envisaged, but it is an exchange nonetheless: the skin of the reader touches the surface (the skin) and interior of the book, which in turn originates from the touch of the author, resulting in an exchange of "mingled bodies" of the book, reader, and author. The reading experience of the reader is not realized through a

¹⁸⁹ Refers to the word "Begierden" or "desires" connected to the areas E5-6 and F2-3 of the body print, near the genital zones of the body print.

¹⁹⁰ In chapter two I argued that the term "Daumen" or "thumb" (connected to area E2 of the body print, part of the genital zones of the body print) could have sexual connotations and perhaps could represent the thumb of the reader as Mallarmé's phallic knife.

process of intellectual engagement alone: the tactile and emotional relation between reader, book and author is central to the understanding of the reader's role as perpetrator, and to the reader's becoming of the perpetrator. As a result of 'becoming' the perpetrator the reader is confronted with the consequences of their actions ("Rot mit anderem Rot," fragmentation, etc.) and has the chance to reflect and ask: "is it okay for me to act on my own desires, solely?" and "what actions led to this outcome?" Perhaps, thinking back to the quotation about the use of paper from Meinert's essay mentioned in chapter three ("Der bewusste Einsatz eines extrem fragilen Papiers beispielsweise evoziert beim Betrachter eine bestimmte Vorsicht im Umgang, die ihn zwingt, sich Zeit zu nehmen, um nichts zu zerstören. Vielleicht führt die Fragilität des Materials auch dazu, dass der Betrachter das Buch wieder aus der Hand legt")¹⁹¹ it is best to not touch the book, at all.

Depicting the naked body as seemingly passive, sexualized and objectified, helps the reader to recognize the body print in *Carte d'identité* as the female body as it has been often represented throughout history, and thus as standard, universal, or general. The reader is or feels invited to act through gendered traditions of sexual performance that tell the reader how to act in a 'normal' way with naked female bodies. When the reader unfolds the map and thinks about the relations between the map and the words, it becomes clear to the reader that this body does not meet these general standards, for it has no head, is fragmented, and is mutilated by itself and the reader. This fragmentation testifies to the consequences of the production and maintenance of the gendered beauty ideals as universal, or standard. The production of this idea as general creates the idea that only the women that meet this standard are normal. Within this frame, passivity and sexual desire are expected, and the sexual actions of the male must be met with desire. Blood testifies to Mallarmé's "possession" of the "virginal folds"- the possession of the female body, but also of rapture of this attempt to possess and oppress: fragmentation and 'blood' as a critique on this male dominated perspective on the female body, which is inconclusive and harmful, because it only portrays one specific type of body (the female) which has just one function (to please the male), and excludes other types of gender identities and sexual orientations. Furthermore, the fragmentation underlines the idea of a body that is not able to identify with this norm.

As a result of the reader's tactile reading process, the reader becomes an active participant of the book, who constructs meaning through their involvement. By presenting the body in the book as the body of the book at the same time, *Carte d'identité* is able to raise questions about the practice of the reader when engaging with books as well. The self-referential aspects of the book, such as the terms "Zickzacklinien" (zigzags), "Weiß" (wit) and "Leinwand" (canvas) further underline this notion. An interesting analogy between paper and

¹⁹¹ Patrizia Meinert 2014, 50.

skin, described by Claudia Benthien in her book *Skin: On the Cultural Between Self and the World*, brings another element of the reading process to mind that is challenged in *Carte d'identité*: modelled on the “penetration and uncovering” of bodies in Vesalian anatomy, Western epistemology has been based on the notion that “knowledge of what is essential means breaking through shells and walls in order to reach the core that lies in the innermost depths.”¹⁹² The reader’s desire for knowledge deconstructs the *Carte d'identité*, because their activities leave traces that cannot be undone.

The interaction demonstrates that the reading practice of *Carte d'identité* requires touch for the construction of meaning, whereas conventional books often require touch for the turning of the pages alone. In this way, attention is paid to sensory ways of knowledge, instead of understanding reading and learning through language alone. Furthermore, when the reader is asked to actively engage with the book in order to construct meaning it is demonstrated, through the difference in engagement with conventional books, that the reading practice of conventional books is passive, while the reader is positioned as a voyeur and perhaps even perpetrator. While in *Carte d'identité* the reader is positioned as voyeur and perpetrator as well, in fact, the book also facilitates the space for the reader to reflect on their position. This reflective phase on the reading practice itself can be considered conceptual and is often absent in conventional books. Once more, *Carte d'identité*, expresses ideas about reading practices by appropriating ideas and thereby challenging them.

4.5.5 Experiencing the world through the book

After considering the exchange between the author, reader and the book in *Carte d'identité*, the question raises what the involvement of the ‘universe,’ world, or environment is within this exchange. While for Mallarmé the Book captures “all earthly existence” and is able to close the gap between the universe and the book by making sense of the “immaculate grouping of universal relationships,” Meinert did not naively try to capture the world in her book.¹⁹³ The ‘world,’ however, does play a central role in the exchange facilitated by *Carte d'identité*, but it is important to note that the ‘world’ understood as a finite whole, which can be captured in a book by the act of writing, like Mallarmé proposed, is questioned and instead is understood as a set of structures, ongoing and open-ended, similar to the external forces of the earlier-mentioned notion of the twentieth-century thinkers (like Barthes who challenged notions of originality, autonomy and individual expression, because they believed people are subjected to external and internal forces).

¹⁹² Benthien 2004, 7.

¹⁹³ Mallarmé 1982, 80; Lübecker 2019, 372.

In fact this might not be entirely ‘against’ Mallarmé’s notion of the world, because Lübecker noted that Mallarmé understands the human being as being caught up in the structures of the world. Mallarmé seems to determine these structures, however, as definite, identifiable and therefore are possible to capture by individuals in the book. I argue, however, that these structures determine our view and understanding of the world, and are as such harder to identify, because they are presented as ‘normal’ to us. Furthermore, individuals are not capable of simply capturing these structures in language or in the book, because each individual is situated within (different) sets of changing and evolving structures, which determine their views. It is important to note that these structures were not always already present, and instead are man-made: constructed and reproduced by people, who are subjected to varying external and internal forces, which in turn influence these structures.

It is difficult to determine who ‘produces’ these structures. In short, it can be argued that these structures are made by whoever holds power (throughout history this would often prove to be white heterosexual cis-men). People with power decide what becomes the norm: what ideas to exclude (the ideas that are not beneficial to this group) and what to include (that are beneficial only to them). While these constructed ideas are presented as universal, and as the ‘best’, they are in fact not definite but always in a process of change, because they evolve to the needs of whoever holds power. In this way, the produced structures are beneficial to this particular group, and can be used as a means to justify the exclusion and oppression of groups of individuals who do not conform to their norms. As a result, the dominating group is able to create a system of oppression, which cannot easily be overturned in order to change this system or its power-dynamics for the benefit of the marginalized groups of individuals. It does not mean that this does not happen: in fact these structures that are responsible for the systematic exclusion of marginalized groups of individuals, are always being challenged and in the twentieth century being questioned more frequently.

4.5.6 Challenging ‘our’ world

If the world is understood as existing of this ongoing, changing, set of structures constructed by people who hold power, it can be argued that objects of the world reflect and/or are under influence of the ideas in the world. Therefore, *Carte d’identité*, also relates to these structures and ideas in the ‘world,’ such as to notions about art, books, artist’s books, and most importantly, about gendered traditions within interaction and bodily experiences. While most of the internal and external forces to which Meinert is subjected are very hard to define, some ideas are easier to detect, because the reader is confronted with them. Especially the ideas that are presented as ‘normal’ concepts of the world, such as the naked female form, the bodily experience, the structure of the map, which I have defined as being of ‘general interest,’ can

be pointed out because these ideas contribute to the process of alternately attracting and alienating the readers.

Meinert used her own body as an instrument to create this body print.¹⁹⁴ Whilst, the body print itself testifies to the absence of the author, at the same time Meinert mobilizes her own body as the source of artistic production. By activating her own body she adopts and transforms the naked (female) body as a form of objecthood and turns it into this body print. By pressing her body into a map (a structure which is designed by a man named Gerhard Falk) the book is being subjected into a pre-established form. By overlaying the print with a grid form, one form of representation (the naked female body) is repressed by another form of representation (the map). In this sense, the body print demonstrates the subjection of the body and its representation to the control of the explorer. Meinert's creative practice is in this sense disciplined by the adoption of male perspectives and techniques. As a result of this subjection to traditional measurements and ideas, the female body is fragmented. Furthermore, spontaneity and chance are restricted within this process, as I have mentioned in chapter three. The reader not just witnesses these restrictions, but is part of them as well, and therefore becomes aware of their position within this process of repression and exclusion, and is able to reflect on this position and to create change. Therefore, by using her own body as instrument and appropriating these male paradigms, Meinert challenges the restrictiveness of these male dominated ideas and concepts, such as the fold, the bodily experience, and the practice of reading.

By producing a stand-in of her own body, Meinert creates the possibility of turning the attention from herself, and toward challenging aspects such as the female form, and the authoritative function of the author, and in doing so creates the possibility of exchange between the four actors. During this process the reader is alarmed of the inconclusive and harmful ideas that are central to this 'general' ideas. The fact that Mallarmé posed that there can be something as a 'general' or 'universal' standard raises questions of who are included and more importantly, who are excluded in the construction of this 'general standard.' Meinert shows with *Carte d'identité* that one type of 'reading' that speaks to everybody and that includes all types of gender identities and sexual orientations, without harming, objectifying or sexualizing, does not exist, at least not in the naked female form.

¹⁹⁴ I am aware of the similarities between Meinert's printing process and Yves Klein's performances *Anthropometries*, during which he instructed several nude women to cover their bodies with paint and onto the canvas. When asked about the connection between her work and that of Klein in the interview of 2018, Meinert stated: "Mir waren sie natürlich bekannt, jedoch schienen sie mir nicht maßgeblich für meine Arbeit. Bewußt und wichtig war mir jedoch, dass ich in Abgrenzung zu Kleins Arbeit mein eigenes Werkzeug bin, was ich durchaus als emanzipatorischen Akt sehe." This emphasizes the notion that Meinert appropriates dominant male ideas and challenges them. In this case, Meinert activates her body in order to be in control, and distances herself from traditional representations of objecthood.

As the result of appropriating the naked female form, the *Falk fold*, Serres' and Mallarmé's perspectives on books and the experience of the body, Meinert, connects dominant ideas from the world to her book (and to the reader's). Rather than just referring to these ideas, Meinert makes these ideas her own by using them in a personal way. As a result, Falk's, Serres's and Mallarmé's ideas are decontextualized and placed in a new context: that of the female bodily experience, which is connected to ideas about the body as a book and the reading experience as well. By creating this new context, it becomes clear that these male perspectives are suppressive and are harmful.

Meinert's process of 'writing' shows resemblance to Lübecker's understanding of Mallarmé's writing process, through which the world and the book are brought together and make sense of the structures of the world. By appropriating ideas that are constructed by men in a creative way, similar to what Lübecker referred to as the "DIY-aesthetic," Meinert demonstrates that these ideas are the result of male perspectives on and forms of oppression of the experience of the body (of the book), and are not 'general' but exclusive and do not align with her own perspective. By appropriating these ideas Meinert did not bridge the gap, but marked it, in order for the reader to notice.

4.5.7 Power to change

As soon as the reader actively engages with the book, and becomes aware of their own position as perpetrator, the reader is able to reflect on their own position and to ask: "what actions led to this outcome?" In a certain sense, *Carte d'identité* adopts Mallarmé's description of the reader's practice in 'Le livre' on a meta level: Mallarmé described the act of the reader as "barbaric," and right after Mallarmé contrasted this act with the reader as being engaged in intellectual process. A similar contrast can be found in the reading practice of *Carte d'identité*, but instead, this reading practice demands bodily and emotional activity from the reader.

The characteristics of the book that the reader recognized and stimulated the reader to interact with the book, become the elements that helped the reader into the position of the perpetrator and therefore have an alienating effect. While these elements are thought to be normal ideas about the interaction with female bodies and books because they are the result of structures formed by dominant ideas of white heterosexual cis-males who dominate the world the reader is part of, they are not.

In fact, the reader becomes aware that these ideas of the perspective on the female body are harmful and not universal. The ideas from the world of the reader are challenged by the ideas of the world presented in the book, and the position of the reader within these ideas becomes clear: either the reader is already aware of these harmful consequences, or they become aware. During this reflexive process, the world presented in the book conflicts with

the world experienced by the reader, resulting in the understanding that ‘each’ experienced world is different and under the influence of both external and internal forces, which present themselves as ‘natural’ or as of ‘general interest.’ Gaining insight into their own position within these structures, helps to alter or challenge the dominant ways of thinking about and interacting with bodies and books, because they learn to understand that these ideas are constructed and therefore not finite but able to change. The reading practice of *Carte d’identité* demonstrates that before this change can occur, the identification and understanding of these structures is of importance. As a result, it shows that the book, the world, the author and the reader connect and exchange.

As a result of portraying the body (of the book) before and during the reading practice that harms the body, the act of voyeurism within this practice and within the act of exploring female bodies, is revealed. Meinert challenged these sexual engagements with the body and the body of the book by appropriating male ideas, and shows what the harmful consequences of their perspectives are. Thereby, the power dynamics within these traditional gendered ideas are called into question and shift towards the book, which alienates the person who acts as perpetrator. The book focuses attention on the fact that the power when reading, when touching, when experiencing, is shared, and not dominated by one participant or the other. Not just bodies mingle, but the world and objects are part of this mixing as well.

4.6 Distribution of power and agency

The distribution of the power aligns with the distribution of agency in *Carte d’identité*: agency is not dominated by the reader or the author, but instead agency is distributed. Through the exchange that takes place between the world, the author, the book and the reader, meaning is constructed. All the participants rely on each other for the construction of meaning in the book. Without one, this exchange would not take place. As a result of this distributed agency, the author is not made a genius, or has been murdered, but in fact has a very important task: to create this book that facilitates the exchange. Therefore, this book is always shifting,

In doing so, both the author as an authoritative figure and the author as absent figure (birth of the reader) are being challenged. The deconstruction of both these conceptions of authorship can be understood as the deconstruction of masculine and patriarchal notions within the medium book itself.¹⁹⁵ This deconstruction does not simply replace the masculine authoritative figure with the female figure, but the importance of the author figure is sidelined.

¹⁹⁵ Barthes’ focus on the absence of the author which is designed to challenge the author’s privileged position in fact helps to preserve this authoritative position, because by declaring him dead the author is granted transcendental anonymity. As a result the author becomes omnipresent and the source of origin behind a work.

This underlines the idea that the book is not a personal document of Meinert, and is not about her personal life, but is instead about experiences that are widespread but missing in the debates about the books and female bodily experiences. Most importantly, these ideas pay attention to being suppressed. As a result of documenting her absence she marked her presence, as if telling us she has been in this position of suppression, and will always memorize it because it left a mark. The trace of her body addresses the need to take up space and the desire to literally leave an impression. By externalizing this experience, Meinert creates a space that can facilitate a relation between the author, reader, book and the world.

The self-referential elements of *Carte d'identité* also help to claim a space for itself: it can serve as a "Leinwand" (canvas), which can be filled in by the exchange between the actors. While at first sight the book seems to be represented as passive, as an objectification of the female form that needs the reader's sexual tactile exploration in order to construct meaning and pleasure, in fact the book is active: it has the power to make the reader reflect on their actions, and creates a dialogue on gendered traditions, the book, and bodily experiences, through the exchange that takes places between the book, reader, author, and world.

CONCLUSION

BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

In May 2019 the possibility arose for me to read *Carte d'identité* in the library of the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. At the time, the book was part of a small library exhibition and was exhibited in partially unfolded state in a glass cabinet. Together with the librarian we removed the book from the cabinet and laid it on a table, so that I could examine the book. Unlike other visitors of the museum, I was allowed to engage with the book for my research. I unfolded the map and closed it again several times, placed the map into the folder, browsed through several zones of the partially unfolded map, and tried to connect the words with the imprint on the map. Something that I still remember vividly was that I was afraid to make a mistake, to unfold a part of the book I should not unfold and thereby would damage the book. The fragile nature of the book was the biggest reason for me to be cautious: there was a genuine possibility that I would do something that would damage the book. There was no guide on how to fold and unfold *Carte d'identité* after all. And the idea that I could read the book while other visitors could not, heightened this angst, because it would make it all the more clear that I was the culprit who damaged this book.

This experience led me to think about the way I engaged with the book and how elements of the book medium, such as the fragile paper, influenced my approach of the book and thereby influenced my perception of the book. The research question thus became: How does Patrizia Meinerts' exploration of elements from the book medium in her artist's book *Carte d'identité* (2017) influence its reading practice?

I approached this artwork in a way that I found somewhat similar to the peeling of an onion: first, I wanted to create a framework by searching for parallels and differences in the oeuvre of Meinert in order to identify the first layer of the work that I could unfold. I found an 'entrance' through the apparent use and function of text, materials and structures in Meinert's books. These three elements are characteristic for the book medium and Meinert used these elements in almost every book in a way that strengthens each other's meaning, invite the reader to engage with the book, and thereby influenced the reading practice. Although, these elements are interwoven in many of her books, I treated them separately in this thesis. Because the textual elements play such a prominent role in our reading practice of conventional books and will therefore be one of the first things we try to use in order to make sense of *Carte d'identité*, in the second chapter of my thesis I centred on how text functions in this artwork.

The text in *Carte d'identité* is borrowed from Serres' book *Les cinq sens* and thereby establishes a relation between this text and the artist's book that is centred on the element of

touch. When I read the terms in *Carte d'identité* for the first time, however, this relationship was not immediately apparent. Only after I started my research the importance of touch in this artist's book became clear to me. While reading the book, I noticed that the words in the folder refer to zones of the map, which carries the body print of the artist. I found it strange that these words did not tell me anything about Meinert, while it seemed such a personal book. The impersonal character of the words, however, did help me to engage with the work and to imagine a body to which these terms could refer. That my reading practice endangered this body, and hurt the body of the book, which I established in the second chapter, did not occur to me while I read the book, and only crossed my mind while I was connecting the terms of the folder to the print during the writing process of this thesis.

Not just these words allowed me to think of the reading practice as harmful, but material and structural elements of the book strengthened this interpretation. The type of paper, the printing technique and the folds of the map in *Carte d'identité* helped to regard the structure of the map as a corpus – a body made flesh. In my own reading practice I envisioned the paper analogous to the skin of the absent artist, which was made present by these material properties. Then, I did not yet meet Patrizia Meinert, I had to imagine this artist being present. The presented naked body made me shy and hesitant to engage actively with the book. I did not understand, however, that engaging with this body had implications for the body itself. I was purely focussed on my own understanding of the book. Therefore, I did not notice my repositioning as reader and the connection that was established between the book, the author and myself.

In my theoretical approach of the book, however, the combination of my understanding of the body of the book as made of flesh and the tangible connection the book established through the indexical relation and the participation of the reader, between the artist, book and the reader, led me to think about the influence of this connectedness for the reading practice of the book. Instead of the focus on either the author or the reader as the sole actor in the book, I understood the book as a site for an exchange between the artist, the book, the world and the reader. This exchange is centred on the way we perceive, approach and read books and (female) bodies. Every aspect of the book I thus far identified, its text, material and formal elements, supported this exchange, precisely because they maintained a connection to our idea of a book. Because of this connection, these elements provided access to the book and challenged our idea of the book and its functions at the same time.

It feels somewhat alienating now that I understand the complexities of reading practices that I was not aware of when I read the book. Even when I approached the book with care and tried not to damage it, a reading practice of *Carte d'identité* always leads to damages. The question rises if the book would be better off behind glass cabinets, after all. Putting the feelings of shame aside, I think that I had to go through this process in order to

understand more about it. The combination between practice and theory helps me to reflect on my own experience and think about ways of reading books in the future. This does not just apply to me, but it is a process that readers have to undertake in their own pace.

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¹⁹⁶ This interview has been removed from the website of Patrizia Meinert.

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¹⁹⁷ This website is currently unavailable.

¹⁹⁸ E-mails can be made available upon request.

ILLUSTRATIONS

All images of the artist's book of Patrizia Meinert originate from the website of Patrizia Meinert – unless stated otherwise. Some of these pictures have been cropped in order to fit the document. I have tried to enlist most of the materials and used techniques in the production of the artists' books, but was not able to recover the entire production process for each book.

Fig. 0.1: Patrizia Meinert, *Carte d'identité*, 2017, 15 x 32 cm, body print on Kozo Muji 40g/sqm, silkscreen, embossing and Colour edging, map in cardboard folder published in an edition of 26 signed and numbered copies.



Fig. 0.2: picture of a detail of the artist book *Carte d'identité* by Patrizia Meinert, 2017 in the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. Photo by the author.

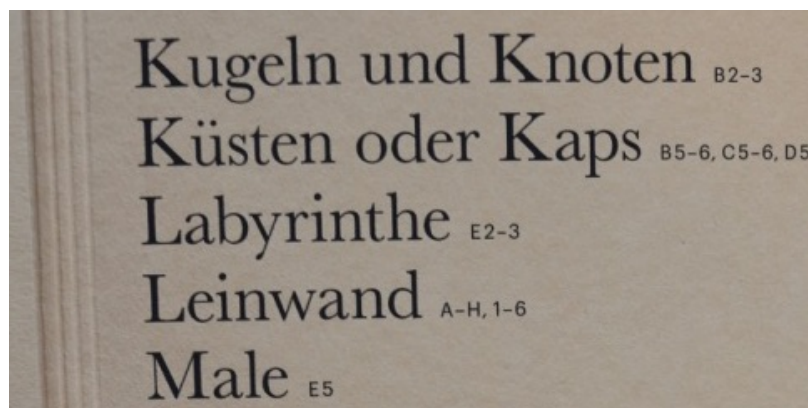




Fig. 0.3: of the unfolded map from the artist book *Carte d'identité* by Patrizia Meinert, 2017 in the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. Photo by the author.



Fig. 1.1: Patrizia Meinert, *Lorca: Poemas*, 2011, closed concertina fold, manual offset, 9,5 x 20 cm, published in an edition of 30 signed and numbered copies.



Fig. 1.2: Patrizia Meinert, *Lorca: Poemas*, 2011, closed concertina fold, manual offset, 9,5 x 20 cm, published in an edition of 30 signed and numbered copies.



Fig. 1.3: Patrizia Meinert, *Lorca: Poemas*, 2011, closed concertina fold, manual offset, 9,5 x 20 cm, published in an edition of 30 signed and numbered copies.



Fig. 1.4: Patrizia Meinert, *Lorca: Poemas*, 2011, closed concertina fold, manual offset, 9,5 x 20 cm, published in an edition of 30 signed and numbered copies.



Fig. 1.5: Patrizia Meinert, *Play*, 2012, 14,8 x 18 cm, cardboard, rubberband, photopolymer print, pochoir, published in an edition of 30 signed and numbered copies.



Fig. 1.6: Patrizia Meinert, *Play*, 2017, 14,8 x 18 cm, digital print and rubber band, published in an edition of 100 signed and numbered copies.

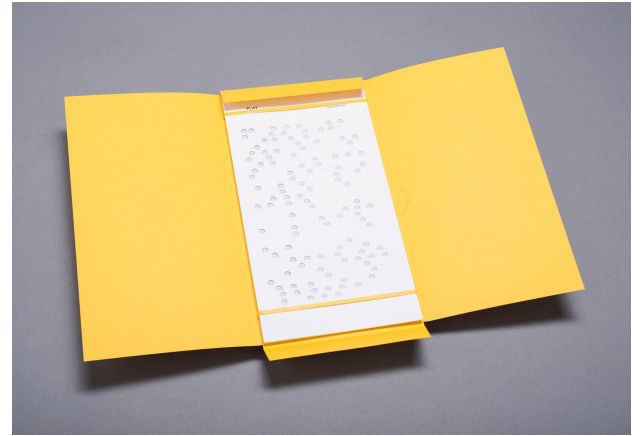


Fig. 1.7: Patrizia Meinert, *Play*, 2012, 14,8 x 18 cm, cardboard, rubber band, photopolymer print, pochoir, published in an edition of 30 signed and numbered copies.

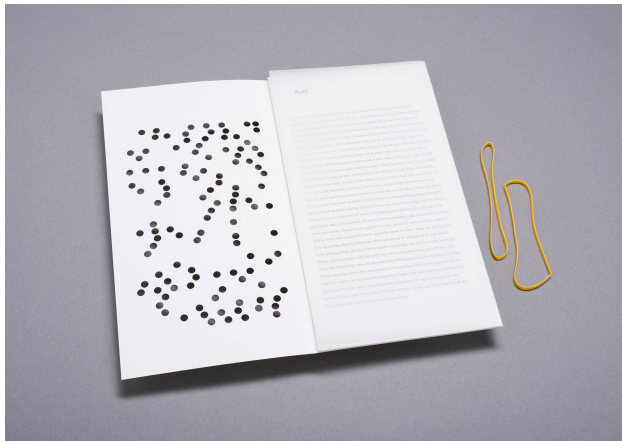


Fig. 1.8: Patrizia Meinert, *Play*, 2012, 14,8 x 18 cm, Cardboard, rubber band, photopolymer print, pochoir, published in an edition of 30 signed and numbered copies.



Fig. 1.9: Patrizia Meinert, *Ophelia*, 2012, 17 x 27 cm, digital print, hand-dyed paper, pamphlet sewn on concertina folder, paper cuts, published in an edition of ten signed and numbered copies.

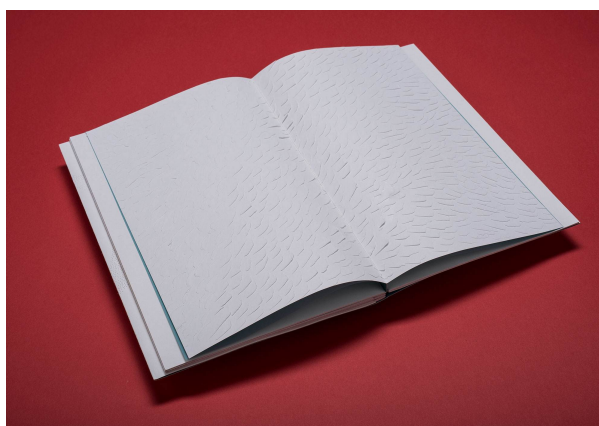


Fig. 1.10: Patrizia Meinert, *Ophelia*, 2012, 17 x 27 cm, digital print, hand-dyed paper, pamphlet sewn on concertina folder, paper cuts, published in an edition of ten signed and numbered copies.



Image 1.11: Patrizia Meinert, *Ophelia*, 2012, 17 x 27 cm, digital print, hand-dyed paper, pamphlet sewn on concertina folder, paper cuts, published in an edition of ten signed and numbered copies.

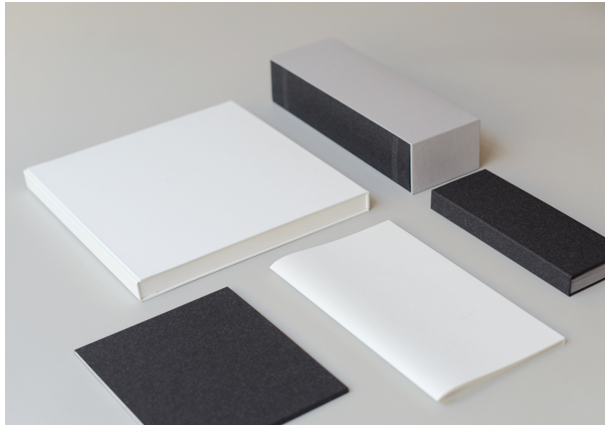


Fig. 1.12: Patrizia Meinert, *t=turning the pages / Eine Versuchsanordnung über die Zeit im Buch*, 2014, box containing 5 artist's books is 30,8 x 31,8 x 13,7 cm, edition of 3 signed and numbered boxes.



Fig. 1.13: Patrizia Meinert, *durée*, 2014, 15,5 x 27 cm unbound pamphlet, silkscreen on mylar, folder with blind embossing.



Fig. 1.14: Patrizia Meinert, *intuition*, 2014, 9,8 x 30 x 6,5, sewn on nylon thread, Inkjet printing, slipcase with blind embossing.



Fig. 1.15: Patrizia Meinert, *intuition*, 2014, 9,8 x 30 x 6,5, sewn on nylon thread, Inkjet printing, slipcase with blind embossing.



Fig. 1.16: Patrizia Meinert, *temps*, 2014, 8 x 21,7 x 2,5, concertina, stamp print and digital print, blind embossing.



Fig. 1.17: Patrizia Meinert, *temps*, 2014, 8 x 21,7 x 2,5, concertina, stamp print and digital print, blind embossing.



Fig. 1.18: Patrizia Meinet, *mémoire*, 2014, 17 x 20,5 cm, digital printing on silk prepared with special finish, paper sleeve with blind embossing.



Fig. 1.19: Patrizia Meinet, *mémoire*, 2014, 17 x 20,5 cm, digital printing on silk prepared with special finish, paper sleeve with blind embossing.



Fig. 1.20: Patrizia Meinet, *Simultanéité*, 2014, 28,5 x 29,3 cm, concertina, silkscreen on tracing paper, clamshell box with blind embossing, republished in 2014 in an edition of 20 signed and numbered copies.



Fig. 1.21: Patrizia Meinet, *Simultanéité*, 2014, 28,5 x 29,3 cm, concertina, silkscreen on tracing paper, clamshell box with blind embossing, republished in 2014 in an edition of 20 signed and numbered copies.

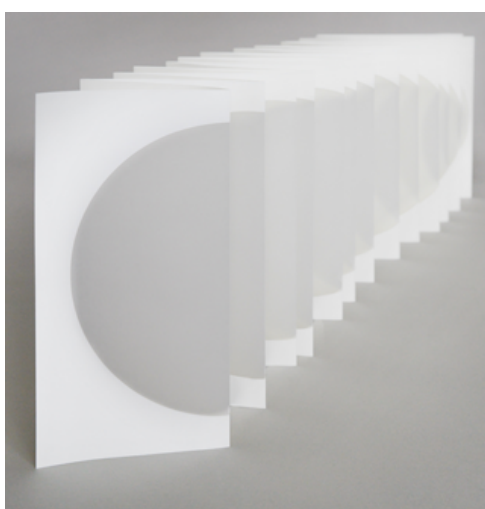


Fig. 1.22: Patrizia Meinet, *Simultanéité*, 2014, 28,5 x 29,3 cm, concertina, silkscreen on tracing paper, clamshell box with blind embossing, republished in 2014 in an edition of 20 signed and numbered copies.

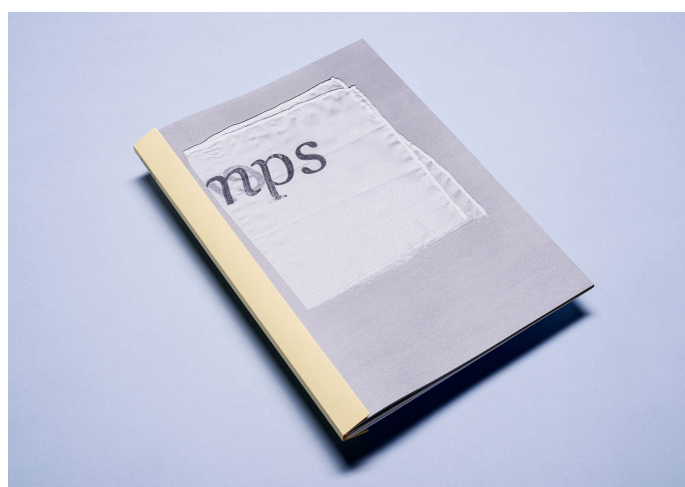


Fig. 1.23: Patrizia Meinet, *Makulatur*, 2016, 21 x 28 cm, double pamphlet, pamphlet stitch, digital print, published in an edition of 50 signed and numbered copies.



Fig. 1.24: Patrizia Meinert, *Makulatur*, 2016, 21 x 28 cm, double pamphlet, pamphlet stitch, digital print, published in an edition of 50 signed and numbered copies.



Fig. 1.25: Patrizia Meinert, *Makulatur*, 2016, 21 x 28 cm, double pamphlet, pamphlet stitch, digital print, published in an edition of 50 signed and numbered copies.



Fig. 1.26: Patrizia Meinert, *Makulatur*, 2016, 21 x 28 cm, double pamphlet, pamphlet stitch, digital print, published in an edition of 50 signed and numbered copies.



Fig. 1.27: Picture of the folder and the closed map from the artist book *Carte d'identité* by Patrizia Meinert, 2017 in the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. Photo by the author.



Fig. 1.28: Patrizia Meinert, *Carte d'identité*, 2017, 15 x 32 cm, body print on Kozo Muji 40g/sqm, silkscreen, embossing and Colour edging, map in cardboard folder published in an edition of 26 signed and numbered copies.



Fig. 1.29: photograph of the red inner flap of *Carte d'identité* sent by Patrizia Meinert in an e-mail on the 27th of March 2020.



Fig. 1.30: Patrizia Meinert, *Flatland*, 2018, 13,5 x 25,4 cm, hand sewn, covered with fabric, chemise plus embossing, cardboard slipcase, sunprint, digital print, published in an edition of 15 signed and numbered



Fig. 1.31: Patrizia Meinert, *Flatland*, 2018, 13,5 x 25,4 cm, hand sewn, covered with fabric, chemise plus embossing cardboard slipcase, sunprint, digital print, published in an edition of 15 signed and numbered copies.



Fig. 1.32: Patrizia Meinert, *Flatland*, 2018, 13,5 x 25,4 cm, hand sewn, covered with fabric, chemise plus embossing, cardboard slipcase, sunprint, digital print, published in an edition of 15 signed and numbered copies.



Fig. 2.1: Picture of the once unfolded folder from the artist book *Carte d'identité* by Patrizia Meinert, 2017 in the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. On the left “Maßstab 1:1” is printed. Photo by the author.

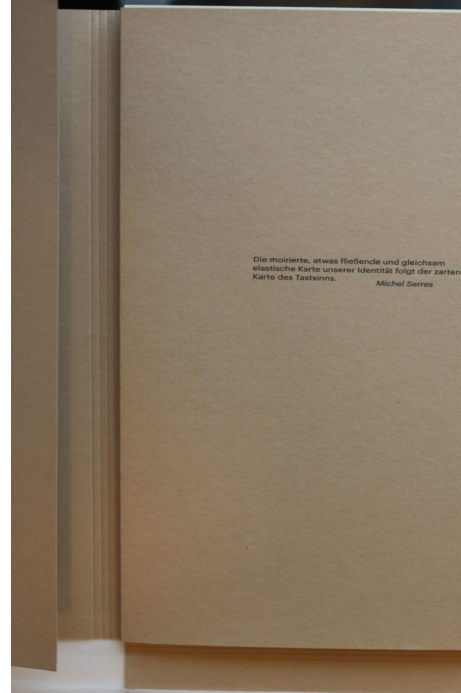


Fig. 2.2: Picture of the once unfolded folder from the artist book *Carte d'identité* by Patrizia Meinert, 2017 in the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. On the right “Die moirierte, etwas fließende und gleichsam elastische Karte unserer Identität folgt der zarten Karten des Tastsinns – Michel Serres” is printed. Photo by the author.

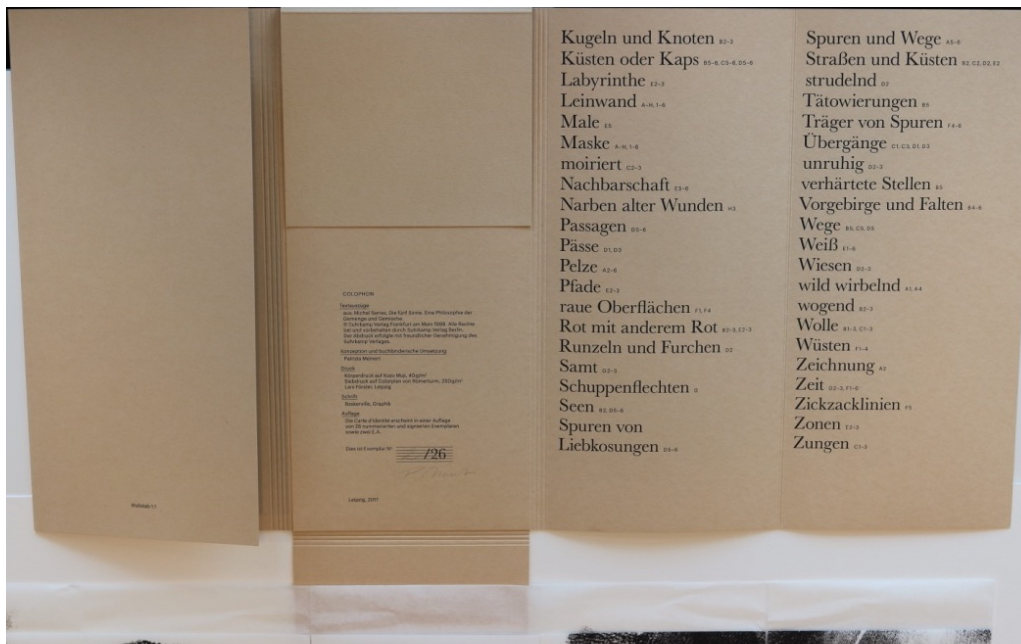


Fig. 2.3: Picture of the partially unfolded folder from the artist book *Carte d'identité* by Patrizia Meinert, 2017 in the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. Photo by the author.

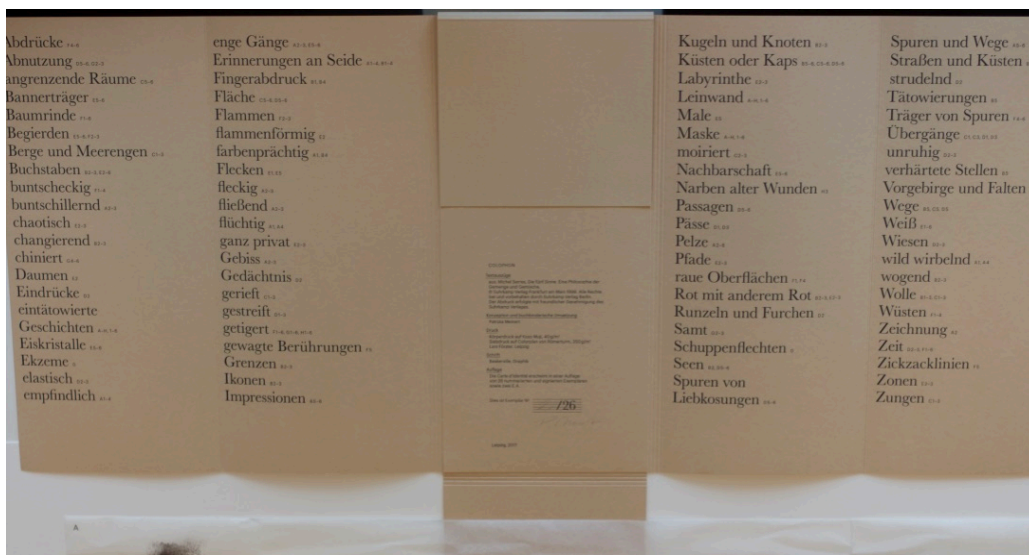


Fig. 2.4: Picture of the folder in unfolded state from the artist's book *Carte d'identité* by Patrizia Meinert, 2017 in the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. Photo by the author.

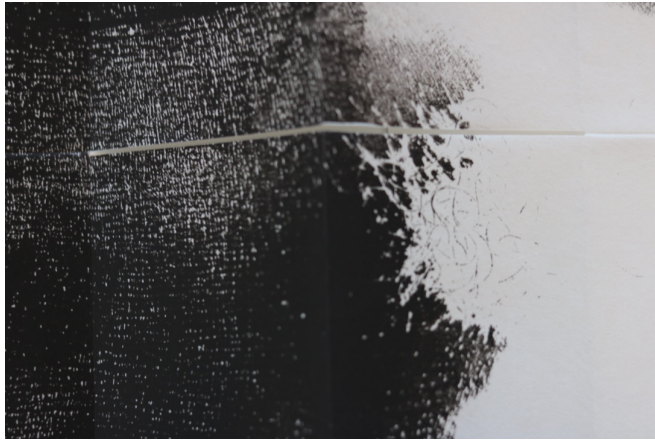


Fig. 2.5: Picture of a detail of the map with body hair (coordinates E2-3) of the artist book *Carte d'identité* by Patrizia Meinert, 2017 in the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. Photo by the author.



Fig. 2.6: Picture of a detail of the map with coordinates B2-3 of the artist book *Carte d'identité* by Patrizia Meinert, 2017 in the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. Photo by the author.

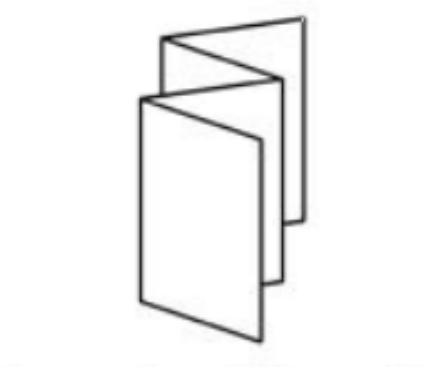


Fig. 3.1 : Accordion, Leporello, Concertina fold. Image copied from Stephan Angsüsser, 'Map Folding Techniques in the Digital Age,' from: https://icaci.org/files/documents/ICC_proceedings/ICC2013/_extendedAbstract/431_proceeding.pdf

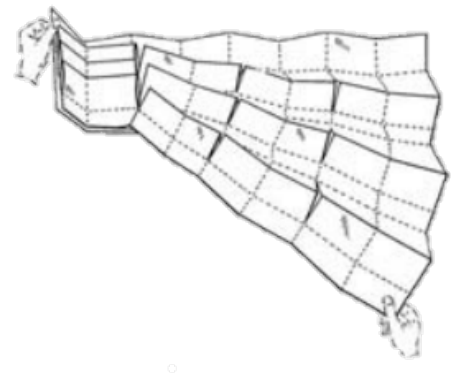


Fig. 3.2 : *Falk fold* map folding technique. Image copied from Stephan Angsüsser, 'Map Folding Techniques in the Digital Age,' from: https://icaci.org/files/documents/ICC_proceedings/ICC2013/_extendedAbstract/431_proceeding.pdf

APPENDIX

English translation of *Carte d'identité*

coasts and capes
entirely private
psoriasis
desires
tattooed
promontories and folds
variegated

Patrizia Meinert
Carte d'identité

The shimmering, vaguely fluid and, as it were,
elastic identity card, obeys the tender map of touch.

Michel Serres

prints F4-6
deterioration D5-6, G2-3
adjoining rooms C5-6
standard bearer E5-6
tree bark F1-6
desires E5-6, F2-3
Mountains and straits C1-3
letters B2-3, E2-6
variegated F1-4
shimmering A2-3
chaotic E2-3
iridescent B2-3
chiné G4-6
thumb E2
imprints D2
historiated
skin A-H, 1-6
ice crystals E5-6
eczema O
elastic D2-3
fragile A1-4
narrow corridors A2-3, E5-6
memories of silk A1-4, B1-4
fingerprint B1, B4
surface C5-6, D5-6
flames F2-3
flame shaped E2
colourful A1, B4
blotches E1, E5
mottled A2-3
fluid A2-3
fleeting A1, A4
entirely private E2-3
teeth A2-3
memory D2
grooved C1-3
streaked D1-3
tigrine F1-6, G1-6, H1-6
daring touch F5
limits B2-3
icons B2-3
impression B5-6
balls and knots B2-3
coasts and capes B5-6, C5-6, D5-6
labyrinth E2-3
canvas A-H, 1-6
marks E5
masks A-H, 1-6
moiré C2-3
vicinity E5-6
scars from wounds H3
passages D5-6
passes D1, D3
fur A2-6
paths E2-3
rough areas F1, F4
reds with other reds B2-3, E2-3
wrinkles and furrows D2
velvet G2-3
psoriasis O
lakes B2, D5-6
traces of
caresses D5-6
tracks and pathways A5-6
streets and coasts B2, C2, D2, E2
swirling D2
tattoos B5
bearer of traces F4-6
transition C1, C3, D1, D3
restless D2-3
calluses B5
promontories and folds B4-6
ways B5, C5, D5
white E1-6
fields D2-3
whirling wildly A1, A4
undulating B2-3
wool B1-3, C1-3
deserts F1-4
drawing A2
time D2-3, F1-6
zigzags F5
zones E2-3
tongue C1-3

COLOPHON

This is a supplement to the artist's book *carte d'identité* by Patrizia Meinert providing the English translation.

The German text fragments were taken from *Michel Serres: Die fünf Sinne. Eine Philosophie der Gemenge und Gemische* (© Suhrkamp Verlag Frankfurt am Main, 1998) and published by courtesy of Suhrkamp.

The single words were translated and put in alphabetical order by Patrizia Meinert. The quote was taken from the English translation by Margaret Sankey and Peter Cowley (Michel Serres: *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*, Continuum, 2009).

Concept and Binding

Patrizia Meinert

Printing

Body print on Kozo Muji, 40g/m²

Silk screen printing on Colorplan, 350g/m²
by Lars Förster, Leipzig

Fonts

Baskerville, Graphik

Edition

Carte d'identité was published in an edition of 26 signed and numbered copies plus two E.A.

Leipzig, 2017