

The New Aspidistra
(3,715 Minutes/
1,488.94 Kilometres/
39,680 Calories)
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Project Description

An 18-month long research project with multiple outcomes related to major new time-based endurance performance *The New Aspidistra (3,715Minutes/1,488.94 Kilometres/39,680 Calories)*, in which Holmes cycled from Emley Moor mast in Huddersfield to the Berliner Fersehturm on a custom-made bicycle. It is an investigation into the work, biography, and critical legacies of Carl Einstein (1885–1940) around the period of 1919 and its impact for making and thinking contemporary art in 2019. The related outputs in this portfolio include a book, *The Graveside Orations of Carl Einstein*, and nine exhibition/events: at Market Gallery (Huddersfield); Sabine Knust (Munich); Hopscotch Reading Room (Berlin); Zwinger Gallery (Berlin); Xero, Kline and Coma (London); Paper Gallery (Manchester); and South London Gallery

Project Duration:

06/2018 – 12/2019

Funder:

School Research Funds to support project £3000

Research Partners, consultants, collaborators:

Soanywaymagazine

<https://www.soanywaymagazine.org/issue-one>

Psi-Vino

<https://www.psvino.cz/>

Publisher MA Bibliotheque and its commissioning editor Dr Sharon Kivland. (Refer to appendix for full list of authors contributing to *The Graveside Orations of Carl Einstein*).
<http://www.anagrambooks.com/search/publications/MA%20Bibliotheque>

A wide range of international academics, authors, artists, art historians, writers and poets.

Specialist fabricators including:

<https://cromaworks.com/About-cromaworks-com>

British Cycling and British Olympic Association nutritionist Nigel Mitchell.

<https://www.healthspan.co.uk/about-us/experts-and-partners/sports-experts-and-nutritionists/nigel-mitchell>

Test space at Market Gallery in Huddersfield

<https://www.creativekirklees.com/temporary-contemporary/>

temporary-contemporary-happening-17-january-2019/ in preparation for exhibitions at

Events/Exhibitions at Xero, Kline and Coma (London), Hopscotch Reading Room (Berlin), Paper Gallery (Manchester), Sabine Knust (Munich), Zwinger Gallery (Berlin) and South London Gallery (London).

Research Aims & Objectives

Research Aims:

The research aims to:

- Investigate the claims of Carl Einstein's work for contemporary art production;
- Investigate his biography in relation to the political and cultural conditions of our current lived experience of neoliberalism as the contemporary phase of late capitalism.

Research Objectives:

Using practice-led methodologies to research the life and work of Carl Einstein, the project sets out to:

- Make new art that investigates through writing, material, process, action, and display, Einstein's notions of the Simultaneity and the Hallucinatory, Totality and the S/O (sub/objective) Function.
- Use practice based-research to contribute to a better understanding of the importance of Carl Einstein's work for contemporary art production in our lived experience of the contemporary phase of late capitalism.

Research Context

Using art practice to explore the work and life of the art theorist, art critic, contrarian, and political radical, Carl Einstein (1885 – 1940), the project began with research of Einstein’s biography, the gaps in his inventory and potentially contestable histories. Holmes’ interest in the potentialities that these gaps presented developed into writing, artworks, exhibitions and performance/reading events.

Einstein is a relatively sidelined figure in the various Anglophone histories of the development of the early 20th century, but in recent decades his life and work has been increasingly recognised as important and relevant to contemporary political and cultural conditions and significant for contemporary art. He was at the centre of some of the defining moments of art and politics between 1914 and 1940, wrote the first non-racist account of African sculpture in 1915, the most incisive critique of cubism when it was still new, and the first survey of art in the 20th century in 1925. These were marked by the contrary positions they mapped out in relation to contemporary interpretations of these subjects. He was a Dadaist writer, a key figure in the Spartacist uprisings in Berlin, and gave an oration at the memorial of Rosa Luxemburg. Exiled in Paris he co-edited and regularly contributed to the dissident surrealist journal *Documents* with Georges Bataille. Between 1936 and 39 he was a strategist and fighter for the anarchist-syndicalist *Durutti* Column in the Spanish Civil War, and in 1940 committed suicide rather than be caught by the Nazis. The contested and unreliable nature of Einstein’s biographical inventory, the future orientation of his thought and the turbulence of the period in which he lived, as an archetypal migrant moving constantly across borders until he was trapped at one, make Einstein’s work and life more relevant now than ever. Through employing practice-based methods, the research challenges and interrogates the existing research into the work of Carl Einstein found in the fields of Art History and Museum Studies/Curating.

The project is informed by new art history research including Sebastian Ziedler *Form as Revolt*, David Quigley *Carl Einstein: A Defence of the Real*, Charles Haxthausen and T.J.Clark. Other contexts include large scale museum exhibitions including *Neolithic Childhood: Art in a False Present circa 1930* at Haus der Kultur der Welt in Berlin¹, and *The Invention of the 20th Century: Carl Einstein and the Avant-garde* at Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid². The international symposium *Carl Einstein Revisited* at ZKM Karlsruhe³ attempted to relate the work of Einstein to the context of current art and literature. These substantial and important developments in Einstein studies are all art historical or museum/curation studies. Holmes’ research is the first practice-based artistic research that explicitly takes the work and biography of Einstein as its subject matter. The research was carried out over a period of eighteen months in collaboration with publishers, galleries and project spaces. The project uses original practice-based approaches to investigate the work and biography of Carl Einstein.

1. <https://www.hkw.de/en/1930>

2. <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/exhibitions/invention-20th-century-carl-einstein-and-avant-garde>

3. <https://zkm.de/en/event/2017/02/carl-einstein-re-visited>

Research Methods & Process



Monument to Carl Einstein (Huddersfield, 2019)

Through the project Holmes carried out material experimentation including using digital drawing tools, UV printing and design applications, laser cutting technologies, sheet steel working, powder coating and spraying techniques. Collaboration with nutritionists and sports scientists was involved, as well as working closely with art historians, artists, authors, and poets to realise a collection of new writing as a published book.

Developed from a new series of paintings based on his engagement with Einstein's writings, Holmes' methodology included an expanded painting practice (powder-coated steel and a customised bicycle), textual production including authoring fiction and commissioning and compiling work by invited artists and writers, and developing new performance works.

The initial series of paintings developed narrative through image construction, colour, and cropping which then directly influenced the writing of a short fiction titled *The Neolithic Deckchairs of Carl Einstein* published 2018 in Soanyway magazine online. The text focused on a road, Calle Einstein Gran Canaria, clearly named after Albert Einstein, and the writing and research of this piece led to a number of discoveries about the numerous cases of mistaken identity and elisions that characterize Carl Einstein's inventory. These formed an important aspect of the subsequent performance works and textual production involved in the project.

The exhibition *Monument to Carl Einstein* (Huddersfield, 2019) involved the production of a largescale painting measuring 360 x 180 cm made by laser cutting a sequence of digital drawings into 1.2mm thick steel sheets that were then powder coated, as well as two paintings utilising UV printing and a wall-based text work. These works were made as an investigation into expanding painting into fabrication processes with new technologies and skilled technicians.

These developments were further extended through the painted bicycle made in collaboration with a professional bike sprayer and powder coater and which included a cast bronze headbadge, combining painting methodology with industrial production techniques in bespoke creative objects. The process began using fibre tip pens to draw images of two African busts, a ceramic tear drop vase and an Aspidistra plant to scale on pieces of paper wrapped around the bicycle frame to determine colour, scale, and positioning. The base colour was a fade effect along the horizontal axis of the substrate/frame and colours were selected for the industrial spraying that matched those of the drawing.



The head badge was designed using a Wacom drawing tablet, subsequently developed with technicians to fabricate a mould and cast the badge in bronze.



The painting/bicycle, titled ***Still Life with Stoneware Tear Drop Vase, Two African heads, and Aspidistra Plant after a Painting Discovered in the Room of a Man Thought to be Carl Einstein in Maspalomas, Gran Canaria after his Death in 1972 (The New Aspidistra 1)*** was then used in the next stage of the project, a performance work titled ***The New Aspidistra (3,715Minutes/1,488.94 Kilometres/39,680 Calories)***, completed on 13/06/2019. This performance is central to the project as a whole, drawing together Holmes' research interests in Einstein's art theory, infrastructures and covert delivery systems with his performance and expanded painting practice. The work stems from Carl Einstein's (incomplete?) formulation of the 'subobjective' or S/O function and develops the notion of endurance cycling as an extreme embodied performance art and accelerated psycho-geography. To make the work, Holmes cycled from Emley Moor TV mast in Huddersfield on 8/06/2019 via Cambridge, Harwich, Hook van Holland, Leverkusen, Kassel and Dessau, arriving at The Berlin TV tower at Alexanderplatz on 13/06/19, riding the

bicycle/painting. On arrival in Berlin the performance culminated in an event celebrating the publication of the book, ***The Graveside Orations of Carl Einstein***. Selected artists and writers performed readings of their contributions to the book. (The full programme of this event is included as an appendix below.)

The book, conceived in April 2018 and published in May 2019, centers on the memorial for Rosa Luxemburg on 13 June 1919, at which Carl Einstein is said to have given an oration. There is no record of what Einstein said, how he said it, or what it addressed and at the time it was reported in the popular press as an oration by Albert Einstein, a misrecognition that would haunt them both and relates to this research project's concern with the contested and unreliable aspects of Einstein's biography. A call for submissions sketching out with a minimum of detail the original events was sent to seventy invited contributors based on potential relationships between this idea and their own previous work. Fifty were selected and Holmes collaborated with Sharon Kivland as co-editor of the book, published by Ma Bibliotheque. The collection assembles broad ranging texts from artists, film-makers, writers, poets, critics, philosophers, and art historians, each speculating on what Einstein might have delivered, each as likely or unlikely to be Einstein's as any other. Through the multiple substitutions of Carl Einstein—a practice Einstein himself pursued throughout his life—the book interrogates themes of masquerade, mistaken identities, of persons substituted after the event, of orations, speeches, and texts rewritten, speculated upon and redelivered, personal mythologies, mapping, and fiction found in the work and biography of Einstein. (The full list of contributors is included in the Project Outcomes section below.)

Research Outcomes & Dissemination

Text:	<p><i>The Neolithic Deckchairs of Carl Einstein</i> Published September 2018 in Soanyway magazine online, ISSN 2043-6408 https://www.soanywaymagazine.org/issue-one</p>
Exhibition:	<p><i>Monument to Carl Einstein</i> A solo exhibition of Holmes' artworks at Market Gallery, Temporary Contemporary, Queensgate Markets, Huddersfield, 10/01/19 – 26/01/19. The exhibition also included a performance reading event <i>Einstein- Luxemburg Spartacus at the Monument to Carl Einstein</i> on 17/01/2019 of commissioned writing and sonic works performed by Jorge Boehringer – <i>The Fibrous Body and The Fucks – Spontinuous</i>. https://www.creativekirklees.com/temporary-contemporary/dale-holmes-garry-clarkson-exhibition/</p>
Book:	<p><i>The Graveside Orations of Carl Einstein</i> Holmes, D & Kivland, S. MA Bibliotheque, 2019. ISBN 978-1-910055-60-1 The book includes commissioned contributions from Sean Ashton, Hannes Bajohr, Rowan Bailey, Sean Bonney, Uma Breakdown, Matthew Burbidge, Sonja Burbidge, Sophie Carapetian, Alison J. Carr, Declan Clarke, Kirsten Cooke, John Cunningham, Mark Curran, James Davies, Sam Dolbear, Kate Evans, Donal Fitzpatrick, Darryl Georgiou & Rebekah Tolley-Georgiou, Dale Holmes, Derek Horton, John Hyatt, Martin Jackson, Tom Jenks, Sacha Kahir, Sharon Kivland, Pil & Galia Kollektiv, John Z. Komurki, Mark Leahy, Rona Lorimer, Katharina Ludwig, Ed Luker, David Mabb, T.C. McCormack, Martina Mullaney, Nick Hadikwa Mwaluko, Benjamin Noys, Betsy Porritt, Bede Robinson, Benedict Seymour, Ohad Ben Shimon, Joshua Simon, Louis-George Schwartz, Zoë Skoulding, Spartakus, David Steans, Jeroen Van Dongen, Frank Wasser, Geoffrey Wildanger, Christian A. Wollin, Sarah Wood, Thomas Yeomans. https://mabibliotheque.cargo.site/Dale-Holmes-Sharon-Kivland-eds-THE-GRAVESIDE-ORATIONS-OF-CARL</p>

Artefact:	<p><i>Still Life with Stoneware Tear Drop Vase, Two African heads, and Aspidistra Plant after a Painting Discovered in the Room of a Man Thought to be Carl Einstein in Maspalomas, Gran Canaria after his Death in 1972 (The New Aspidistra 1)</i>, 2019. A painting/bicycle made by Holmes working in collaboration with a professional bike sprayer and powder coater and including a cast bronze headbadge.</p>
Performance:	<p><i>The New Aspidistra (3,715Minutes/1,488.94 Kilometres/39,680 Calories)</i>, 2019 Holmes cycled from the Emley Moor TV mast in Huddersfield on 8/06/2019 via Cambridge, Harwich, Hook van Holland, Leverkusen, Kassel and Dessau arriving at The Berlin TV tower at Alexanderplatz on 13/06/2019, riding the painting/bicycle described above.</p>
Performance Events:	<p><i>The Graveside Orations of Carl Einstein</i> South London Gallery, UK, 11/09/2019. This event included reading performances of texts from the book <i>The Graveside Orations of Carl Einstein</i>. https://www.southlondongallery.org/</p> <p><i>The Graveside Orations of Carl Einstein</i> South London Gallery, UK, 11/09/2019. This event will include reading performances of texts from the book <i>The Graveside Orations of Carl Einstein</i>. https://www.southlondongallery.org/</p>

Group Exhibition: ***This Land is Our Land***
Paper Gallery, Manchester, UK, 29/06/19 – 03/08/19.
For this group show Holmes exhibited documents and data gathered during the performance *The New Aspidistra* (3,715Minutes/1,488.94 Kilometres/39,680 Calories).
<https://paper-gallery.co.uk/this-land-is-our-land>

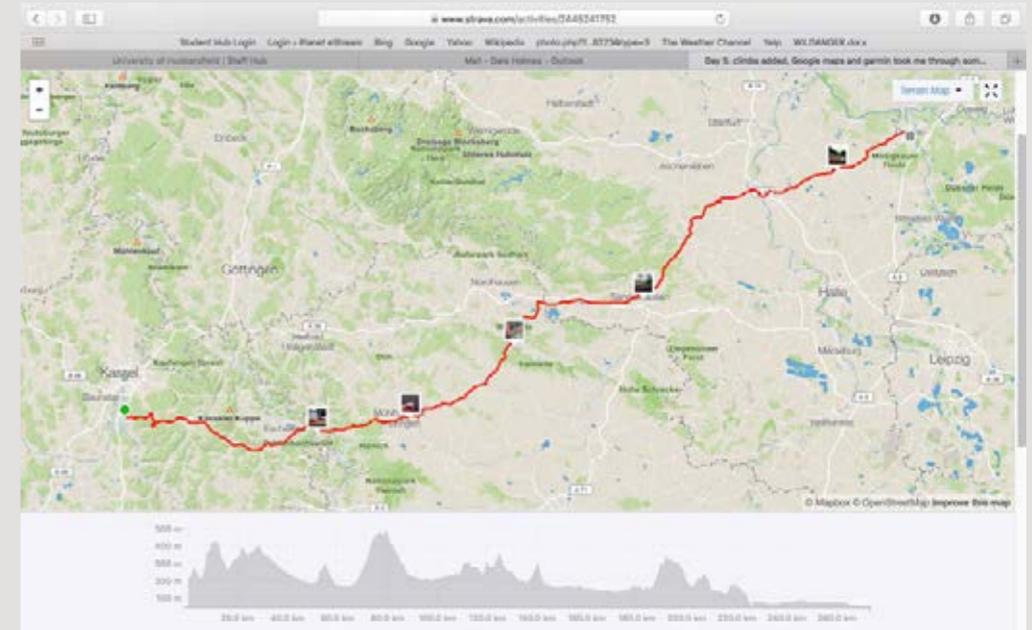
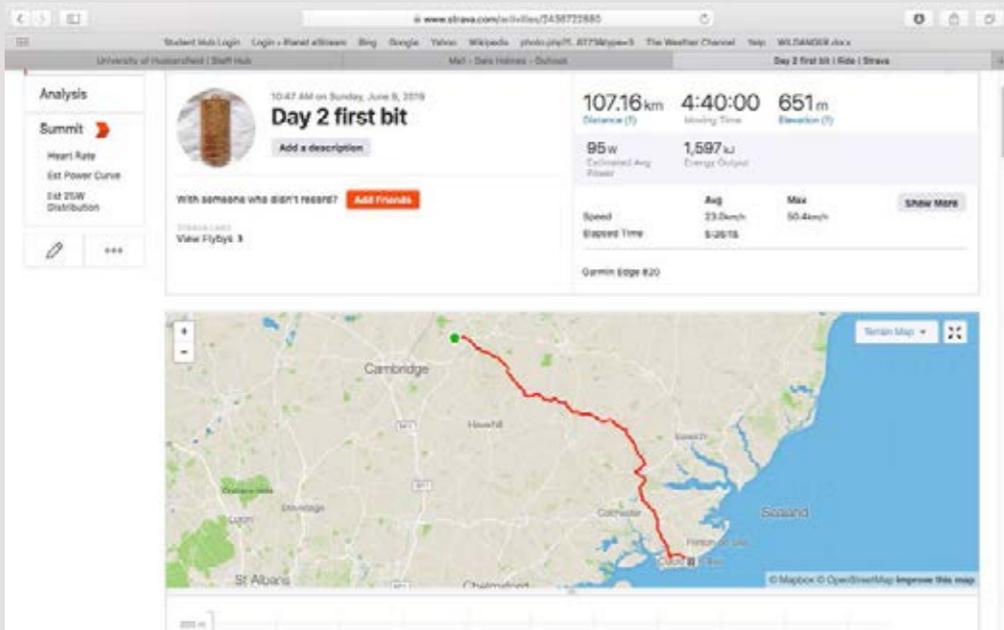
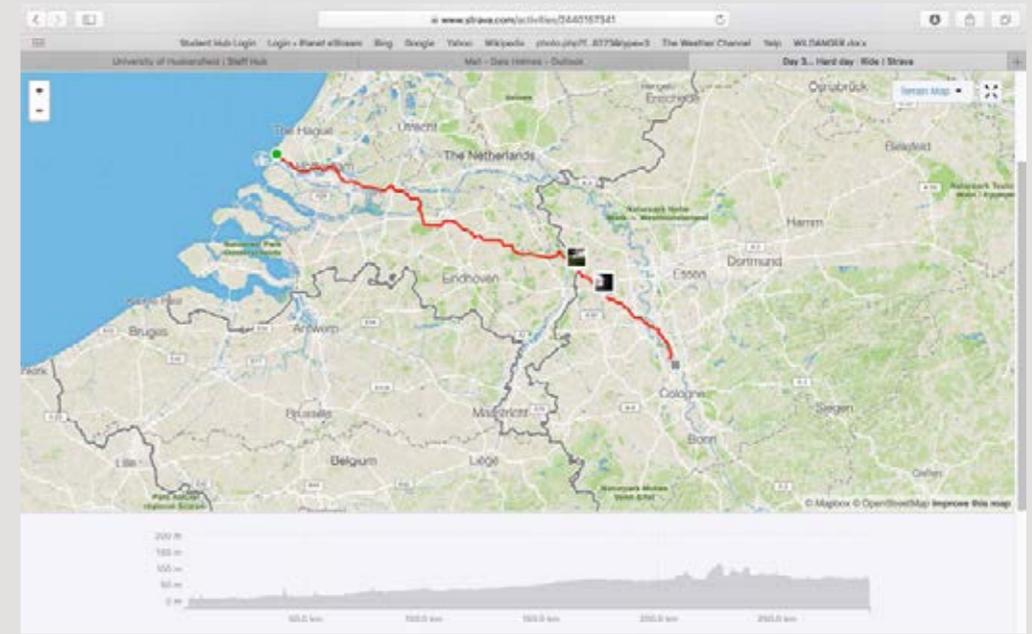
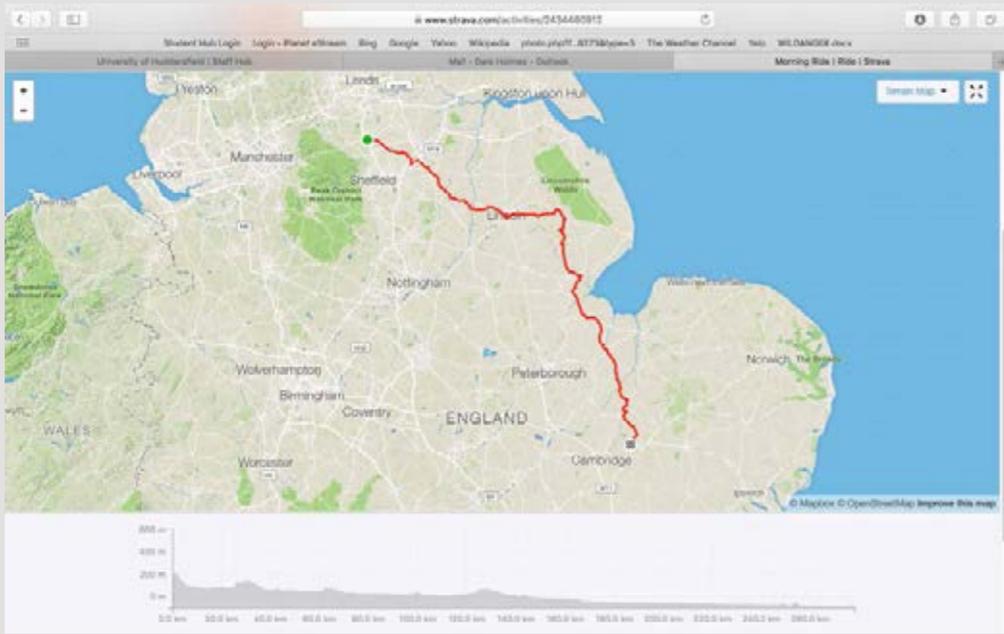
Group Exhibition: ***Intersections***
Market Gallery, Temporary Contemporary, Queensgate Markets Huddersfield, UK. For this group show Holmes exhibited documents and data gathered during the performance *The New Aspidistra* (3,715Minutes/1,488.94 Kilometres/39,680 Calories).
<https://www.creativekirklees.com/temporary-contemporary/intersection-group-artist-exhibition>

Solo Exhibition: ***The Stone that Crashed into the Kneecap was not Moving***
Xero, Kline and Coma, 258 Hackney Road London E2 7SJ.
For this solo exhibition Holmes made a new performance piece titled *LegShow* in which he shaved his legs interrupting this public presentation of a private act with three new pieces of creative writing. The work *STIFF* (Still Life with Stoneware Tear Drop Vase, Two African heads, and *Aspidistra Plant after a Painting Discovered in the Room of a Man Thought to be Carl Einstein in Maspalomas, Gran Canaria after his Death in 1972 (The New Aspidistra 1)*, 2019 also featured in the exhibition with four new digital paintings.
<http://www.xero-kline-coma.com/archive/DaleHolmes/DaleHolmes.html>

Group Exhibition: ***DARK LANTERN***
Knust Kunz, Gallery Editions, Ludwigstrasse 780539 Munich, Germany
T +49 (0)89 29160703
For this show curated by painter Paul Morrison, Holmes made a new painting that explored Carl Einstein's notion of 'mythic realism' and the still life genre.
<https://www.sabineknust.com/exhibitions/dark-lantern>

Group Exhibition: ***Die Zufunkt der SPD.***
Zwinger Galerie, Mansteinstrasse 5, D-10783 Berlin, 030-28598907
For this group show curated by Gunter Reski and Hans Jurgen Hafner, Holmes made a new digital painting which incorporated a quote from Carl Einstein, an image of cyclists legs and colour gradient. The show was reviewed in:
<https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/galerieausstellung-in-berlin-der-strahlemann-fuer-22-000-euro-1.4731646>

<http://www.artmagazine.cc/content110399.html>
www.zwinger-galerie.de



References

The Graveside Orations of Carl Einstein

Hopscotch Reading Room, Kurfurstenstr. 14 (im hof) 10785 Berlin, Germany, 13/06/2019.

Programme contents:

Introduction by Dale Holmes
Geoffrey Wildanger, Sonja Burbidge (read by Irina Gheorghe),
Hannes Bajohr (read by Donal Fitzpatrick), Betsy Porritt

II.

Sean Bonney & Sacha Kahir, Kirsten Cooke, Declan Clarke,
John Z. Komurki (read by Sean Smuda)

III.

Christian A. Wollin, Ed Luker, Matthew Burbidge,
Katharina Ludwig, Zoë Skoulding

IV.

Sacha Kahir, Nick Hadikwa Mwaluko (extract, read by
Sharon Kivland), Sharon Kivland, Spartakus

The event ended with a performance by the artist Susan Phillipsz

Output Type:

Solo exhibition, original artistic works,
performance, creative body of enquiry,
edited book, contribution to collaborative
group exhibitions