

Portrait of a Library | Doreen Kennedy



## PORTRAIT OF A LIBRARY

I have been visiting local libraries since childhood. I am fascinated by the idea that you can borrow books for free and that these books will pass through many hands before reaching me. Each book with its personal history, documented by the date stamps in the inside cover, representing a new reader with every new date. Looking at the dates, I would wonder about the other people who had read the book. Did they finish it, or perhaps just read a few pages and lost interest? Sometimes a clue about previous readers would be left in the form of a bookmark; a receipt from a supermarket, a postcard from a sunny location, or a scrap of paper torn from a notebook. Recent discoveries of routing slips, suggested books ordered from other library branches and made me consider the motivations of the people who sought these specific titles.

During July 2010, I approached the public library in Dalkey, Co. Dublin with the intention of beginning a photographic art project. My idea was to visit the library a number of times to document its contents. As the library would be closed for cleaning on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, it was agreed that this would be a good time for me to be there. My visits began in August when I started the work of photographing the books and other aspects of the library space. Across several visits I made over a thousand photographs.

The resulting images have become a series of photomontage grids, diptychs and single image photographs of book details and the library interior. The collection of photographs contained in the 'Portrait of a Library' project documents the contents of a library. Its history of borrowing is marked by their beautiful worn book covers, broken spines, creased pages and intriguing date stamps.

Doreen Kennedy  
2011





Numbers 824, 2011, Giclee print, 30cm x 20cm

## CHAOS IN ORDER

A reader is much more than a scanning device. Regardless of media, the discourse between reader and written word is an emotional one. Should a writer have skill, and some luck, their intended language may bubble up amongst the ordered, graphic contrasts of any body of text. Yet each reader will decipher that emotional code uniquely.

For me, the joy of the library is the chaos that lurks entwined within and around the Dewey decimal system. Yes, we appreciate - may even revere - the diligence of the librarians and the system they instigate and tend. Within lurks the chaos of creativity - the intangible music born of all those post-it notes, scraps, scribbles, snipped photos, overheard conversations, implications, histories, obsessions and myriad other sources which inspire and deflect the author from the quotidian specific into the freeflowing synaptics of imagination.

As readers, we soak our way through the library like fog through a forest. Searching out a specific book may turn up a blank - yet that same corner holds a title that draws us in - who knows why? Turning away from the shelves a word, colour or image tempts our hand to a well-worn volume of which we have never heard, until that moment.

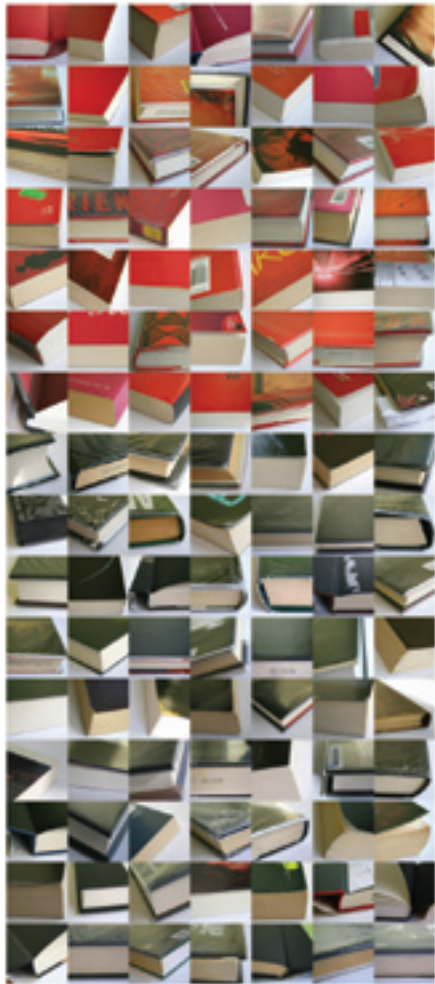
We fizz and pop, like the ideas and inspirations contained in the books that surround us. As we journey through our own stories, we discover milestones where we read - the most valuable where we never planned to look.

Padhraig Nolan  
2011

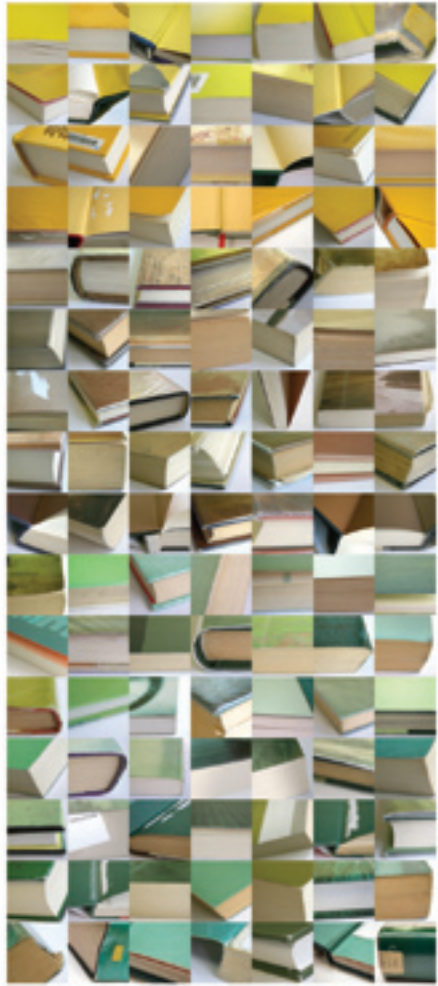
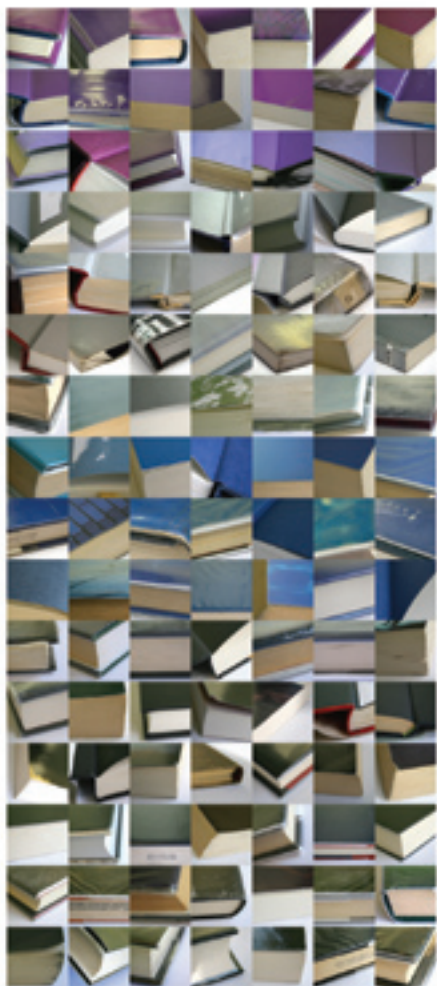
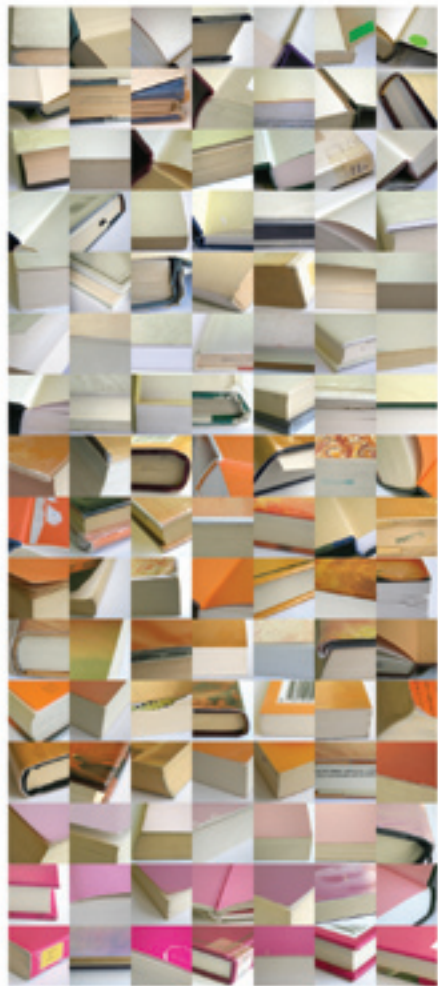


Diptych 1, 2011, Giclée print, 40cm x 30cm





Book Grids 1 - 6, 2011, Giclee prints, 39.5cm x 84cm each





Díptych 3, 2011, Giclee print, 40cm x 30cm

Diptych 4, 2011, Giclee print, 40cm x 30cm







Doreen Kennedy is an Irish artist based in Dublin. She works with lens based media including photography, photo based installations and photomontages. She has exhibited her work in solo and group exhibitions in Ireland and internationally.

She was awarded a dlr County Council Arts Act Grant in 2010 and shortlisted for the inaugural Alliance Française Photography Award in 2011.

[www.doreenkennedy.com](http://www.doreenkennedy.com)  
email: [agent@doreenkennedy.com](mailto:agent@doreenkennedy.com)

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Padhraig Nolan is a writer and artist, originally from Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford. He now lives near Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin and can be found online at [www.padhraignolan.com](http://www.padhraignolan.com)

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Three hundred copies of this publication have been printed. This is number

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