Ponte City Book Towers
User Manual



Installation view of the *Ponte City Book Towers* in the exhibition *1,2,3* at A4 Arts Foundation, 2026.

Patrick Waterhouse, Mikhael Subotzky
Ponte City Book Towers
2026

Stainless and galvanised steel, castors, perspex lightboxes, honeycomb board storage boxes, printed vinyl, printed magnetic sheets, printed plywood, restored and reproduced print ephemera
201 x 81 x 50 cm each

Artwork © Mikhael Subotzky, Patrick Waterhouse
Produced by A4 Arts Foundation.

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Introduction

The four *Ponte City Book Towers* contain bookmaking ephemera: book dummies, archives of process material towards bookmaking, and associated printed matter from Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse's engagement with Ponte City – the 54-storey apartment building that dominates Johannesburg's skyline – since 2006.

These were produced by A4 Arts Foundation in collaboration with the artists. Across the four-years of their making, the artists would visit the foundation's curatorial studio in District Six, Cape Town, for residencies, workshops, and prototyping sessions.

Each Book Tower is structured as a cabinet on one side and a lightbox on the other.

The cabinets are filled with stackable boxes printed with the artists' photographs from the project.

The boxes can interact with one another, building 'puzzles' or scenes.

They contain magnetic 'props' and print materials corresponding to an era of bookmaking from the *Ponte City* project.

These items are intended for installation, or as resources for workshops and engagement.

Brief Description of Each Tower

Tower A:
The Book to Begin

Relates to the period 2008–2012 and contains notebooks, dummies and prototypes of the artists' earliest attempts at editing the Ponte photographs and associated printed-matter debris into a book.









Photographs looking out the windows of residents' apartments in Ponte City.

Brief Description of Each Tower

Tower B:
The Book That Never Was

The second Book Tower contains the attempts towards a book that Waterhouse and Subotzky conceived of between 2012–2013 that was too unwieldy, ambitious, and complicated to ever publish. However, in being unrealisable, it did lay the foundation for the book that would be published, *Ponte City* (2014), and that is the subject of the third tower.









Photographs of the front doors of residents' apartments in Ponte City.

Brief Description of Each Tower

Tower C:
The Book That Became a Box

This Tower holds the story of making of the artists' landmark publication *Ponte City* (2014). A workable version of the artists' ambitions, *Ponte City* (2014) is a box containing a book and seventeen booklets. These seventeen small booklets feature commissioned texts or visual essays, compiled by Ivan Vladislavić, who edited the project, and the artists. Some of the booklets' authors took an imaginative route through the content, writing fiction or narrative responses. The artists and editor assembled these booklets into a timeline, with the cover image on each booklet corresponding to a photograph in the main book.









Photographs of the TVs belonging to residents in Ponte City.

Brief Description of Each Tower

Tower D:
The Box That Becomes a Book

This emergent Tower relates to a more recent period when the artists found themselves once again en route to bookmaking, anticipating the publication by Steidl of *Ponte City Revisited: 54 Storeys.* The development of this second book, *Ponte City Revisited* coincided with the acquisition of the archive of the touring *Ponte City* exhibition by SFMOMA in 2018. At the time of writing this manual, *Ponte City Revisited* is not yet published. The tower, The Box That Becomes a Book, contains the matter towards publication.









Photographs looking through the internal core of the building.

Handling

The four structures are designed to be movable and interactive, but should always be handled with care.

- **Moving the structures:** Each structure is fitted with four castors and can be moved easily. Move the structures slowly and with control, particularly when they contain boxes and archival material.

- **Lighting:** The integrated lightboxes and shelf lighting require power. Each structure must be connected to a power source and switched on using the switch located at the base of the structure.

- **Boxes and contents:** Some boxes (TDB2 and TDB3) contain printed plywood blocks (props), reproduced archival material, or original archival material. None of the boxes is excessively heavy; however, they should be pulled out carefully and supported during removal.

- **Box construction and environmental conditions:** The boxes are made from sturdy honeycomb board and covered with vinyl. Honeycomb board was selected for its combination of durability and light weight; however, it may react to rapid changes in environmental moisture. Following transport, we recommend allowing the work to acclimatise for approximately 24 hours before it is fully unwrapped. Silica gel bags may be placed inside the boxes to provide additional protection against moisture. As a general guideline, we recommend a stable, relatively dry and air-conditioned environment of approximately **21–23°C and 30–50% relative humidity**, away from direct sunlight. As the boxes are functional elements intended to be handled and used, some degree of wear over time is inevitable.

- **Archival content:** Some boxes contain archival material stored in paper boxes. When not in use, these materials should be returned to their respective boxes. The accompanying guide includes a packing system indicating where each book or item belongs, making it straightforward to return the contents to their correct locations after sessions or exhibitions.

- **Shelves:** Each shelf consists of a top section adhered to the lower section of the shelf. Should access to the electrical wiring be required for maintenance or repair, the top section can be removed by an art handler.

- **Internal protection:** Boxes containing objects or archival material are fitted with custom-cut foam inserts designed to hold their contents securely and prevent movement during transport. These foam inserts are not archival materials and are intended primarily to protect the contents while the artwork is in transit. Once the work is in storage or on display, the foam inserts may be removed.

- **Magnetic sheets:** The printed magnetic sheets positioned at the back of each shelving bay can be easily peeled away from the structure and placed on other suitable magnetic surfaces. Handle them carefully to avoid bending, creasing, or damaging the printed surfaces.

- **Identification:** Archival items, boxes, and magnetic sheets are labelled according to the artwork's inventory and coding system. These labels should remain attached and should be used to ensure that all elements are returned to their correct locations after handling.

Item Coding & Naming

The artwork consists of four structures, referred to as **Tower A, Tower B, Tower C and Tower D**. The structures are called towers in reference to Ponte City, the apartment tower around which the project is centred. Each tower can be identified by the lightbox artworks installed within it: **Tower A** features images of views from Ponte; **Tower B** features images of the front doors of apartments in Ponte; **Tower C** features images of television sets photographed inside apartments in Ponte; and **Tower D** features images of windows looking into the internal core of the building.

Each tower is divided vertically into levels, numbered from the bottom upwards, much like the floors of a building. Tower A has five levels, while Towers B, C and D each have four.

The towers contain **17 boxes** in total, as well as **two magnetic sheets attached to the back of each level**, making **34 magnetic sheets** altogether. Some of the boxes are used to store **archival materials** and printed plywood blocks, referred to as **props**, which are used for interaction and engagement with the artwork.

All of these movable elements of the work have code names. The coding system identifies where each component belongs within the towers and, where relevant, the box in which it should be stored.

Tower names are abbreviated as **TA, TB, TC and TD**, while levels are identified as **L1, L2, L3, L4 and L5**.

Boxes are identified with a **B**, followed by a number corresponding to the level on which they are housed. For example, **TAB1** identifies a box stored on the bottom shelf of Tower A, while **TCB3** identifies a box stored on the third shelf of Tower C.

Magnetic sheets are identified with a **P**. As two magnetic sheets are stored at each level, their codes specify both the level number and whether the sheet is **P1 or P2**. For example, **TAL1-P1** identifies a magnetic sheet belonging to the back of the bottom shelving bay of Tower A. **P1 is always placed on top of P2**, meaning TAL1-P1 sits directly over TAL1-P2.

Props are numbered sequentially from **1 onwards**. Their codes do not indicate a tower or level. Their correct placement is specified in the **Prop List**, as all props are stored in either **TDB2 or TDB3 (**Box 2 or Box 3 in Tower D).

Archival materials retain the original inventory numbers assigned to them by the artists. Their placement is identified across both the **Archive List**, which specifies the box in which each archival item is stored, and the **Box List**, which references the archival contents of each box.

Boxes

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Contents
	TAB1	Collage combining landscape, archival and architectural views of Ponte City and its surroundings, an exterior view with the Johannesburg skyline and animal-print textile pattern, and two young residents beside a window inside a Ponte City apartment.	32.5 x 72 x 37.5 cm	Digital print on vinyl, honeycomb board box	Tower A, Level 1	
	TAB2	Collage combining a landscape view around Ponte City, an archival photograph of the tower, views of its concrete architecture, and a resident inside an apartment, with the side panels extending the composition through an archival architectural drawing and a domestic still life of clothing hanging beside an apartment window.	32.5 x 72 x 37.5 cm	Digital print on vinyl, honeycomb board box	Tower A, Level 2	Archival items 0673-2 and 0673-8
	TAB3	Collage combining exterior views of Ponte City and details of its concrete architecture with intimate scenes of domestic life inside the tower, including a woman using a mobile phone beside an apartment window and a woman bathing a child. The side panels extend the composition with a view of workers amid rubble within the building and another domestic interior overlooking Johannesburg.	32.5 x 72 x 37.5 cm	Digital print on vinyl, honeycomb board box	Tower A, Level 3	Archival item 3280
	TAB4	Collage combining exterior views and concrete architectural details of Ponte City with a digitally manipulated image that transforms the tower into a mobile phone advertisement, and a domestic view from an apartment window displaying X-ray images against the Johannesburg skyline. The side panels extend the composition with workers seated amid rubble inside the building and a digitally manipulated image combining Ponte City, protea flowers, two figures and the phrase “LIVE YOUR LIFE.”	32.5 x 72 x 37.5 cm	Digital print on vinyl, honeycomb board box	Tower A, Level 4	Archival items 1552, 3380 and 3381
	TAB5	Collage combining exterior views of Ponte City at different moments of its commercial branding, including Vodacom and Coca-Cola signage, with details of the building’s concrete architecture and a resident looking out from an apartment across Johannesburg. The side panels extend the composition with an archival architectural drawing of the tower’s internal structure and a domestic scene showing a resident silhouetted against an apartment window.	32.5 x 72 x 37.5 cm	Digital print on vinyl, honeycomb board box	Tower A, Level 5	Archival item 0362

Boxes

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Contents
	TBB1	Collage combining traces of everyday life with views and architectural details of Ponte City: discarded sandals on grass, an exterior view of the tower with its Coca-Cola and Vodacom signage, a close-up of the curved concrete façade and windows, and the numbered surface of an apartment door. The side panels extend the composition between the building's construction and domestic life, pairing an archival photograph of a worker on the construction site with a quiet interior detail of an apartment window and curtain.	32.5 x 72 x 37.5 cm	Digital print on vinyl, honeycomb board box	Tower B, Level 1	Power cables, lightbox remote controls, adapters
	TBB2	Collage combining contemporary life around Ponte City with imagery of migration, domestic life and the building's architectural history: a figure standing in an open grassy landscape, an advertisement for passenger and freight transport between the DRC and South Africa, a close-up of Ponte's curved concrete façade and windows, and a resident seen through the partially opened door of an apartment. The side panels extend these associations outward, pairing a dancing couple against a brightly illuminated cityscape with an archival construction-era view from Ponte towards the Hillbrow Tower.	51 x 72 x 37.5 cm	Digital print on vinyl, honeycomb board box	Tower B, Level 2	
	TBB3	Collage bringing together the social, architectural and migratory histories surrounding Ponte City: a Johannesburg skyline partly obscured by a surface covered in handwritten names and markings, a close-up of the tower's repeating curved façade and windows, and a resident standing in an apartment doorway. The side panels extend these themes through a worn chart of African national flags and political leaders, and a photograph of workers standing amid rubble during the clearing and redevelopment of Ponte's interior core.	51 x 72 x 37.5 cm	Digital print on vinyl, honeycomb board box	Tower B, Level 3	
	TBB4	Collage combining domestic and architectural views of Ponte City: an interior scene showing residents on a scanned photograph with one figure cropped out, a close-up of the tower's repeating curved façade and windows, and a resident photographed behind a decorative security gate. The side panels contrast two moments in the building's history, pairing a promotional image advertising the renewed "Ponte City" with a photograph of workers standing among rubble inside Ponte's interior core during its clearing and redevelopment.	32.5 x 72 x 37.5 cm	Digital print on vinyl, honeycomb board box	Tower B, Level 4	Archival items 3281, 1549 and 3433

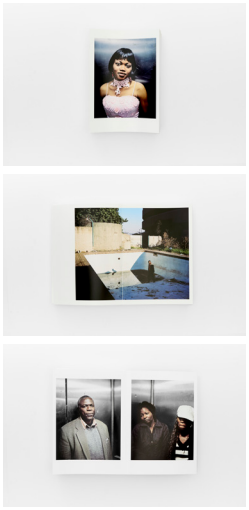
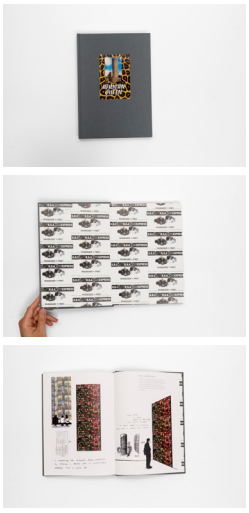
Boxes

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Contents
	TCB1	Collage combining domestic life, architectural detail and popular media around Ponte City: praying figures dressed in white and red outdoors, a family gathered in a living room, a close-up of the tower's curved concrete façade and windows, and a still from a televised film or programme depicting an armed confrontation. The side panels extend the architectural history of the building, pairing an archival city view of Ponte and its surrounding high-rises with a reproduced architectural drawing showing elevations of the tower and other Johannesburg structures.	32.5 x 72 x 37.5 cm	Digital print on vinyl, honeycomb board box	Tower C, Level 1	
	TCB2	Collage combining religious and domestic scenes, architectural detail and popular media around Ponte City: two men dressed in white ceremonial clothing outdoors, an inverted view of a domestic interior with residents, a close-up of the tower's curved concrete façade and windows, and a television still displaying the "OJ Productions" logo. The side panels extend the architectural imagery, pairing an archival comparative elevation drawing showing Ponte alongside other Johannesburg high-rises with a photograph of Ponte viewed from below against a blue sky, framed by a bold leopard print border.	51 x 72 x 37.5 cm	Digital print on vinyl, honeycomb board box	Tower C, Level 2	
	TCB3	Collage combining architectural, documentary and archival imagery relating to Ponte City and Johannesburg: a cityscape dominated by the Hillbrow Tower layered with an illustrated domestic interior; a view looking up across Ponte's curved inner façade; and a photograph of Mikhael Subotzky visible photographing himself in a mirror while another person works in the room behind him. The side panels extend the archival context, pairing an architectural drawing comparing the heights of Johannesburg landmarks, including Hillbrow Tower and the Brixton Tower, with a worn printed chart of African political leaders and national flags.	51 x 72 x 37.5 cm	Digital print on vinyl, honeycomb board box	Tower C, Level 3	
	TCB4	Collage combining views of Ponte City's architecture with scenes of domestic and social life inside the building. The main wrap juxtaposes an overcast sky, a lively gathering in an apartment, a view looking upward across the repeating curved inner façade, and a monochrome television image of a seated figure. The side panels pair an archival architectural floor plan showing the arrangement of studio and bachelor apartments around Ponte's circular core with a domestic portrait of a woman and young girl standing beside a window inside an apartment.	32.5 x 72 x 37.5 cm	Digital print on vinyl, honeycomb board box	Tower C, Level 4	Archival items 1546, 1547, 3436 and 3435

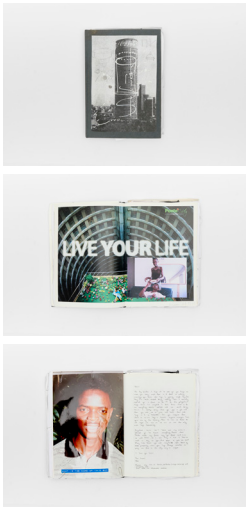
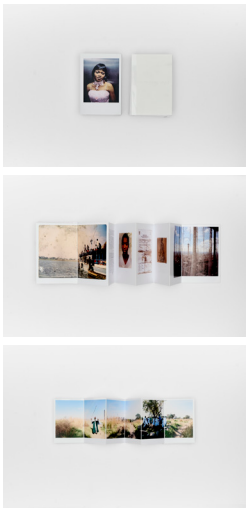
Boxes

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Contents
	TDB1	Collage combining images of Ponte City's architecture and surrounding grounds with fragments of domestic and interior scenes. The main wrap includes discarded material lying in grass, a photograph of a shirtless man reclining indoors and reading a newspaper, an oblique view across the building's repeating concrete façade and windows, and a dark image of a small cat moving through an interior space. The side panels pair an archival architectural floor plan showing one-bedroom, two-bedroom and studio apartments arranged along Ponte's curved plan with a fragment of the words "AFRICAN QUEEN" in large white lettering over a yellow, black and orange leopard-print pattern.	38.5 x 72 x 37.5 cm	Digital print on vinyl, honeycomb board box	Tower D, Level 1	Archival item 3273
	TDB2	Collage combining exterior and interior views of Ponte City with details of its surrounding landscape. The main wrap includes dense grass with the surrounding city visible beyond, a full-height exterior view of Ponte's cylindrical tower, an oblique view across the repeating concrete façade and windows of the inner core, and a view through apartment windows showing figures inside the building. The side panels continue the paired imagery established across the boxes: an archival architectural floor plan showing one-bedroom apartments arranged along Ponte's curved plan, and the complementary fragment of the words "AFRICAN QUEEN" in large white lettering over a yellow, black and orange leopard-print pattern.	38.5 x 72 x 37.5 cm	Digital print on vinyl, honeycomb board box	Tower D, Level 2	Props
	TDB3	Collage combining Ponte City's architecture with archival material relating to the building and its development. The main wrap includes a view across the surrounding urban landscape beneath an overcast sky, an archival newspaper clipping about circular apartment blocks dated 19 August 1972, an oblique view across the repeating concrete façade and windows of Ponte's inner core, and a photograph of a person seen through an open window. The side panels consist of architectural drawings: a partial floor plan for floors 11–40 showing the lifts and the arrangement of studio and two-bedroom apartments along Ponte's curved plan, and a technical elevation/detail drawing featuring a spiral staircase within the building.	38.5 x 72 x 37.5 cm	Digital print on vinyl, honeycomb board box	Tower D, Level 3	Props
	TDB4	Collage combining photographic, architectural and found printed material relating to Ponte City. The main wrap includes an overcast sky; a stylised architectural rendering of Ponte's cylindrical form, shown horizontally against a black ground; a black-and-white oblique photograph of the repeating concrete façade and windows of the inner core; and a dimly lit view through a gridded window or glazed partition, with partial human figures visible beyond. One side panel reproduces a worn printed chart of African heads of state, pairing portraits with national flags and country names. The other shows workers standing amid rubble and discarded material within the concrete interior of the building.	51 x 72 x 37.5 cm	Digital print on vinyl, honeycomb board box	Tower D, Level 4	

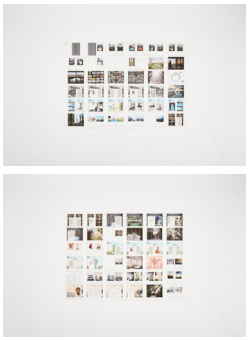
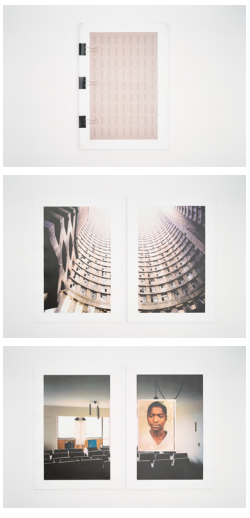
Archival Content

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	1552	This reproduction is based on a book dummy created in 2011 by Mikhael Subotzky and used during presentations to curators and institutions in the United States and Europe.	20 W x 28.3 H x 8 H cm (book); 25 W x 34.5 H x 12.7 D cm (box)	Inkjet prints on Canon matte photographic paper, archival tape hinges, handmade archival board box	TAB4	
	0673-2	Original hardbound book dummy from 2009 constructed with cloth-covered book board and tipped-in pages, housed in an archival board box.	21.5 x 30.5 cm	Printed by HP Indigo, professionally cloth-bound with tipped-in c-prints	TAB2	ORIGINAL - Part of The Book to Begin cluster of archival material, stored in Tower A.
	0362	Reproduction of a concertina-folded book dummy from 2009, exhibited at the Walther Collection and Goodman Gallery. Hand-bound with archival tape hinges, and housed in an archival board box. The dummy reflects an early exhibition presentation of Ponte City and demonstrates how the publication was adapted as a spatial and display object within gallery contexts.	24 x 30 x 15 cm (book, folded); 31 x 33 x 15 (box)	Inkjet prints with archival ink on True Fibre Matt paper, archival tape hinges, handmade archival board box	TAB5	

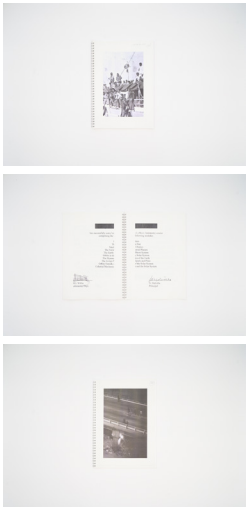
Archival Content

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	3280	Reproduction of an archival scrapbook created by Patrick Waterhouse, containing sketches, notes, photographic references, and pasted source material, housed in an archival board box. For this reproduction, each inserted element was individually digitised, archived, and manually reassembled by the team at A4 Arts Foundation, preserving the material character and working methods evident in the original object.	21.5 x 30.5 x 6 cm; 26 x 37 x 9 cm (box)	Hardbound book with tipped-in photographs and handwritten notes in pencil, ink and typex, handmade archival board box	TAB3	
	3380 and 3381	Laser-printed, hand-cut, and hand-bound concertina-folded book dummy, produced in two separate sections and housed in an archival board box. This reproduction preserves the sequencing and narrative structure explored through an early folded dummy format from 2009.	8.5 W x 12.5 H x 4 D cm (books, each); 16 W x 21.5 H x 8.5 D cm (box)	Inkjet prints on Canon matte photographic paper, archival tape hinges, handmade archival board box	TAB4	
	0673-8	Reproduction of an archival scrapbook used on site at Ponte City during 2010 and 2011, housed in an archival board box. The scrapbook contains handwritten notes, ideas, contact details, observations, and project references accumulated by the artists while working within the building. It provides insight into the research and development process that informed the Ponte City project.	22 W x 30.5 H x 4 D cm (book); 25.5 W x 33.2 H x 5 D cm (box)	Hardbound book, handmade archival board box	TAB2	

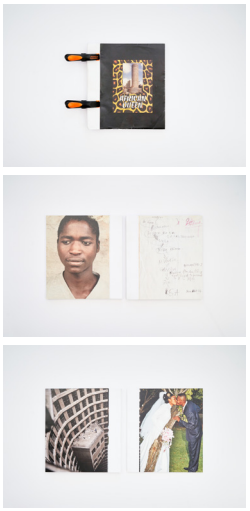
Archival Content

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	3281	Restored original book dummy representing a publication proposal developed for Steidl in 2013. The dummy explores the concept of incorporating the Ponte City booklets as bound-in inserts within a larger-format publication. The original dummy was handmade by Patrick Waterhouse and Ramon Pez. Over time, the binding structure deteriorated, and sections became detached through handling and age. Conservation, restoration, and re-binding were undertaken in Cape Town in 2026 to stabilise the object while preserving its original material character.	22 x 34.5 x 2 cm (book); 26 x 41 x 8.5 cm (box)	Restored hand-bound book, mylar cover, handmade archival board box	TBB4	RESTORED ORIGINAL - Part of The Book That Never Was cluster of archival material, stored in Tower A.
	1549	Photocopied reproductions of early layout schemes developed during the design process of Ponte City in 2013. These working documents were used by the artists in Mikhael Subotzky's Johannesburg studio to test image sequences, editorial structures, and design approaches.	29.7 W x 42 H cm (sheet size)	Colour photocopy, plastic sleeve	TBB4	
	3433	Reproduction of an uncropped book dummy produced from low-resolution print files dating from approximately 2013. The pages are assembled using bull clips, reflecting the provisional and experimental nature of the original mock-up.	29.7 W x 42 H x 1.5 D cm (book)	Colour digital print, bull clips	TBB4	

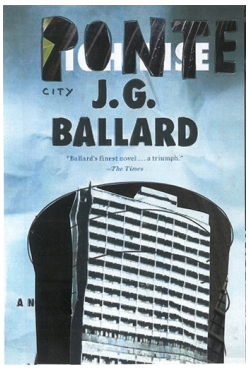
Archival Content

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	3436	Reproductions of the booklets originally issued as part of the Ponte City publication by Steidl. This archival set combines two distinct forms of material associated with the development of the publication. Four of the booklets (I, VII, XII and XIV) are exact reproductions of the original printed booklets and contain only photographic content, without essays or accompanying texts. The remaining items comprise ring-bound printouts of scanned editorial working documents annotated by Ivan Vladislavić during his collaboration with Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse. These annotated notebook-like versions contain editorial comments, revisions, notes, and reflections relating to the development of the publications' content. Together, the reproductions document both the final published form of the booklet series and the editorial process that shaped it.	21 W x 29.7 H x approx 0.5 D cm (ring-bound booklets, each); 15.5 W x 24 H x approx 0.5 D cm (booklet reproductions, each); 27 W x 35.5 H x 8.5 D cm (box)	Ring-bound and stapled booklets, handmade archival board box	TCB4	
	3435	Printed by Steidl Press as a dummy of the main book and mock-bound for display at Le Bal. The book was exhibited and handled in this context, and visible signs of wear are present as a result.	21.5 x 34.5 x 2.3 cm (book); 24.5 x 39 x 8 cm (box)	Bound book, handmade archival box	TCB1	ORIGINAL - Part of The Book that Became a Box cluster of archival material, housed in Tower C.
	1547	Unbound lithographic print proofs from the Ponte book, printed by Steidl in December 2013 and hand-folded. The proofs were approved by Mikhael Subotzky in red ink while he was at Steidl. Minor signs of handling are visible. Each edition contains selected parts of the book in this proof form.	21.5 x 34 cm (prints); 24.5 x 39 x 8 cm (box)	Lithographic print proofs	TCB1	ORIGINAL - Part of The Book that Became a Box cluster of archival material, housed in Tower C.

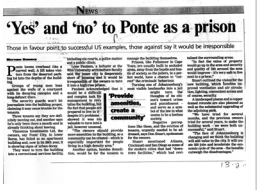
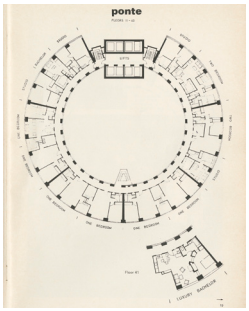
Archival Content

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	1546	Laser-printed, unbound and hand-folded print proofs, made by Bernard at Steidl on 20 December 2013. Minor signs of handling are visible. Each edition contains selected parts of the book in this proof form.	21.5 x 34 cm (prints); 24.5 x 39 x 8 cm (box)	Laser-printed print proofs	TCB1	ORIGINAL - Part of The Book that Became a Box cluster of archival material, housed in Tower C.
	3273	Reproduction of an unbound book dummy produced in 2018 for the development of a revised second edition of Ponte City. The dummy was used by Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse to review the layout, sequencing, and editorial structure of an expanded edition of the publication. This revised version aims to integrate the contents of the original seventeen accompanying booklets into a single unified volume. The reproduction preserves a key stage in the evolution of Ponte City, documenting the transition from the original boxed publication format towards a consolidated book.	25.8 W x 27.5 H x 25.7 D cm (book); 33.5 W x 34.3 H x 8.7 D cm (box)	Laser-printed, unbound, heavy-duty plastic clips, archival box	TDB1	

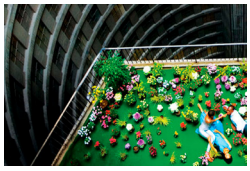
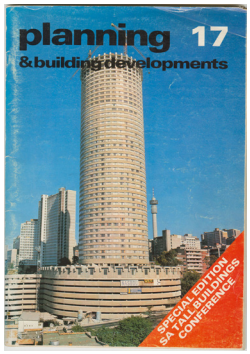
Props

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	1		105 x 221 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB3	
	2		70 x 73 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	3		70 x 69 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	4		110 x 90 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	5		110 x 90 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	6		180 x 121 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	

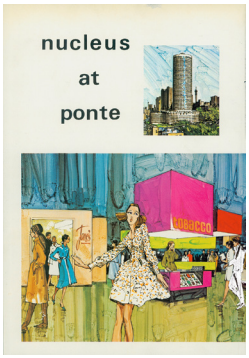
Props

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	7		22 x 16.5 x 10 cm	Digital print on plywood	TDB1	
 'Yes' and 'no' to Ponte as a prison	8		210 x 265 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB3	
	9		110 x 197 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	10		210 x 154 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
 PONTE-NUCLEUS IS . . . THE TALLEST BUILDING IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE	11		210 x 265 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB3	
 ponte	12		210 x 148 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
 LIVE YO	13		288 x 412 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB3	

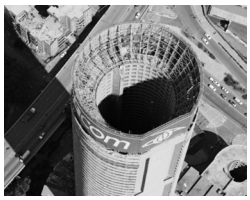
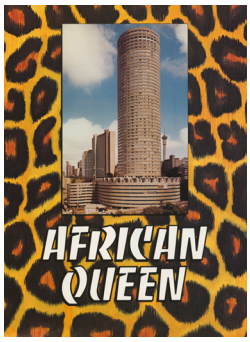
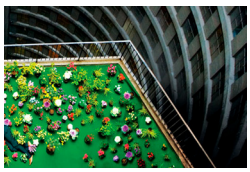
Props

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	14		110 x 90 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	15		110 x 90 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	16		288 x 412 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB3	
	17		160 x 112 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	18		180 x 112 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	

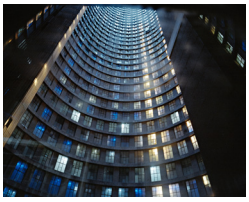
Props

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	19		160 x 114 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	20		130 x 94 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	21		65 x 83 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	22		65 x 83 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	23		65 x 83 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	24		65 x 83 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	

Props

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	25		65 x 83 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	26		130 x 89 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	27		288 x 412 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB3	
	28		110 x 90 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	29		110 x 90 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	30		288 x 412 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB3	

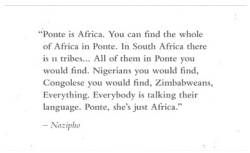
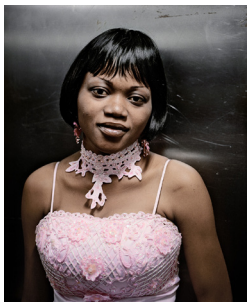
Props

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	31		160 x 122 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	32		353 x 222 mm (closed) 353 x 442 mm (open)	Double-sided digital print on plywood (hinged)	TDB2	
	33		65 x 83 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	34		280 x 352 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB3	
	35		195 x 127 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	36		70 x 107 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	

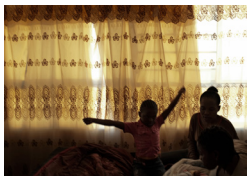
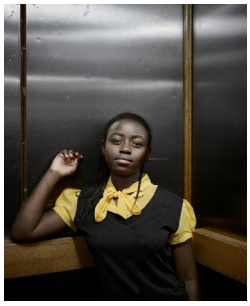
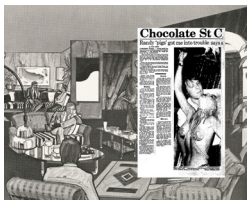
Props

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	37		120 x 75 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	38		210 x 264 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB3	
	39		110 x 90 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	40		110 x 90 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	41		110 x 153 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	

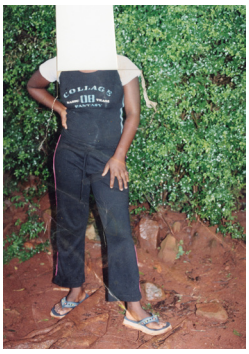
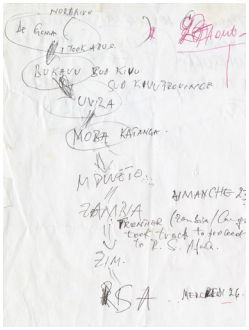
Props

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	42		130 x 80 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	43		100 x 166.7 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	44		110 x 90 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	45		297 x 215 mm (closed) 297 x 423 mm (open)	Double-sided digital print on plywood (hinged)	TDB2	
	46		110 x 90 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	47		110 x 90 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	

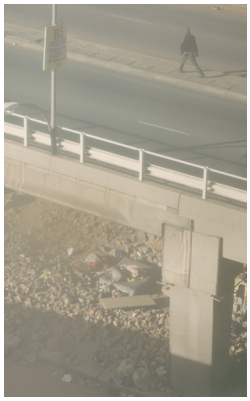
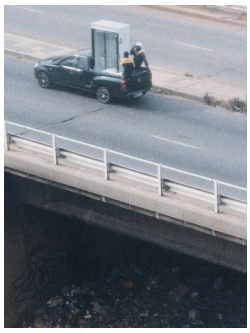
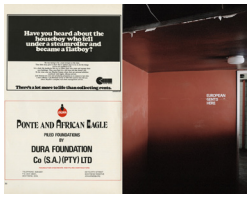
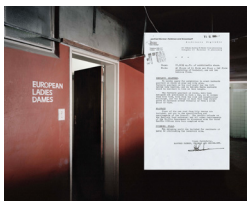
Props

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	48		175 x 249.4 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	49		110 x 90 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	50		220 x 274 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB3	
	51		110 x 90 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	52		110 x 90 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	53		220 x 272.5 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB3	

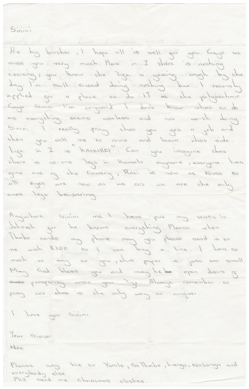
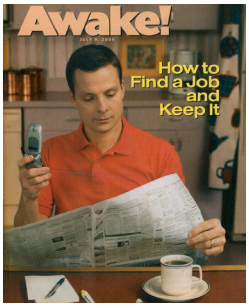
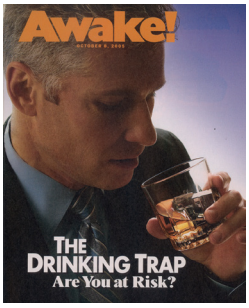
Props

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	54		220 x 311 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB3	
	55		175 x 211 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	56		155 x 64 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	57		240 x 148 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	58		240 x 148 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	

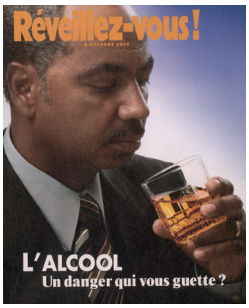
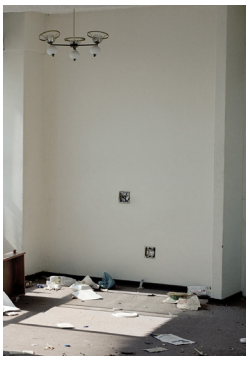
Props

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	59		110 x 109 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	60		240 x 148 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	61		297 x 210 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB3	
	62		350 x 225 mm (closed) 350 x 442 mm (open)	Double-sided digital print on plywood (hinged)	TDB3	
	63		100 x 128 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	64		200 x 250 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB3	

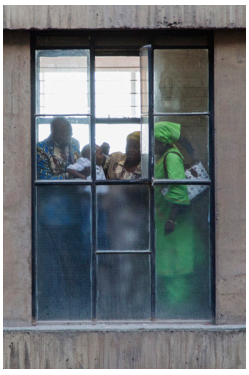
Props

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	65		230 x 151 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	66		210 x 129 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	67		150 x 121.9 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	68		150 x 121.9 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	71		150 x 121.9 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	

Props

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	72		150 x 121.9 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	73		240 x 148 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	74		240 x 148 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	75		240 x 148 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	76		190 x 231 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB3	

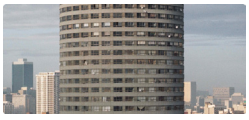
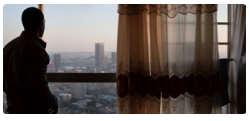
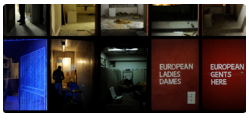
Props

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	77		280 x 217 mm (closed) 280 x 425 mm (open)	Double-sided digital print on plywood (hinged)	TDB3	
	79		110 x 165 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	80		110 x 165 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
 **Coke city – down the tubes** By ANDILE NGOANTA EVERY NIGHT a glowing Coca Cola sign flaunts its international image atop an apartment building, complementing the cultural diversity of the neighbouring Berea flatland of Johannesburg. The building is Ponte City, Johannesburg's towering 54-floor pride, which was built some 32 years ago. Alongside the Carlton Centre, Ponte must rank as one of the city's more famous landmarks, standing out like a beacon in night-time Johannesburg, with that Coca Cola sign beckoning from almost all corners of the city. Ponte is a city within the bigger city of Johannesburg, and it still retains a character all of its own. Ponte is known to leave an indelible impression on first-time visitors. There is no way anyone can be indifferent to it. There just isn't any place quite like it. The vibrant lifestyle of the 'city' has become legendary to night-time revellers, almost rivalling that of the more notorious Hillbrow flatland. Ponte hardly ever goes to sleep. If the glowing sign atop Ponte City is attractive to people cruising through the streets of Johannesburg at night, a closer look at the place reveals that Ponte is much more than a landmark. A microcosm of the most cosmopolitan of cities, Ponte is home to a fascinating mix of cultures, with a strong representation of French-speaking Africa. It boasts a large community of Zaireans. An observer was once prompted to remark that one could be forgiven for believing they were somewhere in Kinshasa, Zaire once inside Ponte City. But beneath that glittering Coca Cola sign and the vibrant lifestyle lies a much darker side to the French Embassy – as the place is known to residents of the neighbouring flatland. Police raids, mostly in pursuit of illegal immigrants, have not done much for the image of Ponte City. They have given the place the reputation of being a vice den. Looming high up are unsightly rows of clothes hanging to dry on the windows of the apartments, giving the place the look of a many-storeyed slum. Present-day Ponte certainly does not present the picture of the once-glittering up-market apartment building that used to house some of the movers and shakers of black society before it became fashionable to move into the former white suburbs. Ponte's management has taken measures to stop the deterioration. In 1993 they announced that they had embarked on a transformation programme. They would empower tenants to participate in all major decisions affecting the building and thus jointly share in the management. Unfortunately, this democratisation process seems to have failed to improve the stormy tenant-landlord relations so common in flatland. Some tenants still complain about the poor services rendered by the 'city' management. Ponte City management also seems to have failed to enforce the strict occupancy number in flats. At nightfall – for those who choose to sleep – up to seven people cram into a bachelor flat. Ponte City has clearly not been able to escape the decay that has taken place around it. BEACON ... The famous – or infamous – Ponte City. THULANI BITHOLE	81		265 x 119 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB3	
	82		210 x 132 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	
	83		210 x 305 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB3	

Props

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	84		120 x 75 mm	Digital print on plywood	TDB2	

Magnetic Sheets

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	TAL1-P1	Collage of Ponte City interior doors and residents	31.9 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower A, Level 1	
	TAL1-P2	Halftone image of Ponte City exterior	31.9 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower A, Level 1	
	TAL2-P1	Collage of Ponte doors, lifts and residents	31.9 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower A, Level 2	
	TAL2-P2	Halftone image of Ponte City exterior	31.9 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower A, Level 2	
	TAL3-P1	Printed PDF layout	31.9 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower A, Level 3	
	TAL3-P2	Exterior view of Ponte City	31.9 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower A, Level 3	
	TAL4-P1	Sangoma with Ponte City in background	31.9 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower A, Level 4	
	TAL4-P2	Night view of Ponte City façade	31.9 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower A, Level 4	
	TAL5-P1	Resident looking out from Ponte City apartment	31.9 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower A, Level 5	
	TAL5-P2	Halftone image of Ponte City exterior	31.9 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower A, Level 5	
	TBL1-P1	Collage of Ponte City interior spaces and signage	31.9 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower B, Level 1	
	TBL1-P2	Halftone image of Ponte City under construction	31.9 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower B, Level 1	

Magnetic Sheets

Image	Item #	Description	Dimensions	Medium	Location	Notes
	TBL2-P1	View of road and surroundings from Ponte City	50.4 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower B, Level 2	
	TBL2-P2	View down Ponte City's interior core	50.4 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower B, Level 2	
	TBL3-P1	Scanned image of a crowded passenger boat	50.4 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower B, Level 3	
	TBL3-P2	View down Ponte City's interior core	50.4 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower B, Level 3	
	TBL4-P1	Collage of African leaders and national flags	31.9 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower B, Level 4	
	TBL4-P2	Resident beside Ponte City rental poster	31.9 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower B, Level 4	
	TCL1-P1	Resident in Ponte City service room	31.9 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower C, Level 1	
	TCL1-P2	Workers clearing Ponte City interior core	31.9 x 71.4 cm	Digital print on magnetic sheet	Tower C, Level 1	

Technical Specifications

1. Main Structure & Construction

Frame	Stainless steel structural frame.
Panels	Galvanised steel sheet panels.
	Printed vinyl applied to galvanised steel surfaces.
	Galvanised steel sheets are pop-riveted to the stainless steel frame.
Mobility	125 mm swivel castor wheels.
	Castors fitted with locking mechanisms.

2. Main Electrical System

Power Supply	75 W / 24 V power supply.
	Model/reference: NW/LRS/75W/24V.
Power Input	Kettle-plug power input with built-in fuse.
	Main power switch located beneath the cabinet.
LED Tape	24 V warm-white LED tape.
	160 LEDs/m.
	Model/reference: MAN573.

3. Shelf Lighting

LED strip lights are installed within the front lip of each shelf.
Electrical wiring runs from the shelf lighting into the rear cavity between the lightbox and the rear galvanised steel sheet. From here, the wiring runs vertically down the back of the structure to the underside of the cabinet.
The LED driver, main power input and power switch are housed beneath the cabinet.

4. Custom Perspex Lightbox

Overall Dimensions	720 × 1800 × 85 mm.
Construction	Sides: 3 mm solid black Perspex acrylic.
	Artwork face: 3 mm clear Perspex acrylic.
	Artwork image UV reverse-printed onto clear acrylic.
	Print specification: three-layer print plus primer.
	Backing structure: 18 mm MDF.
	MDF sealed with black water-based enamel.
Installation	Lightbox bonded into the stainless steel frame using industrial adhesive.

Technical Specifications

5. Lightbox — Internal Illumination

LED System	24 V edge-lit rigid LED strips.
	Power: 25 W per metre.
	LED strips installed around the full perimeter of the artwork/lightbox.
LED Driver	L-Tech 150 W / 24 V Slimline Waterproof LED Driver.
	Model: SN-150-24-G1N.
Dimmer	8 A dimmer with remote control.
	Generic model.

6. Key Materials

Stainless steel.
Galvanised steel sheet.
Printed vinyl.
Perspex acrylic: clear and solid black.
18 mm MDF with water-based enamel finish.
LED tape and edge-lit rigid LED strips.
Industrial adhesive.
Pop rivets.
Lockable swivel castors.

7. Electrical Summary

Component	Specification
Main power supply	75 W / 24 V
Main power supply reference	NW/LRS/75W/24V
Shelf LED tape	160 LEDs/m, 24 V, warm white
Shelf LED reference	MAN573
Power input	Fused kettle-plug input
Lightbox LEDs	24 V edge-lit rigid strips, 25 W/m
Lightbox LED driver	L-Tech 150 W / 24 V
Driver model	SN-150-24-G1N
Lightbox dimmer	8 A, remote-controlled

Technical Specifications

Installation & Operational Requirements

Electrical Connection	Input voltage: 220–240 V AC, 50 Hz.
	The artwork is designed for use with standard South African / European mains electricity.
	Electrical connections required: Minimum of two mains power connections. All electrical connections should be made to properly earthed outlets.
	Power cables should be positioned so that they are not pinched beneath the structure or castors and do not create a trip hazard.
	The artwork should be disconnected from mains power before being moved.
Positioning & Castors	The artwork is fitted with 125 mm swivel castors with locking mechanisms, which are intended to facilitate positioning and installation of the artwork.
	All castors must be locked while the artwork is on display.
	The artwork should be installed on a level, stable floor.
	Do not move or reposition the artwork while connected to mains power.
Ventilation & Clearance	The LED drivers and electrical components generate a small amount of heat during operation.
	Maintain approximately 100 mm minimum clearance around ventilation openings and areas containing LED drivers or other electrical components.
	Allow free air circulation around the artwork.
	The artwork is intended for indoor use in a dry, normally ventilated environment.
	Avoid installation immediately adjacent to heaters, radiators or other significant heat sources.

Technical Specifications

LED Access, Maintenance & Replacement

Replacing the Shelf LED Strip Lights	Disconnect the artwork from mains power before beginning any maintenance.
	Remove the top shelf lid by sliding it out towards the opening of the unit.
	The LED strip light is located within the exposed lip channel, between the double-layered shelf construction.
	The cable supplying power to the LED strip is soldered directly to the strip. To remove the existing LED strip, the wire will need to be carefully snipped.
	Remove and replace the LED strip with the appropriate replacement strip.
	Re-solder the power cable to the replacement LED strip, ensuring that the electrical connection is secure and correctly insulated.
	Refit the shelf lid before reconnecting the artwork to mains power.

Important: Replacement or re-soldering of LED components should be carried out by a suitably experienced technician or electrician.

Development

The design strategies for these four Book Towers were developed after the installation of the artists' *Ponte City* book dummies in a tower-like crate displayed during Sean O'Toole's research exhibition Photo book! Photo-book! Photobook! at A4 Arts Foundation in 2021. The acquisition of the *Ponte City* exhibition archive by SFMOMA prompted the artists to think about sharing and storage techniques for these kinds of materials. A4's curatorial studio took on the task of design, manufacture, and testing the book towers use as tools for workshops and engagement.

A prototype of the first tower was on display at A4 in February 2025 during the Cape Town Art Fair. The previous year, in 2024, a more rudimentary model towards the tower installed at A4 invited visiting curators and practitioners into workshop environments to explore strategies of installation and use. In 2026, the first finished towers were installed in the exhibition *1,2,3* at A4 Arts Foundation curated by Lemeeze Davids, Daniel Malan and Khanya Mashabela.

How To Use the Towers

Working with the material from the project prompts thinking about the relationship between buildings, imported ideologies and human movement in the Global South. The book towers' modular design invites arrangement and use by the viewer. Strategies for display and form follow function, where thematic threads that are relevant across locations and ecologies are 'unpacked'.

Making a Scene:

Scene-making is a useful strategy for exploring how the *Ponte City Book Towers* can be curated in an environment. This can be realised through an ambient position. For example, the Towers appeared in the exhibition *1,2,3* (30 May–5 September 2026) at A4 Arts Foundation. Arranged in a single, stationary scene, titled 'Lighthouse' arranged by then assistant curator Lemeeze Davids, the installation took inspiration from the short story 'Luminosity' by Harry Kalmer, the fourth booklet in the *Ponte City* publication (2014) from Steidl.

Workshops and Facilitation:

As a device for interaction, the A4 team ran several workshops with invited groups across three months. These sessions prototyped ways the Towers can be of use as tools of interdisciplinary facilitation and to test modes of play. Invited groups included schoolchildren, university students in the arts, young urbanists working in urban planning and academics at the African Centre for Cities and UCT, among others. Scenes were built collaboratively by the discrete groups, and explored themes as diverse as 'Will AI take our jobs?', 'A day in the life of a working artist', 'How can I productively engage with clients as a service provider?', 'How can temporary urban interventions become lasting forms of change?', and a concept note: 'Streetwise'. These are in addition to the ideas of migration, xenophobia, brutalist architecture, labour and leisure, race and power that the artists proposed as likely topics for consideration.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A brief biography of the Ponte City residential building

A collision between brutalist architecture and apartheid, Ponte City residential apartment tower was conceived during Johannesburg's economic boom. At the height of apartheid, under the pall of the racist Group Areas Act and discriminatory spacial legislation, it was intended to be a statement in luxury living, but for whites only.

Designed by Mannie Feldman, working with Manfred Hermer and Rodney Grosskopff, Ponte City stood at 54 storeys and 173m. Built in 1975 and opened in 1976, it was Africa's first cylindrical skyscraper and stood as the continent's tallest building for 48 years.

Ponte's fortunes tracked those of the inner city. As apartheid ended and racial demographics in the inner city shifted, the building lost its original tenants and gained notoriety. Dystopian stories abounded that emphasised Ponte City as a place of decay.

Researcher Harriet McKay in 'Ponte City, Johannesburg: a history of appropriation and the appropriation of history' (2021)[1] argues such stories were used to "script" the building for differing agendas at play. In 2000 the infamous Vodacom banner went up coinciding with attempts at renovation and refurbishment. Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse published their photographic project *Ponte City* in 2014, presenting a complex narrative about the social history of Johannesburg. The artists are interested in the mythical position of Ponte in Johannesburg's consciousness, as well as the lived experience of the individuals and communities residing in Ponte during their engagement with the building. At the time of this writing, Ponte City offers a range of apartment types for rent.

1 — In *Appropriated Interiors*. Routledge, London and New York, 2021, pp. 131-150.

Patrick Waterhouse & Mikhael Subotzky
Ponte City Book Towers, 2026

Artwork © Mikhael Subotzky, Patrick Waterhouse
Produced by A4 Arts Foundation

Ponte City Book Towers Production Team

Director: Josh Ginsburg
Producer: János Cserháti
Construction Design & Manufacturing: Kyle Morland
Production Assistance: Lemeeze Davids, Daniel Bradfield, Chloé de Villiers

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Ponte City Book Towers Manual

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Images © A4 Arts Foundation

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