We have Maintained a Silence Closely Resembling Stupidity

The Wanganui Computer, or The National Law Enforcement System, came online in 1976. Resident in the multi-storeyed Wairere House on the bank of the Whanganui River, it employed up to 150 staff at the height of its operations. A computer big enough for its own building was, in those days, awesome and unfathomable – and entirely expected. Awesome and unfathomable, because of its Big Brother implications, its sci-fi feel. Entirely expected, because in those days computers were often large, represented by photographs of large grey boxes the size of a room, big discs spinning, light panels flashing. The ubiquitous home computer with gigabytes to spare was the realm of a relatively distant future.

I was six years old when the Computer came into use. Ann Shelton would have been nine. Even as children, I think it's fair to say that The Wanganui Computer loomed large in our collective imaginations. Indeed, growing up in Auckland, I think the Computer was all I really knew about Whanganui in those childhood years, which only enhanced its mystique.

The fact that The Wanganui Computer housed criminal records allowed it a place in our young imaginations. Never mind that it also held details of drivers' licences, or the fact that criminal records would of course have been kept prior to its advent. There was just something about the mysterious 'computer-ness' of those records that instilled a frisson of fear and excitement in young minds. The notion that, once your

details were stored there, it was game over. In our own juvenile way, we tapped into this in the schoolyard, equating disobedience with data entry. The logic went that if you did something bad, it wasn't out of the question that you'd end up on the System. And what then?

In 1982, by the time I was twelve, The Wanganui Computer was associated with older siblings' driving misdemeanours as much as murderous crime, of which we also knew little about. Your brother could be caught speeding down Queen Street and his name would be held in the same place as a full-on criminal, or so we imagined. Data from the Police and Justice Departments was joined by that held in the Ministry of Transport, a bureaucratic nirvana for the government at the time. This ability to align relative banality with serious criminality (and therefore a strange kind of associational fear) is the particular privilege of such a wide-reaching law-based data repository.

All of this was overshadowed on November 18 that year. For young anarchist Neil Roberts, The Wanganui Computer must have inspired different, more sinister feelings. It seems to me that you need to possess a particular kind of rare, clear-eyed rage in order to walk to a building with a gelignite bomb in a carry bag, with the intention of blowing it up. Which is what he did at 12.33am that day, costing him his own life. News reports at the time stated that when his friends dropped him off at the Stratford bus station where he caught a bus to Whanganui he said 'I'm going to Wanganui to do something frightful. If I should blow up the Wanganui computer, the cops will be around.'[1] Roberts' act followed a wave of protests by libertarians concerned at the threat to privacy the System signified for New Zealand's citizens, but its tragic extremism sets it apart.

WE HAVE MAINTAINED A SILENCE CLOSELY RESEMBLING STUPIDITY Roberts grafittied this sentence on a toilet wall in Moutoa Gardens near Wairere House where the computer was situated, prior to the last act of his life. He followed this with the anarchy sign, that circle with the letter A slashed across it that was on every young punk's patch at the time, and the words 'Anarchy Peace Thinking'. In the late 1970s and early 80s, punks were familiar; they came to school with black painted fingernails, mohawks and an attitude. Anarchy signs adorned many toilet walls, a diluted form of dissonance that became pretty meaningless in its proliferation, but also somehow inevitable under the long years of interventionist economics of the Muldoon government. But Roberts didn't just write the graffiti, or wear the clothes. He committed a truly nihilistic act. Further, Roberts' articulation

1 'Bomb Conspiracy Idea Rejected', *New Zealand Herald*, November 19, 1992, p1.

THE DOMINION

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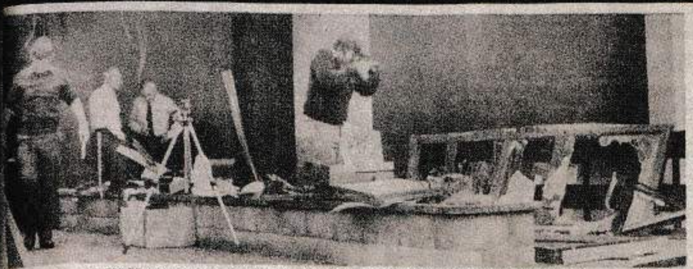

A POLICE photographer, right, records the damage to the Wanganui computer centre yesterday.

Cheerful punk's date with death

By DAVID LOMAS and NZPA

BOMB MAN Neil Roberts, 22, was cheerful and polite as he travelled to Wanganui from Stratford before blowing himself up in an abortive attempt to destroy the Wanganui computer centre early yesterday morning.

Bus driver Grant Elliot said last night he had picked Roberts up at the Stratford railway station about 6.30pm on Wednesday — six hours before Roberts died while trying to blow up the computer centre with six sticks of gelignite.

Mr Elliot said Roberts was a typical punk rocker — "razor blade earrings and that sort of thing".

"He had these black pants on and I remember there was a rip in them and it was sort of held together with safety pins.

"But he wasn't rude or anything.

"He wasn't at the Stratford station when I pulled up. He ran up just as I was about to leave.

"He said he had just been around the corner to tie up his bag."

Roberts had arranged at Stratford parcels depot to send his bag, Umbrella, by rail to his girlfriend in Auckland. He telephoned his father the previous day about it.

"He didn't seem tense — he seemed fairly sort of normal," Mr Elliot said.

Roberts had sat alone during the 2½-hour bus ride to Wanganui. He had sat toward the rear of the bus listening to a radio.

At Wanganui, Mr Elliot asked Roberts if he wanted to get out at the post office when the mail was dropped off but Roberts said he was happy to ride the extra few hundred metres to the bus station.

"Roberts had seemed quite cheerful when he got off the bus.

"When he got off he thanked me for the ride," Mr Elliot said.

Punk associates of Roberts said he was a strange person who identified with the anti-authority, anti-establishment outlook of punks.

One person, who said he knew Roberts quite well, said the bombing was no surprise.

"He was a pretty crazy guy — unpredictable," he said. "He had an anti-authoritarian stand and was against just about anything that was establishment."

Other associates said he was an intelligent person who thought a lot on issues. They said he like to be alone and to move round the country.

Until about six months ago Roberts had stayed in a rented house in Midhurst. The house was in the name of a friend.

Friends of Roberts in Stratford last night said he had stayed in the town on and off for several months and had been to quite a few parties. He had also travelled to Wanganui to go to parties and had at times talked about the computer centre.

A man in his early 20s who said he had met Roberts casually a couple of months ago, said he had seen Roberts fairly regularly at the Midhurst Tavern.

"He either drank in a corner by himself or sometimes with a small group of people," he said.

Roberts was also known at the Empire Hotel, where patrons described him as a bit strange, but a decent sort of guy.

Convictions

Originally from Auckland, Roberts was known to the police. The Minister of Police, Mr Couch, said Roberts had convictions for possession of cannabis and obstruction of the police. He was also a known protester and was believed to have taken part in this year's violent Waitangi Day protest.

"If he had been arrested for cannabis it is fairly likely he must have been out of his mind or drugged when it actually happened," Mr Couch said.

Police are satisfied that Roberts, described by police as a young anarchist punk rocker, acted on his own in the bombing.

Detective Senior Sergeant Rob Butler, in charge of the investigation, said police had conclusive evidence Roberts had acted alone and no anarchist group was involved.

Mr Butler said Roberts had an anti-establishment background.

"He had long held anti-social attitudes and was inclined to protests of various kinds."

Mr Butler said it would never be known if Roberts meant to kill himself "but the indications are, from what we have learned about him, that he did intend to kill himself — that he had become obsessed with committing this last, final act.

"From what we have been told he did not seem to have any concern about his own life."

Mr Butler said police were sure Roberts had painted graffiti on the wall of toilets near the computer centre.

It read: "We have maintained a silence closely representing stupidity." An anarchy sign — a circled A — and the words "Anarchy peace thinking" were also written.

Mr Butler said that before Roberts caught the bus in Stratford he had told friends: "I'm going to Wanganui to do something frightful — if I should blow up the Wanganui computer the cops will be around."

Mr Butler said he believed Roberts had the gelignite with him when he left Stratford. In Wanganui Roberts had bought a battery to set off the detonator attached to the gelignite.

Roberts' body was blasted along a 65-metre path after the explosion. He was identified by a fingerprint.

Police had earlier sought information about a tattoo across Roberts' chest. The tattoo, which had been done professionally, read: "This punk won't see 23, no future."

The computer centre suffered only external damage in the blast. It was able to operate fully yesterday. It is used for storing police, justice and Ministry of Transport records.

Boxer declared dead

DUK Koo Kim . . . gives organs.

LAS VEGAS
NZ PRESS ASSOCIATION

SOUTH Korean boxer Duk Koo Kim was declared legally dead last night, and his mother said his organs would soon be transplanted.

Kim, 23, was knocked out on Saturday in the 14th round of a lightweight title bout against World Boxing Association champion Ray "Boom Boom" Mancini. He never regained consciousness. Doctors said there was no sign of brain activity and Kim was kept alive by a life-support system.

"My son, Duk Koo Kim, has passed away," Kim's sobbing mother, Sun-Yeo Yang, said through an interpreter. "I made up my mind that my son's living organs be transplanted so another person can live."

Dr Lonnie Hammargren, who has attended Kim since the injury, said a team of organ transplant doctors was scheduled to arrive in Las Vegas late last night. "His heart and kidneys and other bodily organs are strong," Dr Hammargren said.

He did not know when the organ transplants would be performed. Kim's body would be flown to Korea on Saturday after a short memorial service.

Soccer's $572,000 pay day

By RUSSELL CRAY

PAY DAY has finally arrived for New Zealand's effort in reaching the World Cup soccer finals in Spain.

A Federation of International Football Association representative said last night that New Zealand would receive at least $572,000, of which $445,000 had already been paid.

New Zealand association chairman Charlie Dempsey had little to say about the matter and would only say that a statement would be issued next Tuesday.

☐ STORY BACK PAGE

Ruling hits prostitutes

By TRISH DOWDING

PROSECUTING prostitutes working in massage parlours should be easier because of a test-case court decision yesterday, according to a vice squad detective.

Judge Max Willis ruled in the Wellington District Court that a massage parlour is a public place when a charge of prostitution was laid under the Summary Offences Act.

The act came into effect in February and the relevant section states that anyone who offers their body for prostitution in a public place can be fined up to $200.

Charges of prostitution in relation to massage parlours had previously been laid under the Massage Parlours Act.

After yesterday's decision most, if not all, prostitution charges relating to massage parlours will be laid under the Summary Offences Act, head of the Wellington vice squad Detective Sergeant Nick Perry said yesterday.

The Massage Parlours Act had a tortuous legal process to follow before charges were brought to court, he said.

The decision would make the prosecution for offences much simpler.

"If the girls commit the offence and we feel there is sufficient evidence to arrest, it can go through the usual criminal procedure. They can plead guilty and be dealt with immediately or if they plead not guilty they can go through a hearing, rather than having us lay a complaint and serve the papers before it even gets to court under the Massage Parlours Act."

Under the Massage Parlours Act, a judge can only order the defendant to be dismissed from her job and ban her from working in massage parlours for five years.

"Nine times out of 10 the girls are fired the night we pick them up, anyway," Mr Perry said.

☐ COURT CASE P6

Tax figures show 231,000 hit

NZ PRESS ASSOCIATION

ABOUT 231,000 taxpayers are worse off because of Budget tax changes, Parliament heard yesterday.

Sixty-four per cent of concessions go to the top 10 per cent of income earners, according to corrected figures read to the House by Labour Party's finance spokesman Mr Bob Tizard.

He said the group earning between $4000 and $6000 a year — about 231,000 people — were paying an extra $48.7 million into government coffers because of Budget changes to the tax regime.

Meanwhile, the top 10 per cent of wage earners were taking $585.6 million of the $900 million total tax cut, he said.

The Minister of Inland Revenue, Mr Falloon, did not respond to the corrected figures, but accused the Opposition of ignoring the need to regard people who were putting more effort into jobs and taking greater responsibility — like those on middle incomes.

Kiwi doctors jealous, Brych tells court

WASHINGTON
NZ PRESS ASSOCIATION

THE TRIAL of cancer therapist Milan Brych has started in Los Angeles with the prosecution saying he knowingly cheated patients out of money and the defence saying he left New Zealand because of jealousy by doctors.

Brych, 43, practised as a doctor in New Zealand but his licence was revoked after he failed to provide proof of qualifications.

He moved to the Cook Islands, then California, where he became assistant to Dr Richard O'Connor, whom he treated for cancer.

The two men were arrested in 1980. O'Connor died of lung cancer shortly afterward.

Brych's trial on 12 counts of grand theft and practising medicine without a licence is in a Los Angeles Superior Court before a jury.

Deputy district attorney Lee Harris said Brych posed as a medical doctor and offered an unauthorised cancer cure which prominent witnesses would testify was worthless.

The charges stem from Brych's treatment of five patients two years ago. One patient was a state investigator who did not have cancer and who helped bring about Brych's arrest.

Mr Harris said Brych told his patients that the side effects of chemotherapy, such as hair loss, made it an undesirable treatment. Brych offered what he claimed was a simple treatment based on immunisation.

☐ CONTINUED P4

BRYCH . . . treatment "worthless".

Role of a lifetime

FAMULARO as Groucho . . . sometimes hard to keep himself out.

No ducking it, he's Groucho

By IRENE GARDINER

WELLINGTON entertainer Silvio Famularo has played a wide variety of roles, but he says his latest — as Groucho Marx — is his most challenging.

Famularo, singer and actor, is playing the most famous of the comic Marx Brothers in Downstage Theatre's Christmas production Full Marx.

"It's difficult because I'm not just doing my interpretation of a character, I'm being that character — impersonating him if you like. It's hard to keep Silvio out of Groucho."

It is 15 years since Famularo, 46, last appeared in a Downstage production. When a friend told him she was auditioning for a musical at Downstage he thought he'd have a try too, not realising it was about the Marx Brothers, whom he has worshipped for years.

With his fan's knowledge of the famous brothers, his tendency to break into joke-telling, a general similarity in size and appearance to Groucho, and the fact he is a tenor as was Groucho Marx, he got the starring role.

Now people are saying he is perfect for the part, that Famularo is Groucho, and when you see him in costume the likeness is striking. For his part, Famularo admits to having gone to many a fancy dress party as Groucho.

Famularo has been in the news lately because of his long battle to open the former Masonic Hall in Clyde Street, Island Bay, as an entertainment and community centre.

Famularo is of Italian heritage, but was born in New Zealand. He wanted to be an opera singer and trained as one with the National Opera Company.

But the jolly bachelor says he never really made it as an opera singer.

"My humour came through and I kept getting all the character parts, so I moved more into musical comedy work."

FAMULARO as himself . . . opera singer who couldn't keep a straight face.

Skydiving verdict saddens mother

CHRISTCHURCH
NZ PRESS ASSOCIATION

THE mother of Bridget Hindson, 18, killed on her first parachute jump in May, said yesterday she felt immensely sad about the outcome of investigations.

Mrs Fay Hindson, of Christchurch, said she had not been given the reason civil aviation decided not to prosecute the Canterbury Skydiving Club or any members.

Mrs Hindson, who on Wednesday attended the inquest into Bridget's death, said she only hoped that aspects would be improved so that other mothers would not have to endure the pain she has suffered.

Mrs Hindson said she felt unable to face work yesterday after the harrowing details of the inquest.

"This will be our first Christmas without Bridget," she said. "Today I'm feeling rather drained."

Bridget's diary entry on October 2 last year — seven months before her fatal fall — is of some comfort to her mother.

It read: "God didn't say it would be easy. He didn't say it would be a bed of roses. But he did say that he would help us and be there if we fall."

Mrs Hindson, the mother of six, said it was also of some comfort to know that the fatal fall was not Bridget's fault.

Coroner N G Hattaway said at the inquest the inadequacies of the Canterbury Skydiving Club were staggering.

Lindy bail decision due

SYDNEY
NZ PRESS ASSOCIATION

A DECISION will be announced today on Mrs Lindy Chamberlain's application for bail pending an appeal in February against her conviction and life sentence for the murder of her nine-week-old daughter Azaria.

Michael McHugh, QC, yesterday made a submission in support of Mrs Chamberlain's bail application to a full bench of the Federal Court. The application was opposed by the Crown.

Mr McHugh said Mrs Chamberlain should be granted bail because there was every prospect that the verdict and sentence would be set aside on appeal.

He said the Crown case had not been proved beyond reasonable doubt and that the trial judge, Mr Justice Muirhead, had misdirected the jury on the standard of proof required for conviction.

Mr McHugh also submitted that it was against the interests of Mrs Chamberlain and her new born child that they be separated.

A psychiatrist had interviewed Mrs Chamberlain in Darwin's Berrimah jail a few days ago and found she was not suffering from any identifiable psychiatric disorder apart from "reactive depression", caused primarily by her having been told she would not be allowed to keep her child.

Japanese market takeover likely

By ANTHONY HUBBARD

THE MEAT Board is likely to take over lamb and mutton exports to the important Japanese market for the next five years.

The board has told the Meat Exporters Council that it considers Japan — an important buyer of lamb and mutton — should become a development market.

A development market is one which is completely controlled by the board. It can decide who sells there, at what prices and for how long.

The board has been saying for some time now that a new marketing strategy was needed in Japan if maximum volumes and prices were to be achieved.

It has been concerned that some companies do not put the necessary effort into marketing, and do not always meet Japanese specifications.

The chairman of the board, Mr Adam Begg, said it had considered for some time that Japan should be declared a development market.

"There would be quite strict quality controls and operators would have to be tied in with an effective distribution system," he said.

Several exporters had suggested that because the board had taken over all lamb and mutton exports for the next two years there was no need for a development market in Japan.

"But we are looking beyond the immediate period, to a five or six-year programme rather than a two-year," he said. "Anyone who goes in and spends a lot of money developing the market will want a degree of protection for doing that."

The board did not intend that the whole Japanese market should be handled by one company.

Mr Begg said that if Japan was declared a development market, the board would call for proposals from exporters on how to handle it.

The exporters who would be allowed to sell to Japan would be decided after that.

But Mr Begg said that a recently formed consortium of five major exporters to sell to Japan would be a front-runner for consideration.

Meat industry sources said yesterday that there was no great opposition among exporters to the idea of a development market in Japan.

"The writing has been on the wall for a long time now," one export source said.

In the export season ending on September 30, Japan bought about 15,000 tonnes of lamb and about 23,000 tonnes of mutton.

The board is expected to declare Japan a development market for lamb and mutton after its meeting in December.

FORECASTS: WELLINGTON CLOUDY | AUCKLAND CLOUDY | BLENHEIM FINE | NELSON CLOUDY | CHRISTCHURCH CLOUDY | DUNEDIN SHOWERS | MANAWATU CLOUDY | MASTERTON FINE | DETAILS PAGE 19

TODAY

LATE NEWS

ATLANTIC RESCUE

TASMANIAN sailor Ian Johnston was rescued in mid-Atlantic last night after his home-made trimaran Rennie capsized — for the second time in four months. Johnston was taking part in the gruelling 6400km single-handed transatlantic race from St Malo in France to Guadeloupe in the Caribbean.

in his graffiti-ed manifesto that we as a nation possessed a collective, silent lethargy towards authority that bordered on stupidity, mocked our casually-held fears and a lazy acceptance of the status quo.

For *Anniversary, "We have maintained a silence closely resembling stupidity" Neil Roberts 1982*, Ann Shelton visited a park close to the building where the now-decommissioned Wanganui Computer was housed. It was the 30th anniversary of Roberts' act and Shelton was on an artist's residency at the Sarjeant Gallery. Here, Shelton transcribed Roberts' statement into the dark night, using sparklers. Each word hangs separately in the frame of a single photograph, which is then hung in a grid. Together, Shelton's action and her photographs perform a delicate kind of memorial to a person and an event. The glow of sparklers is fleeting, and usually joyful. Yet here, they mark brevity in a sombre way, a reflection on both the violence of the act and a life cut short.

The history of terrorism in New Zealand is mercifully brief. In this context, Roberts' act looms large, like the 1985 bombing of the Rainbow Warrior in Auckland by French foreign intelligence. Roberts was no foreign agent, but neither did he seem to be without politics. In her research, Shelton discovered that the young anarchist was a serious protestor, attending Springbok Tour and Waitangi marches in his short life. His slogan is not his own. Rather, it is gleaned from a Revolutionary Proclamation of the Junta Tuitiva, La Paz (now Bolivia) on July 16, 1809, in a revolt that gained them independence from Spanish authority. Did Roberts know about this distant battle? We don't know, but he was identified in the press by friends as highly intelligent, an anarchist philosopher. He had read 19th century Russian revolutionary anarchist Mikhail Bakunin.[2] He was 'no idiot. He read extensively and studied. He would argue lucidly and very technically.'[3]

In the photographs, Shelton does not make mention of the tattoo Roberts had on his chest: 'This punk won't see 23. No future.' It was reported that he had told friends he thought he wouldn't be alive within a year. Seven years after the bombing, a friend of Roberts' said his action 'was not an act of cowardice … it was making a statement with his life.'[4] Inside Wairere House, work continued and the system was uninterrupted.

Whether he meant to destroy the computer, or whether he intended his suicide bombing to be purely symbolic, Roberts' anti-authoritarian act might take a very different form today. Like a modern-day Guy Fawkes, Roberts targeted a built

2 Richard Mason, quoted in David Lomas, 'Friends Talk of Dead Bomber', *Dominion Post*, November 20, 1982, p1.

3 Douglas Small quoted in Pekka Paavonpera, 'Bomber "a Master Tactician"', *The NZ Times*, November, 1982, p3.

4 Bronwyn Dutton, quoted in Edward Rooney, 'We Remember Neil Roberts', *NZ Truth*, 21 November 1989. http://cw178.tripod.com/neil1.htm Accessed 23 June 2013.

Wanganui Chronicle

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Computer Centre bombed

MAN KILLED IN HORROR EXPLOSION

A young man carrying an explosive device was killed instantly when the device detonated outside Wairere House Computer Centre, Wanganui, at 12.35am today.

Story: Linda Millar
Pictures: Karen Day

Inside today

P2 — College prize-givings
P3 — Law Society upset
P5 — Editorial
P5 — Worldwide
P6 — Women's news
P7 — Tarhape District Court
P8 — Homes feature
P9,10 — Racing
P11,12 — Sport
P13 — Features

NORTHWESTERLIES Cloudy. 20 deg.

Wanganui Chronicle, *Computer Centre bombed*, Linda Millar (Originally 1982, Nov 18. Shown here reprinted in the 1996, Sept 18, Chronicle 140th birthday supplement). Reproduced with the permission of the Wanganui Chronicle.

His paybook showed H... e Slight was 5ft 5in tall, with a fresh complex-

Following the Canary Islands route,

The dispatch of the troop...

found themselves the target of hostile

hold. Later trade publications lis... ght family reunion in Wanganui.

Pssst! Anyone want a Kremlin? Security not a problem

By ADA HILL

WANGANUI'S purpose-built high security building will have no secrets to hide after the weekend - but it also may not have a future.

Wairere House on Taupo Quay, which was built to house a centralised law enforcement database system, is no longer home for what used to be the Wanganui Computer Centre.

The staff who are still working in Wanganui move to offices in the Inland Revenue building on the corner of Ingestre and St Hill streets this weekend.

Wairere House, commonly known as the Kremlin or Big Brother, was built in 1973/74 and the first computer was installed in 1975.

Its arrival was marked by widespread speculation that this would mean the end of personal privacy, that Big Brother would be watching our every move and there were fears of security breaches.

All were groundless. Over the years there was the occasional prosecution for a security breach but usually it was someone int he plice checking out something for a friend. Internal security was such that major breaches were impossible.

As for Big Brother, this became something of a joke as the citizens realised it was not the end of life as they knew it.

"The Kremlin" became operational under the Wanganui Computer Centre Act in September 1976 and live operations began on December 1 the same year.

The computer centre soon became part of the landscape but shot back into the headlines in the early hours of November 18, 1982, when a massive blast shook the inner city.

Neil Roberts, punk anarchist, destroyed himself when, at the door of the centre, a bomb strapped to his body exploded.

Damage to the centre was minor but in the wake of the blast security at Wairere House was stepped up dramatically.

In 1990 an additional storey was added to the building which enabled 25 staff who had been housed in other premises to move in.

The $1.75 million addition included a cafeteria and a lift to provide access throughout the building for disabled people.

In April 1994 it was announced the centre, then known as GCS Ltd, was for sale and in November that year EDS was declared the successful bidder.

In July 1995 it was decided to move the mainframe processing functions to another EDS site in Mt Wellington, Auckland.

Although the computers are now based in Auckland, the role they play remain virtually the same as when they were in Wanganui.

The information that is stored with the system is fed into the computer by EDS' three clients - the Police and Justice departments and the land Transport Safety Authority.

The system does not have sufficient mass storage to retain all information fed into it nor is it necessary.

Purge dates for the information are established by the specific sub-system which the information is entered into after ensuring it is up-to-date and relevant.

To gain access to the information a person must be authorised and belong to one of the three clients groups and it must be in relation to the work they are employed to do within that client department.

Members of the public can apply for information on their personal records but the must do so through the Privacy Commission at Police National Headquarters in Wellington.

During its heyday the computer centre employed about 120 staff.

WHEN THE centre first began operating in 1976 between 90 to 100 staff were employed.

The staff operated under three divisions - the development staff which still operate in Wanganui, the systems programming group of which most are Wellington and the operations communications and network support staff which have moved to Auckland.

The development team, which now has 37 staff, peaked at 50 between 1987 and 1990, the operations communication and network support staff peaked at 35 to 37 between 1984 to 1987 and the systems programming group at 15 in 1980.

EDS's lease on Wairere House does not expire until March when the building will then go back to the State Services Commission.

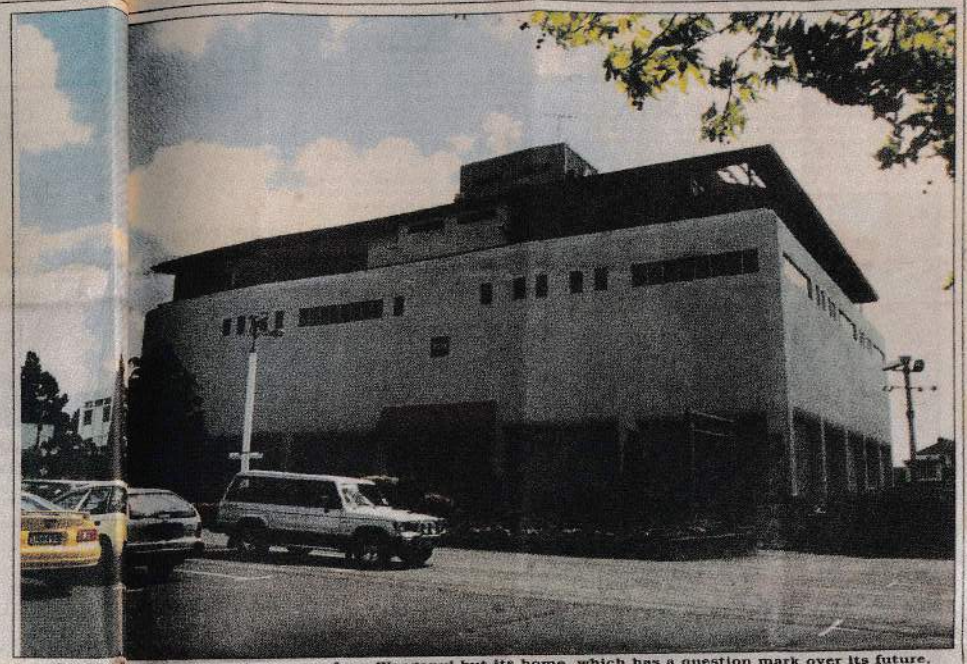
There will be no let-up in security as some equilment will remain in the building. It is not known when this will be moved but it is expected to be by March.

Speculation surrounds the future of the building. There were rumours - quickly rejected - that the museum was interested and other ideas floated have been as an hotel or a casino.

A State Services Commission spokesperson said the Crown was assessing the building's future and it still had a number of issues to work through.

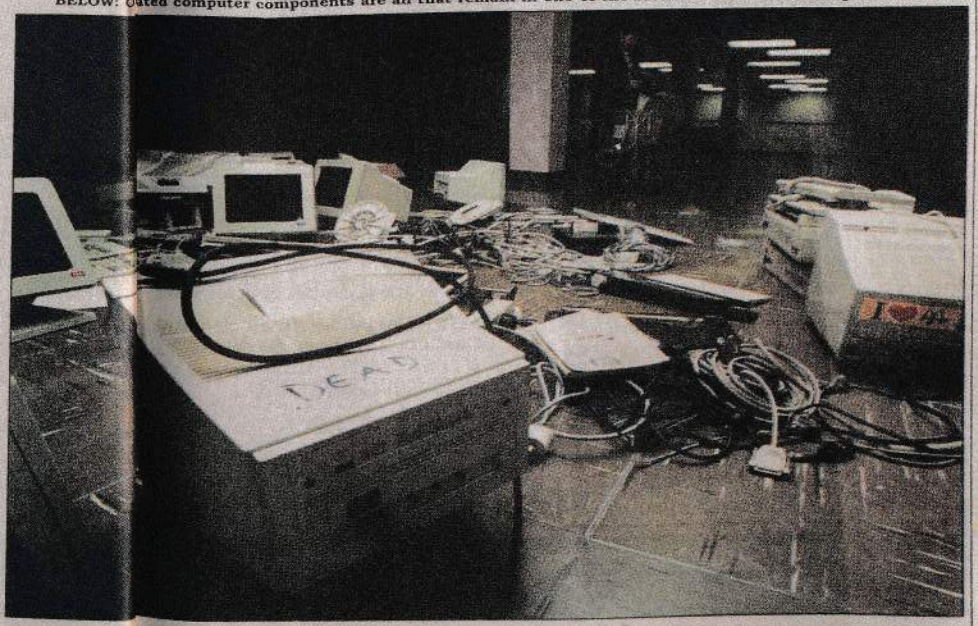
She said it was too early to stay if it would go on the market.

The top floor of the building must have some of the best views of the city. On a clear day there is a grand view of Mt Ruapehu and sweeping views of the Whanganui River.



ABOVE: "Brother" may have gone from Wanganui but its home, which has a question mark over its future, still remains.

BELOW: Outed computer components are all that remain in one of the rooms of the former computer centre.



monolith, as easily identifiable and symbolic as the Beehive. Over three decades later, we live in the era of 'big data', where the velocity, volume and variety of this data has grown so large and unwieldy that storage systems are challenged and data processing made difficult.[5] In this swirling, ever-increasing, constantly-connected data universe of phone calls, photo uploads, emails, Facebook interactions, Google maps direction requests and auto-fill online forms, it is possible to imagine that governments are watching our every-connected move in more penetrating ways. The very recent case of US intelligence whistle-blower Edward Snowden has shown us that this possibility has become reality, as governments access the servers of large Internet companies such as Google and Facebook in order to monitor global activity by foreign users, on the pretext of maintaining national security.

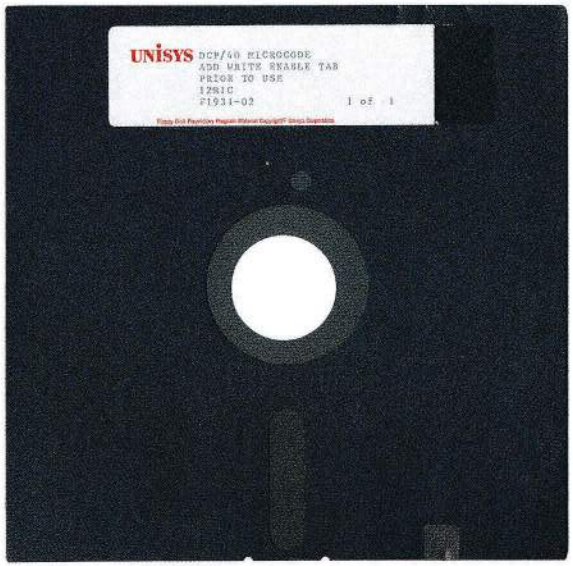
As Snowden has proved, this may be usurped from within. This 29-year-old technical contractor to the National Security Agency in the USA revealed the depth and breadth of his government's Internet surveillance operations in order to throw light on its breathtaking scale and invasiveness. Snowden has said that 'I understand that I will be made to suffer for my actions,' but 'I will be satisfied if the federation of secret law, unequal pardon and irresistible executive powers that rule the world that I love are revealed even for an instant.' He was happy to sacrifice his very comfortable life 'because I can't in good conscience allow the US government to destroy privacy, Internet freedom and basic liberties for people around the world with this massive surveillance machine they're secretly building.'[6]

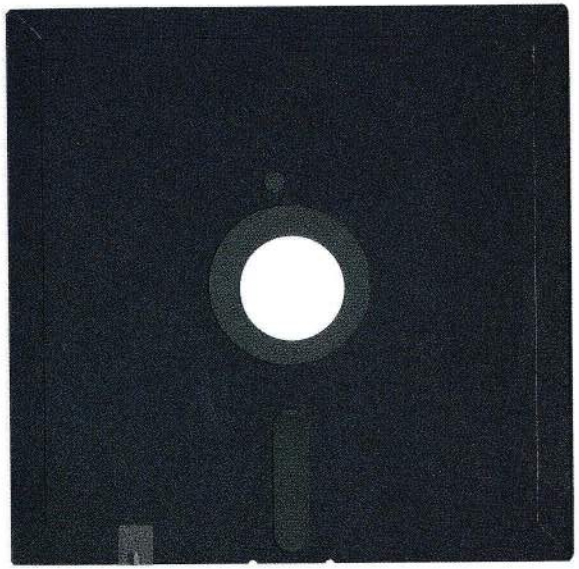
As I write, Edward Snowden is *en route* by air to an unnamed country via Hong Kong and Moscow with the assistance of Wikileaks and foreign diplomats. And Wairere House is home to a more benevolent archive, the Wanganui Service Centre of the National Library.

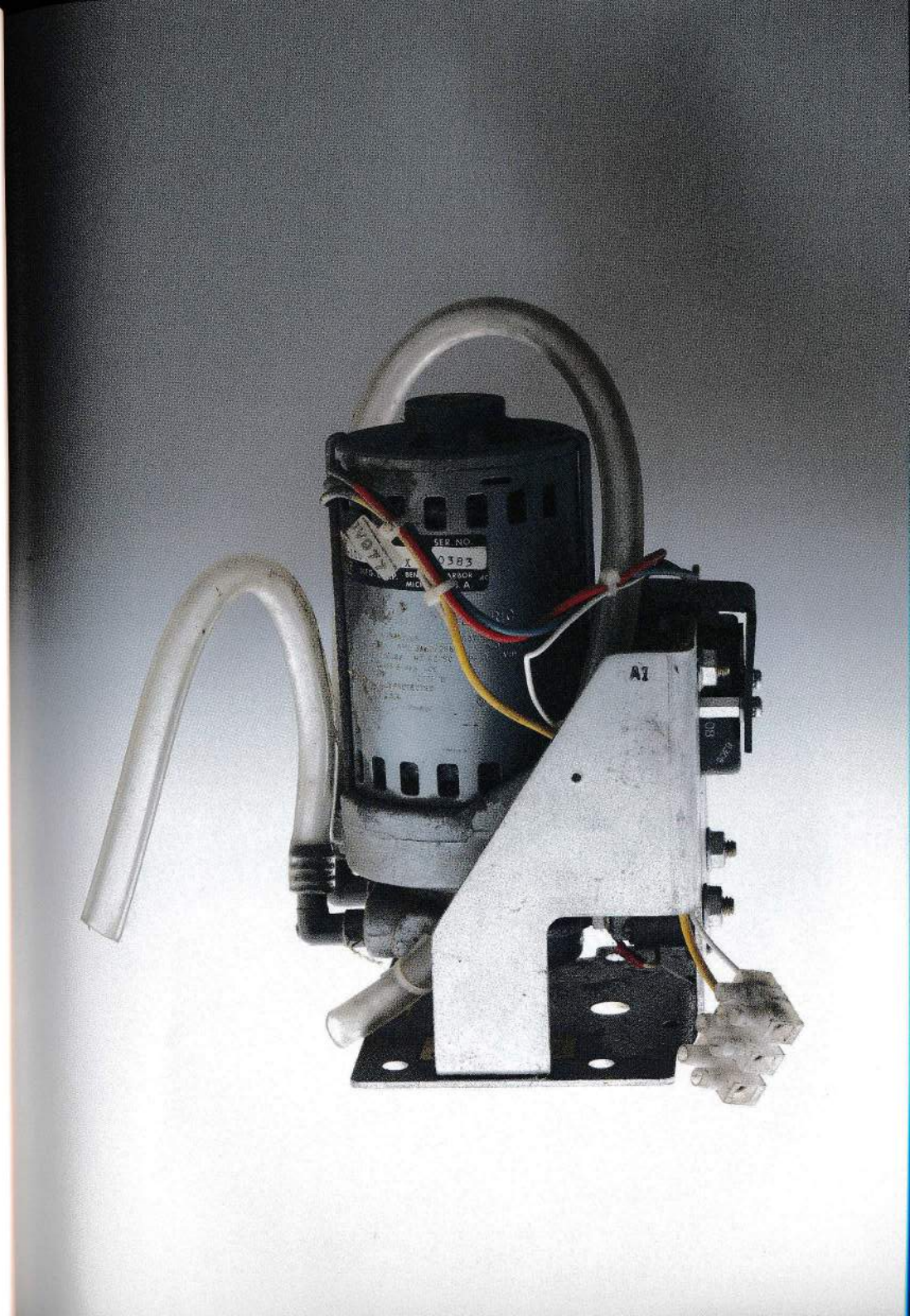
In the 1970s and 80s, who knew what The Wanganui Computer actually looked like? What seemed important was its expansiveness, its potential hold upon our lives, its vague, distant, unquantifiable threat. It was also compelling, as it is now – nearly a decade after the computer's 2005 decommissioning after its move to Auckland in the 1990s – to ponder its shape, its form, its data. In the 1970s and 80s, data was a green glow on a black screen. A trail of numbers and letters scrolling up, endlessly... This was data in the public realm, the data of bureaucracy, the output of networks and off-site terminals. ('The apparent beauty of The Wanganui Computer for the government

5 Mario Bojilov, 'Big Data Defined', http://www.isaca.org/Knowledge-Center/Blog/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=299. Accessed June 18 2013.

6 Edward Snowden, quoted in Glenn Greenwald, 'Edward Snowden: the whistleblower behind the NSA surveillance revelations', http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jun/09/edward-snowden-nsa-whistleblower-surveillance. Accessed 23 June 2013.



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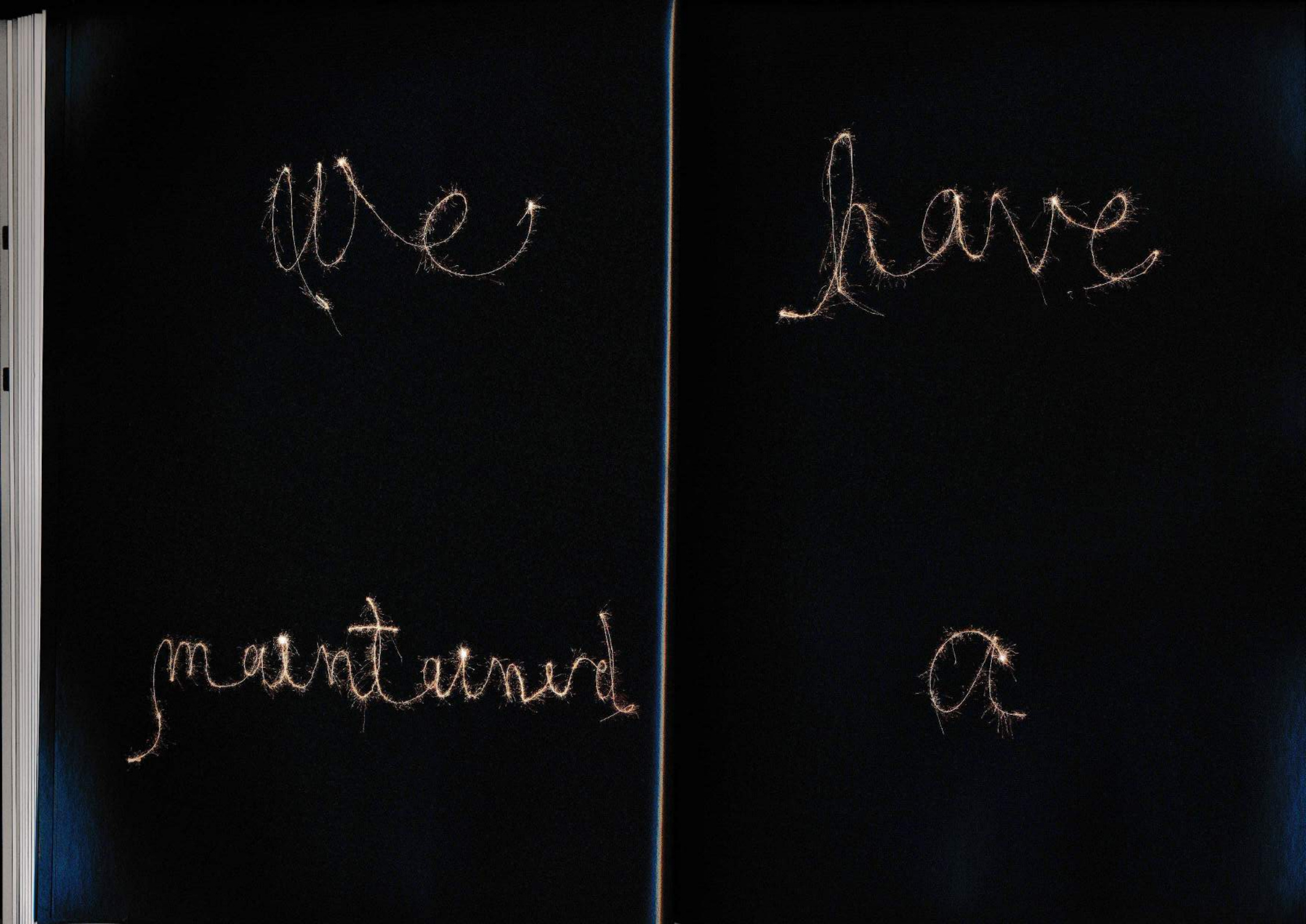
A1

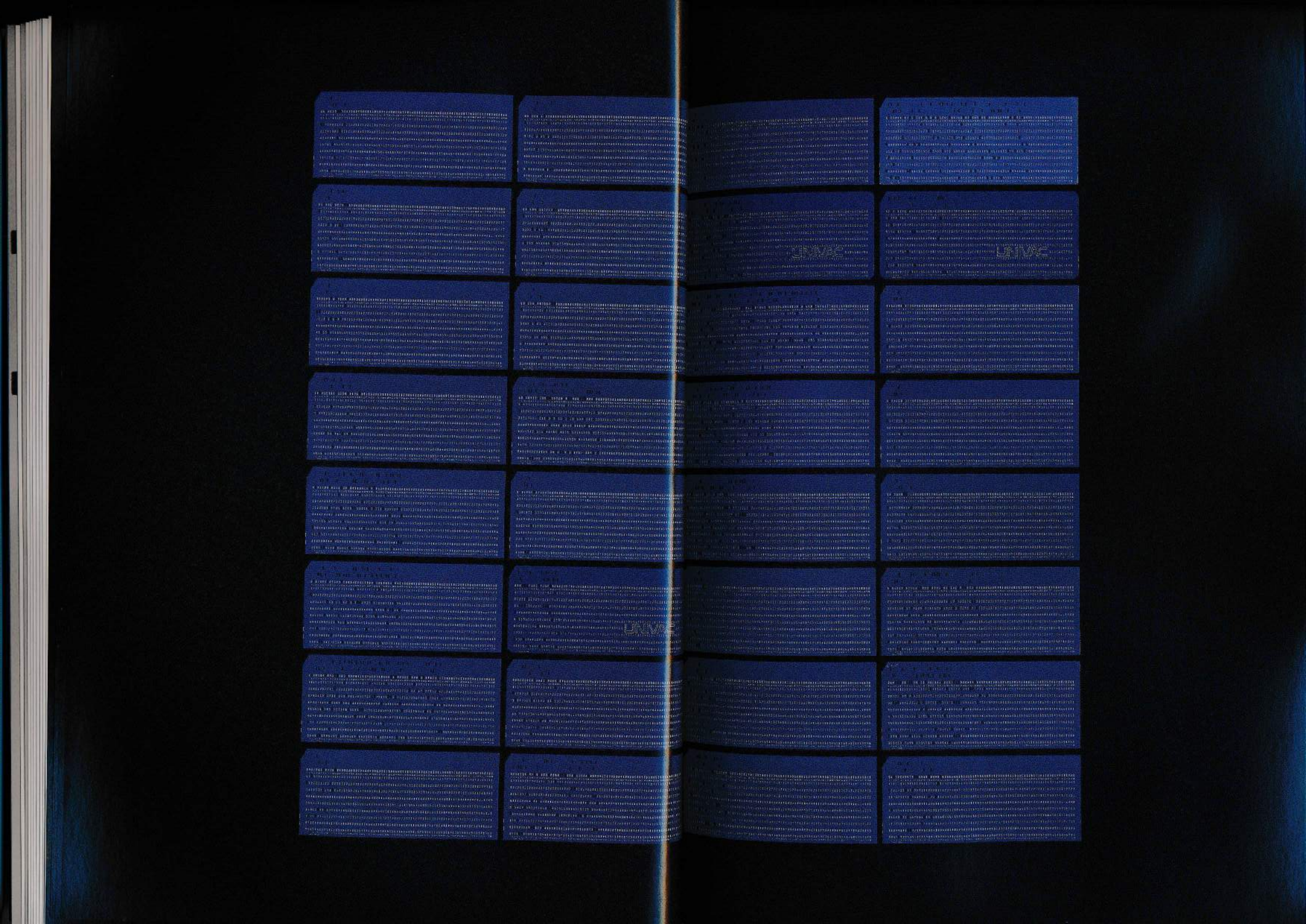

We have
maintained a


silence


closely


resembling


stupidity



Previous:
Ann Shelton *Big Brother, computer disc from the decommissioned Wanganui Computer. Disc 204 mm x 204 mm, (front).* Pigment print, 945 x 1350 mm, 2013.

Ann Shelton *Big Brother, computer disc from the decommissioned Wanganui Computer. Disc 204 mm x 204 mm, (reverse).* Pigment print, 945 x 1350 mm, 2013.

Ann Shelton *Blue Boy, computer part from the Wanganui Computer.* Pigment print, 230 x 300 mm, 2013.

Ann Shelton *Heavy Metal #1, Platinum, recovered scrap metal from the remains of the decommissioned Wanganui Computer.* Pigment print, 604 x 755 mm, 2013.

Ann Shelton *Heavy Metal #2, Palladium, recovered scrap metal from the remains of the decommissioned Wanganui Computer.* Pigment print, 604 x 755 mm, 2013.

Ann Shelton *Heavy Metal #3, Palladium, recovered scrap metal from the remains of the decommissioned Wanganui Computer.* Pigment print, 604 x 755 mm, 2013.

Ann Shelton *Heavy Metal #4, Palladium, recovered scrap metal from the remains of the decommissioned Wanganui Computer.* Pigment print, 604 x 755 mm, 2013.

Ann Shelton *Anniversary, "We have maintained a silence closely resembling stupidity" Neil Roberts 1982,* eight pigment prints, 755 x 604 mm each, 2013.

Ann Shelton *Punch Cards, computer coding cards from the decommissioned Wanganui Computer.* Pigment print, 1135 x 1170 mm, 2013.

Right:
Ann Shelton *Little Brother, computer disc from the decommissioned Wanganui Computer. Disc 133 mm x 133 mm, (front).* Pigment print, 945 x 1350 mm, 2013.

Next:
Ann Shelton *Little Brother, computer disc from the decommissioned Wanganui Computer. Disc 133 mm x 133 mm, (reverse).* Pigment print, 945 x 1350 mm, 2013.

was its connection to a nationwide network, its feeding out of data to police stations and government terminals around the country.)

In her investigations into this large government holding-bay of information, Shelton hints at what data might have looked like inside Wairere House. She presents us with photographic images that we might call Wanganui Computer relics. We see floppy discs, coding cards, little piles of platinum and palladium metal and a strange-looking object that might be a vacuum or pump. Given the expansiveness of The Wanganui Computer in our imaginations – the potentially endless breadth and depth of the data it could gather and maintain and the national scope of the network across which this data might be kept and made accessible – the containment of the Computer into these small objects remains quite discombobulating and, at first glance, something of a tease. Benign curiosities.

The computer discs from the decommissioned computer float in wide-open white space. Shelton adorns them with light-hearted titles – *Big Brother* and *Little Brother* – that deactivate any real sense of Orwellian conspiracy theory. Shelton records the discs as if cataloguing an object in a museum. We see the front and the back of the discs, which are floppy discs familiar to anyone who used a computer in the late 1980s and early 1990s. They are black and blue, with labels that don't tell us much at all. They are scanned at one to one scale.

Shelton also leaves the discs to float in a large, open, white field, giving them a sense of aura and gravitas that operates in opposition to her playful titles. We know that inside these small objects is a field of data many times larger than the object itself. Given the redundant nature of the technology and its further entrapment as photographic image, such revelations remain inaccessible. And what might be revealed should we access this data now? A stream of bureaucracy writ large – a time capsule of unfamiliar names, dates and mostly petty deeds? Like a Wikileaks data-dump, it would take many investigative eyes to sift through the data-dirt encased in these discs for hidden, shiny pearls.

The blue glow and strange beauty of *Punch Cards, computer coding cards from the decommissioned Wanganui Computer* remind me of American photographer Taryn Simon's *Nuclear Waste Encapsulation and Storage Facility, Cherenkov Radiation, Hanford Site, U.S. Department of Energy, Southeastern Washington*, 2005/2007. In Simon's photograph, a highly radioactive material held in capsules in water becomes a floating array of black circles defined by a pale-blue glow, settled in a geometric

grid. The formal beauty of this image along with its highly toxic subject matter gives it a compelling intrigue, an effect similar to that of Shelton's coding cards. Set in a grid, the rows of numbers 0-9 typed onto the cards become a linear sea; the little holes punched into the left-hand side of the cards have the beauty and flow of a digital waterfall falling down through the arrangement of cards. Like Simon, Shelton imbues these objects, replete with the symbolism of government secrecy, with visual poetry. *Punch Cards* also encapsulates, but does not explain, the secret language of computer coding, the embedding of digital information into a piece of card through strategically punched holes.

Even more esoteric is the object in *Blue Boy, computer part from the Wanganui Computer*. This photograph documents a strange, metal, pump-like object with two plastic tubes emerging from a cylinder painted pale blue. There are electrical wires, red, yellow and greenish-blue. The plastic tubes are mysterious and unexpected. The object does not really fit with commonplace ideas of what a computer part from the 1970s might look like. Is it a cleaning device, or some kind of chemical pump? In a strange way, this game of association, along with its anthropomorphic title, gives *Blue Boy* an air of harmless authenticity, as if it were a device you might find on the set of *Doctor Who*, or on sale amid other obscure parts at an outer-suburban garage sale, priced as 'make an offer'.

And what can we make of these small piles of shiny metal objects depicted in *Heavy Metal, Platinum*, and *Heavy Metal, Palladium*? Shelton has gathered these shiny metal 'pearls' together, photographing them against a black background. They look like mysterious, alchemic currency, their shape appears to be realised from a mould or machine. They sit comfortably as a group, four little piles; and in the comparisons we consequently seek between then, their differences are slight. They are in fact, as Shelton's titles indicate, recovered scrap metal from the remains of the decommissioned Wanganui Computer. Electronic scrap – tiny amounts of these precious metals served as conductors between the computer's components. If you search on Google for these metals you'll find several YouTube tutorials on how to extract them from computer hard drives, or investor advice on their price on the global market. Platinum is rare, palladium even rarer, so the little lustrous beads in Shelton's photographs are precious waste indeed. Removed from their conductive context, the metals are precious remainders with a life of their own; a new life spawned from the fast-moving trajectory of technological obsolescence.

Together this suite of photographs performs an interesting balancing act. They pluck physical objects from the abstraction of networked data. Revelatory and fascinating, they also preserve the Wanganui Computer's mysterious, private realm, conveying something of its withholding of information even as it offers it up. Perhaps this is all that Shelton could gather during her residency. Perhaps she has selected them from a larger repository of relics, holding more 'evidence' from our gaze. Or perhaps these objects are simply part of an elaborate fiction she has constructed. That we are not entirely sure of the origins or veracity of the represented objects allows us to reflect upon the nature of truth, its preservation and dissemination. Shelton engages with this through the photographic medium, using its connection to resemblance to prompt such reflections. She also alerts us to the nature of the archive, to history and the nature of its telling, its inclusions and exclusions and its power relations. Researching The Wanganui Computer through its residue and relics, as well as the man in whom it incited a deep rage, Shelton asks us to follow her on a path less-travelled, which leads back to an intimately connected present.

Shelton has titled her exhibition *The City of Gold and Lead*, the title of a 1967 volume in The Tripods trilogy by science fiction novelist John Christopher. In the novel, Tripod City is on earth but under the control of the alien tripods, covered by a large dome and circled by a band of gold. For humans, who are held in the city as slaves, its contained atmosphere is toxic, an environment where gravity's force is doubled and bodies made leaden. This elemental tale gives us an elegant, fearful metaphor for the history of government-held data that Shelton engages with. Existing in a golden world driven by data, its edges defined by its dissemination and disclosure, we might give pause to breathe in and reflect upon this atmosphere. Do we feel a lightness and freedom in our step, or do our bodies and minds drag heavily, our actions determined by a cruel other? In whose reality do we reside?

Kyla McFarlane