



## VERSE

The renovation and reopening of the Thompson Library occurs during a time when digital technologies are changing a reader's relationship to a page of text, to the book as object, and to the library as an institution and system of access to information and print culture. As libraries take on multiple roles, the housing of book collections shares space with its function as an access location to infinitely expanding digital information and a social site for its community of users. Within this context, Hamilton's project, a 6080 square foot cork floor in the Buckeye Reading Room is constituted of a field of words whose graphic organization follows the structure of an alphabetic concordance. Unlike indices which locate subject matter, concordances alphabetize the principal words used in a single text within the context of the sentence in which they appear. The alphabetized words run like a spine through the text, allowing the reader to examine the intersections of context and the frequency of their usage. Just as a concordance is an intersection of a key word with a body of text the library is one place where a reader intersects with the artifacts of print culture. Verse, in its form and woven organization is a reflection of how the reader intersects with and culls information and meaning from the library's collection.

Here, Ann Hamilton creates a different kind of concordance. The 299 words of *The End of the World*, adapted from a White River Sioux myth, are alphabetized to form the spine of the composition inlaid on the floor. *The End of the World* tells the story of a world that is kept alive by a process of weaving, relating itself to the library's life, sustained by its readers and the circulating movement of its books passing from patron to patron. Hamilton, instead of creating a concordance of this story, finds the occurrences of these 299 words in two other texts which account world histories: *A Little History of the World* by E.H. Gombrich, originally published in 1936 and *Mirrors: Stories of Almost Everyone* by Eduardo Galeano published in 2009. The Sioux myth serves as the spine and its words as points of intersection with the two other texts, each reading in different direction. Where no sentences extend from the spine is where the unique essence of the Sioux story resides: the words, "porcupine-quills," "robe," "textile," and "unravels," integral to the action that, when repeated, sustains the life of the world in the myth, are absent in the Gombrich and Galeano accounts of the world. Further, the phrases which are emphasized on either side of the spine are the "floating weft," the visual thread of an unnamed reader for whom another shape—or layer of perception—weaves through the texts. It is the reader, this reader, ultimately, who shapes the world—selecting and accumulating information into knowledge, another process of weaving which cannot help but be full of truths and contradictions, slippages and poetic potential.