

ROOM collaborators

A group exhibition of specially commissioned multiples made for ROOM, London, Mar – April 2009. My work comprised “Marlow and Kurtz” the first two in a series of five works more broadly entitled “the lightships series” whereby archive images of lightships were digitally altered and renamed with characters from literature.

Submitted by Lesley Punton
Output No. 2



OUTPUT

For this group exhibition of limited edition multiples, I exhibited the first two works made, Marlow & Kurtz, 2009, in a series of postcards entitled *"the Lightship series"* 2009/10. These were digitally re-named lightships using the names of characters from Heart of Darkness, The Magic Mountain, and Robinson Crusoe where each character makes a physical, metaphorical or metaphysical journey. The cards were shown on a handmade oak shelf with concealed custom made steel fixings.

My work in this exhibition was reviewed in Art Monthly, May 2009.

<https://www.exacteditions.com/read/art-monthly/may-2009-5130/48/3>

I made three further works in the series following this exhibition at ROOM.

Title

ROOM Collaborators
(Exhibition)

Submission No.

2

Authors/Creators

Punton , Lesley
Liversidge, Peter
Neudecker, Mariele
Faithfull, Simon
Prophet, Jane
Wakely, Shelagh
Parker, Jayne
Arancio, Salvatore
Keane, Tina
Barlow, Phyllida
Bevan & Clark, Richard & Tamsin
Brennan, Tim
Brown, Kieran
Ortega-Ayala, Raul
Chang, Yuiung
Cheung, Gordon
Clark, Elizabeth S.
Whittlesea, Ian

+ 17 others

OUTPUT

"The Lightship Series" was also shown in a two person exhibition (with Judy Spark), in *"Back to the Things Themselves"*,

<http://lesleypunton.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/back-to-things-themselves-24.html> for Gi (Glasgow International) Festival of Visual Arts <http://www.glasgowinternational.org/> in April/ May 2012 at The Briggait, Glasgow.

We were interviewed by Magdalena Chau for the Daily Serving in relation to this exhibition.

<http://dailyserving.com/2012/05/back-to-the-things-themselves/>

A monograph on my practice entitled *Lesley Punton – mountains without end*, was published in Sept 2013 by ROOMBOOKS, London, ISBN 978-0-9549915-6-2, which includes the complete series, and features specially commissioned essays on my practice by the renowned poet, Thomas A Clark (UK), Dr David Watson (Australia) & a contribution from Alec Finlay (UK).



*"Marlow" & "Kurtz" – from the Lightship series
Duotone lithographic postcards on oak shelf, 2009*

CONTEXT

ROOM is an independent gallery space that originated in Bristol in 2003, moving to London in 2007 and has had premises in Shoreditch, and more recently, Marylebone, and have regularly shown at Zoo Art fair, etc. See <http://www.roomartspace.co.uk/index.php>

I am represented by ROOM, London, in the UK and Europe.

The exhibition, ROOM Collaborators, <http://tinyurl.com/o4wsk9r> was curated by Sandie Macrae (director of ROOM, London), whereby artists were invited to submit a limited edition for what became the first of 3 exhibitions over 3 years to be known as "ROOM Collaborators", and which followed on from the galleries previous "multiples" shows.

Invited artists for this exhibition were, Lesley Punton, Peter Liversidge, Mariele Neudecker, Simon Faithfull, Salvatore Arancio, Phyllida Barlow, Richard Bevan & Tamsin Clark, Tim Brennan, Kieran Brown, Carolyn Bunt, Yuing Chang, Gordon Cheung, Elizabeth S. Clark, Nathan Edmunds, Robert Fearn, Chris

Grygiel, Alex Hollweg, Cassie Howard, Takahiro Iwasaki, Tina Keane, Anna Lucas, Heidi Morstang, Eamon O'Kane, Raul Ortega-Ayala, Jayne Parker, Philomene Pirecki, Jane Prophet, Lois Rowe, Kenneth Sachar, Emma Stibbon, Roy Voss, Shelagh Wakely, Ian Whittlesea, Tom Wolseley, and Yu Aishan; all artists of high international standing.

The exhibition received press coverage from Art Monthly, and was reviewed by Larne Abse Gogarty in May 2009, Issue No 326, <https://www.exacteditions.com/read/art-monthly/may-2009-5130/48/3> Review of "Collaborators", (ISSN 0142 6702), where my work was positively received.

I have a history of using text within my work, and these pieces in particular follow on from a practice of finding a reductive methodology whereby texts deny overtly romantic notions of content, but which could perhaps be seen within a lineage of 'romantic conceptualism' and in the poetry and sculptural work of Ian Hamilton Finlay, and in particular, his one word poems.

CONTEXT

ROOM COLLABORATORS

SALVATORE ARANCIO / PHYLLIDA BARLOW / RICHARD BEVAN &
TAMSIN CLARK / TIM BRENNAN / KIERAN BROWN / CAROLYN BUNT
YUJUNG CHANG / GORDON CHEUNG / ELISABETH.S.CLARK
JOHN LAWRENCE / NATHAN EDMUNDS / SIMON FAITHFULL
ROBERT FEARNES / CHRIS GRYGIEL / ALEX HOLLWEG / CASSIE HOWARD
TAKAHIRO IWASAKI / TINA KEANE / PETER LIVERSIDGE / ANNA LUCAS
HEIDI MORSTANG / MARIELE NEUDECKER
EAMONN O'KANE / RAUL ORTEGA AYALA / JAYNE PARKER
PHILOMENE PIRECKI / JANE PROPHET / LESLEY PUNTON / LOIS ROWE
KENNETH SACHAR / EMMA STIBBON / ROY VOSS / SHELAGH WAKELY
IAN WHITTLESEA / TOM WOLSELEY / AISHAN YU

OPENING 25th MARCH 2009 6-9PM

ROOM

31 WATERSON STREET E2 8HT WWW.ROOMARTSPACE.CO.UK



"Marlow – heart of darkness". 2009, Duotone lithographic postcard



"Kurtz – heart of darkness". 2009, Duotone lithographic postcard



Marlow & Kurtz, reproduced in "Lesley Punton – mountains without end"

CONTEXT

Experiences and imaginings of metaphorical places, and of gradual movements and shifts have permeated much of my recent thinking and working process. In Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow makes his slow, inexorable journey up river towards an isolation and metaphysical darkness. The later pieces in the series use the characters Castorp, from Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*, and Crusoe and Friday from Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. In *The Magic Mountain*, the movement is upwards towards the rarified clean air of the mountain, to the sanatorium situated at altitude where contamination by the reality of life at sea level is held at bay, and where time is distorted, or a journey of isolation as in *Robinson Crusoe*.

Much of my recent work explores this positioning of oneself on the edges of perception, looking at the limits of experience, often in relation to landscape.



*"Castorp" (far left), Duotone lithographic postcard on oak shelf 2009/10,
installed in the Briggait, Glasgow, International 2012*



"Castorp – The Magic Mountain" 2009/10 Duotone lithographic postcard

METHODOLOGY

For this exhibition, I made the first 2 in a series of 5 images where archive images of lightships had their names substituted with fictional characters from literature. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* formed the inspiration for the first two pieces, using the characters Marlow and Kurtz. Lightships, being portable lighthouses, have the name of the sea where they are stationed painted in incongruously large letters along their sides to act as aids to navigation. As such however, to the non-seafarer, their names appear more as labels and titles emblazoned across their sides. This consequential act of inadvertent "titling" was of interest in part in relation to concrete poetry, and in an already established use of language in my work.

I began a long process of sourcing archive photographic originals (rather than printed postcards, or web based imagery) in order to be able to use images of a high resolution where I could remove their original name and digitally rename them.

As many of the images found belonged to the obscure genre of lightship *postcards*, I decided to return them to that original form, and utilised lithographic print technology, so as to remain as close to the original as possible, but foregoing tints (such as the sepia tinted original shown to the right) to ensure a consistency across the series.

The question of how to display them was resolved by choosing to make shelves for the cards to sit on. Oak was chosen to obliquely reference the use of oak in traditional shipbuilding techniques. The postcards rest casually on the slivers of wood, and again, the minimalism of their texts was reinforced by designing a shelf where no fixings would be visible.

They were also available to the audience of the exhibition at a nominal cost within a printed envelope containing the 2 postcards.

METHODOLOGY

The work developed to examine other characters from literature, as outlined. As a major 20th Century novel of which I am particularly fond, I chose to use the character of Hans Castrop from Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* to examine a physical and metaphysical journey to a location at altitude. (this also references a major aspect of my practice which is concerned with mountaineering and how physical experiences of landscape might be transcribed into non-descriptive form). There, Castorp, distanced from the world below finds a space of isolation and reflection.

There's an obsolescence in these old lightships, manned stations, anachronisms in today's age of radar, gps, and automatic unmanned beacons. Hans Castorp's displacement from a changing world in his high altitude sanatorium faces a similar separation. For him there, time itself is subject to slippages from normal experience.



Original photographic postcard used for the piece "Kurtz"



Handmade Oak shelves for the Lightship series with custom made invisible steel fixings, in their storage box

METHODOLOGY

The final pair of works to emerge from the *Marlow & Kurtz* pieces originally seen in ROOM Collaborators was *Crusoe & Friday*, taken from Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

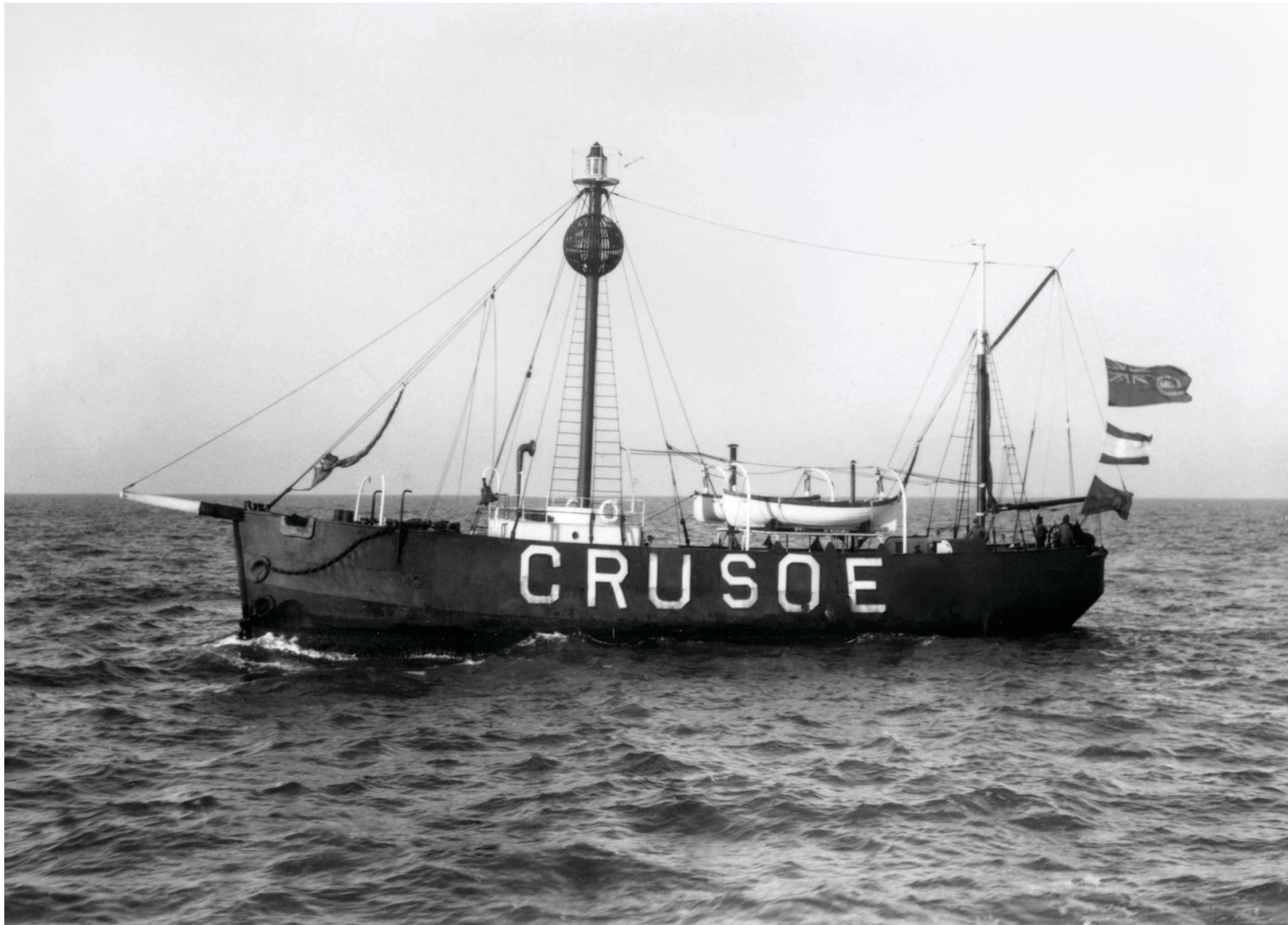
Again, I was interested in the journeys made by the two central characters, and primarily with that of Crusoe in relation to isolation and survival, and of the known and unknown.

Metaphorically, the symbol of the lightship itself is an important one in the context of the themes of my work more generally, whereby light and dark, and the limits of perception in relation to how we encounter and experience landscape are recurrent themes for me.

Lightships, as devices intended to protect, and to aid safe passage, suggest in this work, the metaphorical "illumination" from one state or condition to another; I see parallels to this in the journeys of the main protagonists in all of the novels referenced in the series.



"Crusoe" & "Friday" - Duotone lithographic postcards on oak shelves, 2009/10, installed in the Briggait, Glasgow, International 2012



"Crusoe – Robinson Crusoe". 2009/10, Duotone lithographic postcard



"Friday – Robinson Crusoe". 2009/10, Duotone lithographic postcard

METHODOLOGY

Friday, (the final piece made) more than the others perhaps, seems the most optimistic and hopeful of all the series, being the one image where there is implied a sense of return, a beacon of hope.

This element of light and dark (and specifically darkness) was explored further in the work *Kurtz II*, a barely discernible drawing that emerges from a veil of graphite powder, and developed from the original lightship work “Kurtz”, and is the direct precursor to a series of graphite powder text drawings that I am still engaged with today and which constitute a significant part of my recent practice.

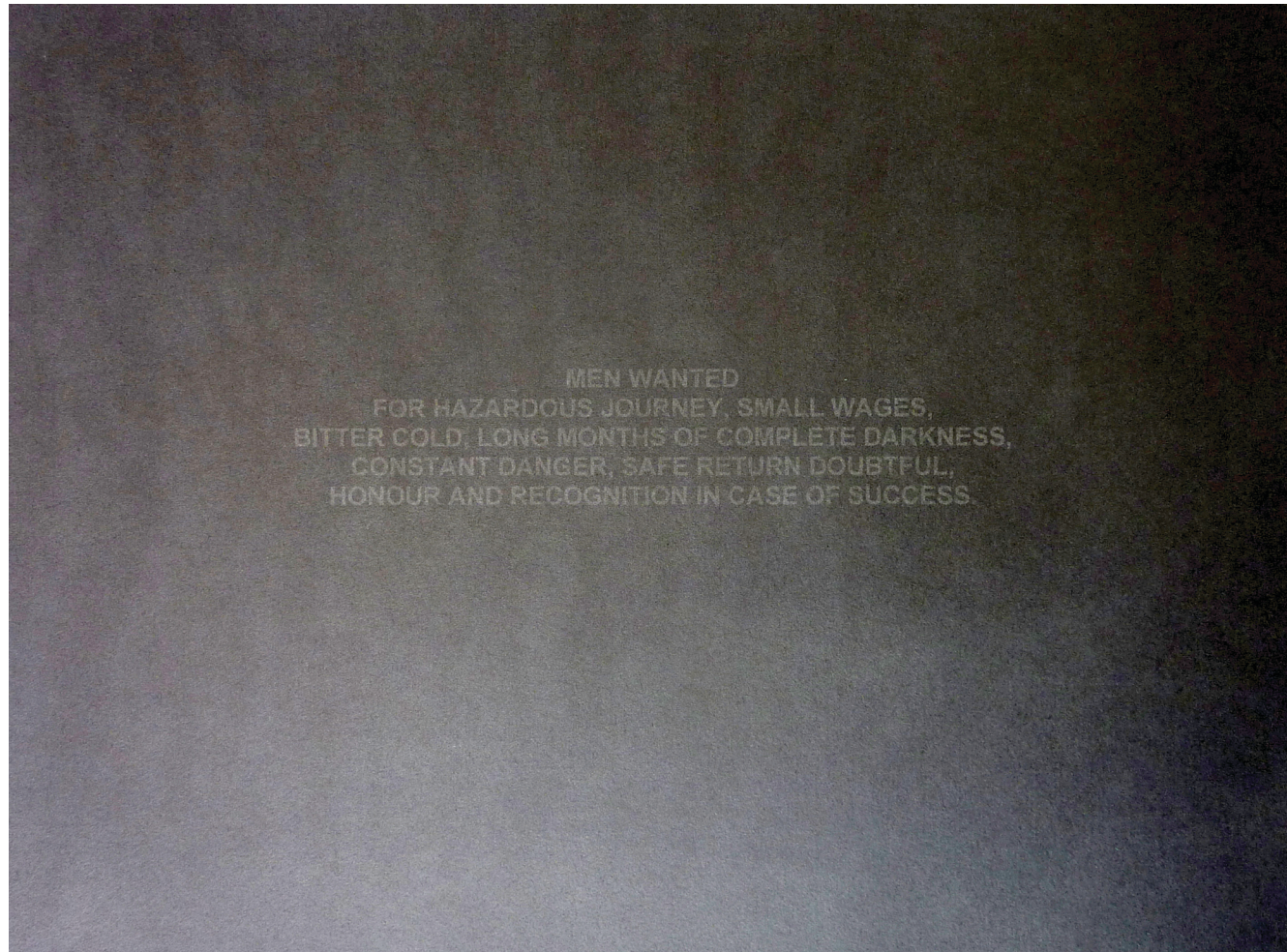
For a clickable version to view at higher resolution, see:

<http://lesleypunton.blogspot.co.uk/2009/11/kurtz.html>

This piece was also shown in my exhibition *Back to the Things themselves*. This work too, is reproduced and explored in depth in my monograph, *mountains without end*, published by ROOMBOOKS.



“Kurtz II,” Graphite on paper, 11.3x8.2cm 2009/10



"Call"- Graphite on paper, 81x61cm 2012, a text drawing that's indicative of the "afterlife" of the works made for ROOM Collaborators.

DISSEMINATION

Apart from the exhibition itself, the work was reviewed in Art Monthly, Issue No.326, May 2009, (ISSN 0142 6702) where a selection of works (including my own) were reviewed favourably.

ROOM also produced a pamphlet/brochure to accompany the exhibition which detailed the work of each of the contributors.

The works continue to be available via ROOM.
<http://www.roomartspace.co.uk/index.php>

As a postcard work, part of its essence is its democratically accessible easy availability. I quite deliberately created a work for this exhibition that was either free, or available for a nominal fee. With relatively high audience figures for the exhibition, it does mean that there are a great many of the images now “out in the world”.



“Crusoe” & “Friday”, reproduced in “Lesley Puntton – mountains without end”

DISSEMINATION

As well as the primary exhibition *Collaborators* at ROOM, the work commissioned for this exhibition has also had an afterlife subsequently and the series was shown in “*Back to the Things themselves*”, a 2 person exhibition with Judy Spark shown as part of GI – Glasgow International Festival of Visual Arts, in April - May 2012 in the Briggait, 141 Bridgegate, Glasgow.

The artists were subsequently interviewed by Magdalena Chau for The Daily Serving and the interview can be read here.

<http://dailyserving.com/2012/05/back-to-the-things-themselves/>

The above interview was also reproduced by San Francisco based arts organisation Art Practical

<http://www.artpractical.com/feature/glasgow-international-festival-of-visual-arts/>

Graphite Kurtz was recently seen in *Learning to Draw/Drawing to Learn*, at The Fleming Collection, Mayfair, London, 3rd Sept - 9th Oct 2013

The monograph & artist book *mountains without end*, ISBN 978-0-9549915-6-2, features the whole lightships series, and was published by ROOMBOOKS in September 2013, and contains essays on my work by the renowned poet, writer and director of Cairn Gallery, Thomas A Clark, UK,

<http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poets/thomas-clark>;

Dr David Watson, Sydney, Australia

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=cAueTqffyDY;

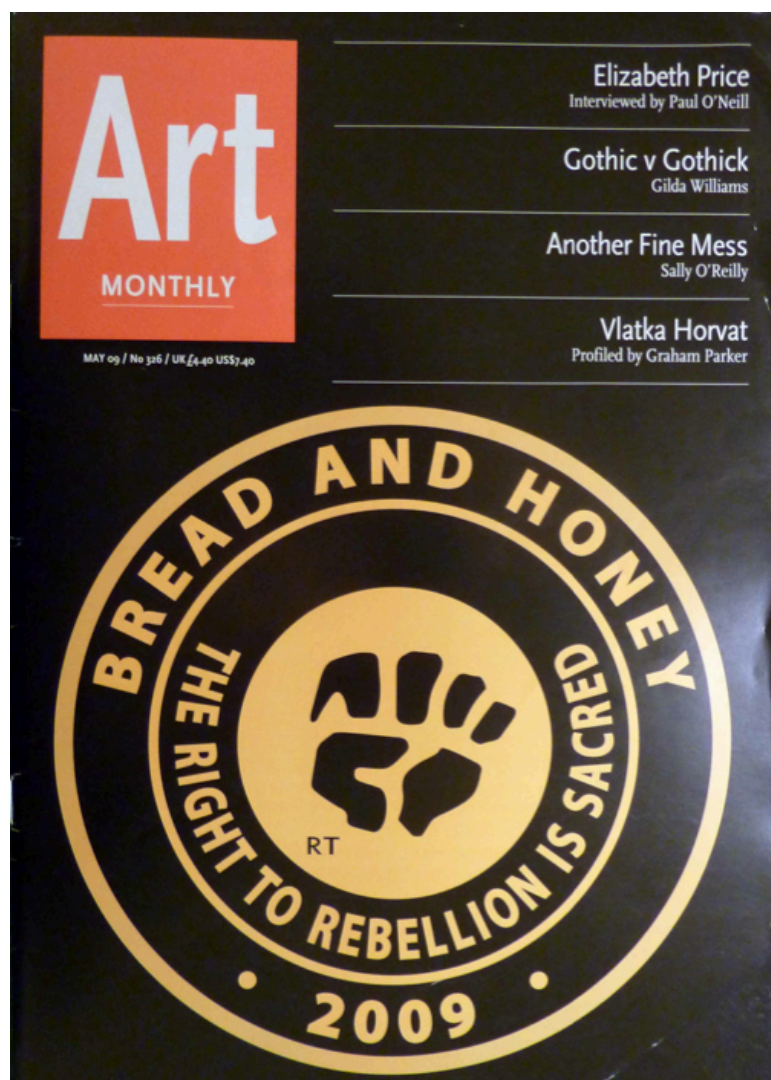
and a prose poem by Alec Finlay, UK, <http://www.alecfinlayblog.blogspot.co.uk/> with an introduction by Sandie Macrae, Director of ROOM, London.

This monograph, “*Mountains without end*” also contains a new text in which I examine through prose memoir some of the research areas that my work has focused upon in recent times.

This book is distributed in the UK directly through ROOMBOOKS, and is available on Amazon, and in Australia. We are also in conversation with Peter Foolen Publications, Eindhoven with regards further European distribution.



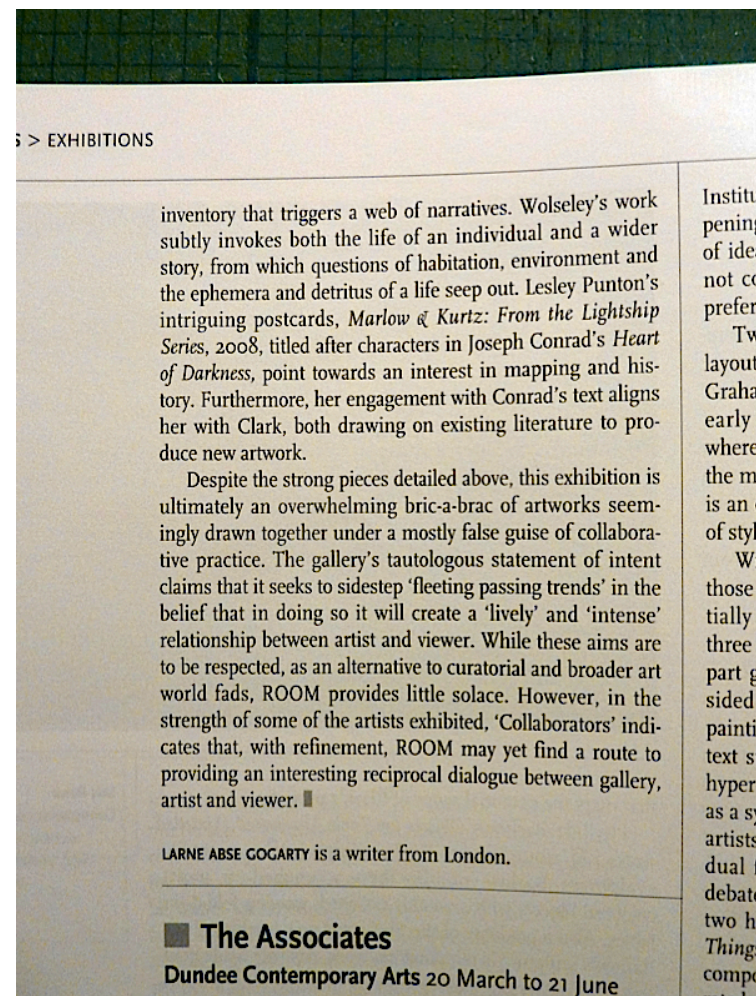
Pamphlet to accompany ROOM Collaborators



Front and Back covers of *Art Monthly*, Issue 326, (ISSN 0142 6702) which contains a review of *Collaborators*



Review of Collaborators by Larne Abse Gogarty in Art Monthly, Issue 326 ISSN 01426702





Exterior view of "back to the things themselves" (featuring the lightships series) for Glasgow International festival of visual arts, 2012

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Sandie Macrae & Tamsin Clark at ROOM,
London, UK

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Thomas A Clark, UK, for his essay *“on looking at
mountains”* in *Mountains without end*.

Alec Finlay, UK, for his poem *“Pataphysical
Cuillin”* in *“Mountains without end”*.

Dr David Watson, Sydney, Australia, for his
essay *“Walking as Knowing”* in *“Mountains
without end”*.

Katrina Brown & Glasgow International
Festival of the Visual Arts, UK

Larne Abse Gogarty, contributor, Art Monthly
London, UK.

Magdalena Chau, contributor, The Daily
Serving, USA & UK

Art Practical, San Fransisco, USA.