

BIBLIOTHECA

Edwin Pickstone

MS

Private view: Thursday 21 September, 6.30–9pm

Exhibition open: Friday 22 September 12–6pm,
Thursday 28 September 6–9pm, Friday 29 September 12–6pm

Biblioclasm is a large-scale site-specific print installation by Glasgow-based typographer Edwin Pickstone. Immersing the main hall of the Swiss Church in thousands of prints, it highlights the contribution that print has, and has had, on movements of social, theological, and political concern.

The installation takes as its source the Elizabethan tragedy *Doctor Faustus*, penned by Christopher Marlowe at the end of the 16th century. First performed between 1588 and 1593, the play describes the exploits of the titular character, Dr J. Faust, a fabled scholar who is highly successful yet dissatisfied with his life. In Marlowe's drama he makes a pact with the Devil, exchanging his soul for unlimited knowledge and worldly pleasures.

The play's emphasis on independent learning and the sin of pride links it to the Protestant Reformation – the schism from the Catholic Church initiated by Martin Luther – that marks its 500th anniversary in 2017. Characterised by the rejection of religious images and icons, the period saw the destruction of hundreds of iconographic books and artefacts. In conjunction, the development of the printing press at this time gave rise to the spread of written propaganda throughout Europe that caused new ideas, thoughts, and doctrine to be made available to the public. Pickstone's installation expands on these two contradictory impulses – one to destroy and the other to disseminate – and takes the title of Biblioclasm, meaning the extreme criticism or destruction of books.

The installation will be contextualised by a number of Pickstone's prints and artist's books, as well as a reading room presenting copies of *Doctor Faustus* and various readers on the play.

Focusing on the material nature of print, Pickstone uses letterpress equipment in his own work as well as collaborating with artists and designers on a wide range of projects. His work spans academic, artistic and design worlds, with particular interest in the history of typography, graphic design, print and the nature of the book. Recent collaborative exhibitions include *Printshop!* with Giles Round at Tramway, Glasgow (2016) and *blip blip blip* with Ciara Phillips at East Street Arts, Leeds (2015).

Pickstone lives and works in Glasgow. He is currently Tutor and Typography Technician at The Glasgow School of Art, where since 2005 he has cared for The Caseroom, the school's collection of letterpress printing equipment. He has spoken and exhibited internationally.

Biblioclasm is part of *Being and Appearing*, a programme of contemporary art curated for the Swiss Church in London by Kirsty White – beingandappearing.org.uk.

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