

Notes to the exhibition

## Some variations on a theme of Bob

Space Studios, London, 2011

25<sup>th</sup> March - 7<sup>th</sup> May

**Lawrence Upton**, curator

### General Notes

1. *Some of the exhibits shown here had been numbered by Bob Cobbing with a 2 digit code by Cobbing which, for the purposes of this exhibition, has been abbreviated "CobCode". It has no significance here; but it is retained in case subsequent users of this documentation find a significance in it. I believe it was purely arbitrary and denotative.*
2. *Lawrence Upton collated the superset of exhibits at Goldsmiths, University of London from where he attempted to raise funds to digitise Cobbing's work and otherwise preserve it. That attempt was unsuccessful, and the system was never applied to all the material; but the numbering system has been retained, at least for now, in case it proves at all useful. It is a 4 digit number, prefixed GC, for "Goldsmith's collection". (This is an ad hoc naming of items temporarily stored at and worked on at the college; and, long term, the items will not be in the possession of Goldsmiths, University of London)*

3. *Quarto is a paper size, now largely fallen from use, 10" high and 8" wide.*

*Cobbing used quarto widely, as well as foolscap and other paper sizes, before, more or less, standardizing on A4 and A3 with the rest of Europe.*

*Some of the works here were originally printed on quarto and then trimmed i.e. the "unused" paper around the image has been trimmed back. Where it is known that has been done, it has been noted (as "quarto trimmed" followed by the approximate dimensions after trimming)*

4. *The term "ink duplicator" and "ink duplicator print" can mean many things, some obvious, some not; here it is given, partly, as a basis for discussion and further work, as well as distinguishing ink duplicator work from photocopier work.*

*Cobbing sometimes used the term "monoduplicator print", where the mono seems to refer to the machine taking one colour at a time.*

*It is often extremely difficult to be quite sure if an image really came out of a duplicator as Cobbing used inky duplicator stencils to monotype on paper, not only pressing one on to the other but also by swinging one at the other so that they came into contact in varying degrees of collision. At least one example in the exhibition appears to have been produced as a monotype, albeit using a wet duplicator stencil.*

*The result, when dry, could be scanned, a process which tended to variance, a tendency he would wish to control and limit with benignity if he was particularly*

*keen on the image to be scanned. Having said that, he was also extremely interested in variations – witness the Destruction in Art series (examples included in this exhibition) and Spontaneous Appealinair Contemprate Apollinaire, and some implicit methodological elements of the Processual project and Domestic Ambient Noise*

#### Annexe

- from **Destruction in Arts series**, two  
quarto portrait. Ink duplicator print  
1966 [Cobcode: 10. GC: 0079]
  
- from **Destruction in Arts series**, four  
A4 portrait. Ink duplicator print  
1966 [CobCode: 12. GC: 0114]
  
- from **Destruction in Arts** series, five  
A4 portrait. Ink duplicator print  
1966 [CobCode: 13. GC: 0081]
  
- from **Destruction in Arts series**, one  
A4 portrait. Ink duplicator print  
1966 [CobCode: 9. GC: 0116]
  
- **e colony, a version**  
A3 landscape. Ink duplicator print  
1973 [GC 0083]
  
- **Poet Reading**  
A4 portrait. Photocopier output  
1986 [CobCode: 42 GC 0086]

- from **Poems for the North west Territories two (variation)**  
 quarto, portrait, trimmed: 9" high x 8" wide approx Ink duplicator output  
 1976 [CobCode: 29. GC: 0054]
- **T 21 t**  
 quarto, portrait, trimmed: 8.5" high x 7". Ink duplicator output  
 1976 [CobCode: 31. GC: 0055]
- **TYGER, One** from Song Signals, four  
 quarto, portrait, trimmed: 9" high x 7.5" wide  
 1971 - 72 [CobCode: 22. GC: 0094]
- from **Undum Eidola**  
 quarto, portrait, trimmed: 8.5" high x 7" wide. Ink duplicator output  
 1977 [CobCode: 32. GC: 0050]
- **Reversible**  
 quarto, portrait. Ink duplicator output  
 1976 [CobCode: 30. GC: 0056]
- **with our tongue our drills and quadras**  
 Commercial litho prints of Cobbing's colour photocopy and collage - the process would have been repeated, feeding back, until he was satisfied.  
 22 images, each approximately A6 portrait, spread over three panel ) + 2 additional page images from book  
 Probably made during 2001. Published by Cobbing very late in 2001 in a short print run as a *Writers Forum* booklet. Reprinted *Writers Forum* autumn 2010. 24 images including title and verso pages, each A6.  
 [GC0087, 0088, 0089]

- from **A Processual Double Octave, three**

A4 portrait; photocopier output

I have found it impossible to leave out Cobbing's Processual. It was only at a late stage that I excluded a summative display of part of **Domestic Ambient Noise**. Both are central to Cobbing's output; but **Processual** is largely, but not entirely, solo work rather than collaborative; and to exclude it entirely would be to offer a misshapen statement of Cobbing's work rather than the incomplete statement which is inevitable in an exhibition of this size.

1984 [CobCode: 36. GC 0049]

- from **A Processual Nonny-Nonny, two**

A4 portrait; photocopier output

1985 [CobCode: 37. GC: 0073]

- from **A Processual Nonny-Nonny, two**

A4 portrait; photocopier output

1985 [CobCode: 38. GC: 0092]

- from **Six variations on Typestract One, two**

Quarto landscape. Ink duplicator output.

1966 [CobCode: 8. GC 0099]

- **Dynamic Progress, two**

8" high x 7.75" wide approx. Monotype.

1951 [CobCode: 4. GC 0100]

- **Dynamic Progress, one**

8" high x 9" wide approx. Monotype.

1951 [CobCode: 3. GC 0105]

## ■ Cataclasm

quarto, portrait. Monotype.

1951 [CobCode: 2. GC 0108]

## Library shelves

### Top shelf left

- **Triptych** by Bob Cobbing; no date or title yet known; ink duplicator

Triptychs were a favourite form of Cobbing's and they even appeared in disguised form, as in his book Vispo for Eric (Writers Forum, 1995) where a series of triptychs run through the A4 saddle-stapled pamphlet with its diptych structure, creating a counterpoint

- **Triptych minus one** 1953 by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum July 2000 – actually his photocopy master for the run

### Top shelf right

- **A Winter Poem 1**, 1974 Writers Forum & privately distributed; ink duplicator; 2nd edition 2004; ink jet version by LU from his scan of an original – in the belief that ink jet gives the feel of ink duplicator better than laser.

Winter Poems became a regular item of Cobbing's output. This was the first, made in the print shop of the Consortium of London Presses, an umbrella organization created for the purpose of administering the print shop, at Earls Court Square

- Bob Cobbing / Ernst Jandl hand-made record cover by Jennifer Pike Cobbing for the one and only Writers Forum long playing record 1965
- Extra Verse 17 an essay by dsh with illustrative poems on Bob Cobbing – among the first critical commentary. 1966

- **Dptych** by Bob Cobbing; no date available but probably mid 1980s; no title yet known; Derek Beaulieu's No Press is publishing a limited edition in Canada during 2011

### Second shelves down

- **Hydrangea**; score by Bob Cobbing and Lawrence Casserley published by Writers Forum October 1985 (NB The much-used publication is disintegrating) + additional material prepared by Casserley & Colourscape leaflet from a memorial performance on 20th September 2003
- *Fylking* leaflet from 1968 regarding the text-sound festival that year, in which Cobbing featured prominently

### Third shelf down left

- A photocopy self-portrait
- A Cobbing performance running order
- A posthumous leaflet on Cobbing from British Library
- a glimpse of Cobbing's submission to the Eastern Arts' database 1986
- Robert Sheppard's collection of things Cobbing – with joke title. This photograph usually hangs on Jennifer Pike Cobbing's kitchen wall!
- National Poetry Centre press release from 1976 – written by Cobbing
- Home-made advertisement for Birdyak's Aberration record

### Third shelf down right

- double page (to be guillotined – there was a paper guillotine in the Cobbing kitchen) of fliers for the workshop
- photocopy treatment by Cobbing of a photograph of Bob Cobbing performing with Hugh Metcalfe

- single A5 [Writers Forum] Workshop flier
- photograph of Cobbing by Jennifer Pike Cobbing
- advertising leaflet for the celebration **bill jubobe** / **bob jubile** at ICA 1990
- photo by Jennifer Pike Cobbing of Bob Cobbing in his kitchen in front of his poem **Ulli's Sett**
- 4 workshop fliers

These fliers would be given out at performances, of which he did many, and even posted to regulars at the workshops at Cobbing's expense – nowadays workshop reminders are sent by email.

The fliers are works in themselves, reflecting either or both current publishing or performance activity or his pursuit of image ideas

#### Fourth shelf down left

- Triptych: **Undum Eidola** ink duplicator
- **J & F** Poem signed copy of an edition of 60; 22nd February 1971
- Two pages of manuscript

#### Fourth shelf down right

- from Cobbing's variations on his poem **Word row**
- A reasoned condemnation by Cobbing of the *Arts Council of Great Britain*. Increasingly the argument of *The Poetry Society* with the *Arts Council* occupied Cobbing
- An advertisement for the launch of Neutral Drums by Robert Sheppard and Patricia Farrell. Whatever happened, he kept publishing, getting to

500 titles by 1992; and then he speeded up.

- descriptive notes for a workshop to be given by Bob Cobbing, 1979
- A selection of posters advertising Cobbing's performances internationally is on the far wall
- 18 panels from **Ulli's Sett**

These 18 panels are from an original 20, a set dedicated to the poet Ulli Freer

The item has long since been out of print; and this set has been borrowed from the Cobbing kitchen wall.

Attentive gallery visitors will notice some honourable splashes on some of the images. There is a photograph of Cobbing in front of his work in situ on the other side of the room

### Back wall annexe

*NB Among the items following are some that are being called, curatorially, experiments. Of course, in some ways, everything in this exhibition is an experiment. In other ways, calling art "experimental" is saying almost nothing.*

*What is meant in this context is that one can see, or believes that one can see, Cobbing, the artist, watching what happens if he does something, a particular thing or things, technical or formal or both; and the artist's interest in the result -- without perhaps the artist knowing quite why it is being done and without being that sure what the result will be.*

*Of course, this is all curatorial construct and may, here, be wrong in particular cases; but it is proposed carefully and in good faith.*

*In each case of an "experiment" being designated, it has not been possible to identify a final outcome. That may reflect ignorance, poor memory, poor records -- or that there was no public outcome; but it is so as part of being so classified here.*

*That, no apparent or recorded outcome exists, would not mean that an image had been abandoned as a failure. Witness Cobbing's **Triptych minus one** (1953) -- exhibited in this exhibition -- which he finally published in July 2000, nearly fifty years later; sometimes he responded quickly to his own learning, and sometimes it manifested itself more slowly.*



*The discovery of an outcome to these “experiments” might change the way they appear to us, almost certainly would; but that’s ok, and I would welcome hearing from anyone who can throw further light on them.*

*There are also some items for which the title is unknown which are not designated experiments in this sense (trying to avoid the analog of the sometime anthropologists’ and archaeologists’ tendency to label anything unclassifiable as “sacred” or “ritual”) if there is no sign of the drive to find what happens when x is applied to or performed on y over and above or separate from the drive to make a specific work.*

*One may see a mixture of both in the forthcoming film of Bob Cobbing by Richard Tipping where, amongst other things, Cobbing effects a substantial part of the making of a black and white visual, on camera, on his photocopier.*

*It is anticipated that this film will be available via Writers Forum during 2013.]*

■ **red and fellow fibrillation**

14” high x 6” wide approx. Monotype

1950s [GC0121]

■ **untitled** or title no longer known

6.5” x 6” wide approx. Monotype

1950s [GC0136]

■ **untitled** or title no longer known

8.5” x 6.5” wide approx. Monotype

made as or just used as a greetings card by Bob Cobbing and Jennifer Pike Cobbing

1960s [GC0131]

■ **Picture sheet 1**

A4 portrait. Ink duplicator print

I can take a little credit for this piece in that I invited Bob to kick off what I hoped would be a series of visual works under the title “Picture Sheet”. In the event, he fulfilled the “commission” and took over the series name as the name of his own series.

I asked him to try to be “as representational as possible” without losing

the sense that the main purpose of the text was as a score for vocalization.

[GC0159]

■ **Picture sheet 3**

A4 portrait. Ink duplicator print

Included here as exemplary of Cobbing's development of the publishing "idea", still, it seems to me, exploring that border between representation and notation.

[GC0160]

■ **untitled** or title no longer known

11" x 9.5" wide approx. Monotype

1950s [GC0173]

■ **untitled** or title no longer known. experiment

10" x 14" wide approx. Orientation curatorial.

Colour photocopier output

1990s [GC0137]

■ **untitled** or title no longer known. experiment

9.25" x 12" wide approx. Orientation curatorial.

Colour photocopier output

1990s [GC0164]

■ **what the eye does see**

17.75" wide 15.75" high approx

Bob Cobbing & Jennifer Pike Cobbing

photograph. 1969 [GC0180]

- **untitled** or title no longer known. experiment  
A4 portrait. Orientation curatorial.  
Ink duplicator output. 1970s probably [GC0211]
  
- **Integration is not enough**  
12" x 8.75" approx. Ink duplicator print  
1966 [GC0051]
  
- 6 originals from **undum eidola**  
8" x 9.25" approx  
6 ink duplicator images  
1979 [GC0222]
  
- **self portraits with glasses**  
photocopier outputs  
2 x A4 portrait side by side  
1989 [GC0118]
  
- **stanza 1**  
8" x 9.75" wide. Monoduplicatorprint  
1969 [GC0120]
  
- **untitled** or title no longer known. experiment  
9.5" x 8.5" wide approx Orientation curatorial.  
collaged ink duplicator monotypes  
1960s – 1970s [GC0139]

■ items from **pattern of performance**

9.5" x 35" ink duplicator prints

1979 [GC0123]

■ **black and red.** experiment

14.25" x 10". colour photocopier output

Title curatorial. Orientation curatorial.

Date unknown, probably late 1990s [GC0157]

■ **tyger, two**

quarto, portrait

1971 – 72 [GC0140]

■ **Blotting Music**

quarto, portrait

This is the version published in Cobbing's book **Song Signals**

1972 [GC0142]

■ Portrait of Robin Crozier

foolscap, portrait; ink duplicator output

Crozier approached Cobbing – and many others – to make a portrait of him without Cobbing having seen him. The response, this response, makes explicit, one of Cobbing's working methods in the way that he collaged

1974 [GC0161]

■ **Blotting Music**

20.5" x 16.75"

photographic enlargement of previous item

1972-3 [GC0146]

■ **Portrait of Robin Crozier**

11" x 15". silk-screen

for and from: Ruby Editions Portfolio 2

1975 [GC0147]

■ **Computer-generated text: experiment**

16.5" x 11.5" approx. This orientation is curatorial

The title is curatorial; but it is a generic phrase that Cobbing often used to indicate this mode of work.

Generally, these images were initially printed on simple consumer printers, dot matrix or ink jet.

Some pieces have titles, but that is rare.

Even the text used as the cover image of Talus Number 4 Spring 1989 [ed Balzani et al] seems never to have been titled.

No date can be given with any certainty: mid to late 1980s, probably.

[GC0166]

■ **Computer-generated text: experiment**

16.5" x 11.5" approx. This orientation is curatorial

The title is curatorial. See previous entry.

Mid to late 1980s, probably. [GC0167]

■ **Computer-generated text: experiment**

10" x 11.5" approx. This orientation is curatorial

The title is curatorial. See previous entry.

Mid to late 1980s, probably. [GC0168]

■ **Computer-generated text: experiment**

9.5" x 7.25" approx. This orientation is curatorial. The title is curatorial. See previous entry.

Mid to late 1980s, probably. [GC0169]

- **Computer-generated text:** experiment  
 12" x 11" approx. This orientation is curatorial  
 The title is curatorial. See previous entry.  
 Mid to late 1980s, probably. [GC0171]
  
- **Computer-generated text:** experiment  
 14" x 10" approx. This orientation is curatorial  
 The title is curatorial. See previous entry.  
 Mid to late 1980s, probably. [GC0172]
  
- **Computer-generated text:** experiment  
 14" x 10" approx. This orientation is curatorial  
 The title is curatorial. See previous entry.  
 Mid to late 1980s, probably. [GC0174]
  
- **Computer-generated text:** experiment  
 10.5" x 8" approx + 11" x 8" approx. – two exhibits joined by two strings  
 by Cobbing. The title is curatorial. See previous entry.  
 Mid to late 1980s, probably. [GC0175]
  
- **Notes to a lecture: Changing forms in English visual poetry - the  
 influence of tools and machines**  
 2 sheets, 2 column A3 – notes with small versions of images that were  
 to be displayed for a lecture given in West Germany in the mid 1980s,  
 the notes published as a pamphlet in 1988 [GC 0111, 0112]
  
- **In any language**  
 quarto, portrait; ink duplicator output  
 1973

■ **Square Poem**

11.5" x 11.5"

1989

■ from **Beethoven Today**

quarto, portrait. Ink duplicator output

1970 [CobCode: 17. GC: 0074]

■ from: **GroupHon, one**

11" x 8". Ink duplicator output

1966 [CobCode: 5. GC: 0061]

■ **First duplicator print**

7" x 5" Ink duplicator output

1942 [CobCode: 1. GC 0095]

■ from **Six variations on Typestract One, one**

8" x 11". Ink duplicator output

1966 [CobCode: 7. GC 0097]

■ from **Run Runes (Two)**

quarto , portrait. Ink duplicator output

1974 [CobCode: 25. GC: 0078]

■ from **Run Runes (Three)**

quarto , portrait. Ink duplicator output

1974 [CobCode: 26. GC 0098]

## Vitrines

### General note

*In the case of published titles, a relatively brief description is given. Fuller bibliographical details will eventually be found in the Writers Forum bibliography, which is in preparation on behalf of the press by Marc Vaubert de Chantilly.*

*Many of the titles are, of course, now out of print and not easy to find; though many are still available at an affordable price, if you can find them; but Writers Forum is reprinting as much as possible and will also be willing to help to some extent to find items if it can.*

*As with the wall-based images, there is no complete story, chronological or otherwise; although here the exhibits are grouped more in that sort of way.*

### Vitrine 1

*[Most of the titles herein are by Bob Cobbing; but not exclusively. I concentrate on his press Writers Forum as a source of and frame for his work and influence; and, in showing late titles, show his influence continues.]*

- verbi visi voco: a performance of poetry; edited by bob cobbing and bill Griffiths assisted by Jennifer pike introduced by eric Mottram; cover by Jennifer Pike; 320 pages; perfect bound; Writers Forum 1992  
  
This was Writers Forum's 500th publication and includes the majority of those who had been published by the press – a sign of Cobbing's egalitarianism.
  
- WORD SCORE UTTERANCE CHOREOGRAPHY in verbal and visual poetry edited by Bob Cobbing and Lawrence Upton; preface by Cobbing; introduction by Upton and a further introduction by Robert Sheppard; perfect bound; Writers Forum 1998
  
- bill jubobe: selected texts of bob cobbing 1942-1975; bob cobbing; selected by bob cobbing & sean o'huigin; perfect bound. The Coach House Press, Toronto 1976. This is still the book for the gradual understanding of Bob Cobbing. If you can get a copy, use it as a flip book and watch the range of graphical forms he employed.



- bob jubile: selected texts of bob cobbing 1944-1990; bob cobbing; selected by bob cobbing & jeniifer pike; perfect bound; New River Project 1990. New River Project is one of Cobbing's enterprises. (His last residence is on a road which follows the course of the New River.) In this volume, he followed the form and design of the earlier book. They make a wonderful pair.

Going back to these books is, for me, like going to Blake's original volumes (or, in my case, reprints) and seeing what his intentions were. I do not regard the comparison as excessive or inappropriate. However, it should be borne in mind that in a number of cases Cobbing took the opportunity to show different aspects of a poetic idea as he took account of and fitted in with the form of the book he was making.

This book shape was followed by Etruscan Books in two subsequent volumes.

- Make Perhaps This Out Sense Of Can You

Catalogue to exhibition at University of Pennsylvania Libraries 2007

A measured and thorough document. Many have homed in on this poem title, the BBC did so in March 2011, and had their minor fun with it. This exhibition, based on Ruth & Marvin Sackner's collection of Cobbing's work, took it seriously.

Many have missed the point: the original was a headline in the local paper, and not a friendly one; but Cobbing calmly processed it into something interesting. The combination of the title with Cobbing's A Peal in Air makes the point for those who can perceive it

- with our tongue our drills and quadras by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum; 2001; 2nd printing 2010

This was one of Cobbing's last publications and it shows him crossing new boundaries. It is superb use of colour and excellent composition, raising questions and setting problems for the would be performer. It is the subject of a wall-mounted display in the exhibition and will be performed by Benedict Taylor (viola) and Lawrence Upton (voice) during the exhibition.

- Bob Cobbing and Writers Forum; edited by Peter Mayer; documentation by Bob Cobbing; 83 pages; third edition Writers Forum 2010

Originally this was the catalogue – Ceolfrith 26 – of the Ceolfrith Arts exhibition in Sunderland in 1974.

It was a very good exhibition, celebrating not just Cobbing's artistry but his collective, cooperative and collaborative approach, an approach he practiced, to the benefit of many, rather than just making pronouncements about it. The catalogue even reproduces images by other artists. The articles are valuable, nearly four decades on, including Cobbing's on notation and Mottram's thorough examination of Writers Forum in its first decade. And the documentation is invaluable.

In due course, Ceolfrith ceased to be and the catalogue sold out. Cobbing reproduced it as a Writers Forum title; but that too sold out. Last year, thanks to donation, we were able to reprint it; and that is the edition on exhibit, both an example of how important Cobbing is and how vibrant the Writers Forum that he founded remains.

- Destruction in art by Bob Cobbing; 24 pages; perfect bound; Writers Forum, 2004.

A sample of the work Cobbing did for the Destruction in Art Symposium of 1966

- London Poems by Martin Gubbins; 52 pages; perfect bound; Writers Forum, 2010; edited by Lawrence Upton

The return of Martin Gubbins to his homeland of Chile was a great loss to Writers Forum as a workshop; but it did, in part, lead to this extraordinary book of poems made in London, influenced by Cobbing and the workshop. Having said that, it is clear that he quickly found his own approach. That's how it was if you worked with Bob Cobbing.

In Chile, Gubbins founded foro de escritores, in honour of Writers Forum.

- Off the page (& back again) by Richard Tipping; Writers Forum, 2010.

From Chile to Australia. An Australian poet and artist; an admirer of Cobbing's work who is finishing a film about him in the 1990s. Cobbing published him towards the end of the last century; and WF is happy to continue the association. Richard is finishing a filmed interview and documentary on Cobbing which will be available via Writers Forum

- Louise Gate by Bob Cobbing; No Press, 2010

A small poem found magazine published by Cobbing in 1997 and apparently not reprinted thereafter.

No Press's editor / publisher, Derek Beaulieu, in Canada, agreed to produce a limited edition. Cobbing's work is still highly regarded there.

A Writers Forum edition will follow in due course.

- Collaborations for Peter Finch; by Bob Cobbing and Lawrence Upton; 64 pages; Writers Forum, 1997; 3rd edition, perfect bound, 2010

Included both to illustrate the sort of book that Bob Cobbing produced on his kitchen table, apparently effortlessly, using an office photocopier – and before that a Gestetner duplicator – and a stapler; and to illustrate the strength of Writers Forum nearly a decade after Cobbing's death, which is primarily attributable to his initial energy. This new edition, commercially printed, was made possible by donation.

- pitchblend by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum, July 30th 1994

- Kilties by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum; June 1991

- Black & White Minstrelsy Book One by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum

- Kikaku revisited by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum, 1998

- The congruence of speed and stall by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum; 26th December 1990

- Duppies by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum

- Type cast by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum, Christmas Day 1999

- Seventy Not Out: a day in the life of a computer by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum July 1990

- MOOL3Ghosts by Michael Basinski; Writers Forum, 2001; the last full calendar year of Cobbing's life.

Basinski's work "speaks to" and with Cobbing's and yet they're in some ways quite different. Cobbing reveled in the different and promoted Basinski's work.

- are your children safe in the sea? by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum 1998.

In one way this is just Cobbing keeping a favourite and important poem in print; but it is also reworking the image with new processes and new formats. The cover image had appeared in Bob Cobbing & Writers Forum in 1974, printed litho; this is a photocopy production and offers us a slightly different quality to the ink duplicator triptych shown in this vitrine

- Are your children safe in the sea?

Two fragments of Cobbing's 1966 visual triptych of his permutation poem, ink duplicator printed. He used to join the wings of his triptychs to the main card with adhesive tape; and after some decades it tends to fail. Two of three parts are here held together.

Separate from them, probably taken from another copy, is the third part; and it has been left affixed to its blue sugar paper. Cobbing would mount his work on material like this if that was all that could be done. It deteriorates; but serves its purpose at the time.

- Photograph of Cobbing's hands at work by Jennifer Pike Cobbing; no date

## Vitrine 2

- **(Soma) light song** by Bob Cobbing, 1980

Astonishingly skilful and imaginative ink duplicating

- Group H first published in 1966

an anthology of the group of that title, originally Hendon Experimental Art Club (in 1951)

- The Sacred Mushroom by Bob Cobbing

A book in an envelope. This was a favourite format of his for many years. It had many advantages and many disadvantages. In terms of advantages, it meant that he could publish on cards and not worry what order they went in; he could publish in one order and then change it; he could vary the materials upon which he printed; he could vary the size of pages within a publication

- Five Visual Poems by Bob Cobbing

Another book in an envelope

- Self-portrait with glasses by Bob Cobbing, 1989

Yes, they are clearly photocopy self-portraits. They are also scores for sound poetry.

- Members Only by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum, July 30th

- sign writing by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum, Dec 25th 2000: “dedicated to the memory of my father, Rob, who was a signwriter – and an ongoing inspiration to me in my work”

- Masquerade by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum, Dec 25th 1990

Cobbing liked to print and publish something on Christmas Day

- Kroklok 2

A magazine of tremendous influence, largely the product of dsh’s enthusiasm, but with Cobbing’s readiness to publish, which lasted for a surprisingly short time. It is policy of Writers Forum to have all 4 issues back in print!

- OW 2 by Bob Cobbing, March 1996  
 Cobbing notes on the back cover, under the ISBN and the date, “Published in the thirtieth year of the association of little presses” – he was always doing at least two things
  
- fuerteventura by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum, Dec 25th 1992  
 and he liked the “cheap and cheerful format that allowed him to produce an attractive and affordable book within hours of thinking of it
  
- Variations on a theme by Bob Cobbing, 1986  
 Cobbing reworking earlier monotypes with the photocopier
  
- Poetry into music by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum 1986
  
- Towards design in Poetry? for and by? Eric Mottram by Bob Cobbing  
 This extraordinary visual poem was made by collaging the marks left on the detritus of producing the publication of Eric Mottram’s Towards Design in Poetry.
  
- Clyde Dunkob in Vancouver by Bob Cobbing and P C Fencott, endorsed “Bob’s copy” and “Working copy”  
 Bob Cobbing and P C Fencott, Clive Fencott, went round a fair bit of North America together; and wherever they performed they produced a publication. It wasn’t always the best photocopying. The cover of this one comes from Bob Cobbing’s Girlie Poems
  
- Pieces of Poetry by Jeff Nuttall, first published 1966.  
 One story has it that Jeff Nuttall said to Bob Cobbing: “Why don’t we publish some books?” And Bob said: “OK”. And thus Writers Forum began as a publisher, with Jeff Nuttall as editorial advisor
  
- Six Sound Poems by Bob Cobbing, 1968

- Processual Quintet by Bob Cobbing, 1984  
Another book in an envelope...  
And the Processual project needs an exhibition to itself
- Cylinder Head by Jennifer Pike and Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum 25th December 1997
- Light Poem by Cobbing, Garnier, Keith, Lora-Totino and Tanabu.  
Published simultaneously in five countries. 1994
- Morris Dance by Bob Cobbing Christmas Day, 1998
- Far Cliff Babylon by Barry MacSweeney. "A short political poem", wrote Barry; "a little reggae piece". And it was to Writers Forum and Bob Cobbing that it seemed appropriate to send it.
- The Triumph of the Mobile: The Structure of Information, the language of Computers and Contemporary Poetry by Eric Mottram. Mottram early championed Writers Forum and he always had a publisher in Bob Cobbing.
- Inside the whale by Eric Mottram; Writers Forum, August 1970
- Processual Four by Bob Cobbing; Christmas Day 1983
- K7 by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum July 1998
- Variations on an Urban Theme by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum; April 2001
- Resonanzas by Bob Cobbing; Writers Forum July 1991

- Composition and performance in the work of Bob Cobbing: a conversation – cover shows Cobbing performing with David Toop at The Poetry Society
  
- And 4
  
- And 5
  
- And 9
  
- And 11
  
- And 12

*Copyright © except where otherwise stated Lawrence Upton 2011*

*Thanks to Sound Practice Research Unit, Goldsmiths, University of London*

*Thanks to British Library for permission to play their CD (NSACD 42) The Spoken Word Bob Cobbing; early recordings 1965-1973*

*Thanks to all truly involved in Writers Forum for their help, support and encouragement ([wfuk.org.uk](http://wfuk.org.uk))*