

# **Guy Begbie & Lawrence Upton**

## **Collaborative Works**

September 2012

### Notes to the show at Sheppard Library

Most but not all of the works are labelled inside the cabinets. Here is a complete list, by cabinet. At the end of the list there are some notes on the new items which are exhibited here for the first time and on one other . The new works are:

**Dialogue with Bob Cobbing 2012**

**Talking to Bob** maquette 2012

**Broch 2012**

**Broch cast 2012**

**Broch cast maquette 2012**

### Contents of the cases

Standing case furthest from desk

**Namely, 2011** (see note) – *top shelf*

**Talking to Bob maquette 2012** (see note) – *all other shelves*

Two Wall-mounted cases

**Dialogue with Bob Cobbing 2012** (see note)

Standing case nearest desk (left)

**Flotsam, 2010**

**Gardiner / Gardener, 2010**

**In dust, 2010**

**In dust 2, 2010**

**engine / house, 2010**

## Standing case nearest desk (right)

### **Contains itself, 2010**

**In fall, 2010**

**Foreshore, 2010** -- edition of 4

**Broch 2012** – (see note)

**Broch cast 2012** (see note)

**Broch cast maquette 2012** (see note)

**Porth cast, 2010**

## Notes on selected works

### **Talking with Bob** (maquette) 2012

In the first half of the 1950s, the late Bob Cobbing (1920 – 2002) was what we might now call an *arts activist* in Hendon.

The organisations which he co-founded and through which he worked included what later became Group H (painting), The London Film-Makers Coop (which lasted till near the end of the last century) and Writers Forum, an organisation which is still active today under the direction of Lawrence Upton. These organisations, and there were more, have been in various ways extremely influential and productive. At one time, they were all grouped under the name “Hendon Arts Together” of which Cobbing was the Secretary.

Cobbing was, amongst other things, a prolific maker and publisher of largely hand-made artistic books although he resisted the title *artists books*. His egalitarian approach ensured that they were available at consistently low prices. His craftspersonly invention ensured that he encouraged creative imitation.

His work has had a profound effect upon the art of Guy Begbie and of Lawrence Upton; and some of their new works are a tribute as we approach the tenth anniversary of his death (29<sup>th</sup> September).

**Talking with Bob** uses a multi-layered text of an account for Bob Cobbing and our half of a discussion with Bob Cobbing on what has happened since he died to his reputation and the organisations he founded; and what has been done in his name.

The layering has been accomplished via an algorithmic approach which determines, amongst other things, the colour of toner and angle of text. We have sought to use methodologies and technologies which would be recognisable to Cobbing; and many are in use in Cobbing and Upton’s long multi-section collaboration **Domestic Ambient Noise** (1994 – 2000). We have sought to avoid pastiche.

The original printing has been subjected to further interventions, including physical distressing, again using the inclusive and serendipitous approach developed in **D. A. N.** and already known to Cobbing from earlier collaborations, in which mistakes and misunderstandings are accepted and absorbed as a valid part of the creative system

employed.

The intention is to produce an installation in which prints of these texts, original and generated, form a collection of folios, a wall-suspended codex, printed on a variety of papers arranged spatially. (Much of the imagery, devoid of the specific physical attributes of our prints, can also be presented in conventional book and e-book form and some of it is scheduled for publication in a web magazine later this year.)

This maquette, spread over three shelves, is one of a series of experiments towards the realisation of the installation. This one uses only prints which have been crumpled and straightened out repeatedly prior to photocopying.

### **Dialogue with Bob Cobbing 2012**

20 separate paper structures across the two wall-mounted cases.

This arises from the same material for **Talking with Bob** but goes outside of what we believe would be directly sanctioned by his own work, solo or collaborative. We like to think that he would approve, but that is something else. The materials for both works have been developed in the same time frame and start from the same inputs as the other work; but they include the use of colour and of architectural shapes in ways which we think would have interested and pleased Cobbing greatly but which diverge from his making vectors. That is, we have tried to pay attention to what we have learned in the decade since his making ceased. We owe him a lot and much of what we do is a dialogue with our views of him and his work.

### **Broch 2012**

This book did not start out with its title; it had another which we have abandoned; but the broch concept was early part of our working concepts and has slowly taken over all the others until the book is now called *broch* whilst being something of a broch when opened out. The actual item is supplied flat, recognisably a book, but it is made so that it encourages one to present it as a curving form.

Brochs are iron age dry stone structures in Scotland which are not fully understood. Obviously all are in considerable ruin. The stone walls remain to various extent. The floors – one can see where the joists sat – and rooves have rotted away. Some archaeologists believe they had no rooves, but that seems unlikely.

In the middle of our book, hidden or as if hiding, there is a poem called Broch which reflects one view of what the structure might have been for and one state of mind it might have induced.

None of us fully knows what is listening. / And none tells now what is in truth wrong. /  
Because the walls are strong. We feel sure / light is dangerous, the dark much worse.  
We've seen, / when the door is blocked and we are at home. / Contraries engage; and  
those who are outside / fear that which is familiar to all. / Beware! Befriend all that would  
befriend you / hot from an unintelligent ailing, / playing words; and arguing: attack talk /  
troubled by a nature of nearest death.

Much of the imagery derives from manipulated prints of the lined text.

## **Broch cast 2012**

This is a cast in the sculptural sense, as opposed to the meaning of, for instance, our 2010 piece *Porth Cast*, on exhibit here, which proposes that something has been thrown into the sea at a landing place. This is a cement cast, made from a number of cardboard structures, found or made, which we used as maquettes to develop the images and shapes of **Broch**. Photographs of this cast also found their way into the book.

## **Broch cast maquette 2012**

As you look at this, you may say “But that's a piece of packing material” and you'd be right. It is, so far, a found object; and we rather like it for itself. That's why it's here for you to see. In due course, with or without further manipulation, it will be photographed; and then it will be used as a mould. Casting is a destructive process from the mould's point of view, but the cast will survive; and it, the cast, and or photographs of it, may find a way into future *broch* works or related pieces. [Recently, Guy has been visiting Sardinian nuraghic remains, and Lawrence has been looking at Cornish and Scillonian entrance graves.]

## **Namely, 2011**

And that brings us, perhaps, to **Namely** which is not such a new work and has been exhibited a number of times already. It derives its name from a visual poem by Lawrence Upton called **NAMELY for Peter Manson** (actually a set of sets of poems, one of which was taken as a score for a text-sound composition by Upton and John Levack Drever commissioned by Contemporary Poetics Research Centre, Birkbeck College, London in 2009)

Begbie reworked Upton's images (which are transformations of the letter shapes of Peter Manson's name) and then those reworked images were reworked collaboratively by Begbie and Upton. From that, the book was realised over several months. Although it packs down to the size of one volume of a print encyclopaedia, it opens out to cover up to thirty square feet and was shown that way in 2011 at Center for the Arts, Buffalo, USA. In that form one sees that it contains within itself representations of ruinous rooms, corridors, stairs, windows and rooves, all written, as it were.

There is no one arrangement that we consider correct. The book itself is a starting point for many possibilities.

In our later piece **namely unnamed**, not exhibited this time, we revisited the same material (as reworked) to produce 21 separate paper structures, the formal idea which led this year to **Dialogue with Bob Cobbing**.

Lawrence Upton & Guy Begbie, September 2012