

Anagrammatical and homemade

*Deluxe editions of collaborative works emanating from an East End house. By **Cathy Courtney***

Newfoundland

Romilly Saumarez Smith, Verdi Yahooda and Bryan Appleyard

Mile End Press, 40pp, subscribers' edition 1-10, £3,500 (boxed), special edition 11-100, £250 (modern vellum), standard edition 101-300, £60 (linen)

This book of photographs is a container of secrets. The spine gives no content clue, the title is partially hidden under Japanese tissue in the special edition and appears subtly on the cover of the standard version. No one admits authorship, and it is only on the last page but one that a cast list is revealed. This includes the jeweller Romilly Saumarez Smith, the artist Verdi Yahooda and the writer Bryan Appleyard.

Saumarez Smith and the theatre designer David Fielding share a love of anagrams, and their word games have infiltrated Newfoundland, subtly articulating its themes of loss, rediscovery and rearrangement. Meticulously crafted, Newfoundland has a visual purity suggestive of deep seriousness, yet is delivered playfully. The bookbinder Charles Gledhill, Rob Hadrill of Book Works, the artists and typographers Nicola Barnacle and Daniel Edwards, and the printer Ben Craze of ArtQuarters Press are the other key players. Gradations of colour – for both images and typeface – and questions of placing, weight and texture have been minutely controlled throughout.

Another ingredient is the 1742 house on the Mile End Road in east London, in which Saumarez Smith lives and which has now given rise to Mile End Press. When she and her family moved in nearly 20 years ago, the building was in dire need of rescue. Much of the restoration was achieved physically by Saumarez Smith, who became familiar with every detail of its fabric. Her vision for the house is all of a piece with her former

role as a bookbinder and her subsequent work as a jeweller. Working in the building, all the Newfoundland contributors are certain that its character influenced their designs.

It is the floorboards of the house that Yahooda has chosen as a backdrop for Newfoundland's first series of 16 photographs. The texture of the boards means that the viewer must sometimes search quite hard to find the objects placed on them, a process that mirrors the return to the surface the objects themselves have undergone previously. They are remnants of lost Roman and Tudor artefacts unearthed by 21st-century treasure hunters waving metal detectors; of no value to the finders because they are not made from precious metals, they are sold cheaply on eBay. Saumarez Smith is a keen buyer, recognising their potential for combining with new materials to create fresh pieces.

Echoing the style of 1930s specimen catalogues in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, each photograph is captioned "Found at", followed by an exotic and unknown place name. It is here that the anagrams come into play, as each imagined place is a rearrangement of the titles Saumarez Smith chose for Yahooda's images. (There is a key to the anagrams at the back of the book.) Appleyard's essay acts as a bridge between the floorboard images and Yahooda's second series of richly glossy photographs, which foreground in sharp definition a selection of the found objects now transformed into Saumarez Smith's finished jewellery.

A further excavation is embodied within the bespoke container for the subscribers' edition. The case contains both standard and special editions of Newfoundland and, beneath these, a compartment in which one of Saumarez Smith's jewels hides.

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