

Artists' Books

In the Public or Private Domain

Cathy Courtney

Under Pressure, Tim Staples, Open edition,
£175

SK329858, Tony Kemplen, published by the
artist in collaboration with Sheffield Hal-
lam University of Art and Design, edition
of 100, £10

Rex Reason, Simon Patterson, Book Works,
1994, 1 870600 13, edition of 2,000, £6.
Limited edition of 10 h/b copies num-
bered and signed by the artist

Surface Reading: A Hair's Breadth, Jane
Mulfinger, Unique, £1,200

The Eagle, Chloe Cheese, David Eyre,
Michael Belben and Emma Hill, Eagle
P.H. and Dinosaur Press, 1994, edition of
100, £125

In contrast to Patterson's formulation, Jane Mulfinger's *Surface Reading: A Hair's Breadth* trades in the barely visible. For a start the texts she uses are in braille – surfaces which the seeing eye 'reads' as textures but which yield secrets to the touch of the blind. Secondly, the books are bound in perspex boxes, their stories anyway out of reach of both eye and hand. The braille editions of both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Crime and Punishment* run to seven massive volumes each and Mulfinger has placed the works on opposite sides of a sturdy pair of scales where they conduct a delicate dance of equivalence, moving between the hair's breadth of her title. Seeing these classic works extended to such length and size it is impossible not to be struck again by the extraordinary 'weight' of intellectual achievement contained inside at the very moment that we witness them float airily, their movement contained within a fraction of an inch. The Royal National Institute for the blind, which publishes the braille editions, uses 'Helping Blind People To See A Future' as a slogan on its covers and the overall title of Mulfinger's highly emotive piece and the books she has incorporated leave one wondering which of us counts as a seeing person.

Mulfinger's work was on show at the Mayor Gallery, London in July, a rare month in which book works were to be glimpsed at more than one Cork Street gallery simultaneously. In Farringdon Road, the Eagle Gallery confirmed its commitment to artists' books with the publication of *The Eagle*, a collaboration between the landlord (in the form of the pub) and the gallery. More relaxed than any of the work reviewed above, *The Eagle* continues the Dinosaur Press' admirable tradition of simple bindings and further confounds those in search of a