

airspacegallery

ERS CLAPTON

WESTLIFE

OUR STORY

WH

CENTURY  
KATIE PRICE  
*Love, Lipstick and Lies*

MICHAEL  
BARRYMORE

# FOOLS RUSH IN

JOHNSON REAR ART VC  
barefoot soldier sphere

CLARE  
SHORT HONOURABLE  
DECEPTION?

A SOLO EXHIBITION BY

## LEIGH CLARKE

22 APRIL TO 28 MAY 2016

JEREMY KYLE

*Ruby Keesh* absolute beginner

PHIL VICKERY

Choir Gareth Malone

ARTS COUNCIL  
GLASGOW  
FUNDED

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ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND

stoke  
on trent

# FOOLS RUSH IN

22 April to 28 May 2016  
Public Preview: 22 April 6.00 to 9.00pm

Fools Rush In is a solo print exhibition, exploring the autobiography and in particular how a contemporary ubiquity of its form has almost completely obliterated any sense of value, distinction and esteem.

Leigh Clarke's work deconstructs popular and mass manufactured autobiographies that he collects from second hand shops and markets. He is interested in a consumerist obsession with premature legacies and fabricated life stories that often form the foundations of these books, against genuine heroic endeavours and achievements.

Most of the books the artist purchases are unread and originally bought as token gifts, culminating in stacks of unwanted literature of other people's lives. Fools Rush In is taken from the subtitle of Stoke-on-Trent born Anthea Turner's autobiography.

Clarke is concerned with the ever-increasing inequality gap in the UK and how the media use celebrity hero worship as a means of keeping people apathetic. He dissects the books, leaving only the embossed spine which he then paints and applies printmaking ink to. This process of working removes any hierarchy or status between the famous personalities, creating equality through the process of making.

For his project at AirSpace, Clarke has also worked with students on the BA Fine Art course at

Staffordshire University to locate and collect every autobiography to be found in charity shops across the six towns of Stoke-on-Trent. These discoveries will also become the subjects and material for the exhibition.

Additionally, to act as a counter to the celebrity culture which these glossy autobiographies represent, and to celebrate the life stories of local people in Stoke-on-Trent, we have invited six local writers to ghost write a limited edition of autobiographies about local heroes. As a close to the exhibition, a book signing will take place allowing the public to meet the writers and their subjects. The books will be available to buy on the evening.



Caption

Leigh Clarke is engaged in a multidisciplinary practice that employs mass manufactured objects or mass disseminated slogans to make singular political statements. His research has been generated through printmaking, performance, painting, letterpress, publishing and curating. He has tackled subjects such as the Michael Jackson trial and it's relationship with the War on Iraq; Fathers For Justice; crime in Norway; the local press in Hackney; political fancy dress masks and the Yewtree investigations on Jimmy Saville and it's link to the Gill Sans typeface.

Leigh Clarke is an artist and lecturer at The London College of Communication and Print Tutor at the Royal Academy. His concern with public engagement through art practice has led him to curate projects at Lokaa1 01 in Brecka, LCC, The Portman Gallery London and Extrapool in Nijmegen. In 2010, he was commissioned by Lokaa1 01 to exhibit 10 banners outside the Museum of Brecka in reaction to the Pope's denial of child abuse within the Catholic Church. In 2012 he was selected for the London Open at the Whitechapel Gallery where he exhibited 30 plaster casts on scaffold poles of the negative spaces within political latex fancy dress masks. His recent letterpress works use the Gill Sans Typeface designed by Eric Gill and used by the BBC in their logo, to display comedic slogans of celebrities involved in the Yewtree investigations.

## Additional Events

**The Artist Soup Kitchen**  
Whose Image is it Anyway?  
with Mishka Henna

Artist, Mishka Henna, shortlisted for the Prix Pictet in 2014, awarded the ICP Infinity Award for Art and shortlisted for the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize in 2013, will be the guest presenter at the next instalment of this popular and enduring series of critical discussion events. For this Soup Kitchen, we'll be exploring issues around authorship and appropriation, copyright and "copy-wrong" and ownership and intellectual property.

For full details on dates and times and how to book your place, please visit [www.airspacegallery.org](http://www.airspacegallery.org)



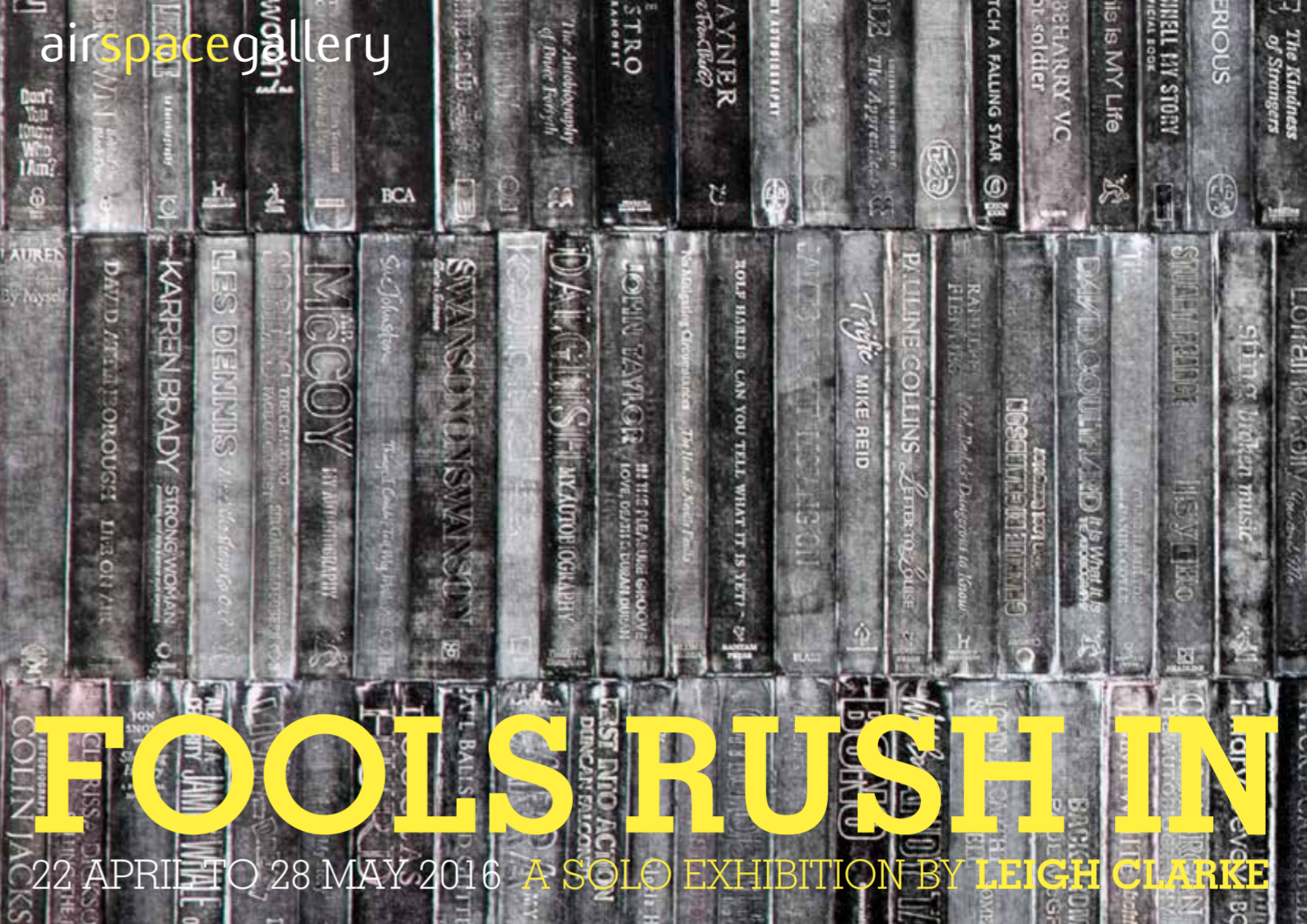
Caption

**Fools Rush In - The Book Signing**  
27 May 6.00 to 7.30pm  
The Resource Room at AirSpace Gallery

Timed to coincide with the end of the main exhibition, this event will see the launch of the Fools Rush In Autobiographies – a set of six mini-autobiographies by writers, Tim Diggles, Fred Hughes, Kat Boon, Misha Harwin, Dave Proudlove and Rianne Shelley, celebrating the lives of six ordinary 'heroes' from Stoke-on-Trent. This book signing will be a chance to meet the authors and their subjects and get your own signed copies of these special limited edition autobiographies.

**Fools Rush In - The Undergraduate Exhibition**  
22 April to 7 May 2016  
The Resource Room at AirSpace Gallery

Running alongside the main exhibition, this complementary show results from a workshop undertaken by Leigh Clarke with members of Level 5 Fine Art at Staffordshire University. Led and curated by Amy Matthews and Rachel Kennedy, the exhibition will feature individual responses by the group to the main exhibition theme, and the workshop activity, which saw the bartering for, and acquisition of, over 50 autobiographies from the six towns of Stoke-on-Trent's many charity shops.



# airspacegallery

**AirSpace Gallery** is a collaborative, artist led project in Stoke-on-Trent, providing professional development opportunities, studio and exhibiting space and support for artists and curators. Currently, particularly concerned with issues surrounding collaboration and partnership working and a relational relevance with its location and the socio-political landscape, AirSpace Gallery brings critical, high quality contemporary art to the region through a dynamic and evolving programme of exhibitions, residencies and public realm activities.

**Visit** AirSpace Gallery  
4 Broad Street  
City Centre  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST1 4HL

Open during exhibitions  
Thursday to Saturday  
11.00am to 5.00pm  
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If you want something to happen Anthea, that's what you said...

A text by Claire Potter

When she exploded on television.

That's not something I can explain satisfactorily. I'd not a bit of sympathy for her before the accident; I was completely indifferent. I vaguely knew she was on the television – this wasn't some teenage fan scenario.

The children were home. My wife was at work. We shared the summer holidays, my wife and I, the child care, I mean. They were running around the coffee table. Chasing each other, sweating. Everything was hot, hottest June on record, we had the ceiling fans on, the windows open. That's what started the commotion off, running after blasted flies, screaming up and down the stairs, racing round the table. I had an empty glass jug I was bringing in from the patio. I'd had enough of the pair of them. In and out, in and out, the noise. I turned on the television. I thought it might calm them, give them some focus and I'd get some peace and quiet.

The explosion. I saw her burning on the floor.

I was standing no further than I am sitting from you now. The remote control was in my hand, I pressed standby – Monica was always on at me for leaving the set on standby. I'm sure she doesn't give a shit what I do now, but there you go – the picture strengthened and there she was: Saturday morning TV, sitting, swinging her legs either side of the platform like a teenage girl. It was a loading van, one of those with the controllable platform, you know, for moving furniture – something a delivery company might use – swinging her legs either side of the platform, in yellow. Was she wearing yellow?

I remember her in yellow for some reason. Maybe it was the hair – her whole head was like a child's drawing. Blonde spikes sticking out at all angles from her smiley round head. Choppy, is how they ask for it in the hairdressers, choppy layers. My wife's had it before. That caught fire too.

If you want something to happen, that's what she said before the motorbike burst through. Black sugar paper they had taped over the van. Sugar paper – this is BBC we're talking about – taped over the back of the van. I don't know how that passed the health and safety officer. Sugar paper. Then she caught fire. If you want something to happen that's what she said! Then bang, she blew up. Stranger than fiction; the whole thing is... the way she spoke into the microphone seems so – I don't know how best to talk about this.

Her speech was slow, deliberate, you know. I remember her saying the words very deliberately into the microphone. It was a foam microphone, bulbous. The corner of the metal platform stuck out from between her legs, jutting out like this – quite shiny between her thighs. They were live, rolling, she was looking right at me. There must have been some confusion when they called action. She started burning.

She was never out the papers.

The children stopped watching. I vaguely kept track in the magazines. I'm not one of these celebrity hounds. I don't care about bake-offs and Big Brother's House. I'm a serious man. I care about my wife and children. Cared. I mean, I still do –

The way she fell to the ground.

She didn't fall.

No. I can't explain how she ended up on the floor, not fully, not in a way that is satisfactory. There must have been a mistake. That's all I can say. I think she won a court case about it.

Television on. Swinging legs, white trainers. Sliver triangle between her thighs. Microphone head, mouth. Blonde spikes. If you want something to happen. The motorbike revved, the wheels ripped through the paper. Smoke, flames, hunched over – her shoulder was on fire. Nobody came to help her! Hunkered down is the best way to describe it, then she keeled off the platform, smacked onto the concrete; smoking like a sack of, well, like a burning body. Awful. And the bike sped off too! Then I dropped the jug on his head.

I dropped the jug of water on my son's head.

He passed out. I called an ambulance. There's documentation.

I was found in her front garden because the police were called your honour!

I'm just telling you what happened. Nothing I say now will make a blind bit of difference.

We ended things, Monica and I. Since that time, I mean Julian's head was – things between me and my wife have always been, difficult. Perhaps things were sour before that day. We'd stopped sleeping together at some point. Oh what's the point in dredging it all back up, Julian had his stitches, his head healed and my dearest filed for divorce – good riddance, say I!

I joined the Reader's Digest Dating you know, a few months back now. That's how I heard about the programme, that she was back on the television. She divorced that prat. I read it in the paper.

Correct. I drove from Altrincham down to Surrey in the dead of night to stand in her front garden because she was single.

I'm not being. Those are the things I did. But not because she was single. Listen, I can't explain my actions here any better than I can explain them to myself. But there must be an explanation. There just must be an explanation, I mean, surely, if other people want one!

There isn't one. There are no explanations.

I watched the explosion video on the internet. Not hard to find. I watched it. I didn't go there to convince her to run away with me if that's what you're thinking: Oh! My darling! No, I went to talk to her. There were some things I need to clear up about the explosion, the sugar paper, the way she fell, you know. I had to tell her about Julian's head.

I thought she'd understand. She'd been there at the time, in a way, as a much as a smouldering heap can be. Do you want to know something else while you're asking? That's how I've felt these last years: a heap. A nude heap lying among the ruins of my manhood, crying – fifty-eight years of age and crying – on Anthea Turner's front lawn.

An AirSpace Gallery commissioned text as part of its commitment to creative writing in the Arts.

Claire Potter is an artist writer from Merseyside who works with modes of reading and speaking. More information on Claire's published, live and audio works can be found at [www.clairepotter.net](http://www.clairepotter.net)