

EDMUND CLARK

IN PLACE OF HATE

IKON, BIRMINGHAM
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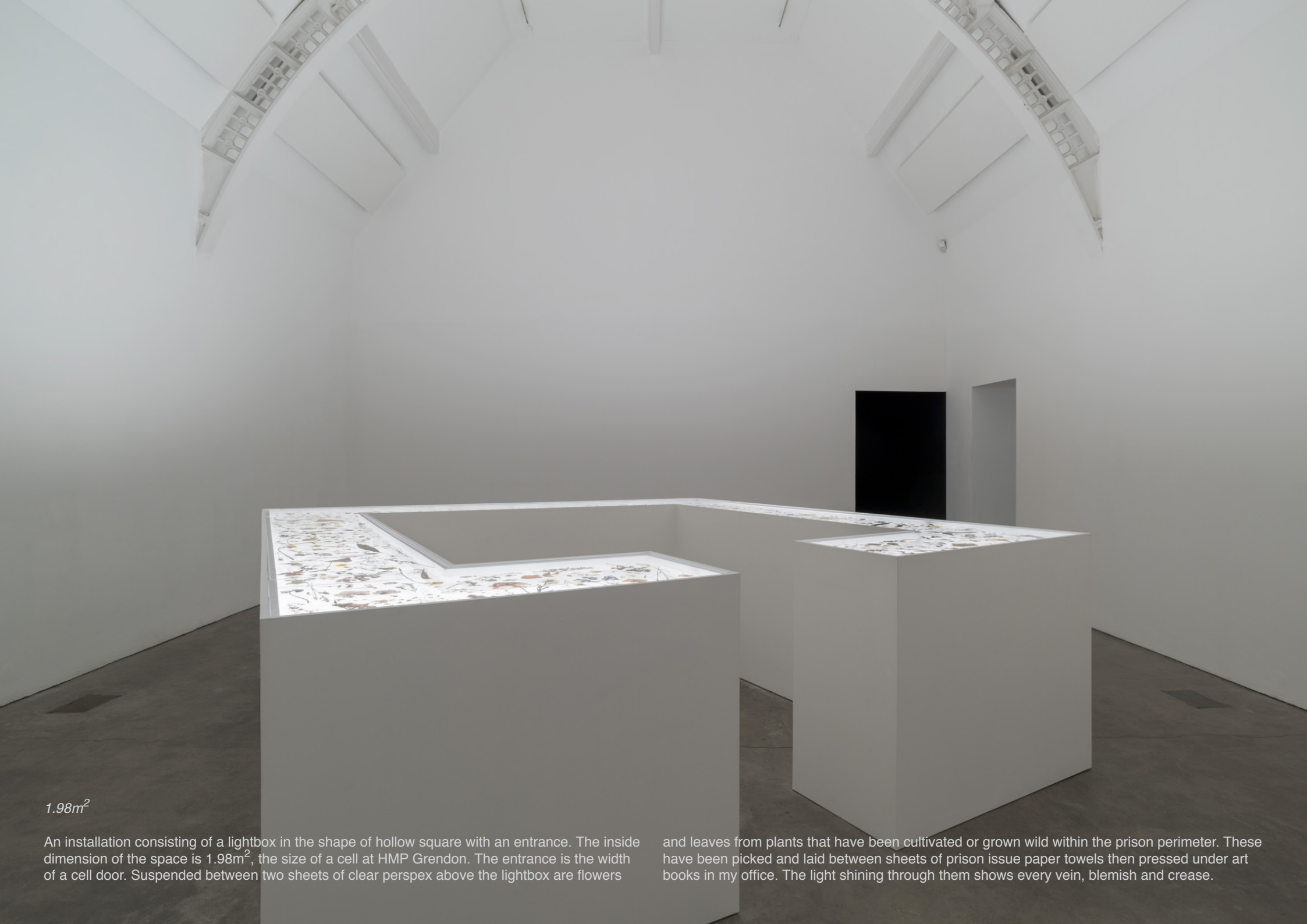
In Place of Hate

An exhibition of work made by Edmund Clark over three years as artist in residence in HMP Grendon, Europe's only wholly therapeutic prison, specialising in the rehabilitation of violent and sexually violent offenders. Men apply to be sent to Grendon from within mainstream prisons to undergo an intense process of group therapy and self-revelation.

Living in communities of about 35 they share and attempt to understand their criminal narratives and personal histories, often of abuse, addiction and disorder. They have roles of responsibility in the community and must hold each others' behaviour to account every waking hour when they are out of their cells.

This work has been shaped by the men, staff and the intense therapeutic processes and experiences at Grendon; and by the environment of the prison. It explores notions of visibility, transformation, trauma and self-image in the context of the reductive binary of good and evil that characterises discourse about criminal justice.

The residency, exhibition at Ikon and accompanying publications were made possible with the generous support of the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust.



1.98m²

An installation consisting of a lightbox in the shape of hollow square with an entrance. The inside dimension of the space is 1.98m², the size of a cell at HMP Grendon. The entrance is the width of a cell door. Suspended between two sheets of clear perspex above the lightbox are flowers

and leaves from plants that have been cultivated or grown wild within the prison perimeter. These have been picked and laid between sheets of prison issue paper towels then pressed under art books in my office. The light shining through them shows every vein, blemish and crease.









Vanishing Point

A multi-screen installation of slow, portrait orientation videos shot on a standard 50mm lens showing circular or repeated journeys made by prisoners and staff around prison gardens, exercise yards and along the long corridors running through the prison. The films vary in length from one to several minutes. They play in turn during the duration of the longest video, an eighteen minute journey, never made by prisoners for security reasons, around the entire inside perimeter fence. These films have been redacted where necessary for security.

Oresteia

A film inspired by psychodrama, one of the main creative therapies in the prison where inmates respond to characters from Aeschylus's three part tragedy 'The Oresteia.' The prisoners identify with the characters, played by the psychodrama staff, as perpetrators, victims or witnesses in a process of catharsis, central to the role of Greek tragedy. All the characters are masked; for the necessary anonymity of the men and as part of the customary presentation of dramatic personae

in Greek drama for the staff. The interaction between the participants combines accepted representations of violence in high art and the unheard narratives of serving prisoners. Filmed on three cameras, the two closer angles had to be redacted after viewing by the Ministry of Justice. The film is shown on three monitors placed on a circle of the blue chairs seen in the film; the same chairs and configuration that the men and staff use during group therapy.

<https://vimeo.com/257475593>









My Shadow's Reflection

Comprises three types of photograph: architectural images from around the prison; photographs of pressed plant matter from inside the prison on a lightbox; images of the men made with a pinhole camera. The pinhole images are made in a group situation where men take it in turn to stand before the camera and talk in response to questions from me and other men in the room about why they are at Grendon, their past lives and their experiences of prison. Each exposure takes about six minutes. Prison Officers and members of the therapeutic staff also took part in making images of themselves

<https://vimeo.com/257476562>



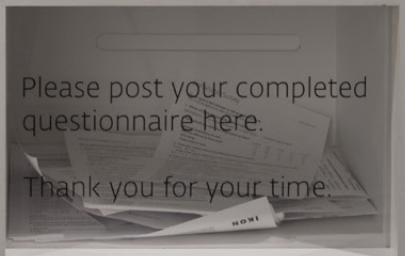
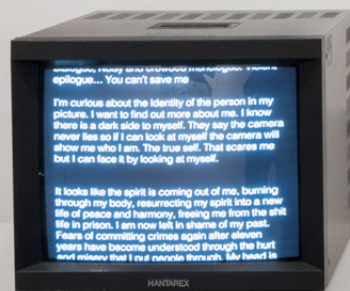
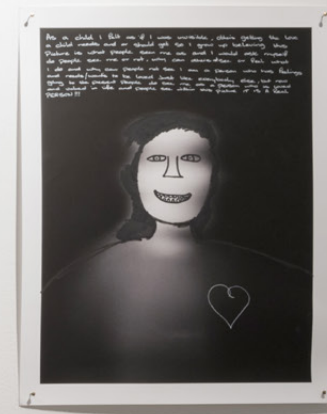
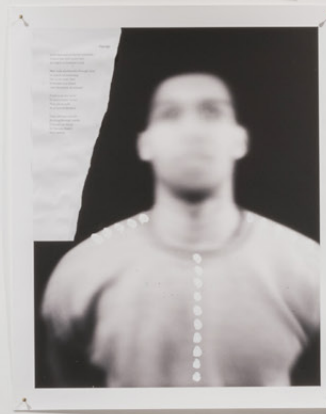
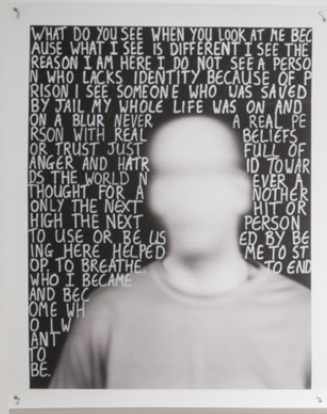
The men then respond to the image of themselves in terms of what they think it says about them, what others may think of the image and if it represents any aspects of the experience or process of therapy at Grendon. The title comes from one of these responses. Their words appear scrolling down the screen of a monitor accompanying the images.

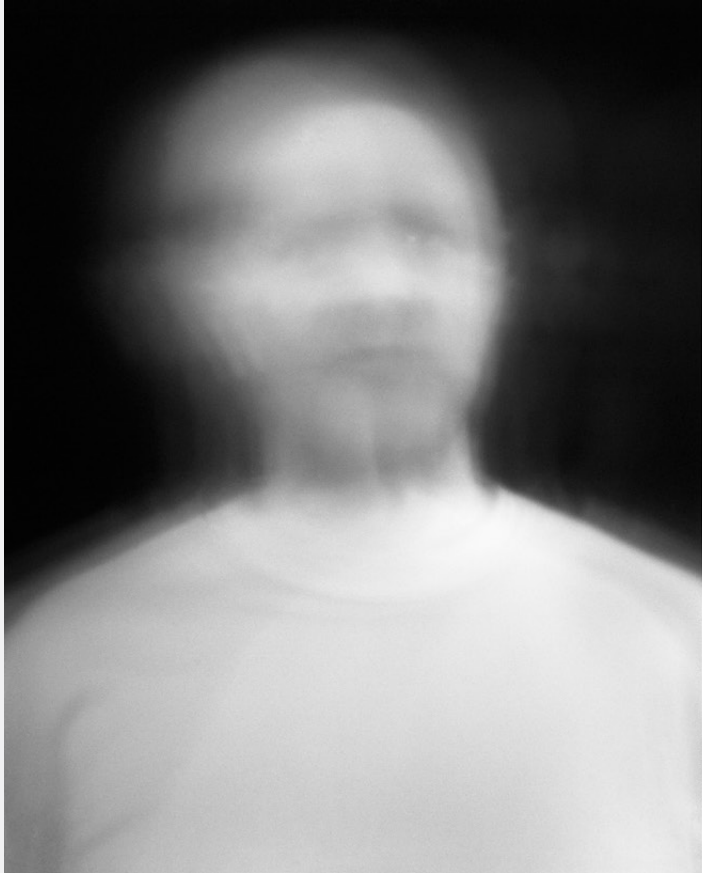
The men's words and images, together with the plant and architecture photographs also comprise a stand-alone artist's book with the same title. Copies of this have been given to the men and staff who took part and sent to decision makers and opinion formers involved in criminal justice.



As a six projector installation the images are projected onto and through green bed sheets the men sleep between locked behind a door during what is described as 'hard lock up'. The night time of reflection on talking and hearing about the damage you did to someone and of what was done to you; of seeing those images of yourself. Of hearing what those you live with and have to

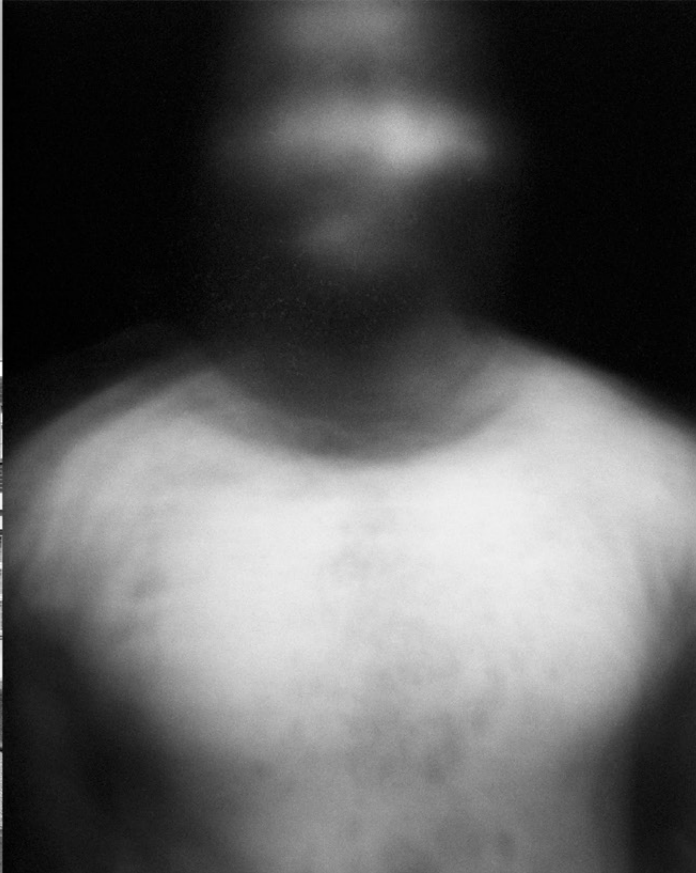
tolerate did to others; of what they have exposed to you of their episodes of violence, abuse and neglect. Prison officers and staff talk, in turn, about their images in relation to the experience of working in Grendon.





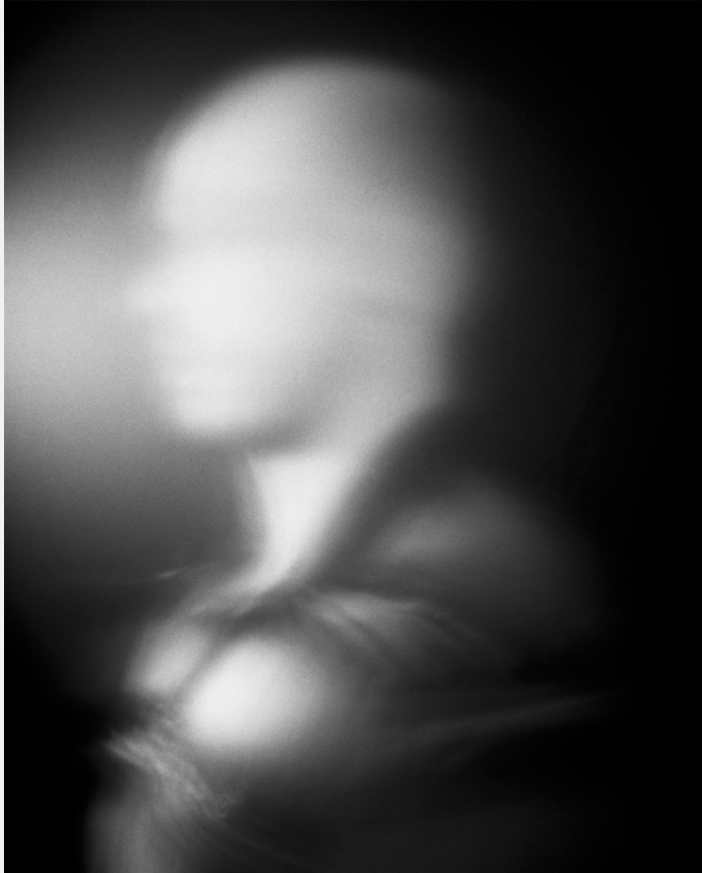
‘I hate myself because I’m a murderer. Once you kill someone that’s it, you change your life, you’re alienated from the world. I know you who are looking at this picture would hate me just because I’m a murderer. It’s so sad. I didn’t go out to kill anyone. I went out to go to work.’

‘It’s the best photograph of me ever, it’s amazing. It’s like you are looking through me but you can see the warmth of my body or my organs or the energy inside me, like a heat recognition camera. I’d like people to see me as a normal person. There is nothing in this photograph to identify me as a prisoner. I’d like them to see the essence, the spirit, the warm energy inside me.’



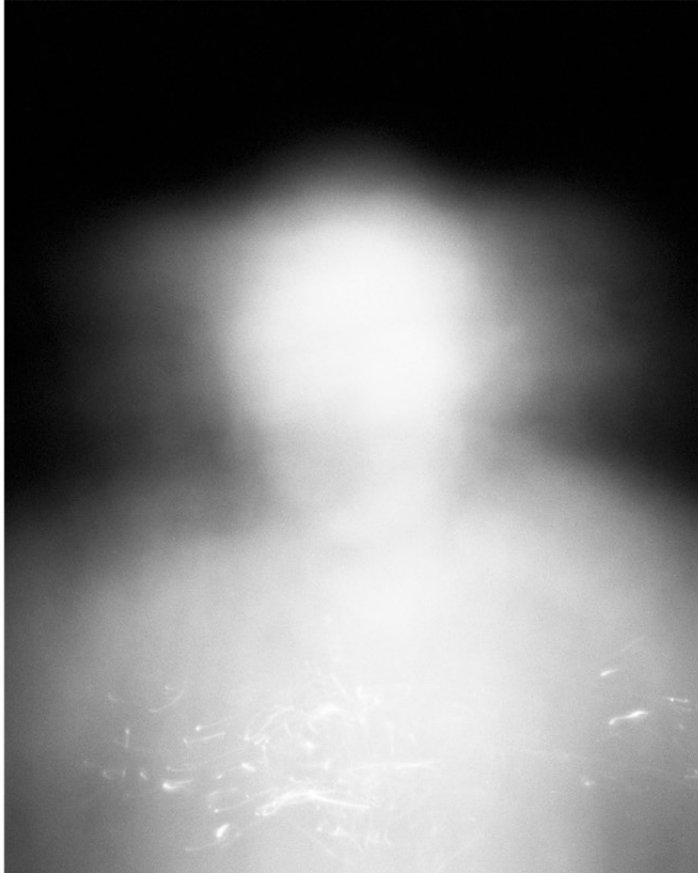
‘It’s someone who is stripped of their identity and lost in the cogs of the system. A faceless deviant offender who is part of people’s nightmares. I’m devalued to the point where I don’t deserve to be human. It makes me feel really angry looking at it.’

‘I think it is an apt image of me. It says exactly how I feel the general public see us. We are a faceless, forgotten part of society. That attitude perpetuates our responses. Treat us as scum and we behave like scum. If I’m irrelevant why should I behave any differently. In reality we are all somebody’s son, father and brother with emotions and feelings who just made mistakes in life.’



‘I see someone that is nowhere, in limbo. You who are a looking could offer to help that person and pull them into focus or push them away into the darkness. It looks like a ghost of me. Or a lost young boy looking for help. I can see the pain.’

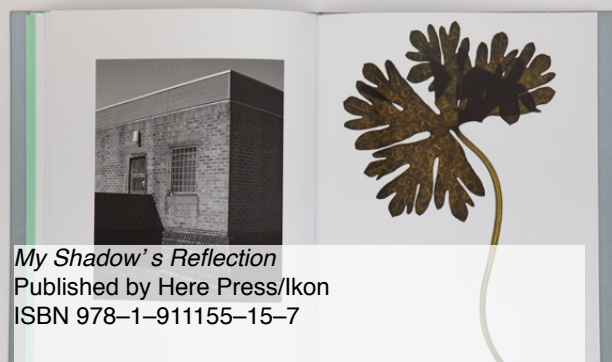
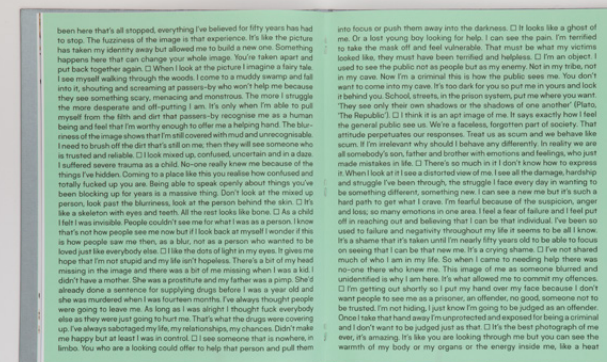
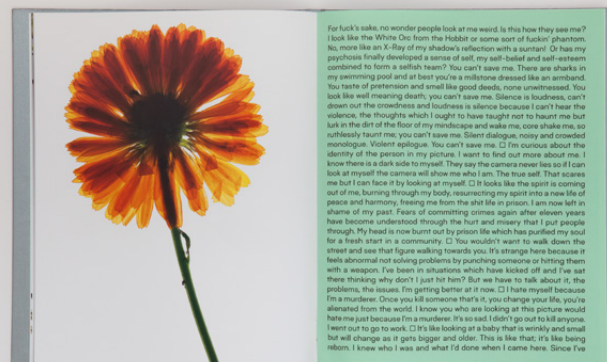
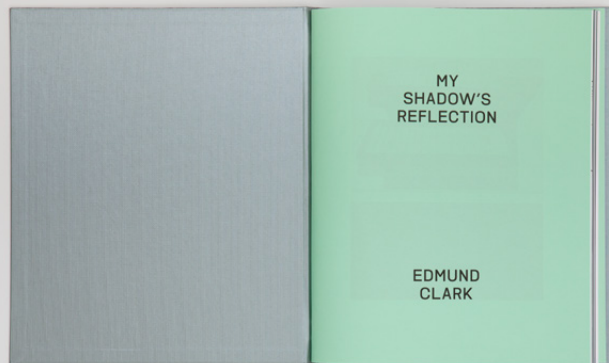
‘I’m terrified to take the mask off and feel vulnerable. That must be what my victims looked like, they must have been terrified and helpless.’





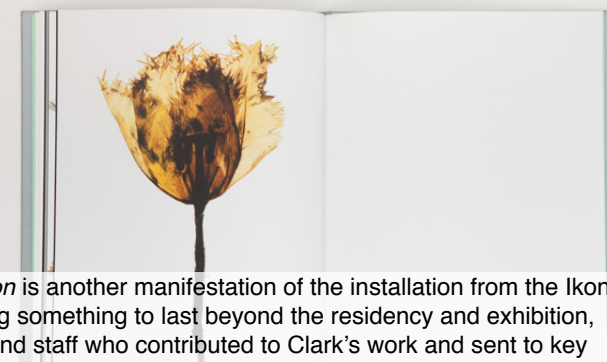
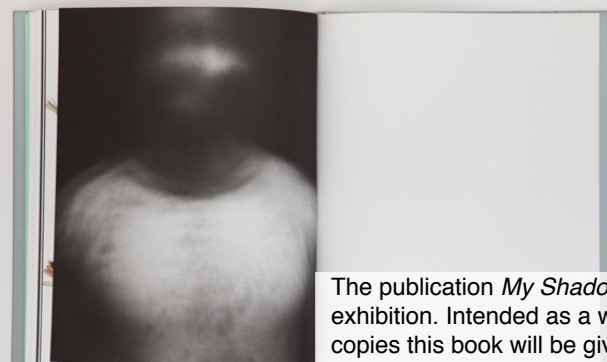
Fish Tank

Videos of the fish tanks that feature on every wing in the prison. These discrete glazed environments for exotic residents have a significant presence on the wings, with a representative appointed to look after the fish and the tanks on a rolling basis.

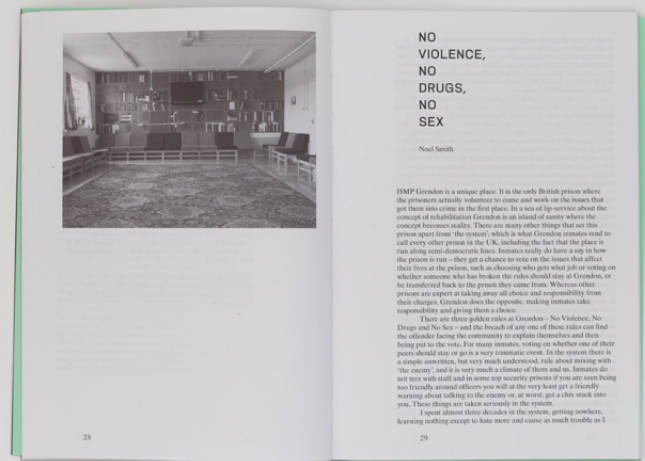
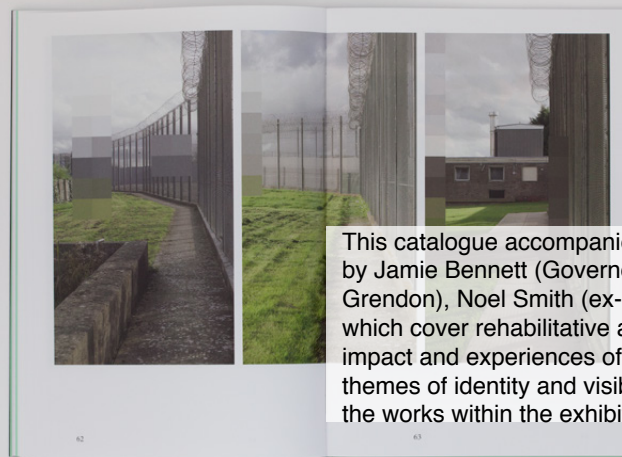
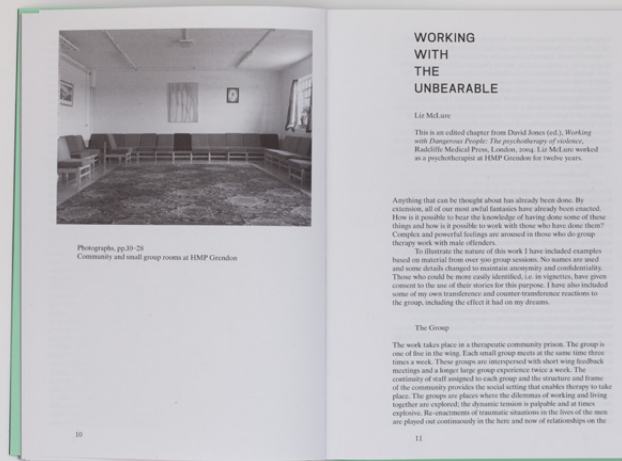
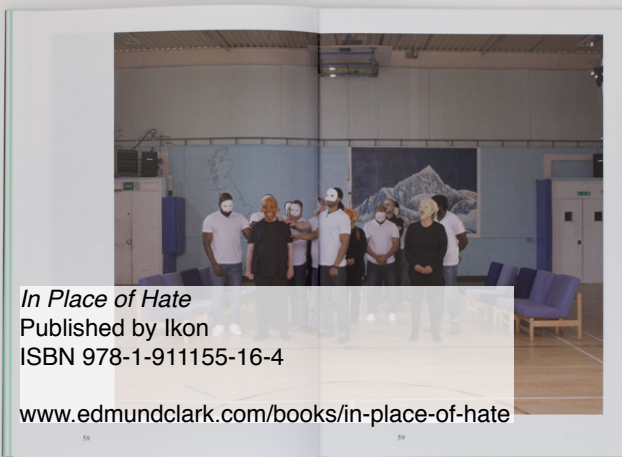
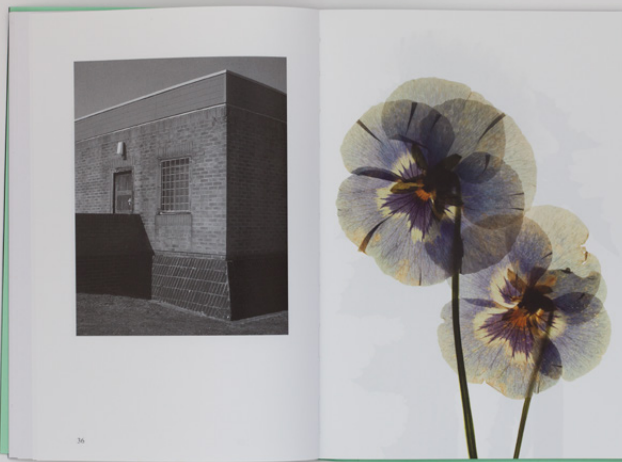


My Shadow's Reflection
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www.edmundclark.com/books/my-shadows-reflection



The publication *My Shadow's Reflection* is another manifestation of the installation from the Ikon exhibition. Intended as a way of making something to last beyond the residency and exhibition, copies this book will be given to men and staff who contributed to Clark's work and sent to key criminal justice policy makers and opinion formers.



This catalogue accompanies *In Place of Hate* at Ikon Gallery. The catalogue contains essays by Jamie Bennett (Governor of HMP Grendon), Liz McLure (previous psychotherapist at HMP Grendon), Noel Smith (ex-Grendon resident) and Jonathan Watkins (Director of Ikon Gallery) which cover rehabilitative approaches and therapeutic work within the criminal justice system, the impact and experiences of Clark's residency, and interpretation of Clark's exhibition through the themes of identity and visibility. The catalogue also contains images and written details of each of the works within the exhibition.

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www.edmundclark.com/books/in-place-of-hate

My Shadow's Reflection

Edmund Clark

A man stands between a black cloth backdrop and a camera. There is a group of us in the room. He talks in response to questions asked by me and the others present. As he talks his head moves and he gestures with his hands. The venue for the performance is a room on a wing of HMP Grendon, Europe's only entirely therapeutic prison. I have been artist-in residence there for three years, making a body of work about the institution and engaging the men with creative practice.

The architecture comprises 1960s brick buildings connected by long corridors. Alterations have been made: new roofs, temporary structures added then kept, doorways blocked, paths changed. Inside there is irregular piping and electrical boxing from decades of patching up and making good. Trees, hedges and plants are cultivated within the razor wire topped perimeter fences. Other things that grow find their own unplanned places in between, in corners, beside walls or away from the path. In the way or out of the way until removed.

Grendon's inmates must accept responsibility for their offences. They make a full time commitment to intensive group therapy and exercise a degree of control over the day to-day running of their lives through democratic decision-making.

The community of around 230 residents is divided over six wings including an assessment wing, a wing for men with learning difficulties, a wing for men sentenced for sexual offences and three general population wings. Five years is an average stay at Grendon before moving to a lower category prison. Three-quarters of the men are serving life or imprisonment for public protection sentences until they are deemed fit for parole. Many will live according to licence conditions when released.

Wing communities, including officers, psychologists, psychotherapists and other staff, meet twice a week to discuss bureaucratic and disciplinary issues. These are run by chairmen and vice chairmen elected from within the community on a rotating basis. Smaller groups moderated by an officer or therapist meet on other days to look at the crimes and the back stories of each member. Art therapy, psychodrama and, on one wing, music therapy are available to the men with the permission of their community. Individuals take on roles of responsibility and jobs to contribute to the effective functioning of the community.

Evidence shows that Grendon has delivered lower levels of violence and disruption inside, while reducing levels of reoffending outside after release. The camera has no lens. Light is reflected unrefracted from the moving speaker into the camera (from the Greek, *kamarã*, vault) through the pinhole onto the film for up to six minutes. The result is a visual impression

of a conversation with and about the man: what he has done, why he is at Grendon, about prison, about therapy and his community.

The flowers and leaves in this book grow in Grendon. Picked and laid between sheets of prison issue paper towels then pressed under art books in my office. Some rot and stick to the paper, others dry and thin and curl if taken from between the sheets. Over time they become delicate. Petals tear, stems snap, colours fade. Tweezers are needed to handle them. Light shining through them shows every vein, blemish and crease.

I am not allowed to make images that reveal the identity of the prisoners. This is to protect their victims and their victims' families; in some cases it is to protect the prisoner once they get out.

Visibility is a longstanding theme in the history and theory of detention, from underground dungeons to panopticon structures where all the cells can be seen. People effectively disappear when they become prisoners. Even in a panopticon prison only a shadow or silhouette may be seen. 'We' on the outside cease to see 'them' on the inside, as if humanity stops at the exterior wall. Or the police mug shot. In the binary of good and evil that afflicts the discussion of criminal justice, human beings are refracted into sharp stereotypes of victim and perpetrator. Once inside they become indefinite presences. Except, hopefully, to their family and friends, but that may depend on the crime.

Grendon is a prison where everyone has to be seen. You ask to be sent here to analyse and understand why you ended up in prison. It means being held to account for your behaviour every hour of the day and asking your community for permission for almost everything you want to do. The men you share your daily and past life with will vote you out if they question your commitment to the community or to your therapeutic process. There is care and support. It is a chance.

The words in the middle of this book were not spoken before the camera, but afterwards when each man was faced with the image he made of himself. The words are printed on green paper because that is the colour of the sheets the men lie between in bed. Alone locked behind a door day after day after day of talking and hearing about the damage you did to someone and of what was done to you; of seeing those images of yourself. Of hearing what those you live with and have to tolerate did to others; of what they have exposed to you of their episodes of violence, abuse and neglect. 'Hard lock up' is the phrase I've heard to describe this. Beneath the wit and banter on the wings this is the undercurrent of trauma shared by inmates and staff.

The pinhole photographs are troubling. The reaction from the men when I first showed them their images evoked the therapeutic process. Individually

and in community meetings they spoke of visualising transformation or confronting the image of themselves and how those outside might see them. The facelessness or ghostliness was uncomfortable to some but seemed to correspond to themes already being explored. This response is what makes the images relevant.

This work has been shaped by the men, staff and the intense therapeutic processes and experiences at Grendon; and by the environment of the prison. Everyone had a choice of whether to work with me, but my role inevitably has an element of exploitation or inequality to it.

Apart from the keys that open doors and gates and enable me to go home at night, there are other privileges that separate me from the prisoners. I have the privilege of not having experienced abuse, addiction or neglect. My life has not been chaotic or deprived of love, support and education to guide my choices. I have not, to date, had serious mental health problems or committed a crime that would result in a prison sentence. This is all that separates us.