

Paradise Row

'...ascend to a hard human parade of mind stealth; cold comfort knowledge; the vortex of the self.'

From *Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror*

Text by Justin Coombes

Press Release

Project Space

Justin Coombes

HALYCON SONG

09/03/2012–07/04/2012

Private View:

Thursday 8th March

7.00-9.00pm



Justin Coombes, Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror (Detail), 2012, Lightjet photograph, 60 x 142 cm

In his second solo show at the gallery, Justin Coombes presents 'Halcyon Song', a series of photo-text vignettes. A halcyon is a mythical bird, often identified as a kingfisher, said to charm the wind and waves into calm from its floating nest. Fusing the fantastical and the everyday, Coombes' colourful, large format, panoramic photographs show the point of view of a female kingfisher as she searches for nesting sites along the length of London's Regents Canal. The pictures are accompanied by short poems in the form of wall texts that capture the bird's observations on her quest and her place in the wider world. In one image, a Chinese woman gazes inscrutably from a bridge. Others show a girl and boy stealing coots' eggs at night, and the kingfisher spying her own reflection as she flies past a barge's reversing mirror.

These new works develop Coombes's photographic aesthetic of the 'urban pastoral', and for the first time combine his own poetry with his photography to create a compelling productive tension.

Coombes has exhibited widely both nationally and internationally. Collections include the Government Art Collection, Ernst and Young and the David Roberts Art Foundation. Numerous awards and grants include the Arts and Humanities Research Board, 2011. He is a PhD candidate in Fine Art by Practice at the Royal College of Art and a tutor at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, University of Oxford.