

# Jane Prophet

## *Explorations of Structure*



JANE PROPHET, THE BLOT SERIES, DETAIL, (2002).  
STRUCTURE OF LANDSCAPE: WHAT IS NATURAL?

Dawn at The Lafarge Exshaw plant, Lac des Arcs, Alberta, Canada.  
These photographs were taken in November 2002 during a visit to  
Banff Centre for the Arts, using a 6:17 Fuji panoramic camera.



Elements of these art pieces are derived from fractal mathematics. The 'blot' series takes its name from the process of using a 'blot' or random instant mark as the source of inspiration. Gordon Selley's mathematical code makes the trees in these images and generates different 3D forms each time it runs. Prophet responds to the images and the code is altered accordingly to produce different outputs. Small changes to random numbers in mathematical equations result in huge shifts in the final form of the works.

The composition of the final images is a response to the V&A's British Watercolour Collection. The landscape scenes are of The Lafarge Exshaw plant, Lac des Arcs, Alberta, Canada. These are the first in a series of new works by Prophet exploring locations that combine reflecting pools and natural 'sublime' landscapes with icons of the industrial or technological sublime (aggregate works, power stations and other 'cathedrals' of industry).

JANE PROPHET, THE BLOT SERIES, LAC DES ARCS,  
CANADA AT DAWN, (2002).  
STRUCTURE OF PARKLANDS AND WILDERNESS.



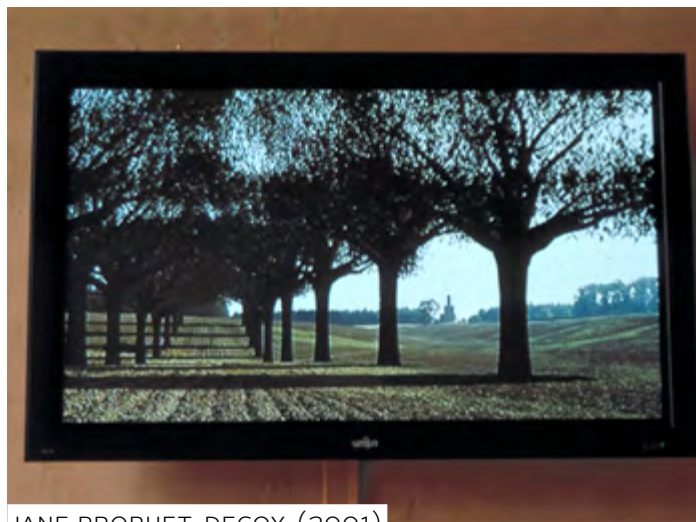
JANE PROPHET, THE BLOT SERIES:  
DETAIL, LAC DES ARCS, NIGHT, (2002).  
**STRUCTURE OF BEAUTY.**

The works were a response to the Victoria & Albert Museum's British Watercolour Collection. Exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London as part of the 'Digital Responses' series curated by Paul Coldwell.



JANE PROPHET, THE BLOT SERIES, LAC DES ARCS,  
NIGHT, (2002).  
**STRUCTURE OF BEAUTY.**

The landscape scenes are of The Lafarge Exshaw plant, Lac des Arcs, Alberta, Canada. Each image is a Lightjet print, 80" x 26.5", backed with aluminium and front mounted with acrylic. An Edition of 10.



JANE PROPHET, DECOY, (2001).

STRUCTURE OF OAK TREES AND ENGLISHNESS.

A screen based digital work reflecting on the politics of landscape, construction and ownership. Drawing on works by painters such as Gainsborough and Poussin as well as the creations of landscape designers Humphry Repton and "Capability" Brown, Decoy consists of a series of animated digital "paintings", displayed on plasma-screens, in which subtly evolving fractal landscapes are combined with photographic images of the views of the grounds of various country houses.

English oaks once formed an avenue in the parkland at Blickling Hall. Most were removed to form the characteristic clumps of trees favoured by Capability Brown and Humphry Repton. Using the existing trees as a guide, the avenue is reinstated.

This quintessentially English, Arcadian vista has entered the popular imagination as an embodiment of Nature and the Natural, yet it is almost entirely artificial in its construction. By combining these vistas with evolving simulated landscapes, Prophet unearths the artificiality of each landscape's past, either by returning the setting to a closer approximation of "wild" nature, or by allowing the viewer to project ahead into the future, according to different growth and planting patterns.



JANE PROPHET, DECOY, INSTALLED IN THE ORANGERY AT BLICKLING HALL, ENGLAND, (2001).

STRUCTURE OF PARKLANDS AND WILDERNESS.



JANE PROPHET, DECOY, (2001).

STRUCTURE OF COLLECTING PAINTINGS AND COLONIALISM.

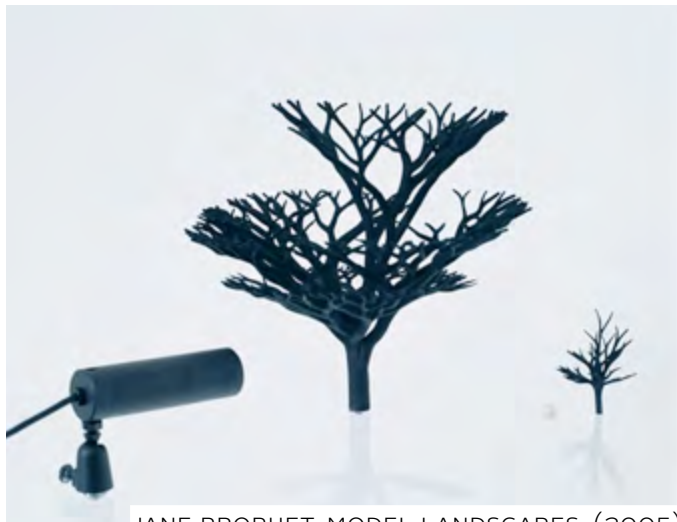
As part of 'Life is Beautiful', 'Decoy' was double hung with 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> century watercolours from The Laing Gallery's permanent collection. In this showing the work drew attention to its relationship to painting.



JANE PROPHET, DECOY, (2001).

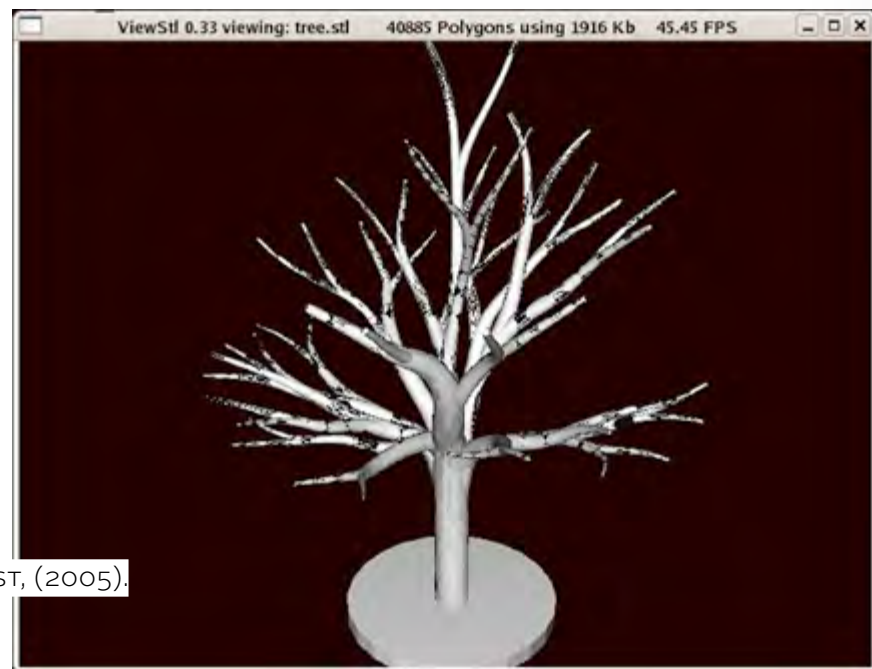
STRUCTURE OF TREE BRANCHING PATTERNS.

Test computer rendering of tree form for 'Decoy'. Based on algorithms by Gordon Selley, this tree was used as the basis for developing data sets that could be used to make Rapid Prototyped trees.



JANE PROPHET, MODEL LANDSCAPES, (2005).  
STRUCTURE OF IDEALS.

Shelf work component of Rapid Prototyped tree piece. 'Model Landscapes' engages with our desire for the perfect landscape and our willingness to mold or model these via large and small scale interventions. Prophet created a series of 'Model Landscapes' of fictional states which co-exist alongside recognisable landscapes.



JANE PROPHET, TEST, (2005).

Early test showing an algorithmic tree structure in a form that (finally) the Rapid Prototyping machine could use.



JANE PROPHET, MODEL LANDSCAPES, (2005).  
STRUCTURE OF MEDIATION.

Screen component Rapid Prototyped tree piece. Each of these works addressed ideas of model or 'ideal' landscapes. In contrast to her large installations, Prophet has created new miniature landscapes viewed on small monitors, drawing the viewer in and demanding close inspection. These small object based vignettes are subject to surveillance by cameras.



JANE PROPHET, SOUVENIR OF ENGLAND, (2007).  
STRUCTURE OF ORCHARDS AND HERITAGE SPECIES.

Since they were first made in 1898 to commemorate the building of the Eiffel Tower, Snow Globes have been used as mementos to encapsulate key landmarks. They have become the quintessential souvenir object, now slightly outdated and nostalgic themselves. Shaking them brings the scene to life for a brief and artificial moment of suspended disbelief.

This dome is a memento to the English orchard which is fast becoming an endangered species. The apple tree inside died in a commercial orchard, its contorted shape a result of pruning.



JANE PROPHET, SOUVENIR OF ENGLAND, (2007).  
STRUCTURE OF GARDEN DESIGN.

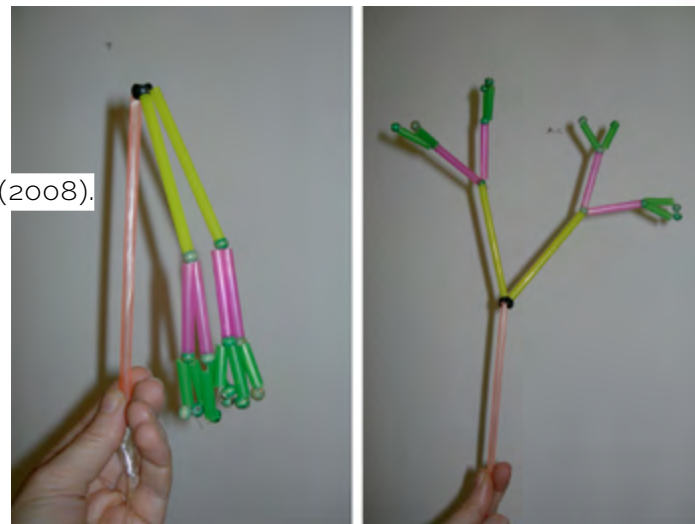
The 28 ft snow dome with tree inside is installed in the orchard at Hanbury Hall. Curated by Anne de Charmant.

Note the cow parsley in the foreground.



JANE PROPHET, (TRANS)PLANT: COW PARSLEY, (2008).  
STRUCTURE OF WEEDS.

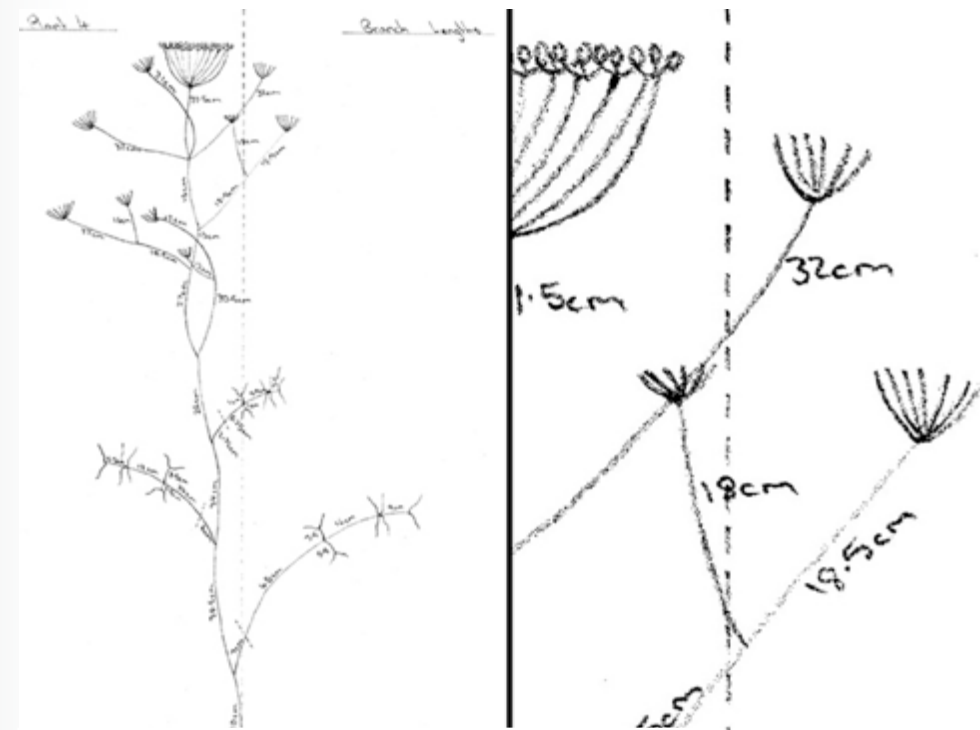
Cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*). This native British plant is familiar to people living in both rural and urban areas where it can be found on railway banks, in ditches, at woodland edges and on waste ground. In the past children used the hollow, furrowed stems of this plant as pea-shooters.



JANE PROPHET, (TRANS)PLANT: DRINKING STRAW MODEL, (2008).  
STRUCTURE OF PLAYFULNESS.

In combination with the cow parsley structure, Jane wanted a playful movement for the kinetic sculpture. She wanted it to seem to collapse and reform, inspired by the classic toy Sampo (first made in 1945) by the Swedish brand Brio.

A simple drinking straw model tested this out with a branching plant form.



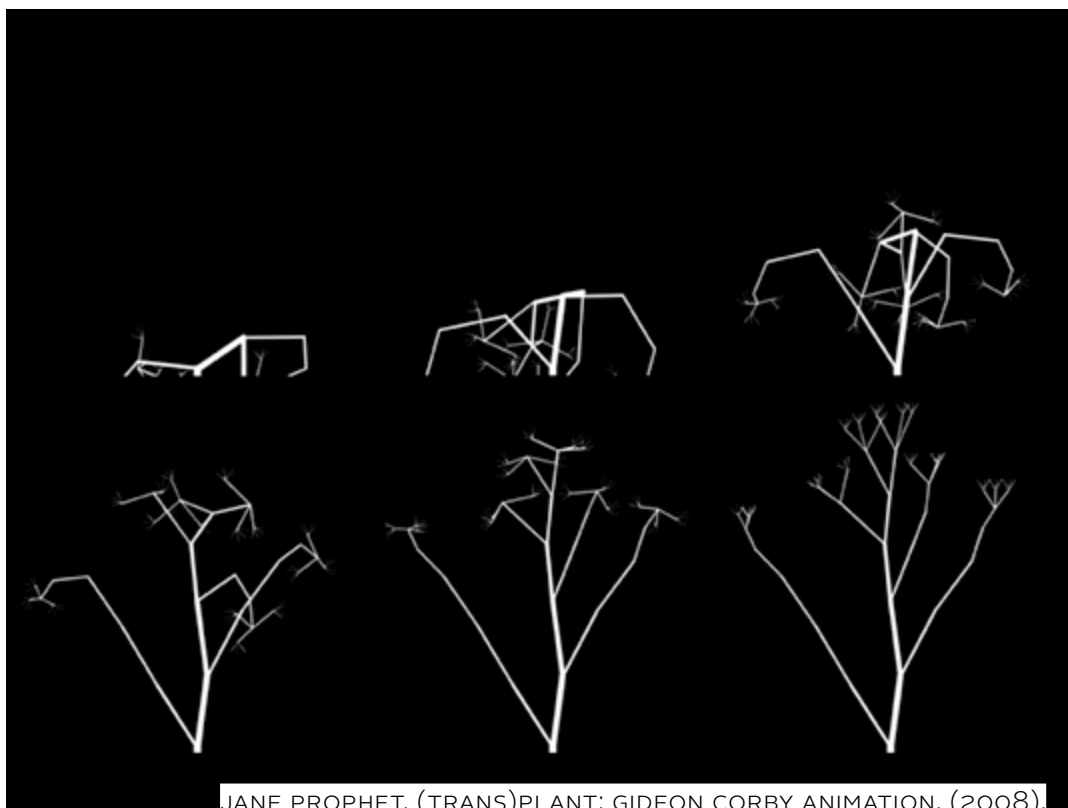
JANE PROPHET, (TRANS)PLANT: JULIAN VINCENT SKETCH, (2008).

STRUCTURE OF NATURE AND GEOMETRY.

Cow parsley is of interest to mathematicians and engineers because it (and other members of its family such as Giant Hog Weed) show geometric consistency over a very wide size range in an order of magnitude ranging from less than 1m high to 7m.

This suggests that, within limits, whatever the size of the structure of '(Trans)Plant' one can predict the sizes, lengths and angles needed to produce a structure of any given size. This geometric consistency also means that the resulting sculpture will look both biological and familiar.

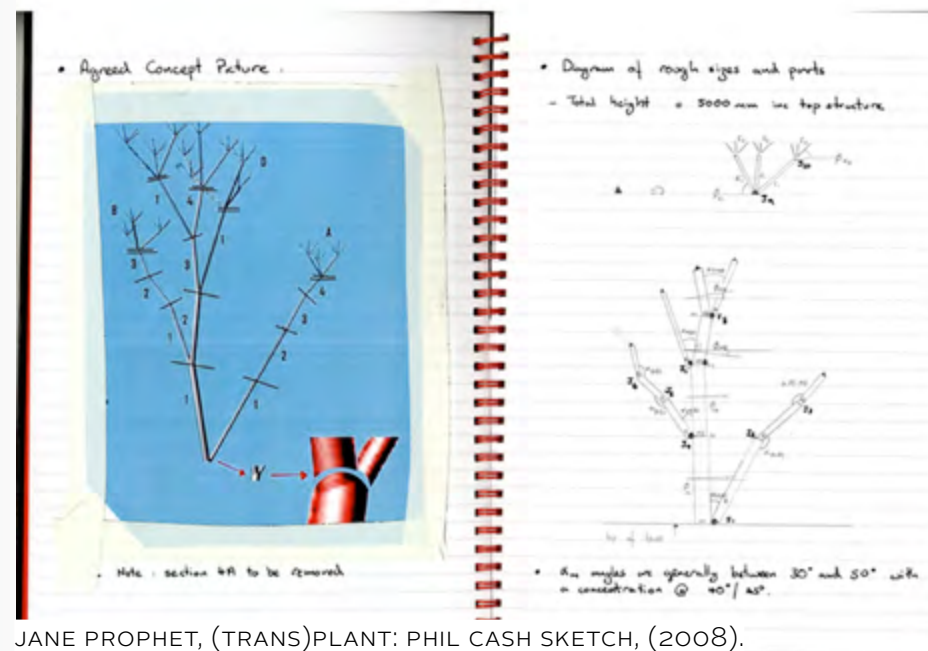
Using the measurements of cow parsley that Professor Vincent has in his extensive database of natural structures, we can predict the design of a structure up to twice the height of the biggest known similar plant (7m).



JANE PROPHET, (TRANS)PLANT: GIDEON CORBY ANIMATION, (2008).  
STRUCTURE OF MOVEMENT.

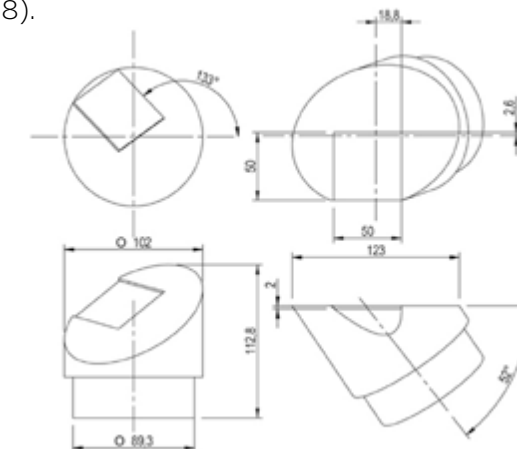
Jane Prophet was born in Birmingham. Her father, David, began his career as an apprentice at Birmingham's Austin Motor works. He was fired for spending too much time working on his racing cars (while someone else clocked on for him) and for insubordination, evidenced by late night welding sessions in the factory workshop that resulted in giant amalgamations of metal work.

The design process and materials of Prophet's piece '(Trans)Plant' which was made specifically for Birmingham reflect her father's love of mechanics and his respect for innovative manufacturing.



JANE PROPHET, (TRANS)PLANT: PHIL CASH SKETCH, (2008).  
STRUCTURE OF BIRMINGHAM.

JANE PROPHET, (TRANS)PLANT: ENGINEERING DRAWING, (2008).







JANE PROPHET, (TRANS)PLANT: IN PROGRESS, (2008).  
**STRUCTURE OF TRANSPLANTATION.**

(Trans)Plant:

1: a type of experiment where an organism is moved from one location to another

2: Different species and varieties react differently to transplanting; for some, it is not recommended.

Avoiding transplant shock –the stress or damage received in the process –is the principal concern.



JANE PROPHET, (TRANS)PLANT: INSTALLED, (2008).  
**STRUCTURE IN THE CITY.**

The kinetic mechanical art work installed for 2 weeks in Birmingham.  
 Shown collapsed and beginning to open.

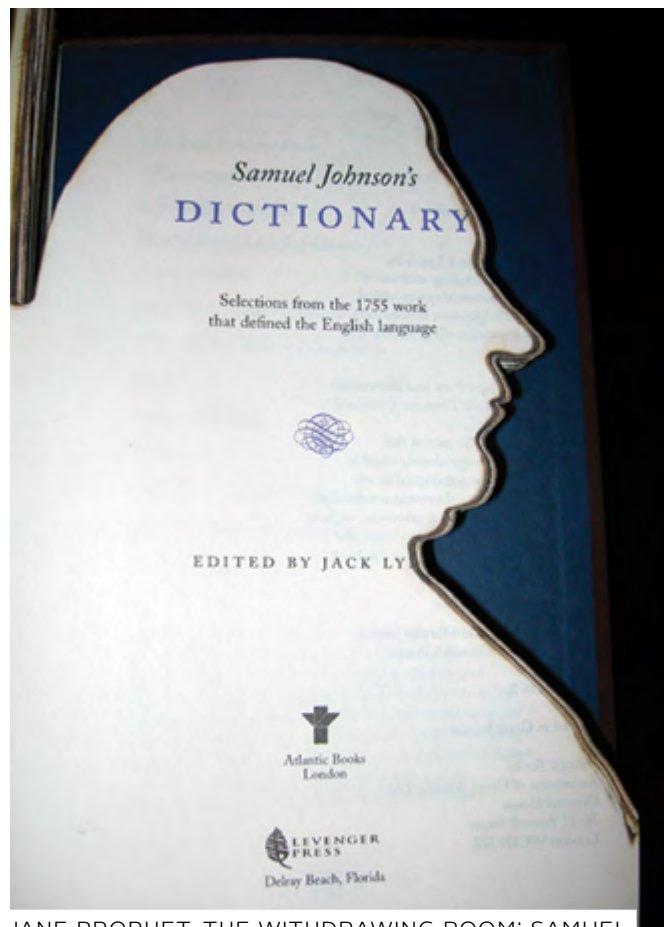


JANE PROPHET, (TRANS)PLANT: INSTALLED, (2008).  
STRUCTURE OF METALS.

'(Trans)Plant' is equally influenced by her close relationship with Arthur Watkins, her maternal grandfather, from Sparkhill, a metallurgist who entertained her by making objects out of wire and showing her how mercury behaved. Her fascination with plants and their shapes started during her childhood and came from his discussion of plant chemistry and her mother's life-long passion for horticulture and garden design.



JANE PROPHET, (TRANS)PLANT: INSTALLED (DETAIL), (2008).



JANE PROPHET, THE WITHDRAWING ROOM: SAMUEL JOHNSON (DETAIL), (2009).  
STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE.

To mark the Tercentenary of the birth of Samuel Johnson there was an exhibition of works by a group of artists from June-September 2009, set within, and in response to, the house where Samuel Johnson compiled one of the first English Dictionaries.

Samuel Johnson, 1709-1784, was widely regarded as the leading literary figure of his time, so much so that it is often referred to as the "Age of Johnson". He was (amongst other things) a poet, biographer, lexicographer, essayist, editor and reviewer of the English Dictionary. Prophet's works comprised of a series of laser-cut books, the first of which is shown here, cut through with Samuel Johnson's profile.

A commemorative Jasperware medallion of Johnson was issued by Wedgwood in 1784. Jane Prophet's Portrait of Samuel Johnson, a dictionary in which a profile of Samuel Johnson is cut through the pages (produced in an edition of 10) offers a comparable memento.



JANE PROPHET, THE WITHDRAWING ROOM: SAMUEL JOHNSON INSTALLED, (2009).  
STRUCTURE OF DICTIONARIES.

The works were all produced to be installed at Samuel Johnson's House. Johnson gradually acquired a reputation in the literary world, and in 1746 he was commissioned by a consortium of printers to write a dictionary of the English language. At this time he rented 17, Gough Square, London, which served as both home and workshop for the Dictionary. While working on the Dictionary, he also published a series of essays under the name "The Rambler", and contributed to "The Adventurer" essays. (He was later to write another series as "The Idler".)

The Dictionary of the English Language was eventually published in 1755. It was not (as is often claimed) the first English dictionary, but it was certainly the most important one published up to that date. It went through numerous editions, and was not superseded until the publication in 1928 of the Oxford English Dictionary.



JANE PROPHET, THE WITHDRAWING ROOM:  
LEAF, (2009).

**STRUCTURE AND DEFINITION.**

Johnson's definition of LEAF: The green deciduous parts of plants and flowers. A Part of a book containing two pages.

It is well-documented that Samuel Johnson was hard on books, capable of 'tearing the heart' out of them and leaving them –as if discarded– on table or floor as soon as they had served his immediate purpose. But these specimens, with their pages so precisely and impressively laser-cut, are clearly not the result of careless treatment.

Prophet is interested in the way familiar objects can be adopted as symbols, for example, the use of the oak tree as shorthand for 'Englishness'. In this installation she has transformed standard dictionaries by designing computer fonts to facilitate the laser-cutting of shapes of words and objects that evoke ideas of Johnson's life and work.

Collectively the books symbolize his achievements as the leading literary figure of his time.



JANE PROPHET, THE WITHDRAWING ROOM: WEDGE, (2009)  
**STRUCTURE OF BOOKS AS OBJECTS.**

The old floors of Samuel Johnson's House slope dramatically at times. The dictionary, open at the page for "wedge" props up the antique display case and keeps it level.



JANE PROPHET, THE WITHDRAWING ROOM: OATS, (2009).  
**STRUCTURE OF RUDENESS AND HUMOUR.**

Johnson's definition for OATS: A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland appears to support the people.

In the background: DENDROLOGY: The natural history of trees.



JANE PROPHET, THE WITHDRAWING ROOM: LACE, (2009).  
**STRUCTURE OF LACE.**

COLBERTINE: A kind of lace worn by women.

Displayed amongst objects in the permanent collection.



JANE PROPHET, MY SILVER STALKING JUBILEE:  
WORK IN PROGRESS, (2011).  
STRUCTURE OF PSYCHOSIS.

I have been stalked for 25 years. It's the kind of thing one commemorates privately. Or not. I have received hundreds of letters. For a month in 2000 I kept the letters. They form the starting point of this photographic series.

I selected sentences from them and keywords from these sentences. I typed the words, one at a time, into Google image search.

I then set up an A3 document and wrote the whole sentence from the letters, containing the word, in to the document. Next I placed images from the search into the document and worked intuitively, removing images until I had a combination of one image and a line of text from the original letters.

I went back to Google and searched for the exact object that I had an image of, but that was for sale. I bought all the objects and had them shipped to my studio in London. I arranged to do a professional high resolution studio shoot with my friend, the artist, Bill Jackson.  
Image: No. 1 Catwoman

0000 The letter 'o' in your font is too big. You don't write your letter O with generous abandon, you might want to enclose my world but your letter O is small. So now I'll go and look again at your letters to me, look closely at the way you form your letters.

I don't want to.

It's like looking at the surface of your skin, breathing your sweat, which I remember from when you tried to abduct me, when you kept out as I walked along a street in London, when you closed your hand over my mouth, when you dragged me backwards and lifted my feet off the ground so I struggled and walked like your puppet. I remember that your sweat smelled of medicine, that somehow you smelled all wrong and the fear I felt and my desperate struggle to get away from you intensified and was a huge thing, driven by that smell that with my mouth sealed by your hand shockingly warm on that smell of you became my whole world for a few seconds. I was encircled by it I drowned in it and I thought drowning and death might be nice and I relaxed and then I wanted to live and I had the strength of a thousand men as I struck out struck you kicking for the surface I was an animal and I wanted to live and you were only my enemy the only thing between me and life between me and air.

Oh Oh The breath my breath, writing my breath in your hand, holding my breath behind your hand let writing but being.

Two men fought you off I ran you closed me I felt over a tear. You followed. Passengers stood between us. The bus driver came out of his seat, he left the acrylic barrier behind, he helped to bring you off the bus.

I sat on the upper deck and with I look I look I look I noticed that I breathed and there was no wrong smell. I think the smell of me, the all encompassing smell of my fear.

0000 The letter 'o' in your font is too big? With generous abandon, you might want to letter O is small. So now I'll go and look again closely at the way you form your letters.

I don't want to.

It's like looking at the surface of your skin which I remember from when you tried to abduct me out as I walked along a street in London your hand over my mouth, when you dragged my feet off the ground so I struggled and puppet, I remember that your sweat smelled of medication, that somehow you smelled all wrong and my desperate struggle to get away intensified and was a huge thing, driven mouth sealed by your hand shockingly warm on that smell of you became my whole world for a few seconds. I was encircled by it I drowned in it and I thought drowning and death might be nice and I had the strength of a thousand men.

JANE PROPHET, MY SILVER STALKING JUBILEE: WORK IN PROGRESS, (2011).

STRUCTURE OF HANDWRITING.

While 'My Silver Stalking Jubilee' may seem like a departure from the previous works, it is really similar. Not so easy to make, but nevertheless an exploration of structure. The structure of the stalker's letters, the structure of his mind, the structure of his handwriting.

I have made a font by tracing his hand writing and then written a series of texts with the font.

I wrote a piece at each stage of designing and testing the font.

My rule was to only write about the experience of using the font.

This is Letter No.6 and a close up of one section of it.