

WORDSWORTH'S
POETICAL WORKS



Every picture tells a story

Many of us look at paper – whether in the form of books or letters – without thinking about it. But for artist Veronica Bailey, it's the history behind it that counts

Most people read books and write letters; Veronica Bailey photographs them. There's a paper trail that runs through her work. "I went back to college to do an MA and found that people were obsessed with books. All artists wanted to do was put their work in book form and I realised that the book was never going to die," she explains.

Her three major projects since graduating from Central Saint Martins – *2 Willow Road*, *Postscript* and, currently, *Hours of Devotion* – have all involved heavy historical research, with Bailey acting as storyteller, but leaving blanks for viewers to fill.

Her first series of work was inspired by a stint as a tour guide at the National Trust house at *2 Willow Road*. It is a modernist building designed by architect Ernő Goldfinger, and Bailey became fascinated by him and his wife, the artist Ursula Blackwell, who once lived there.

"There is a sense of humour with the books that I chose to photograph," she says. "You can't see any writing, although

WORDS: EMMA LOVE



there are some images peeping out."

Having started out as an illustrator, her new photographic career snowballed quickly. Work was snapped up at an exhibition and she was one of five people to win the first Jerwood Photography Award for the *2 Willow Road* series.

Postscript, her second project, also focused on paper but in a more sculptural, three-dimensional way. The life of Lee Miller, photographer, model, muse and war correspondent, is recorded through Bailey's photographs of her letters.

Her careful observation has been put to good use in Bailey's latest, biggest project to date. *Hours of Devotion*, commissioned by Coutts to bring its archives alive, has involved Bailey trawling through ledgers, abacuses and letters from the likes of Dickens and Queen Victoria. It wasn't until Bailey

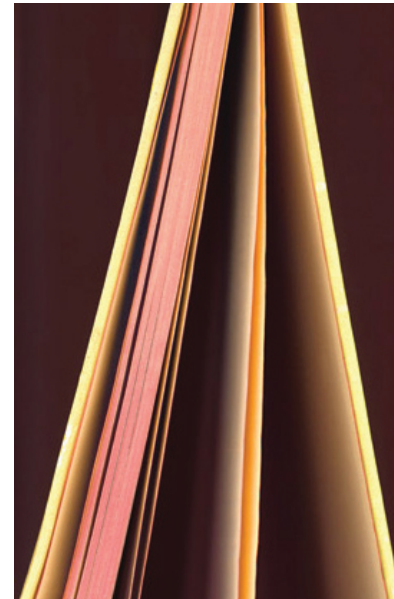
discovered the old staff library within the Bank that she found a theme to thread it all together. "It was full of books with colour and binding. I'm interested in the gold lettering and embossing of the old books; I'm sick of slick so I'm going backwards," she laughs.

The title of the work is one of the books that belonged to Angela Burdett-Coutts and was kept in the public library. In comparison to others chosen, the appearance of this work, on Christian worship, is plain.

The beauty of Bailey's images is in the research that unlocks the individual history of the paper. Her next potential project is a series of book spines, also photographed in the Coutts library, which she hopes to include in an exhibition next year. But for now those hidden meanings will have to wait – that's a whole other story.

Postscript is at *The Photographers Gallery Print Room* from 2 November 2007 to 2 February 2008

NOTES



FROM YOUR FRIENDS
IN NORWAY



TENDER EMBRACES



EMERALD AND NANCY



RUSSELL'S MODERN EUROPE



BURNET'S HISTORY OF THE REFORMATION