

ART FIRST

## REARVIEW MIRROR

Jack Milroy: Five Decades of Work



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Jack Milroy: Five Decades of Work

23 APRIL – 11 MAY 2019

ART FIRST

At:

**Bermondsey Project Space**

Bermondsey Street  
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Opening times: Tuesday-Saturday, 11am-6pm

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“**Milroy’s sculptural collages** of printed images on paper and film blend fairy tale and conceptual art, meditations on rhythms and shapes with references to Darwin. Like Jeff Wall, Milroy came of age when beauty was suspect and has found his own subversive way of incorporating sumptuous colour and formal rigour into work that is offbeat and unexpected.

He has the gentle wit of a late surrealist, yet the sense of infinite possibilities of mutation, rearrangements of species, gravity, day and night, is fraught with 21st century tension about science and nature: a pertinent contemporary vision. ”

**Jackie Wullschlager**

Art Critic, *The Financial Times*

“**Jack Milroy doesn’t want to be categorized**, either as a surrealist or some kind of book artist. Nor does he think of himself as a sculptor. As he points out, he works with flat objects —‘I tend to think in terms of sides and backs and fronts’—and doesn’t envision his work in the round. If anything, he is a collagist. He admits that there is ‘an element of surrealism in all the work’, but he has also been known to hint darkly about his structuralist interests. In fact, Milroy’s work resists all isms and plunges to the heart of the unclassifiable. ”

**Andrew Lambirth**

Art Critic, *The Spectator*



**Cloud/Nest/Water**, 2014, cut book page constructions, triptych - each, 21 x 61 x 27.5 cm

6 And of course there are the books: ah yes, the illustrated books that, occasional experimental or comparative digressions apart, have been at once the principal working substance and imaginative preoccupation in his work these past 30 years or more. Few artists have similarly made The Book their own, as both material and subject. John Latham, in burning it, addressed it both sculpturally and as a cultural taboo. Tom Phillips, in his *Humument*, continues to quarry his way into a text. There are others. Jack simply opened the Victorian illustrated manual or textbook to discover and release a world of Nature—the birds and beasts, the trees and flowers, the fish, shells and rocks—enclosed within.

So his world has grown, ever more ambitious in the statement and endeavour, ever more varied and surprising, ever more beautiful. Sometimes the images thus released he has drawn, painted or photographed himself—but all are treated to the same precise, intricate consideration. Now a fallen, or merely falling, angel tumbles down the sky, now a mermaid, or just poor drowned Ophelia drifts through the weeds.

I have called Jack a Conceptual Artist, which in truth he is in that his work is led by the informing idea. Yet here lies an irony: for what results, far from being thus predetermined, always has to it, even so, a quality of surprise and inconsequentiality that is the character of surrealism. So is he, then, a Surrealist too? Who is to say? The visual puns and bizarre conjunctions might suggest as much: but Jack himself has always resisted such close description, and so should we. He is just a true artist, which is the greater compliment. 9

**William Packer** February 2015



**Cloud/Nest/Water**, 2014, cut book page constructions, triptych - each, 21 x 61 x 27.5 cm



**The Collector**, 2012, cut book page constructions, 100 x 61 x 14cm



Grey Skies, 2015, cut and constructed book pages, 215 x 121 x 14 cm





Grey Skies (detail), 2015, cut and constructed book pages, 215 x 121 x 14 cm



Waterline, 2014, cut book-page construction, 148 x 131 x 12.5 cm



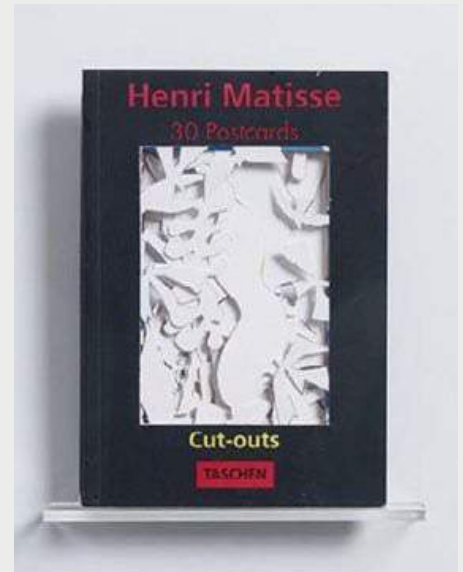
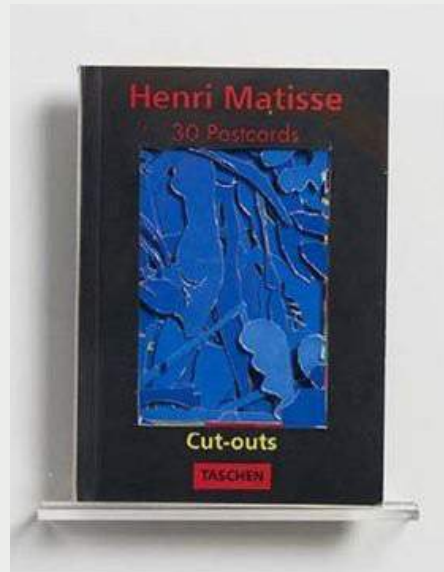
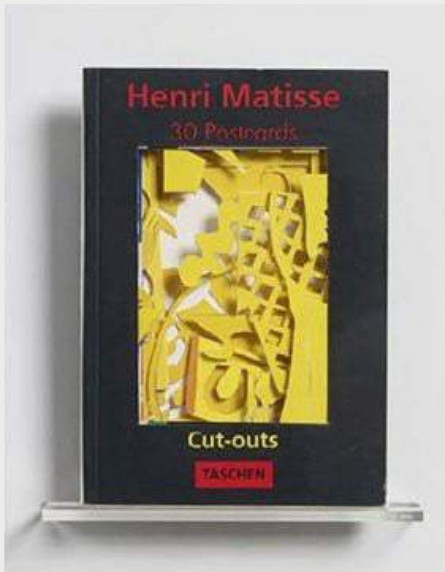
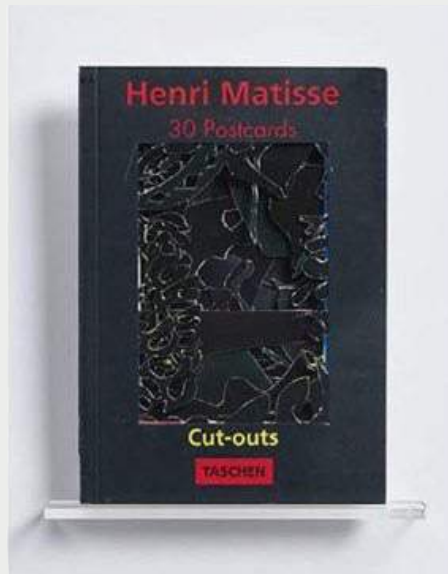
Detail of **Waterline**, 2014, cut book-page construction, 148 x 131 x 12.5 cm



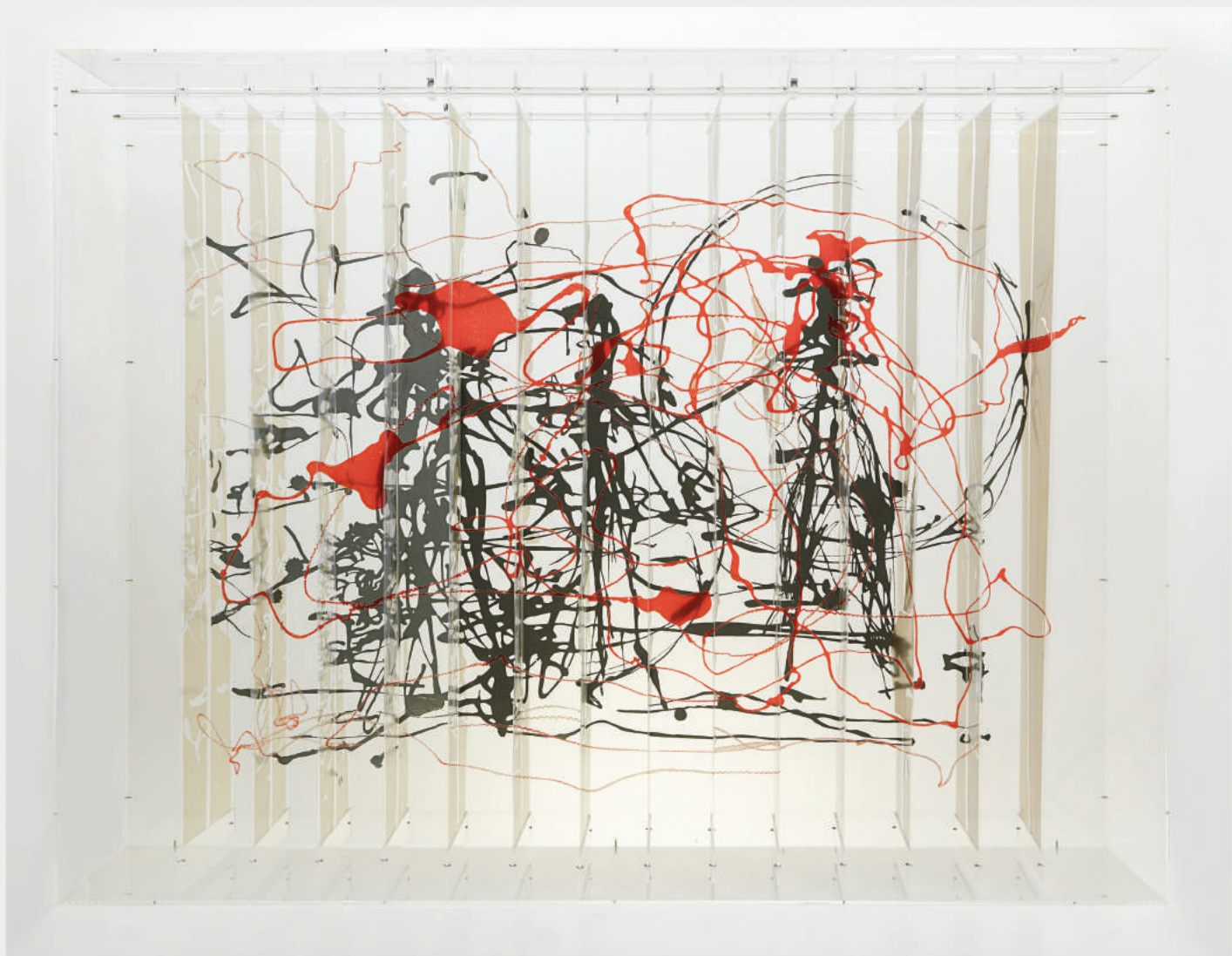
Territorial Ambitions, 2014, cut book-page construction, 149 x 118 x 12,5 cm



Detail of **Territorial Ambitions**, 2014, cut book-page construction, 149 x 118 x 12.5 cm



The Colours of Matisse 1–5, 2015, cut and reconstructed books, set of five, each 43 x 35 x 5 cm



**Le Rouge et Le Noir III**, 2010, cut and constructed archival print on paper, 70 x 104 x 8.5cm

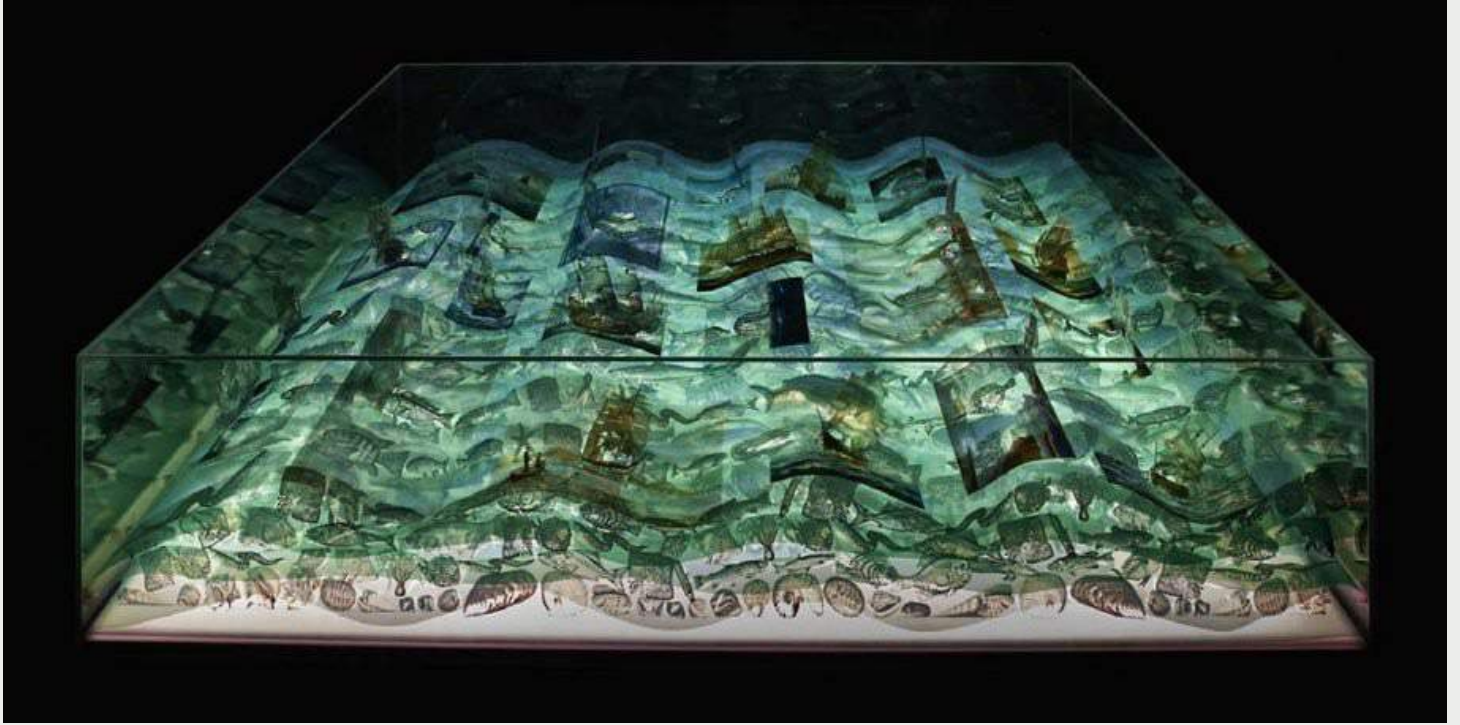


**Ophelia VI**, 2015, Printed on Acetate Film, 136 x 113 x 41cm

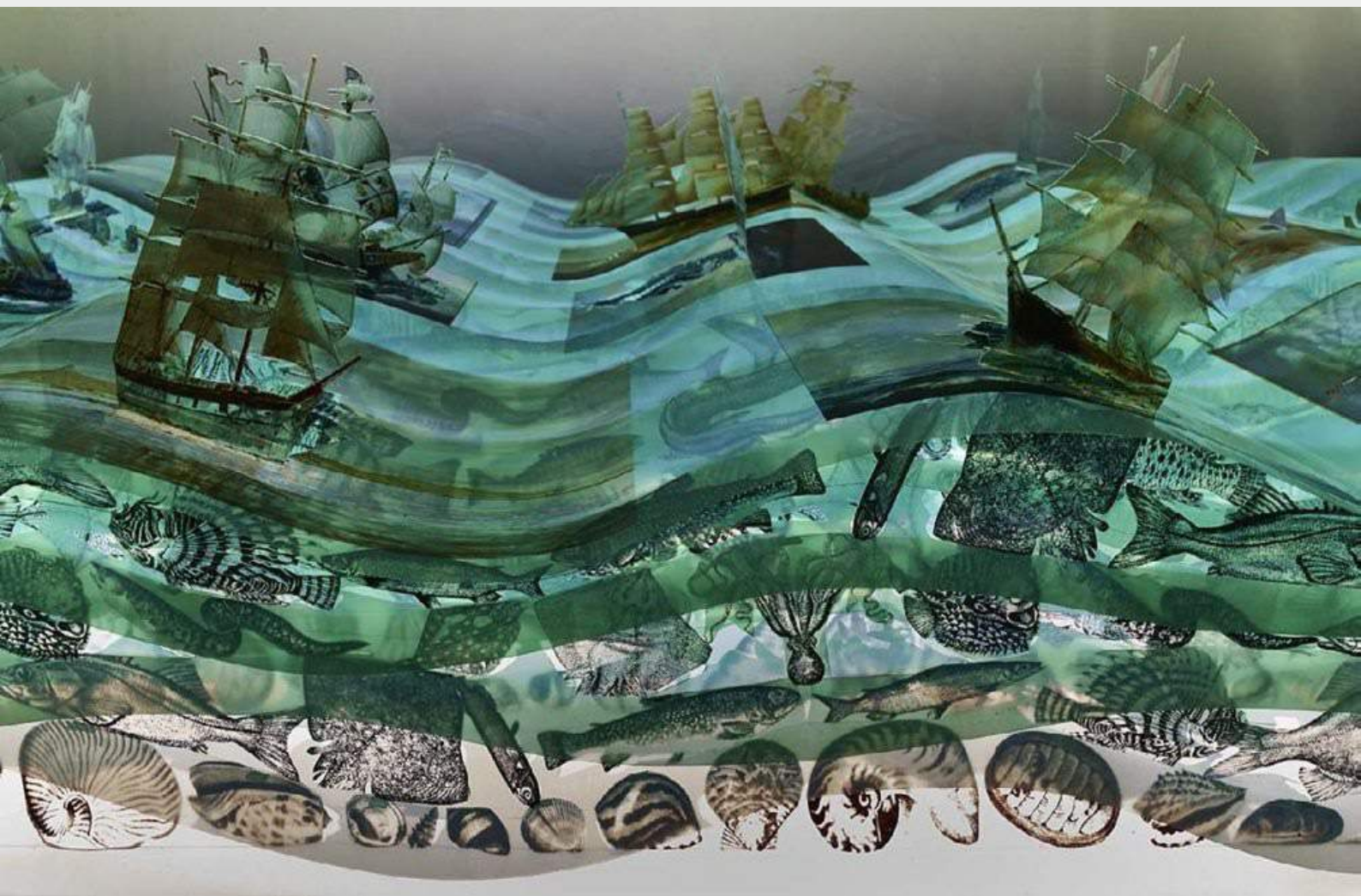




**Ophelia VI**, 2015, Printed on Acetate Film, 136 x 113 x 41cm



Seascape, 2015, cut and constructed print on film with lightbox, 39 x 140 x 100 cm



Detail of *Seascape*, 2015, cut and constructed print on film with lightbox, 39 x 140 x 100 cm



Leaf Mother and Child, 2018, cut book construction, 61 x 68 x 14.5cm



**Wild Grass**, 2010, cut Japanese book, 32 x 246 x 18.7 cm



Wild Grass (detail), 2010, cut Japanese book, 32 x 246 x 18.7 cm



**Walking Man**, 1998, torn and constructed map pages, 186 x 117cm

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