



## This is a Leeds Arts University Repository copy of: Halting Implosion

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### Abstract

The output is a set of 50 cards created by Barker and Oben in response to a Frances Woodley's collaborative project 'At Cross Purposes (2021-23)'.

**Research Process:** Barker and Oben corresponded both visually and in poetic text over two years, their ideas bouncing back and forth as they each created 25 printed cards with an image on their face and text on their reverse. The research was conducted via email and post, which were used as communication systems that allowed for both textual interchange and visual juxtaposition.

**Research Insights:** The nature of collaboration as a vehicle for sustained invention and the development of insights into other people's motivation and conceptual frameworks was understood far deeper than previously. Both artists had previously worked in collaboration with other people, but neither had examined the actual process of collaboration with the depth and sustained processes of joint thinking that this project allowed.

**Dissemination:** The texts and images of the cards, as well as the processes that lay behind their evolution were used as a focus for a book section authored by Barker and Oben in 'At Cross Purposes', which was published in 2023 by Aberystwyth University School of Art. The cards as well as framed prints of them formed part of a group exhibition, 'At Cross Purposes' which will tour several galleries: Aberystwyth University School of Art Museum and Galleries, 14 February - 21 April 2023; Oriel Môn, Llangefni, Anglesey - 29 April to 11 June 2023; Queen Street Studios Gallery, Belfast, - 7 to 28 September 2023; Elysium Gallery Swansea - November 7 to December 23 2023.

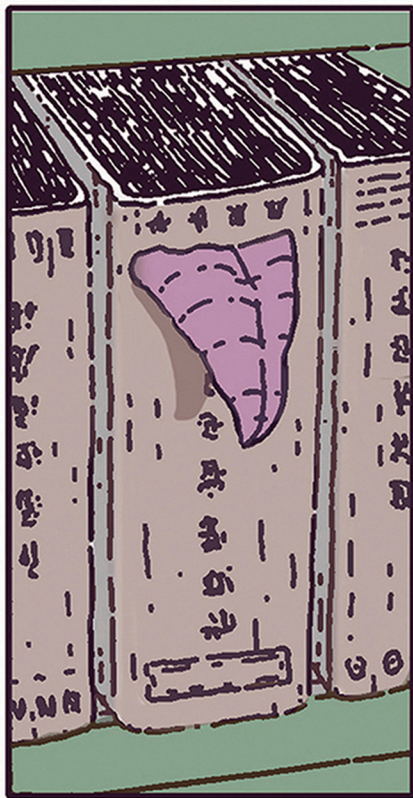
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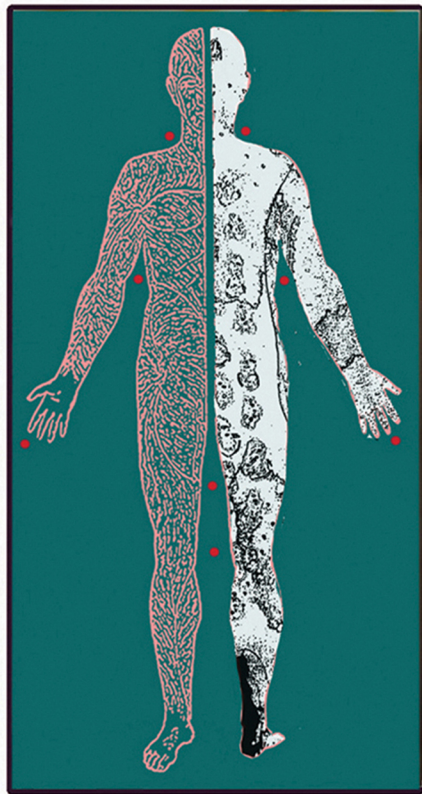


## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

1

Implosion designs were used  
Designs made for the little boy  
But given to the fat man  
Because there were flaws  
The moment of impact  
Was surrounded  
Captured and compressed  
Imperfections, stray electrons  
Other thoughts of possibilities  
Of where all our learning had  
led us  
Of the foolishness of the wise  
Of how easy it was  
To become Death



## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

3

A body remembers  
The redness  
It wasn't something skin born  
It was inside  
Sharp, beyond pinks  
Into a bile range  
A stomached emotion  
Pulled down by embarrassment  
Now drained in acid  
Only to re-emerge  
A reflux action  
As the diaphragm works  
To protect  
As well as to calm  
And to breathe out the past



## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

5

I felt something  
You felt something too  
But I never knew you  
You said you knew me  
But I never knew  
Anybody  
My body was in your  
Body  
You said you knew  
But I never felt  
That you were honest  
About what it felt  
To be in a body  
Perhaps  
It felt like this

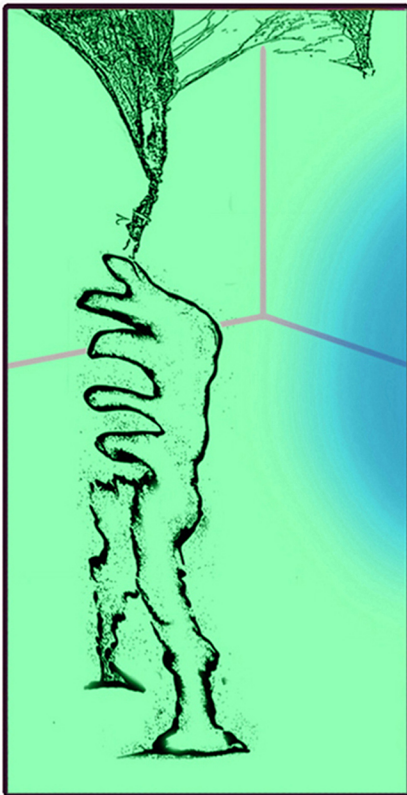


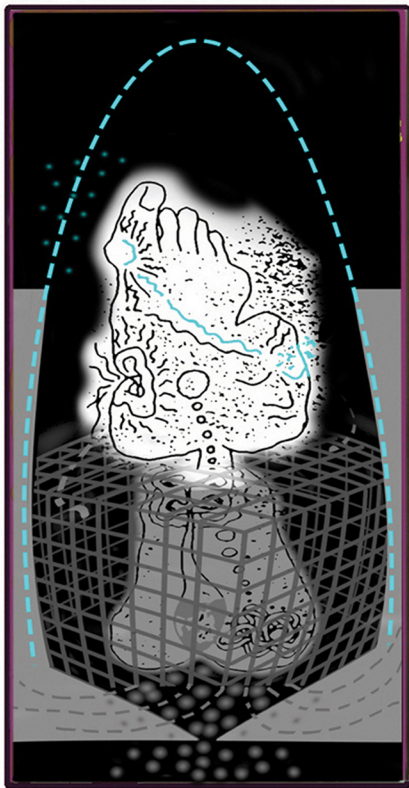
# Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

7

I stood in a room  
Thought of the space  
Between myself and a spider  
Spinning a web in the corner  
Opening a window  
Into other minds  
Other bodies  
Some we see.  
Others so deeply buried  
We barely have an inkling  
Of  
Who they are  
Of our cousins  
Our  
Neighbours  
Our  
Future





## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

9

Sometimes a pain emerges  
Gradually into the light  
Of the mind  
A slow burn  
That when it fires  
Sucks out your energy  
Fills the head  
With whispers that  
Only go away at night  
When sleep comes  
And the foot rests



# Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

11

The hand touches both  
Inside and outside

A

Being sensitive to feelings

B

Touched and untouched  
The Hand of Glory

Suggesting an alternative magic  
Lies beneath bony fingers

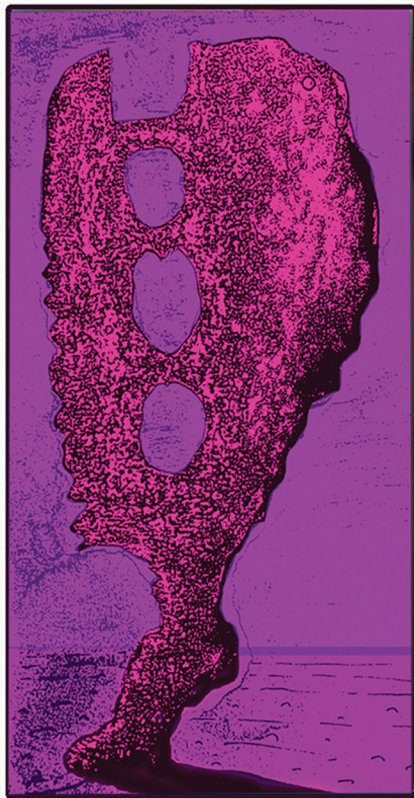
Another touch

One that cuts through the skin  
Making possible the impossible

The open hand of friendship  
Forming a bridge between

The human and the inhuman

ACADABERA



## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

13

Everyday  
We walk over monuments  
Of what came before  
Some we see.  
Others are so deeply buried  
We only feel them in dreams  
But they all make us who we  
are



## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

15

Between an inner  
And an outer idea  
Of a body  
Lies a space  
Out of which  
A new form  
Emerges  
Binaries now bind  
Together  
Their oppositions  
Cast to the wind  
As clouds unfold  
Their crenulations  
Holding uncounted  
New forms  
As the key to new life  
Turns



## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

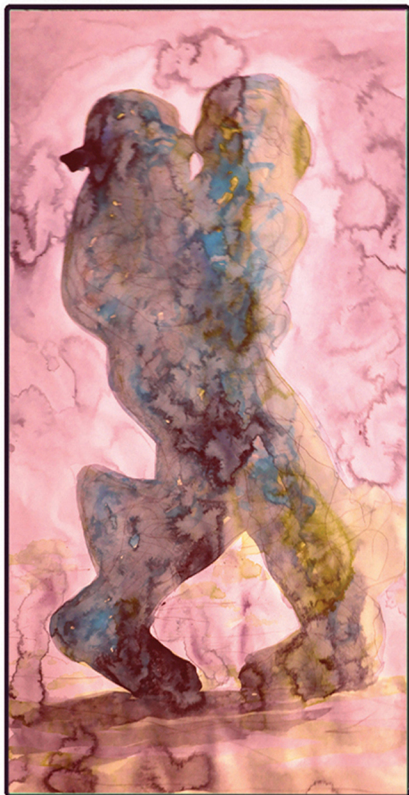
17

The body that  
Sits in the body  
Imagines another  
Being another  
Unable to escape  
The confines of itself  
It searches in vain  
For others

But

Vanity can only go so far  
Eventually you have to  
Accept your own mortality  
And that begins inside  
Unless you have a shell





## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

19

Bodies can sometimes  
Slip into others  
Or collide as ships  
Lost in the fog  
Unable to see past their noses  
Myopic until like bees  
They scent a new flower  
One that better fits their shape  
And then  
When it's too late  
They try to disengage



## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

21

Cast from a shallow  
Representation of themselves  
The charm was they thought  
Superficial  
It turned out it could  
Move mountains  
Shift perceptions  
And bestow grace  
On all who touched it  
A new belief system  
For the twenty-first century

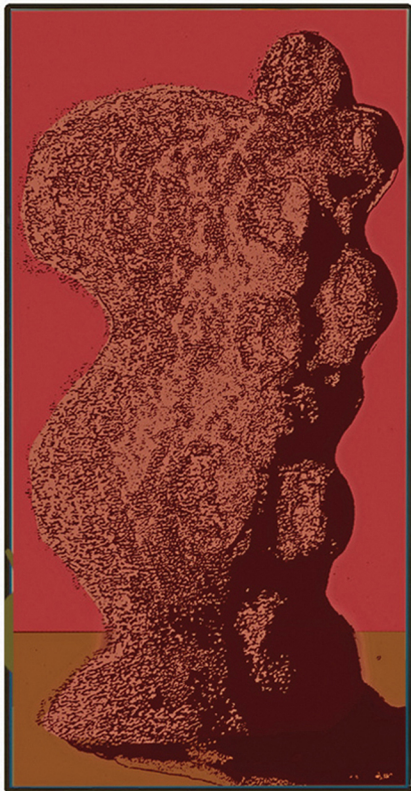


## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

23

A body remembers  
The colour  
It was something that  
emerged  
It was from inside  
The colour beloved by Rome  
Coming from the body sea  
Drying quickly as it flows  
Ever more slowly  
Fixing its own memory  
Developed from a negative  
In too cold fluids  
Reticulation revealing  
A deeper structure  
Of crystals  
And the flowers of tears



## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

25

When the spirit leaves  
What is left begins to live  
Excited bacteria  
Wearing a mass extinction  
Like an overcoat  
Looking for warmth  
Beyond the body  
Searching for beginnings  
Streaming out into the world  
An army of billions  
That never stops  
Operating a dead body policy  
To those looking to crematoria  
Rather than the sweet bliss  
Of the garden





## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

27

The reign of Law  
is upon us,  
Its carapace weighing  
vastly on our minds  
But  
Tomorrow is the time of  
vegetation  
The animals have  
had their way



## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

29

A body forgets  
The colour  
It was something skin born  
It was outside  
Soft, pink  
A warm colour range  
A feeling of endearment  
Supported by a mother's arm  
Milky memories of lost time  
Submerged beneath  
Reason and logic  
As the lungs open  
To inhale  
As well as to excite  
And to breathe in the future



## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

31

I am defined by my ears  
Even when a boy  
My mother said,  
"You will grow into them"  
As I got older  
They grew even bigger  
Buddha ears  
My wife said  
But she is one  
So she would say that



## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

33

One of many sensations lost  
Between Egypt and Sicily  
As he watched news of  
Other lives  
Until death finally persuaded him  
To give up on ideals  
He passed away  
Sinking through a whirl of his  
own blood  
Washing his insides, scrubbing  
their stains away  
Cleaning up the mess  
Making ready for a bacterial  
future  
Making ready for the sun  
And the moon  
To take their rightful places



## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

35

Art and body formats  
Are sometimes glued together  
As if we were supposed  
To understand ourselves by  
Gazing at the outer skins of  
Bodies other than our own  
Geometry might help  
If only as a contrast  
To the sloppy virtues  
That emerge  
When the pain hits  
Or loneliness bites





## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

37

It is in the stomach  
That fear begins  
An invisible ghost  
That grows quietly within you  
Waiting for that moment  
When the mind grows faint  
And exhaustion obscures  
The path of reason

## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

39

Invisible threats magnify  
The visible  
Our microscope minds  
Dreaming of futures  
Where bacteria and virus  
Rule the planet once more  
Life as we know it  
Forgotten  
Like dinosaurs our remains  
Sometimes exposed by storms  
Or washed up on  
Alien shores  
Of new continents  
As the sun begins  
To turn red





## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

41

A spectre of tomorrow  
Haunts today  
Drifting into focus  
Through the haze of days  
That stack up behind  
Our foolish science  
Digging trenches  
For the planting of seeds  
That will only close their eyes  
And sleep  
Waiting for us all  
To go away



## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

43

When trying to save others  
Make sure you save yourself  
first

If not you can dissolve  
Into another  
Personality being something  
That is hard to achieve  
But once in place it can be  
The only thing between  
Yourself and the rest  
Of the world



## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

45

Elephants sometimes dream of  
flight  
Passing their thought dreams  
On to sympathisers  
Who will see themselves  
As unexpected others  
Others  
Unable to conceive  
Of the possibilities  
Inherent in cross species  
Communication  
Are lost in their own bodies  
Unable to touch anyone  
But themselves





## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

47

From the outside  
The body can look contented  
Composed  
Within itself  
Inside  
It can be a sea of worry  
A sloppy mess of virtues  
An aching mass of bone  
Tendons thickening  
As decisions become  
Harder and harder  
To make



## Halting Implosion

A SERIES OF 50

49

Pain can be beautiful  
Sometimes when your mind  
Is full of the enormity  
Of the body  
Pain will leave its host  
A rocket launched  
Into the heavens  
A flowering of pain  
Planted so deeply  
That its roots  
Entwined the heart  
And as it flies  
So does the body  
Leave behind its mess