



UNSEEN
A Collaboration

Jane Bustin
Tracy Chevalier
John Hull

12 January – 14 March 2009
@ The British Library
96 Euston Road
London NW1 2DB

Unseen is an exhibition of paintings and texts, which are the result of a two-year collaborative exchange between the British artist Jane Bustin, the writer Tracy Chevalier and theologian John Hull, author of *Touching the Rock*.

A limited edition bookwork will be published by EMH Arts / Eagle Gallery Publications for the exhibition.

For further details please contact the Eagle Gallery on 020 7833 2674 or email: emmahilleagle@aol.com

John Hull's account of the onset of total blindness and its impact on his sensory perceptions and spiritual beliefs, prompted Jane Bustin to explore ways of making paintings that might involve an 'unseeing' of an original visual image. In 2006 she invited Tracy Chevalier to translate the effects of a series of minimal abstract paintings into words, as a means of making the works 'visible' to Hull. Chevalier's texts acted as a conduit for Hull to respond to the original paintings. Completing the Chinese whisper, Bustin conceptualised Hull's words as related ensembles of paintings, where the scale, colour, materiality and interval of each element were determined by Hull's perceptions. The final visual images are in a sense, authored by someone who cannot see.

The exhibition includes the initial sequence of paintings: *Touch-Shout*, *Stroke-Grief*, *Breath-Kiss*, together with email exchanges between the collaborators. Chevalier's texts are steeped in imagery that evoke the scents and textures of sensations and memories as a way of circumventing visual description – "The hiss of a radio tuned between stations...". Hull's responses are short and distilled, yet powerfully sensuous – "Kiss suspends breath / I hold breath to hold you...".

Bustin's final works, which employ various mediums of oil on wood, aluminium, silk and gesso have undergone subtle but perceptible changes. Arranged at irregular intervals on the wall (to echo the space between words on a page) they invite long and close contemplation. The works subvert traditional formal readings, since the related objects and the spaces between them must be read as a whole. The paintings have an extraordinary vocabulary of colour and texture, relying on the most minimal haze of pigment on the textured weave of a canvas, or a stain of oil bleeding from beneath a skin of overlaid paper. The painted objects and their after images, reflected at intervals as pools of colour along the walls, are meditations in the widest sense on 'seeing'.