

Pocketbooks

Overview of a Scottish publishing program.

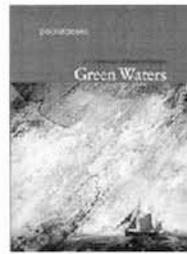
POCKETBOOKS WAS AN INNOVATIVE publishing program dedicated to publishing high quality artworks in a uniform format and available at very reasonable prices (typically around \$15.00 for each book). This very interesting series was largely the idea and the work of Alec Finlay, who still runs Morning Star Publications, an artists book publishing venture located in Edinburgh. Pocketbooks, co-published by Morning Star, offered a contemporary vision of Scottish culture, including visual artists, poets, and intermedia artists. It was funded by the Scottish Arts Council National Lottery New Directions Programme and also received assistance from Highlands and Islands Arts Ltd.

From the beginning, Pocketbooks was intended to publish fifteen titles (I think I have identified seventeen, including the pilot book) and then go out of business, but it still seems sad to see a publishing program with such a distinctive vision cease operations. Pocketbooks concentrated on Scottish artists, or artists working in Scotland and, based on these books, a case could be made for a Scottish sensibility in contemporary art (though of course, what is most apparent is the vision of the editor). Many of these works are succinct distillations of quiet observation. A thread of concrete poetry also runs through some of the titles (*Football Haiku*, for example, is a book of photographs of t-shirts imprinted with football-related slogans which are incidentally readable as haiku. These slogans were drawn from a call for submissions).

The books themselves are all designed and produced to read as part of a series, with standardized cover treatments, fixed trim size (17 by 13 cm, or approximately 6¾ by 5½ inches) and consistent commercial printing. Several of the books are packaged with small audio cds, which contain audioworks related to the theme of the book.

Many of these books are still available. Printed Matter (<http://www.printedmatter.org>) in New York city carries some of these, as does Columbia University Press (<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cup/catalog>). Or you could try Pocketbooks at <http://www.pbks.co.uk>.

—Clifton Meador



PILOT EDITION
Green Waters
edited by Alec Finlay
ISBN 0 9527 6692 2



PBO 2
Atoms of Delight
edited by Alec Finlay
ISBN 0 7486 6275 8
January, 2001
Paper, 208 pages



PBO 3
Love for Love
John Burnside and Alec Finlay (eds)
ISBN 0 7486 6276 6
January, 2001
Paper, 184 pages



PBO 4
Without Day
edited by Alec Finlay
ISBN 0 7486 6277 4
January, 2001
Paper, 200 pages



PBO 5
Wish I Was Here
edited by Kevin MacNeil and Alec Finlay
ISBN 0 7486 6281 2
January, 2001
Paper, 208 pages



PBO 6
Wild Life
Hamish Fulton
ISBN 0 7486 6282 0
July, 2001
Paper, 208 pages