Images & Texts

*The Last Hundred,* Aaron Kent & William Arnold (Cards in folder, £12.00, Guillemot Press)

After reading this collection I remain unsure of what the title means, although there is an oblique reference to it in a poem about standing stones. Perhaps it is to do with the limited edition of one hundred copies?\* Anyway, this hand-crafted folder contains a number of beautifully printed cards with images and texts on, each exploring part of West Cornwall.

The photographs are, it has to be said, the star of the show here: Aaron Kent’s poems can’t match the simple power of the black and white art; and I’m also unsure about the mix of portrait and landscape formats, and the varying font sizes and design. (I like things ordered, I do.)

Kent’s poems are sometimes rather gnomic and minimal, at other times buying into a kind of romanticism, or simply piling up associative ideas. Even at their best they are upstaged by the photographs, which need no accompaniment. They are stark, sometimes bleak, photographs: grey horizon lines, granite tors and crosses, heavy clouds and mist which overshadow and overpower signs of human occupation, whether historical or contemporary.

Kent’s tougher poems – such as ‘Lanyon’, which is a list of words; or the melancholoy, haikuesque ‘Site of Holy Well Morvah’ – can hold their own, but ultimately I’d have liked to have sees these words and images given more space and, to be honest, their *own* spaces. Here, each cramps the other’s style rather than working together.

This is an interesting but ultimately unsatisfying project from the ever-intriguing Guillemot Press.

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