



CANARY WHARF
ARTS+EVENTS

AND THE SCREENS THAT
CIRCLE YOU LIKE BUTTERFLIE
NOW // ALL YOUR TOMOR-
ROWS TURNED TO ELECTRIC
WATERFALLS. MODERNISM
ISN'T A STYLE MODERNISM
A DREAM OF FAIR TAXATIO
AND GENE EQUALITY
RISE OF AND KIN
NESS. DREAM
FROM
ATIO

ROBERT MONTGOMERY

Estuary Poem for
Wyndham Lewis
and Other Works

15 — 27 January 2018

Daily 7am — midnight

Lobby, One Canada Square,
Canary Wharf, London E14 5AB

canarywharf.com

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ROBERT MONTGOMERY

Estuary Poem for Wyndham Lewis and Other Works

British artist Robert Montgomery brings to Canary Wharf two text-based conceptual pieces: a new site specific commission, *Estuary Poem for Wyndham Lewis*, and one of his most famous light poems, *The People You Love 2010*. *Estuary Poem* brings the unique landscape and atmosphere of the Thames Estuary into the heart of Canary Wharf, reminding us of its historic connections to the coast. Montgomery says, "I worked for a magazine at Canary Wharf for a brief time in the 1990s, what struck me about the place was the water, I realised that in a real sense Canary Wharf is the beginning of the Thames Estuary, and I wanted to explore all that implies - the unique landscape of the estuary, the unique atmosphere and the light, and the place of the estuary in language, we say "estuary English" but what does that really mean? With this project I wanted to make a piece that would mean travelling to the end of the estuary and then in some way to bring the wild estuary inside One Canada Square."



Wyndham Lewis, 'Enemy of the Stars', published by Harmsworth, London 1932



Estuary Poem for Wyndham Lewis, film still, Shellness Beach 2017

The text of *Estuary Poem for Wyndham Lewis* references Wyndham Lewis's play 'Enemy of the Stars', first published in excerpts in BLAST magazine in 1914, which Montgomery has updated for our age of ecological crisis to "ENEMIES OF THE ICEBERGS AND THE STARS". He is saying that we have all, at the end of the oil age, become enemies of the icebergs and the stars, and, in a sense, enemies of nature until we find a way to run our society from renewable energy sources.

In looking back to Wyndham Lewis, Montgomery is mapping a line from Fitzrovia to the end of the Thames Estuary at Shellness. For the film shown in the exhibition Montgomery took the sculpture to the end point where the estuary meets the North Sea and The Swale. His ceremonial burning of the *Estuary Poem* piece on Shellness Beach at the very mouth of the Thames celebrates the unique romantic untamed beauty of this landscape.

Back in the studio, Montgomery carefully reconstructed the burnt fragments and the rebuilt sculpture was then illuminated with neon and LED light creating a halo around the relic of the poem. The artist wanted to bring the outside in, from the estuary to the heart of Canary Wharf, and with the burnt wood to create simultaneously a sense of warmth and wilderness. This sharp contrast between the natural environment of the estuary and the grand marble architecture found at Canary Wharf is moderated by the elements these buildings are made of, namely sand, metal, fire, water, all present on the beach on the Isle of Sheppey. The overall message is to connect One Canada Square back to the estuary and the people of the estuary.

Alongside the light sculpture is the atmospheric film of the burning of the poem on the beach. Montgomery and his wife, the poet Greta Bellamacina, light up the poem with naked flames and watch it slowly burn in the coastal wind. By coincidence Montgomery and Bellamacina live together in the very block in Fitzrovia where Wyndham Lewis and Roger Fry founded the Omega Workshops, making the memorial poem to Wyndham Lewis and the journey from Fitzrovia to the end of the estuary a deeply personal journey for them - a pilgrimage to make a temporary memorial to a Modernist hero on a wild winter English beach.

Alessandra Caggiano, Curator
Creative Director at e-Luminate Studio
e-luminatestudio.com



Kent Fire Poem, Broadstairs Beach 2013

ROBERT MONTGOMERY

LIST OF WORKS

Dimensions in cm, height x width x depth

The People You Love 2010

Wood, copper, recycled PVC and 12volt LED lights
232 x 378 x 170
Edition of 3

Estuary Poem for Wyndham Lewis (Part 1) 2017

Fir wood, plywood, flame residue, copper,
12volt LED lights, neon and mixed media
300 x 471 x 170

Estuary Poem for Wyndham Lewis (Part 2) 2017

Film, Shellness Beach
Dimensions variable
Edition of 2

Robert Montgomery's work is public; it brings a poetic voice and public interventionist strategies to the tradition of contemporary text art. His output spreads to diverse media; from billboard pieces, solar powered light pieces, fire poems, woodcuts and watercolours. Montgomery creates public poems that can be seen and enjoyed by everyone in a successful attempt to democratise art and seduce with simple words that spark something in the observer's mind.

Montgomery's work is intimate; the lighting up and setting fire to the poems further deepens the process of internalisation of the artworks, to the point where some of Montgomery's most famous poems, such as *The People You Love*, have become tattoos on people's bodies.

His work is inspirational and contemporary yet firmly embedded in a long tradition of the politicised poets and artists who came before him. *Estuary Poem for Wyndham Lewis* is an extraordinary example of this and of his passion for British Modernism.

Montgomery's work is international; he was the British artist selected for the 2012 Kochi Biennale and the 2016 Yinchuan Biennale. A monograph on his work was published by Distanz in 2015. He has exhibited in Paris, Berlin, and New York. Along with the architects Allied Works he was a shortlisted finalist for the UK National Holocaust Memorial in London in 2017.

"There is something pacifying about Robert Montgomery's text-based artwork. The poems he composes suggest a steady faith that humanity can heal the ecological and emotional trauma of our times, with a lyricism that recalls poets like Philip Larkin and Sylvia Plath."

Rachel Small
Interview Magazine, New York

For more information, visit
ROBERTMONTGOMERY.ORG

Exhibition Tour

Tuesday 23 January, 6.30 - 7.15pm

Curator Alessandra Caggiano discusses the exhibition with Robert Montgomery

The tour is free but please contact Canary Wharf Public Art Office at visualart@canarywharf.com to reserve a place

The exhibition is part of Winter Lights at Canary Wharf

Photographs courtesy of the artist unless credited otherwise

