

Signal and Residue

Screen prints, collage and instant film by Rowan Ellery

These works are made from things that were printed once for another reason. Sheet music, repair manuals, survey maps and paper grocery bags all carried information to someone. By the time they reach me, that job is finished. I print over them, cut them up and photograph them until they carry something else.

I learned to print in a commercial shop, where a misregistered layer meant a ruined shirt. In my own work I leave those mistakes in. In *Score*, a hymnal page from a church rummage sale shows through yellow and black passes that never quite line up, and a red block sits over the middle like a note someone forgot to erase. *River Map* started as a survey sheet of channels and sandbars. The red bars were cut from a test print and laid down by hand, slightly crooked, the way surveyors' stakes lean after a winter.

Some images come from the inside of machines. *Signal Ghost* is printed over a circuit board diagram from a 1980s television repair manual. A bedsheet ghost felt right for a drawing of a device that also made pictures appear out of nothing. *Three Radios* is printed on bags from the grocery store near my studio, and *Satellite* sends collage strips out from a hand-drawn globe across a field of blue.

Alongside the prints I work with instant film. *Two Interiors* pairs an escalator and a view up into a steel atrium, both shot on expired film whose chemistry decides how much of the scene survives. For the *Drift* pieces I lift the emulsion off the film in warm water and lay it down on watercolor paper, where it tears and folds. I can steer it, but not control it.

What ties this together is residue: what is left of an image after it has been used. I am interested in printed matter at the end of its useful life, and in how a second printing can give it another one.