

# information as material

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**information as material** is proud to present Andrew Dodds's new artist's book, *I, Sparkie. World Famous Champion Talking Budgerigar* (80pp, 168x240mm, ISBN: 978-1-907468-17-9), edited by Nick Thurston. It features an extensive interview with the artist and contextualising essays by John Mullarkey and Robert Williams. This first edition of 350 copies, made possible by the generous support of the Henry Moore Foundation, also includes an audio CD and will be distributed internationally from October 2013 by Cornerhouse (Manchester).

"Artist Andrew Dodds's beautiful new book is a marvellous and complex case study in the culture of nature. This lush volume makes a significant contribution to the blooming field of animal studies by highlighting how animals are themselves – how animals are highly differentiated individuals."

—Mark Dion, artist and Professor, Columbia University

"This book is a testament to Andrew Dodds's commitment to offering a new perspective on our relationship with nature and with seemingly fleeting, yet distinctive moments in our recent history. Experiencing this project and hearing this talking bird again, reanimated, does exactly what great artworks do... It shifts our understanding of the things we think we know and creates genuine new insights."

—Alessandro Vincentelli, Curator of Exhibitions & Research, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art

*I, Sparkie* represents a rich and unusual archive relating to the life of a real budgerigar, Sparkie Williams, who was raised and trained in Newcastle, England by Mrs Mattie Williams. Between 1954-58 Sparkie came to be recognised as the world's most famous talking animal. His vocabulary included over 500 words; he won awards and a place in the Guinness Book of Records; his voice was used on pop records and bird seed adverts; his dialect was distinctly Geordie; and his taxidermed remains have their own strange history of display.

Since the late 1990s Northern Irish artist Andrew Dodds has sustained an artistic study of Sparkie's history and the relations of that history to the natural sciences, museology, the voice, human/non-human relations and the government of 'nature'. In his new book Dodds reveals the Sparkie archive held by the Natural History Society of Northumbria, much of which has never been reproduced before, including facsimile extracts from a typescript of Mattie Williams's moving biography of her beloved pet.

*I, Sparkie* also presents two invited analyses of the 'Sparkie phenomena' by esteemed academics John Mullarkey and Robert Williams who explore the philosophy of animal studies and some cultural mysteries of (uncanny) talking animals respectively. In the inside cover of every copy is an 18-minute audio CD of a private reel-to-reel recording of Sparkie learning to talk, transferred and abridged by the artist, that has never been publicly released. The publication opens with an extensive interview with Dodds that situates the project in a complex web of social, political, cultural and speculative histories (plural) relating the artist's *oeuvre* and the crises evoked by Sparkie's persona.

**Andrew Dodds** is a Belfast-born artist based in London. His work combines specialist and amateur skills and interests with local and institutional knowledge to create a new kind of space where future ideas might form amongst the everyday. Since the late 1990s his work has been commissioned and exhibited widely at major public and private galleries, artist-run spaces and sites beyond the gallery.

**John Mullarkey** is Professor of Film and Television at Kingston University. He is the author of three books, co-editor of *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy* (2012) and *The Bloomsbury Companion to Continental Philosophy* (2013), and is currently working on a book entitled *Postural Mutations: Laruelle and Non-Human Philosophy*.

**Robert Williams** is Professor of Fine Art at Cumbria University. His interdisciplinary practice encompasses archaeology, anthropology, alchemy and collaboration. His work is held in public and private collections around the world and he has exhibited internationally at venues including at the Guggenheim (Bilbao).

**information as material** was established in 2002 to publish works by artists who use extant material – selecting it and reframing it – and who, in doing so, disrupt the existing order of things.

Special thanks to the **Henry Moore Foundation** for their generous support of this project.

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