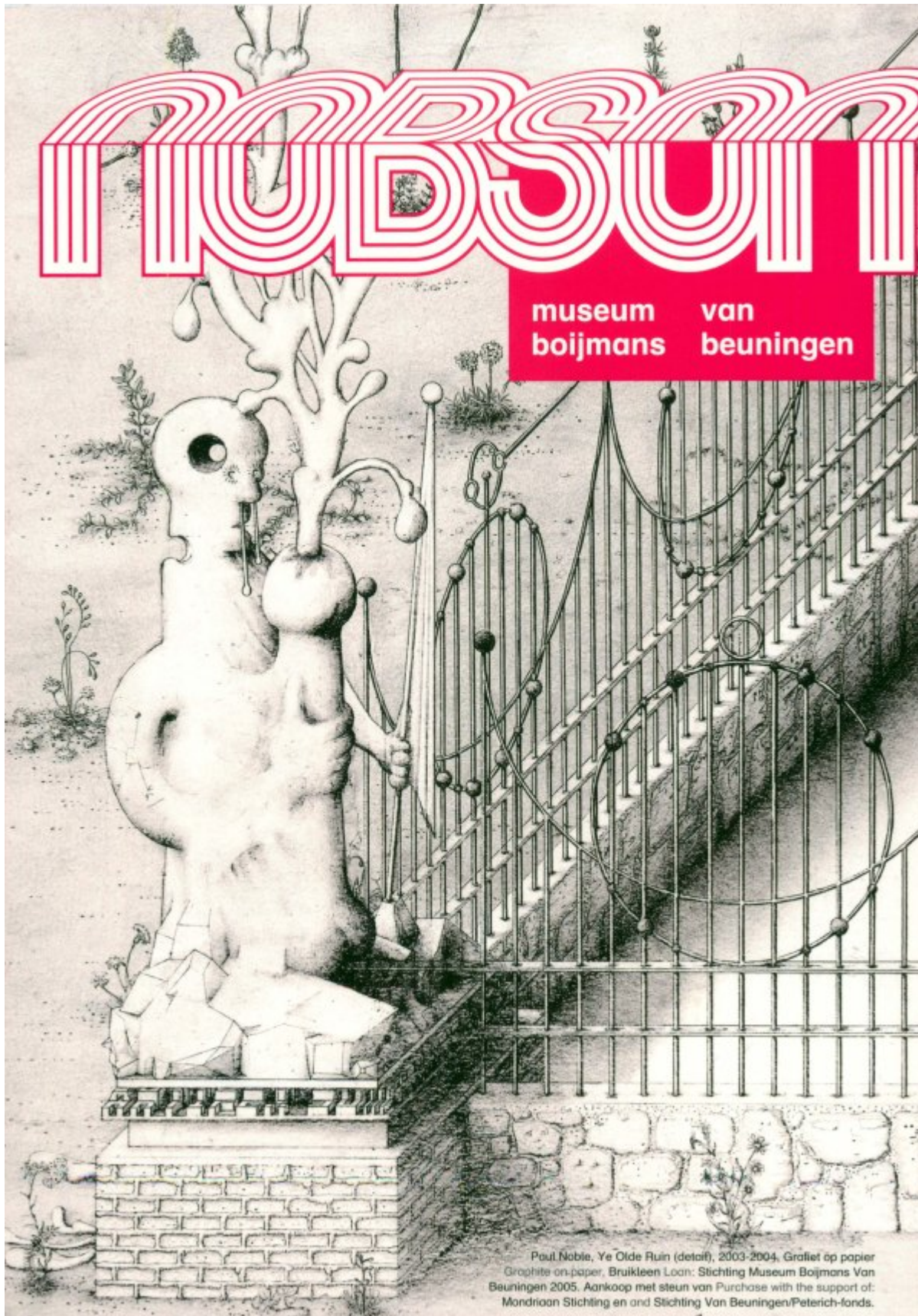
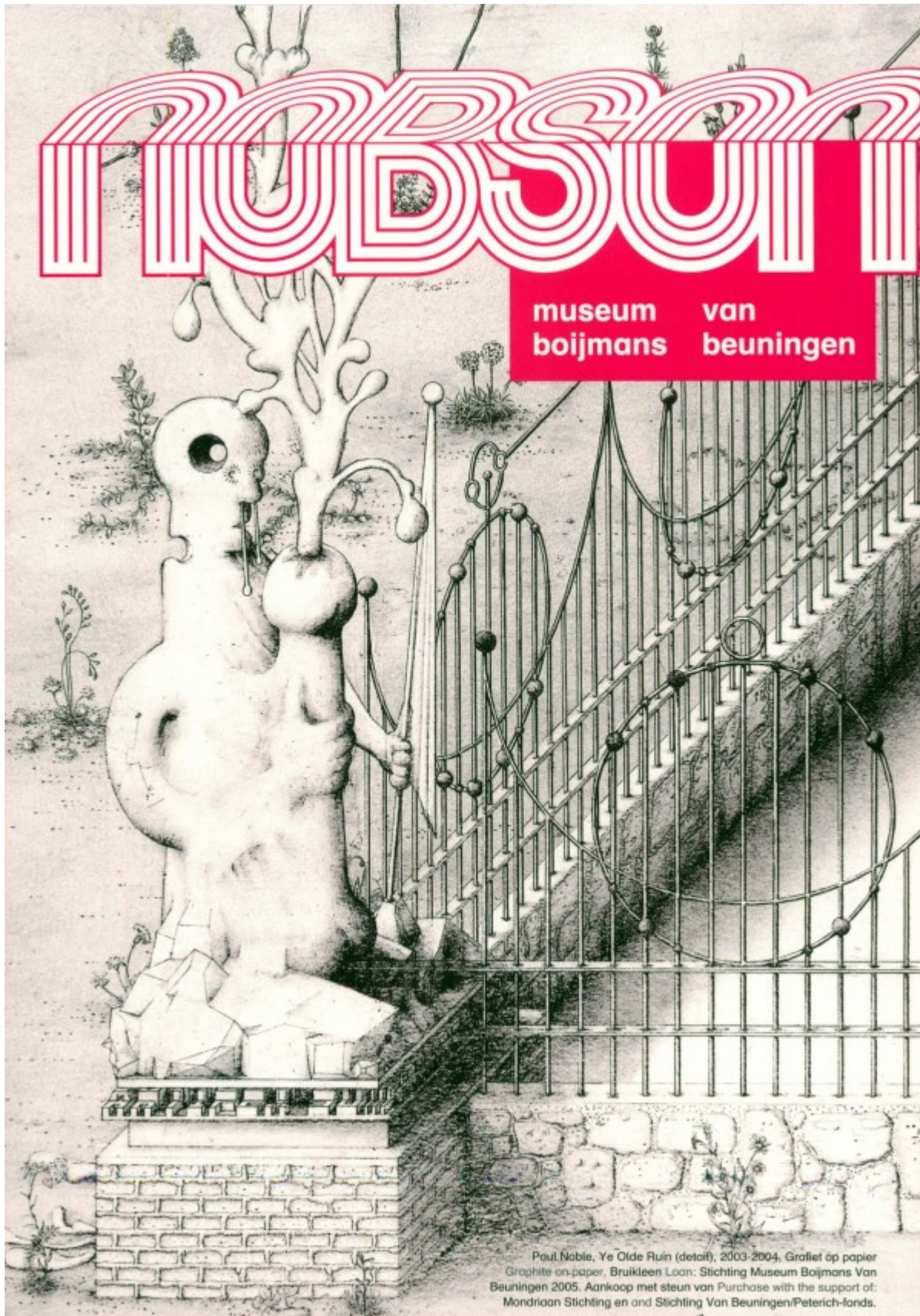


NOBSON NEWTOWN – IN PARENTHESIS



The great exhibition of Paul Noble's work opened at Museum Boijmans van Beuningen at the weekend – [Link]



An endlessly growing cosmopolis

14 June – 21 September 2014

This summer Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen will exhibit Paul Noble's **Nobson Newtown**, an ever-growing cosmopolis on which the artist has worked for eighteen years. The vast drawings and other artworks that make up Nobson Newtown are spread across major museums and private collections worldwide, and will be brought together in the museum's 1500m² Bodon Galleries for the most comprehensive survey of Noble's project to date.

Paul Noble's (1963, UK) metropolis takes form through detailed and gigantic pencil drawings, sculptures, video and other objects. The Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen purchased two works by Noble in 2004, and now 10 years later the museum is excited to be gathering the largest ever collection of the Nobson works. Works such as Nobspital (a hospital), Nobsend (a cemetery), Welcome to Nobson (a civic monument), and many more will be presented in collaboration with the artist, to give scope to the breadth and depth of Noble's visual world.

Nobson Newtown

Located in the precise moment of 10.45am, the sun's rays hit Nobson Newtown at a 45-degree angle, illuminating it left to right. All buildings and objects are represented in oblique projection, in which there is no distinction between foreground and background, and the buildings are made up of a three-dimensional typeface, the 'Nobson font', through which the letters literally describe their locations.

I worked with Paul on a text, called *In Parenthesis* to accompany pictures of his work in the catalogue – it can be visited at a website – [In Parenthesis – website]

The text takes the form of a series of comments on things you might encounter in Paul's world, Nobson, with some reflections on topics like geometry, territory, theatre. Here's a link to – [Nobson – the book]

Here's a sample:

grid

Geometric grids abound in Nobson. Features follow angular paths. In *Welcome to Nobson* geometric decorations from *The Dome of the Rock* are picked out by stones on the ground. Regular tiled patterns occur too, squared paving, or the like, in *The Mall* and *Welcome to Nobson*. There are egg-carton forms, cages and contained forms, in *Ye Olde Ruin* these are next to a cadastrated cemetery, while a great gridded structure dominates the

upper half of the vista.

Prisonob is rigorously gridded, with its rows and columns. *Welcome to Nobson* features a crossroads and labyrinth – enclosed, squared off. There are enclosures everywhere. *Unified Nobson* looks to be organized in square sections or city blocks. There's no tangle of streets here, no narrow winding lanes. Nobson sometimes seems to have been built under an aesthetic of cleanliness – that the clear passage of air will blow away stagnant humors.

There is more generally a deep sense of order to Nobson, in the drawings, because everything is marked out on the coordinates of a three-dimensional grid – x,y,z, lines and points. This offers articulating structure – like an invisible skeleton.

The walls in Nobson often have a regular grid structure that can form the basis for sculpture and imagery, like storyboarding, and as also in the great *Egg*.

Grids, spreadsheets of rows and columns, putting things in boxes helps us organize the world. Cleaning up the world and organizing things into proper categories – a grid is about putting things in contained forms.

Then there's the corollary – *Cathedral* is a pile of stones, and the great bound sculpted forms in *Villa Joe Rear View* conspicuously refuse to conform and instead seem to explode the boundaries of containment.

projection

Nobson is projected across a paper surface. These are not perspective drawings, but adopt oblique projection, a particular kind of informal 3D rendering.

This is not the way our eyes see the world. There's no vanishing point, no convergence of parallel lines on a point in the distance – parallel lines stay parallel, and the surface extends off into infinity, so there's no horizon either.

Nevertheless these are architectural drawings combining plan, section, elevation into a rendered view. There's a traditional term quite relevant here – ichnography – the ground floor plan that comprises the depiction of ichnoi – tracks or footprints, marks made by those no longer with us, paths that we may follow again. The term suggests that architectural drawing concerns matters of presence and absence.

illuminated manuscript

Nobson is bathed in an even light, but what lights Nobson isn't the sun. The light source is outside the viewer's field of vision. The shadows are all at the same angle, and there's no converging perspective, so the light in Nobson must come from a prism or angled slats that are above but parallel to the land, not from a point source such as the sun. The sun in Nobson is not about light.

So the light in Nobson is a function of the projection and its grid, the way Nobson is drawn. Illumination actually therefore comes from the reflective qualities of the paper, shining through the pencil graphite, the drawing, while the angled shadows offer the impression of three dimensional modeled form. Nobson's light is brightness – tone.

Paul Noble: "I mostly use hard, or technical, pencils – 4H,5H,6H,7H,8H and 9H. Each of these hardnesses has their own tone – or a darkness they can't go beyond. The more 9H pencil you apply to your paper doesn't increase it's darkness, it simply compresses the paper so that it becomes shiny, reflective and thus a pale

mirror.”

These drawings are chirographic, scripted by hand, manu-script. Given the organizing principle that word and letter forms are the basis of so many buildings, features, landforms, Nobson is a kind of illuminated manuscript.

Here's a video of Paul made with the BBC – [\[Link\]](#)