

# Power, Corruption & Lies # 1

## Film & Video in a Divisive Atmosphere

### Our Magnolia

Nashashibi/Skaer, 2009, 5 min, 16mm

*Our Magnolia* expands outwards, in portentous swoops, from British painter Paul Nash's *Flight of the Magnolia* (1944). An official artist for both World Wars, Nash ended his career with an essay and series of paintings, entitled 'Aerial Flowers,' that channel war-time paranoia into depictions of flowers hovering like enemy parachutes across the English sky. Nashashibi and Skaer's associative montage shakily traces a path through figures of mortality and militarism into the neoconservatist age, moving from alternating close-ups of the painting and aristocratic flowers to sequential reframings of the hollowed eye socket of a decomposing whale carcass; two photographs of Margaret Thatcher, shown first on an office desk and again in unflattering close-up; airport security documentation of passenger aircraft; and a heart-rending scene of a female griever in the looted National Museum of Iraq. Her cry punctures the previously mute soundtrack and resounds until the last shot of the film, when Nashashibi and Skaer cover the actual 16mm filmstrip (of footage of Nash's painting) with a flurry of scratches.

— Tyler Coburn, 'Nashashibi/Skaer at Murray Guy, New York,' Art Agenda, August 2010

### Ian Breakwell's Continuous Diary (12 Oct 1982)

Ian Breakwell, 1984, c.8 min, digital

During the 1970s and 1980s, Ian Breakwell published a series of *Diaries* in book and video form. In Breakwell's words, "The Diaries record the side events of daily life: by turns mundane, curious, bleak, erotic, tender, vicious, cunning, stupid, ambiguous, absurd, as observed by a personal witness."

In 1984 he worked with Anna Ridley to make *Ian Breakwell's Continuous Diary*, a series of 21 videos, ranging from 3–11 minutes, broadcast on Channel 4 Television on dates specified by the artist.

This particular episode – which refers to The London Victory Parade of 1982, held after the defeat of Argentina in the Falklands War – was broadcast to coincide with the two-year anniversary of the sinking of HMS Sheffield by an Argentine missile in May 1982.

Presented courtesy of REWIND Archive, DJCAD, University of Dundee, Anna Ridley/Analogue, and Felicity Sparrow.

### The Trophies of Empire

Keith Piper, 1985 (revised 2017), 11 min, digital (originally tape/slide work)

Described by Piper himself as a work very much of its moment, *The Trophies of Empire* was highly critical of the political climate that produced it. The work was made in the Thatcher years, where race riots, high unemployment, the privatisation of nationalised industries, and a new property-owning class became its context. Given this, Piper's work is justifiably didactic in revealing how the legacy of the British Empire had a continued effect in the contemporary political context.

— Mo White, "It's all Just a Little Bit of History Repeating":

Slide-Tape's Key Works in the UK Since the 1970s, in: Practices of Projection, 2020

Made whilst studying an MA in Environmental Media at Royal College of Art, *The Trophies of Empire* was originally presented in 1985 as a mixed media installation in the 'Black Skin, Blue Coat' exhibition at the Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool.

As well as borrowing the title of artist Donald Locke's 1972–4 work *Trophies of Empire*, Piper has acknowledged the direct influence of Black Audio Film Collective's 1983 tape/slide work *Expeditions One: Signs of Empire* on this piece.

Presented courtesy of Keith Piper.

### Island Race

William Raban, 1996, 28 min, digital

*Island Race* was filmed between 1994 and 1995 in the East End of London. Raban described it as 'rediscovering' a part of London he had lived in for 20 years. The film depended on constant observation and the gathering of information about events and celebrations taking place on the street: the funeral of Ronnie Kray, VE day celebrations and street parties, a political campaign by a British National Party candidate, and anti-racist demonstrations. Raban intended the film to question if

this view of a small part of London ‘would offer up any clues as to the general condition of the country at large.’

— Exhibition guide for ‘Making History: Art and Documentary in Britain from 1929 to Now,’ Tate Liverpool, 2006

### Sari Red

Pratibha Parmar, 1985, 13 min, digital

*Sari Red* is concerned with racist violence, and in particular with the effect of the threat of violence upon the lives of Asian women. Red symbolises the spilt blood of a woman killed in a racist attack, and Red symbolises the sensuality and intimacy between Asian women. The tape explores the external world of the street and the internal world of private spaces, both of which are underlined by the threat of violence.

— Electric Eyes, video programme, Film & Video Umbrella, 1989

I had been really moved when I read a story of this young Indian woman [Kalbinder Kaur Hayre] who’d been killed by three white racists on the streets of London. [...] I read about how they had screamed racist abuse at her and she had shouted back at them in self-defence. They were driving along in a white van, and as a result of her shouting back, they turned the van around, went on to the pavement and crushed straight into her and her two friends deliberately. All because she had stood up for herself and shouted back. When I read that I felt it could so easily have been me or any other Indian person that I knew. I did that. I would shout back at racists and here was a young girl who had been killed for it.

— Pratibha Parmar, Interview by Maggie Warwick, 10 May 2007

### Jordan’s Dance

Derek Jarman, 1977, 16 min, digital (from 8mm)

*Jubilee* (Jarman, 1978) incorporated Super 8 at its heart, in the sequence of Jordan dancing around a bonfire, which Derek also edited as the standalone Super-8 film *Jordan’s Dance* (1977). Jordan was one of the pioneers of the punk movement, turning heads as she walked down the street wearing rubber and extraordinary makeup. Derek first saw her in Victoria Station, where they had both gone to catch a train. She wanted to be a ballerina; he wanted to film her dance.

— James Mackay, ‘SLNC IS GLDN,’ in: Derek Jarman Super 8, 2014

In 16 breathtaking minutes, Jarman delivers the vision — love and death, cruelty and compassion, contamination and purity locked in mortal combat in a derelict,

purgatorial England — that would become his signature.

— Rachel Spence, ‘The Queer Magic and Rage of Derek Jarman,’ Financial Times, 18 December 2021

Presented courtesy of James Mackay and Luma Foundation

### I Hope I’m Loud When I’m Dead

Beatrice Gibson, 2018, 21 min, digital

In the two years following the birth of my daughter, Britain voted to leave the EU, Donald Trump got elected as US president, Grenfell Tower in London burnt to the ground, the #metoo movement happened and I suffered an acute bout of hormonally and politically induced anxiety. Getting emo became par for the course. When I met you, and partly in response, I was consciously trying to widen the predominantly male influences that had informed my films. I was consciously seeking out a community of voices that I could pass onto my daughter that would draw a picture for her of a more inclusive and diverse world but, also, of a world that valued feeling as much as it did fact. A world in which emotions weren’t suspect, in which feelings (read: being female) were not a problem.

At the time, I was reading a lot of poetry: yours, but also that of CAConrad, Audre Lorde, Alice Notley and Adrienne Rich. The poems functioned like an alternative news feed, a steadying force in an increasingly turbulent world. I wanted to write this letter to thank you: you gave me permission. If I can make even a single film that’s able to feel, in the way that your poems do, I’ll be done.

— Beatrice Gibson, ‘Filmmaker Beatrice Gibson on the Importance of Eileen Myles’ Essay “Painted Clear, Painted Black”’ [an open letter to Eileen Myles], Frieze, February 2019

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