

Power, Corruption & Lies # 3

Film & Video in a Divisive Atmosphere

Tory Stories (Part 3: An Ugly Streak of Violence)

Peter Savage, 1984, 2 min, digital

An Ugly Streak of Violence uses material from a chat show interview with Margaret Thatcher in which she is attempting to show her 'softer side.' This interview was broadcast at the height of the miners' strike and this segment is an attempt (with ridicule) to reveal the mechanisms at work when politicians manipulate their appearances to signal emotional resonances that are actually contrary to their actions.

With the perspective of hindsight I came to see that any 'system' (political, religious, philosophical) that offers 'solutions' will simply exchange one prison for another. After 1984 I stopped making overtly political work and threw away several of the works I had previously made. *Tory Stories* was unearthed while sorting through old storage boxes and I felt it had a place in a historical context.

Peter Savage

Dissonance and Disturbance

Lis Rhodes, 2012, 26 min, digital

Dissonance and Disturbance was first shown as a 2-screen installation at ICA, London in 2012. Its materials are drawn from three earlier films by the artist: *A Cold Draft* (1988), *In the Kettle* (2010) and *Whitehall* (2012).

The move towards such febrile transparency in Rhodes's recent work is, you could say, itself symptomatic. Conflicts like this preclude formal niceties, it says; though there's still artistry here, with Rhodes at times working a nightmarish syntax of slowed violent footage, disconnected terrified shouts and softly howling winds that, somehow, rarely descends into theatrics. At other times she makes arcing, everything's-fucked connections, e.g. moving from don't-attack-Iran protests in London to, say, reports of Israel blowing up a flour mill in Gaza. If the intense topicality and understatement of this work's formal architecture means it doesn't feel like art maybe it shouldn't (and, in any case, one day it

will). For now, Rhodes' art should just feel like what it is, an exemplary little barricade composed of fury, fear and frustration: conscience as form.

— Martin Herbert, 'frieze,' April 2012

Crimewatch UK (from Death Valley Days)

Gorilla Tapes, 1984, 4 min, digital

Scratch video, a phenomenon of the first half of the 1980s, involved the 'sampling' and repeating found images and sounds recorded from broadcast television, often using domestic editing equipment, thereby making a new work. Gorilla Tapes was the collective name of Scratch video artists Jon Dovey, Gavin Hodge, Jean McClements and Tim Morrison, who met at the video workshop at Luton and made an immediate impact with their sharp, no-budget political tapes, collaged from old film footage and the TV new imagery of the mid-Thatcher years.

— David Curtis, *A History of Artists' Film and Video in Britain*, 2007

Time and the Wave

William Raban, 2013, 15 min, digital

This way of thinking about time and specifically the paradox of the present as a time that cannot be reflected upon until it has become past, seems consistent with the idea of thinking about the passage of time as the movement within a wave. In a wave the individual particles of water remain static – in the same way that the single frames in a film are static. Just as the wave appears to move forwards across the sea surface, so the projected succession of individual frames in a film create an illusion of movement. I investigated this idea further in *Time and the Wave* (2013).

— William Raban, 'Materiality of Time,' UAL Professorial Platform lecture, 2015

Pull Down Lads

Séamus Harahan, 2008, 3 min, digital

A sorrowful conjoining of picture and song. The former a bus journey around the labyrinthine structure of HMP Maze, the latter an English folk song by John Tams about the travelling fairground leaving town.

HMP Maze was a maximum security prison situated 15 minutes outside of Belfast. During The Troubles, alleged paramilitary prisoners were held there under Special Category Status, which recognised them as prisoners of war and gave them particular rights – including not wearing prison uniforms. In 1976, as a result of this status being withdrawn by the British Government, inmates commenced the Blanket Protest which culminated in the 1981 hunger strike and the death of 10 prisoners to starvation. The Maze symbolises the Irish conflict itself. It closed in 2000, and Harahan's video was shot in 2006, shortly before it was largely demolished.

The accompanying song, *Pull Down Lads* – written by John Tams and recorded by June Tabor in 1976 – refers to the term 'pulling down' – where traditional travelling fairgrounds would clear the ground after the last night of the show and be gone without trace the next morning.

Bernadette

Duncan Campbell, 2008, min, digital

Bernadette presents an unravelling, yet accumulatively open-ended portrayal of the female Irish dissident and political activist, Bernadette Devlin. Cutting between archival material, animation, and scripted voice-over, Campbell's film is interested in fusing documentary and fiction in order to assess both the subject matter and the mode of communicating it.

— International Film Festival Rotterdam

Devlin is a figure in whom the politics and history of this very particular time and place seemed to distill, and through whom they seemed to pass. I think that recently it has become possible to look at this period in Irish politics and appreciate the political nuances that were present. Her politics have far more to do with class than they do with religion and I think it is now possible to look at that. *Bernadette* is my portrait of her.

— Duncan Campbell, interview with International Film Festival Rotterdam, 2009

Documentary is a peculiar form of fiction. It has the appearance of verity grounded in many of the same formal conventions of fiction – narrative drive, linear plot, and closure. Yet, the relationship between author/subject/audience is rarely investigated in the same way as it is in meta-fiction. I want to faithfully represent Devlin, to do justice to her legacy. Yet what I am working with, are already mediated images and writings about her. What I produce can only ever be a selection of these representations, via my own obsessions and my desire to make engaging art of her. My film is an admission of limitation, but I have too much respect for Devlin for it to be an expression of nihilism or irony. I am striving for what Samuel Beckett terms, "a form that accommodates the mess." I want to broaden the scope of the film to include this space and tension, which is typically excluded or concealed, and that is the reason for the overlapping strands in the film...'

— *ibid.*

Séamus Harahan made the music for the film. This only features briefly but is very important. He's an ace accordion player.

— *ibid.*

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