

Tales Gates; and Plank Points - The Project

“Work commenced on these pieces in 1973 and arose through, as it were, asking fundamental questions of photographers and photography — questions which for some years, to that point, had been posited within a discourse generated largely by film-makers, a debate developing consistently and rigorously around the means and function of representation as a system of signification within the wider social context.

Some of the questions raised did not lead anywhere; many crossed over with other practitioners’ debates in art history, modernism, psychoanalysis and linguistics; many led directly into other, unexpected areas; some are still being pursued today, though perhaps less consistently.

At the same time organisational advances were made in areas directly related to independent film production, such as in the distribution and exhibition of product, and the educational projects associated with the production and use of the photographic image on motion picture film. Altogether the welter of activity was responsible for an extraordinary surge of non-institutionalised film-making and film-viewing throughout the regions of Britain, crossing many interests and many practices, with varying involvements in theoretical discourse, which among the practitioners of photography at that time, with a few notable exceptions but certainly from photography itself, was visibly absent.

A Biography

A vocational training in photography provided the background for many of the film projects undertaken and indeed certain of the films, such as VISTASOUND and EROTA/AFINI incorporate photographs and photography. Parallel to the completion of various film projects between 1973 and 1979 a range of photographic experiments was commenced and the two pieces in this exhibition are the largest of this work. *Tales Gates* was commenced in 1973 and completed in 1984, the places being visited, the prints being made at different points throughout that period. Similarly, *Plank Points* was commenced in 1974, the original negatives being worked with in various ways at different times until completion in 1980.

The extended production period, (and the reference to it in the work itself), was partially determined by the circumstances of organising the time and resources outside various film projects and work in other mediums.

Questions

The viewpoint of the producing photographer, as work progressed, was neither slavishly following nor seeking to prove a number of definitions or conceptions prepared in advance of the progression, which might simply pose, or less so appear to answer, a range of abstracted questions. The conditions which affect the viewpoints of producer and spectator alike, which could be described as transactions or mediations as they arise from their respective viewpoints, assume a desire to be active in encountering the artefact which emerges, to make meaning from various layers of presented photographic and material evidence, to construct an order by which these are related to the Subject(s) of the photograph or the photographic presentation. It is this area of the post-photographic and the presentation of the photographic image that can make more visible the transactions which occur with the photographer. Although, this cannot restrict the making of other meanings from each wholly subjective viewpoint. For the purpose of this note the

transactions can be categorised into a diagram which will indicate the various axes around which the issues raised by this work will probably turn.

Mike Leggett was born in 1945 and was trained in Photography at Regents Street Polytechnic, London, (now Polytechnic of Central London). He teaches part-time in the Fine Art Department at Exeter College of Art and other colleges, and works as a picture editor in the film and television industry. Completed films include: *Shepherds Bush*, *Tender Kisses*, *Sheepman & the Sheared*, *Vistasound* and *Friday Fried*. He is currently completing a 50-minute television programme, in collaboration with a dancer and a zoologist, commissioned jointly by Television South West and South West Arts.

South West Arts Award received in 1980 for the completion of the above project: £150.