

Ian Breakwell

THE ELUSIVE STATE OF HAPPINESS

A companion guide to QUAD's
major exhibition of the work of
Ian Breakwell (1943-2005) that
explores the voice of this very
special artist, a man with an eye
for seeing the extraordinary in
the ordinary.

Exhibition Curated by

LOUISE CLEMENTS & ALFREDO CRAMEROTTI

In partnership with

ANTHONY REYNOLDS GALLERY & FELICITY SPARROW

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ANNA DRUMMOND

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ALAN CHAFFE

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Market Place
Cathedral Quarter
Derby
DE1 3AS
T +44 (0)1332 290 606
E info@derbyquad.co.uk
www.derbyquad.co.uk

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Introduction

Ian Breakwell, a man with an eye for seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary, was a world renowned prolific artist who took a multi-media approach to his observation of the minutiae of life through a wide range of media including visual diaries, film works, TV, audio and drawing. The exhibition explores the unique voice of this very special artist; here, the spoken word becomes a visual stimulus and partner in the process of image-making. The humour, mischief and oblique wonder at the world that permeates his verbal and visual legacy is already legendary. His voyeurism-social rather than sexual – is always mitigated by humour: 'The humour that I love is the morose, the deadpan, the seemingly unfunny stuff that is close to misery, but not quite.'

Curated by
Louise Clements & Alfredo Cramerotti.

In partnership with
Anthony Reynolds Gallery & Felicity Sparrow.

About Ian Breakwell

Born in Derby and educated at the Derby College of Art, Ian Breakwell was a remarkably talented artist in any medium he handled, written, spoken and depicted. He kept a diary that underpinned his entire body of work, from 1962 until his death. His life-span oeuvre *Ian Breakwell's Continuous Diary* represents a remarkable chronicle of the rich idiosyncrasies of the everyday existence. In many respects, Breakwell's method of working prefigured the careers of artists of Damien Hirst's and Tracey Emin's generation – like them he was keen to have the widest possible public, achieving it also through media broadcasts, notably with adaptations of his *Continuous Diary* and *Christmas Diary* on Channel 4 in 1984 and 1988. He was awarded an Arts and Humanities Research Council Fellowship at Central St Martins.

Curatorial Outline

Spanning a career of 40 years, Ian Breakwell's work is an attempt to subtract the obvious from the everyday, to isolate and bring it to another level of meaning, and aesthetic experience. The diary is the central motif of the exhibition, and the link of Ian's books and films with his video, drawing and audio works – all of them speaking as reference for his *Continuous Diary*, his lifelong project. In time, *Continuous Diary* took a number of formats (books, exhibitions, television and radio), and can be read as an attempt to subvert the traditional separation between documentary and fiction. While documentary excerpts some elements of reality (combining them to represent a whole), and fiction adds to the continuum of reality (creating images and sounds that were not there in origin), Ian presents a continuous re-interpretation of what we already know, and have overlooked. He invites the viewer not to discard, but to reinvent the meaning of things. He invites us to see with other eyes.

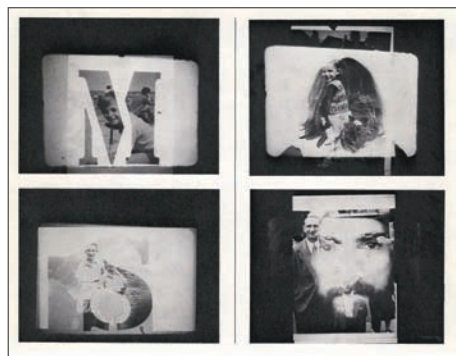
Growth

1969-73

Photographic-assemblage on board,
Courtesy British Council Collection.

For nearly forty years, Ian Breakwell kept a diary, in which he used written observations, collage, sketches and photographs to comment on what he saw around him. Together, the diary entries form the main body of the artist's work.

While Breakwell's diary entries are most often observations of other people, in this diary entry the artist remembers his youth. In this work, the artist ponders the memories associated with the photographs in an old family photograph album. Breakwell's connections to Derbyshire run deep. He was raised in Long Eaton, where his father worked in a lace factory, and the artist attended Derby College of Art, graduating in 1964.



(Detail).

1969 Diary

1969

Text, collage and drawing on paper, 42 parts
Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

The diary entries that formed the bulk of Breakwell's body of work were in general not a record of his personal life and in fact he rarely mentioned himself. Instead, the artist observed what was going on around him, particularly in London's Smithfield, where he lived.

The things Breakwell chose to remember were generally not important current events, but oddities, mischance, bizarre or unusual things that he observed in his daily life. Breakwell's talent was to spot what he called 'the side events of daily life: by turns mundane, curious, bleak, erotic, tender, vicious, cunning, stupid, ambiguous, absurd.' His observations could be as simple as 'he lifted the flat stone at the bottom of the garden and revealed a footprint' or as detailed as a description of an event he observed on the street. What joins all of his observations are that he does not share the context in which he has seen something, and leaves out details that might explain what he has observed. In this way, he highlights the odd and the absurd, the bizarre and the curious. Breakwell once said that his diaries were a form of fiction because out of the twenty things going on around him, he would choose to record two.





(Detail).

Ian's Breakwell's Film, and Video Works and TV Collaborations

In the 1980s, few artists created works for television. There were programmes about artists, but not works of art that were shown on television. However the founding of Channel 4 in 1982 provided a new forum for artists to present their work, and Breakwell was the first to be commissioned. Working with independent producer Anna Ridley, he created a television version of his diaries. The episodes were intended as a series of true works of art rather than programmes crafted to fit a predetermined slot and the ranged in length from 2.5 to 10 minutes. Television appealed to Breakwell because it gave him access to a huge audience, beaming his work into hundreds of thousands of homes. Rather than being an artist who created work for its own sake, Breakwell always thought of his art as intended for a mass audience, hoping works like *The Walking Man* would end up in public collections where they could be seen by many viewers. Although he disliked the aesthetic properties of television - it was over-lit and had a poor depth of field - its reach to a mass market was a perfect fit with Breakwell's aims. Reflecting on his television work, Breakwell once commented: 'When I was making things for television with Anna I imagined myself in people's living rooms and I was talking to them one to one.'

The News

1980

U-matic video. Colour, sound,
Courtesy Lux.

Breakwell's satire of television news featured a real newsreader, Eric Wallace, who read the news on Border Television. In *The News*, Wallace delivered a spoof news bulletin of mundane, local events including the location of a park bench, a door that had been left unlocked and the discovery of an empty post box. By including such apparently banal reports, Breakwell wished to invert the media's scale of values that determined what was important and what unimportant. While conventional television news reported predominantly events of national significance, Breakwell reported the reverse, suggesting that such everyday events were also important.



Ian Breakwell's Continuous Diary

1984

Made in collaboration with Anna Ridley, Annalogue Productions, for Channel 4 Television, 21 programmes.



1.

Ian Breakwell's Xmas Diary

1984

Made in collaboration with Anna Ridley, Annalogue Productions, for Channel 4 Television, 8 programmes.

Public Face, Private Eye

1988

Made in collaboration with Anna Ridley, Annalogue Productions, for Channel 4 Television, 5 programmes.



2.

In the *Continuous Diary*, Breakwell brought to life episodes from his journals and combined them into a television programme. Some entries were re-staged using actors and the artist read other excerpts straight to camera. After the success of this series, the artist created a Christmas special entitled Ian Breakwell's *Christmas Diary*. In fact, Breakwell disliked Christmas, as his home close to the Smithfield Market immersed him in months of festive cheer and bustle each year. Given this distaste it is no surprise that the programme takes a slightly acerbic look at festive eating. Taking on a new role as a television chef, the artist prepares a series of unusual dishes including squirrel ravioli and Creole guinea pig. Although Breakwell did believe that

eating pest species would be a good thing, his recipes were firmly tongue-in-cheek. In *Public Face, Private Eye*, conversely, Breakwell turns his gaze on himself, and explores significant events in his life that have shaped his concerns as an artist. Described as 'autobiographical television in five acts', the piece includes Breakwell's childhood introduction to magic from his uncle Tom, another on midnight fishing and another on his time as artist in residence at King's College, Cambridge. Act 4 concentrates on the important influence of Goya on Ian's art, and in the final act the artist explores the process of aging with the help of a makeup artist.

1. Screenshot from *Ian Breakwell's Continuous Diary*.

2. Image from *Ian Breakwell's Christmas Diary*.

Nine Jokes

1971

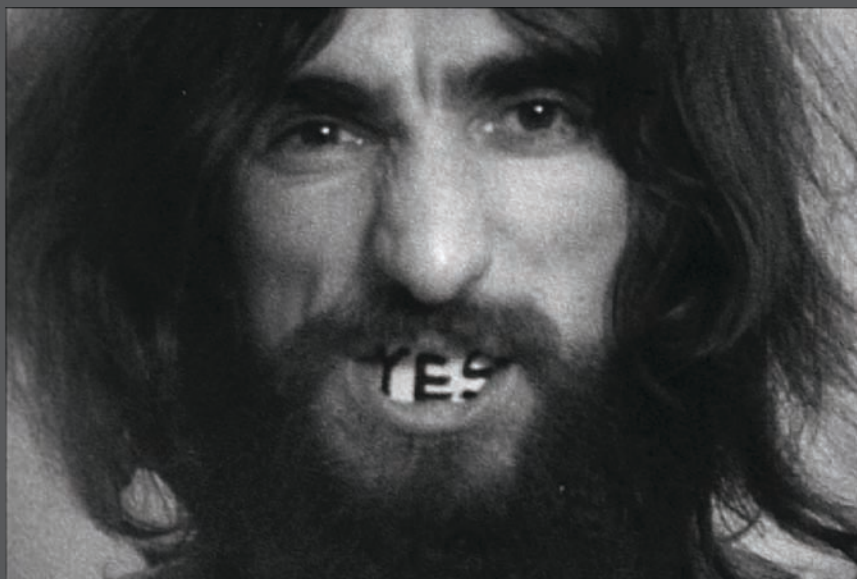
16mm, black & white, silent,

Courtesy Lux.

In *Nine Jokes* the undercurrent of humour that runs throughout Breakwell's work comes to the fore. In a series of ten very short films, each lasting for no more than two minutes, the artist presents a series of visual jokes. Breakwell enjoyed one-line, standalone gags presented without explanation, in a similar way to the fragments of observation in his diary, which are also deliberately presented out of context. This artist's preference for one-liner jokes links his works to contemporary art movements such as Fluxus, whose work Breakwell described as 'zen vaudeville' and as 'highly intelligent' people doing 'incredibly stupid' things.

As well as the absurd one-line joke, the artist's preference was for black comedy, as he once described:

'I think cheerful humour is just like sunshine. It warms you, but it doesn't warm anything more than the surface. The humour that I like is the morose, the deadpan, the seemingly unfunny stuff that is close to misery, but not quite. I suppose that is a very northern thing. My mother's famous phrase was "You have to laugh." Because life can be pretty bloody miserable, and you have to laugh in the face of it. That's always the kind of humour that I've loved.'



One

1971

16mm, black & white, sound, duration 15 minutes. Made with Mike Leggett. Digitally remastered 2003 (DVD).

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

Created to coincide with a pivotal event in history of mankind, *One* is both a film of a performance and a comment on the value of manual labour.

On 10th February 1971, astronauts from the Apollo 14 mission dug soil samples from the surface of the moon. At the same time, Breakwell and Mike Leggett created a performance piece that reflected on the value of labour in different contexts.

The performance took place in the upper floor of the Angela Flowers Gallery, where three piles of earth were dug by three labourers hired to work an eight hour day. Each worker shovelled earth from his own pile into that of his neighbour in a continuous,

futile circle, so that the only thing created was an eventual layer of mud across the floor of the gallery.

Viewers could access the performance only through closed-circuit television, which was shown in the window of the gallery. As the event took place simultaneously with the moon landing, passersby mistook the footage for that occurring in space.

In the resulting film of the event, Breakwell and Leggett interspersed footage of the performance with that of the moon landing. Breakwell added a commentary on the value of labour, from the futility of the worker's efforts in the gallery to the apparently glamorous and important digging on the moon.



Books

Breakwell's work was published throughout his career, in publications ranging from collections of diary excerpts to volumes interspersing sketches, collage and photography with poems, letters, scripts for films and short plays, lists and short prose texts. It was partly through his print publications that Breakwell became so well known that the preface of one collection begins 'In many respects, an Ian Breakwell diary might seem to require little in the way of introduction.'

Breakwell moved comfortably between different types of writing. As well as diary reflections, he presents short pieces of satirical fiction ranging from a set of faux letters from a mother to her son to invented notices supposedly from a community newspaper. In these the sense of humour that underpins much of his work is particularly evident, and nowhere more so than in his lists. These include everything from an inventory of the characteristics of bad waiters to a compilation of pretend phone numbers such as the 'Shoulder Pad Crisis Line' and the 'Iambic Pentameter Weather Forecast'. Other pieces of writing are breathtakingly poetic, such as the Epitaph for a Bell, a lament that reflects on the poignancy of the bell's toll:

'I marked the hours / I woke the sleeper / I called to order...I hailed the bride / I cried for the dying...I sang for joy / I sighed in the fog /...I screamed in the fire'.

From comedy to poetry, such collections of Breakwell's written works make plain his diverse talents as a writer. Here is a short selection of Ian Breakwell's publications:

Awayday to Paradise and other texts
2007

Book

Published by RGAP.

Derby Days

2001

Book

Published by RGAP.

Ian Breakwell's Diary 1964-1985

1986

Book

Published by Pluto Press.

The Artists Dream

1988

Book

Published by Serpent's Tail Ltd.

Unword

1969-70

16mm, black & white, sound. Made with Mike Leggett. Digitally remastered 2003 (DVD), single-screen installation.

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery

One of the defining characteristics of Breakwell's work is his use of a diverse range of media, from the early diary entries that combined collage, photography and written work, to his later film and television pieces. The artist said that he never saw himself as a specialist in one particular medium, but used whichever best fitted the message he wished to convey. The medium was a vehicle rather than an end in itself.

In the 1960s, Breakwell began to incorporate performance into his work, but characteristically combined this with text, sculpture, radio and film projection. *Unword*, a film produced in collaboration with fellow artist Mike Leggett, is based on Breakwell's performances. In these, pieces of footage were projected onto a set covered in writing. The set was used for a performance which was filmed and then the footage projected onto the next presentation of the same piece. At other times, the cameraman became a character in his own right, 'stalking' the actors as they performed. Breakwell once described the result as a 'multimedia salad' in which a range of media were used simultaneously. In this way, the dividing lines between different media were blurred in a way that is characteristic of Breakwell.



The Elusive State of Happiness

1979

Newsprint & photograph on card,
Courtesy Arts Council Collection.

In *The Elusive State of Happiness*, a mass of newspaper headings surround a photograph of one man's face. Breakwell found the man's picture discarded outside a passport-photo booth in Long Eaton and the headlines are also from a local paper.

Pushed into the corner of his photo and wearing a glum expression, the man seems overwhelmed by the shouting of the headlines. In *The News*, the artwork Breakwell would produce the following year, the artist reconsiders the supposedly trivial nature of events reported in local news. *The Elusive State of Happiness* seems to send similar messages, suggesting that the man is in fact overpowered by what otherwise might seem relatively small issues. The largest headline, 'Widespread Effects Are Being Felt', echoes this suggestion.

RENTS TO BE PAID AT POST OFFICES?

CPRE says gravel plan is too enormous

PSYCHIATRIC DAY HOSPITAL IN TOWN?

COMPLAIN GAS MEN CALL BUT GO TOO SOON

WILL COUNCIL GO FOR CLUB AS CENTRE?

Protective netting now is in need of repair

TWO MUCH SHARING OF CAR PARK IS NOT RECOMMENDED

Woman hurt in fall from cycle

Shelter damaged

'Demand for houses with outstrip supply'

BOUNDARY COMPROMISE

Fluoride or not? parish meeting to decide

That's what a battery is for!

Asking only for replacement of road markings

'RIDICULOUS' FELLING OF THE TREES

Appointed new manager

Omission of part of path near stream would be 'unacceptable loss'

Butcher plans to make extension to shop premises

NO CASH FOR ALTERATIONS

'Business as usual' in the new premises

Window smashed

Adults school is entertained

ACTION GROUP TO SHOW COUNCILLORS?

TWO LAMPS TO BRIGHTEN LANE

NEW SIGN WOULD BE OUT OF CHARACTER

Put out rubbish fire

JOINS IN A PARTNERSHIP

IS GETTING BETTER

Business as usual at swimming pool

Present on request

Five sewage pumping stations put out of action due to floods

Only a little trouble FAILED TO MAKE MOST OF CHANCES

WONDERED WHY NO ACTION WAS TAKEN

COMPROMISE IS REACHED

WAR EMERGENCY EXERCISE

ROLLER DAMAGE TO FENCE PRODUCES SOME COMMENTS

MORE BIBLES

WARNS, DIFFICULTIES COULD GET WORSE

Chimney fire

Church clock just back in show

Cannot now stand, but be safe too!

MOUNTAIN MAN IS SPEAKER

Thief of cash box

House extension

ILL WIND DOES GOOD



Thief from a shed

Man's sudden death

Rider injured when motor-cycle skids

CALL FOR HOME SAFETY SCHEMES

ADmits DAMAGING A CAR WINDOW

Vandalism costs £275 damage to car tyres

Thief of equipment

To Japan and Honolulu

Radio stolen from bus

Executive will still have a seat

His hobby, to give colour to stations

Cash and dress tickets stolen

CYCLIST PUSHING A CYCLE IS NOT A PEDESTRIAN

A DARING COMEDY FARCE

Bitter weather

Advanced speaker

A secondary floodbank or rubble 'left over'?

APPROVAL FOR PLAN

Officers feel bows centre inappropriate to the area

Community hall? survey to be made of club

Firm feels penalised and offers tour of works

Favourable response

BOROUGH RATE COULD STAY UNCHANGED

Yes to plan for premises empty for four years

TO TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT PLAN

to proposed relief road petition

Want council to reconsider amusements centre plan

A DRAMATIC CHANGE IN PART OF TOWN

CAR STOPPED NEAR A 10-FOOT DROP

AREA HEALTH AUTHORITY INTERESTED

The elusive state of happiness

OLD SEWERAGE SYSTEM 'STARTING TO CRACK UP'

'Stupid' offence after too much drink

AFTER BREAK-IN THIEVES RETURN TO APOLOGISE

SOME EX-SERVICEMEN ARE NOW POLICE OFFICERS

HIS AIM IS TO MAKE YOU SMILE

PLAN FOR COLD STORE IN STREET OFF BUSY ROAD IS TURNED DOWN

The Walking Man Diary

1975-78

Black & white photographs, hand-written and
type-written text on paper, 8 parts,

Courtesy Tate Collection.

The Walking Man Diary is a series of photographs of an anonymous man that Breakwell observed from his window again and again over a period of several years. Amongst the bustle of the Smithfield market, Breakwell kept watch on a man walking in a continuous loop through and around the building. Although he wore the same clothes every day, regardless of the weather, the man was not a tramp and carried nothing with him. He just walked. Sometimes, the man would stop and freeze in the one place for up to half an hour, and then continue on his way.

Breakwell began to photograph him from his window whenever he saw him. Sometimes this was every day, other times he would disappear for months.

Breakwell said 'I wondered what he had seen out of the corners of his eyes as he walked time after time past the same buildings, the same shop windows, the same people going about their 'normal' business; did he hear their comments as they watched him?'

Eventually, nearly four years after Breakwell had first seen him, the Walking Man disappeared for good. No longer able to record his movements in photographic form, Breakwell attempted to recall him from memory in a series of drawings.





(Detail).

50 Reasons for Getting out of Bed

2005

Vinyl wall text,

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

Amongst the most poignant, intense and personal of Breakwell's works, *Fifty Reasons for Getting out of Bed* seems on first glance to be a simple list of everyday pleasures, from memories and snippets of music to sights, sounds, images, tastes and smells. The list is poetic in its brevity, but each of the items on the list conjures a poignant image, from cherished pastimes such as 'first cast of the fishing season'; to tender thoughts such as 'her hand in mine'; to everyday pleasures like 'salt beef on rye with mustard and dill pickle'. Unusually for Ian, it is an intensely personal list that offers a glimpse of Breakwell's daily life beyond what he observed going on around him.

Although this list of beautiful and pleasurable experiences seems optimistic, at its end all positivity is extinguished as Breakwell describes the physical pain associated with simply leaving his bed.

By the time had made the list, Breakwell's health was failing and he had only months to live. In this context, the list can be read as both an attempt to cheer himself up and a poignant reflection on all that he would leave behind.

Below is an extract from *Fifty Reasons for Getting out of Bed*;

'When I wake I lie and think of what George Brecht once said to me, that nothing is necessarily gained by getting out of bed. So I decide that if I can spontaneously name fifty things worth getting up for, then I will. Here goes:

Blue sky with vapour trail turned golden by the setting sun.
Backlit spider's web on the kitchen window.
Belisha beacon at midnight on the empty street.
Lionel Hampton solo on Stardust.
Freshly poured pint of Guinness settling on the bar.
White butterfly on purple buddleia.
Cat purring against my ear, her breath on my neck.
Cat stretched full length in sunbeam.
A soft poached egg on soda bread toast.'

Diagnosis Drawings

2004

Mixed media on paper, 13 parts.

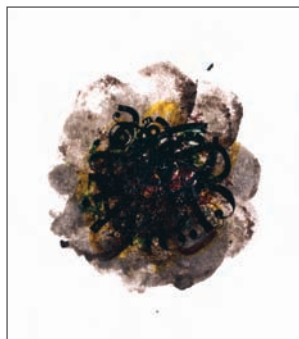
Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

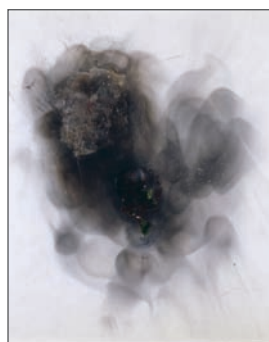
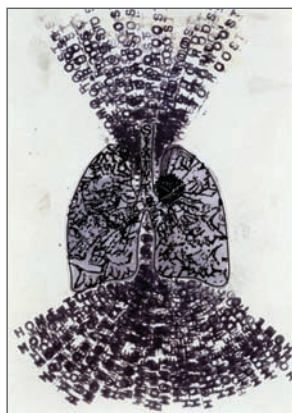
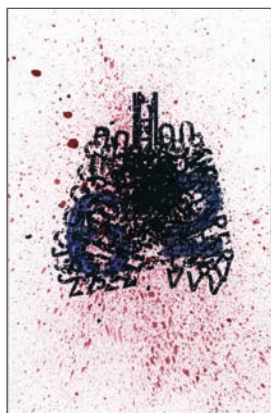
In 2004, Breakwell was diagnosed with the inoperable lung cancer that would eventually take his life. His distress prompted a fortnight of insomnia, and he spent part of his night drawing, as he described afterwards:

‘Shock, and feverish consideration of the implications meant that I could not sleep, and I made a drawing each night, sometimes in the hours of darkness, sometimes at dawn, in a physical state of fatigued insomnia and slight hallucination. The flower-like drawings are images of organic growth and blooming. On the fourteenth night my normal sleep pattern returned and the series ended.’

The lush drawings mix text with images of flowers and fruit. In the drawings, Breakwell seems to reflect on his illness, its origin and his own response. His shock is suggested by his incorporation of the phrase ‘dumbstruck’ and his reflection on the cancer and its cause is suggested by the image of smoke in one of the drawings, and the phrase ‘home to roost’ that appears in another.

Breakwell uses botanical motifs to recall the deadly growth inside him, planting a red flower on a rib cage in one drawing, and in other, a menacing dark circle in the same place on a set of lungs. Yet another work includes the words ‘strange fruit’, a further meditation on the cancer that has been created by his body but which will also destroy it.







Walserings

1991

Ink and gouache on paper, 27 parts,
Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

Walsering (ex-series)

1991

Gouache and ink on sandpaper and mixed
media on paper, 3 individual works,
Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

Walser's Walk

1992

Mixed media on paper,
Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery

In 1990 Breakwell became fascinated with the writings of Robert Walser, a Swiss modernist author known best for his short stories and literary sketches. By this time, Breakwell was focussed on producing written diary entries rather than including photographs and collages. He had already become interested in Franz Kafka, whose diaries were published posthumously and through whom he discovered Walser.

Breakwell may have related to Walser because both, in their works, became observers, commenting on society from its margins. As well as writing fiction, Walser produced *feuilleton*, entertaining short pieces of social commentary that appeared in newspapers. In this way, Walser took on the role of *flâneur*, one who strolls through a city acerbically observing modern life, in a similar way to Breakwell's diary observations of the curious and colourful in London. Walser was in fact the archetypal romantic outsider: he struggled to make a living from his writing, most of which was forgotten for decades after his death. He became increasingly reclusive in his later life, the final decades of which he spent in a mental asylum. There he stopped writing altogether, saying 'I am not here to write, I am here to be mad.'

Breakwell's affinity with Walser is suggested by the series of drawings he produced in response to reading the writer's work. The artist began to wonder what Walser might have looked like, and started making imaginary head and shoulder portraits of him. Eventually, he grouped these invented portraits into a series that he called *Walserings*. Breakwell's empathy with Walser is suggested by the imaginary portraits' increasing resemblance to Breakwell himself.







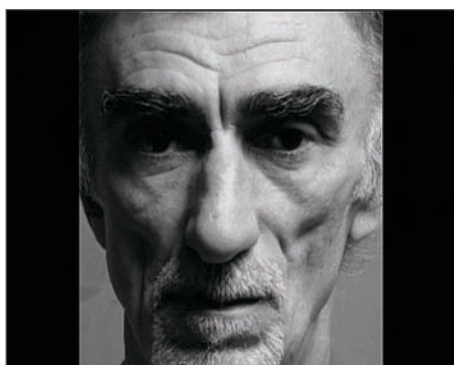
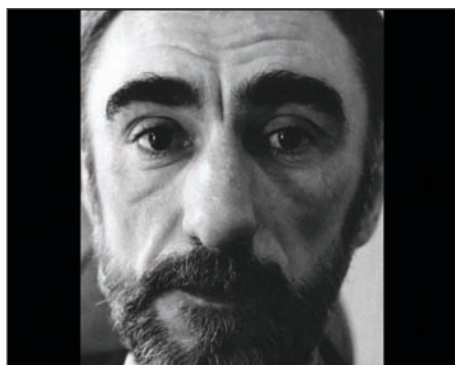
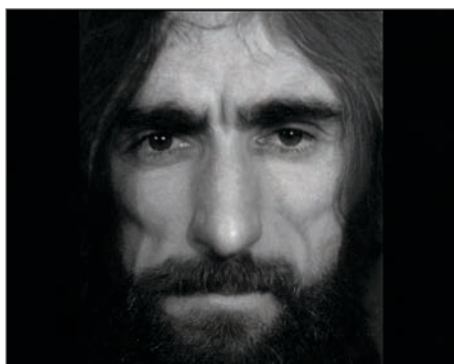
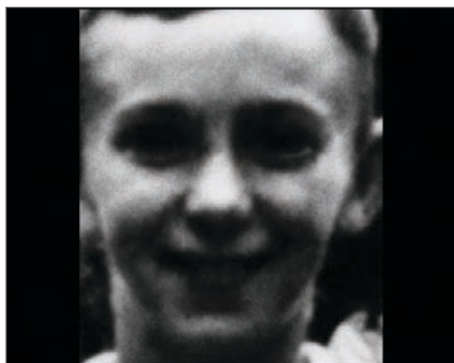
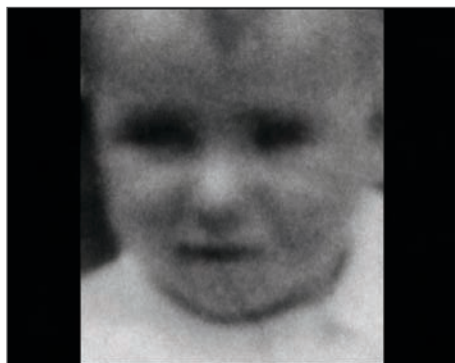
BC/AD

2005-08

Digital video, black and white, sound, mastered
on Blu-ray disc, single-screen installation,
Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery..

In 2004, whilst undertaking a fellowship at Central St Martin's College of Art & Design, Breakwell began to explore new ways of presenting his diary entries. When during the year he received his diagnosis of inoperable lung cancer, his final diary entries took on a new edge. He worked frantically to complete his planned works in his remaining fourteen months, and left instructions for colleagues to finish what he could not.

Part of Breakwell's final series of works was a video installation entitled *Before Cancer / After Diagnosis (BC/AD)*, in which Breakwell combined his usual diary material with a reflection on his life and impending mortality. As well as the sharp, humorous observations about life around him that are the mainstay of much of his diary material, Breakwell presents memories from his past life and an unflinching chronicle of his gradual decline as the cancer took hold. Images of the artist's face as a child, a healthy adult and a dying man morph into one another throughout the film, linking past and present in a final reflection on his life and work. Breakwell died in October 2005.



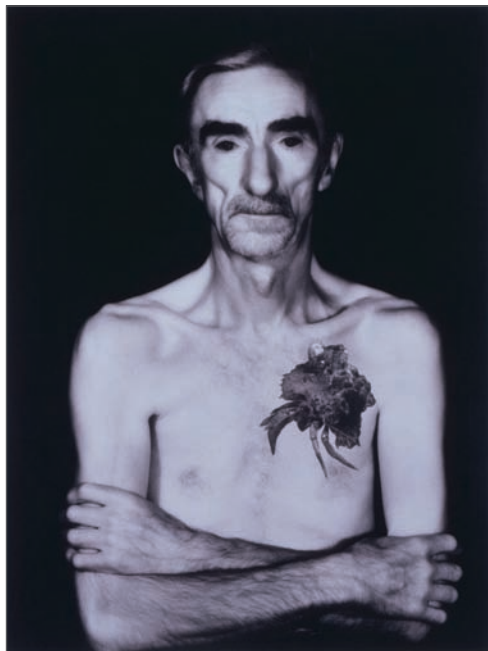
Parasite and Host

2005

Digital Giclee print on Hanemuehle photo rag paper,
Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

Parasite and Host is an unflinching portrait of Breakwell in his final year. Superimposed on the artist's chest is what on first glimpse seems to be the strange fruit that appears on his torso and lungs in the *Diagnosis Drawings*. In fact, the artist has placed on his chest an enlarged photograph of a microscopic parasite that seems to be marching menacingly across Breakwell's torso on its insect-like legs. In this way, Breakwell conjures cancer's parasitic invasion of his chest.

Although the portrait is confronting, it is neither grim nor despairing. The artist's body is undeniably emaciated, his failing health has etched deep lines into his cheeks and his shoulder bones seem carved out of his body. Yet he stands tall with his arms crossed, looking directly at the camera. Silhouetted against the black background, Breakwell contemplates his situation honestly, neither shying away from his mortality nor giving in to despair. Instead, he seems to face both the camera and his future head on.



Episode from Face History

1969

Black and white photograph,

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

Episode from Face History is a rare early example of Breakwell including himself in his art, in identical pictures reproduced in different sizes across what appears to be a strip of film. And yet the photographs are not of the artist at all, but pictures of a photograph of him. In some of the

images the photograph of Breakwell is being altered by a figure standing before it, who is perhaps creating the deep lines that appear across each image of the artist's face. In this way, Breakwell ponders his self-representation, and the ability of the artist to shape their own image.



Estate

1971-76

Photographs, pencil & ink on board, 32 parts,
Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

The 32 works that make up *Estate* include a variety of anonymous photographic portraits that include figures cut from newspapers and nineteenth-century images of psychiatric patients.

Interspersed with these are images of windows, with curtains veiling what lies behind them. In the accompanying texts, Breakwell imagines what is hidden inside the buildings, and his text includes the artist's characteristic mix of the everyday and the surreal. 'Behind the closed curtains of the window' reads one text 'the room is dark. In the corner of the room the budgerigar in its cage is talking to itself quietly.'

Although the scene contains nothing out of the ordinary, there are hints of madness and something more sinister in the solitary animal speaking to itself in hushed tones.

In inventing what lies inside an unknown building, *Estate* recalls Breakwell's *Repertory*, in which the camera circles a theatre whilst a voice describes imaginary scenarios occurring within. The connection between the two works is made explicit by the repetition in the *Estate* texts of the phrase 'behind the drawn curtains of the window...', which recalls a similar phrase repeated in *Repertory*. Both works suggest Breakwell's fascination with the theatrical and the hidden as well as his taste for the surreal.



Contextual Material

The Continuous Diary

1977

16mm documentary directed by Alan Yentob for BBC Television.

This film explores the way in which Breakwell responds to his environment in creating his Diary, in particular the Smithfield Market, which he observes from his studio window. It features a voice over by the artist and focuses particularly on *The Walking Man*.

1. Screenshot from *BBC Arena*.

The Frame-Ian Breakwell

2007

Digital video documentary directed by John Wyver, Illuminations, for BFI British Artists' Films.

Filmed only a month before the artist's death in 2005, this interview considers each of Breakwell's films. The artist reflects on his works in this medium, offering insights into his artistic aims and the context in which they were made.

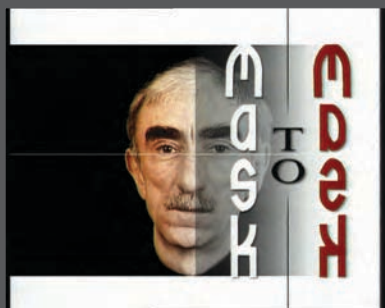
Mask to Mask

1993

Beta SP video documentary directed by Phil Lewis for Harlech Television.

In this video, Breakwell describes his work in different mediums and in particular the work he created for his 1993 solo exhibition *Mask to Mask*, held at the Ffotogallery, Cardiff. In particular, Breakwell discusses the work *Twin Audience*, which involved a search for twins in South Wales.

2. Screenshot from *Mask to Mask*.

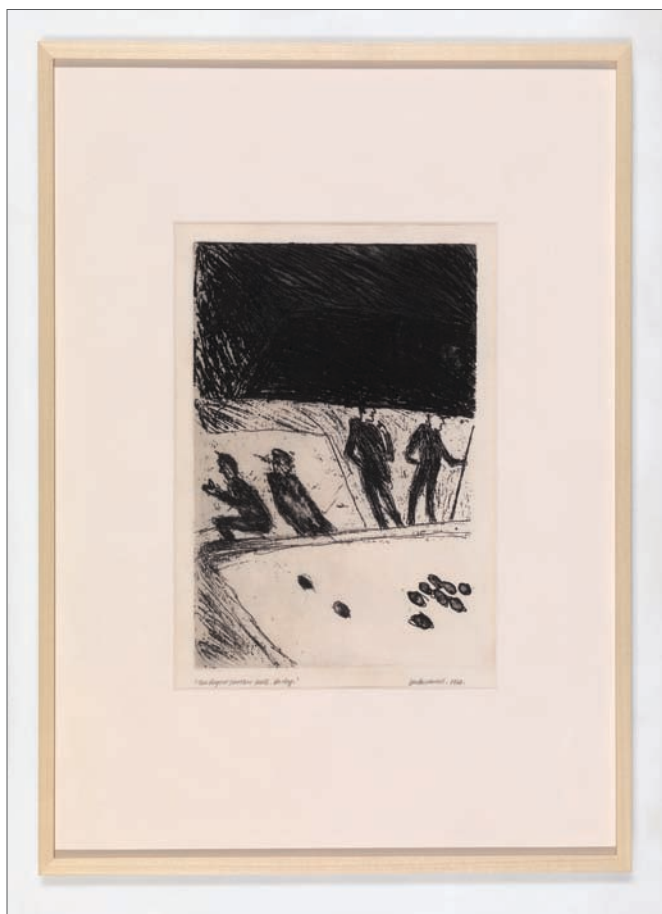


The Regent Snooker Hall, Derby

1964

Etching on fine paper,
Courtesy of Felicity Sparrow.

This etching, executed the year
Breakwell graduated from Derby
College of Art, shows the interior of a
local billiards hall.



10 Diary Pages, 1969-1982

1969-82, 1983

Screenprint on card, 10 parts plus 1 title page,
Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

Breakwell admitted to being fascinated by glimpses, snippets, half-heard conversations and event that he had only half seen. 'Misinterpretation intrigues me' he said once in an interview, 'a lot of the Diary is a mixture of sharp observation combined with the half-seen, glimpsed, half-heard. Often the rational explanation will be straightforward, and dull.'

As well as being characteristically devoid of contextual information that



might explain away their strangeness, Breakwell's diary entries are often framed in a way that links them to his interest in theatre. Frequently, the events he describes have a neat conclusion in the final words of each entry; the door closes as a person leaves, the train exits the station, the taxi drives away. These endings function like curtains coming down over the scene, sealing Breakwell's observation into a neat package, a theatrical glimpse.

Some years, Breakwell produced a page of his diary per day; in other periods he took photographs and made notes and sketches at one time, and then months later produced the photographs and final diary entry. He did not record things scrupulously as he observed them, but made the briefest of notes, sometimes as little as 'bus and typist', before writing his entries up fully in retrospect. Sometimes his observations remind him of past events and previous diary entries, and the diary jumps around between the past and the present and even speculations about the future.

JULY 1973

5 Thursday

13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

He lifted the corner of the curtain
and the dog jumped against
the closed
window.



JAN 1982



The man stumbling through the snow slid to the ground. He struggled to rise. But as he immediately fell on his back, he crawled up on his hands and knees, stood up, swayed, and fell backwards. He lay on his back and the snow his arms waving feebly in the air. He was now motionless. A moment later, he became still and warm, exhausted, on him. The pedestrians in the snow settled on him. The pedestrians on the opposite pavement resumed their journey to the bus stop.

APRIL 1973

24 Tuesday

London.

London.
11:11 p.m. "The two Chaimim" pres.
As Confucius Square, where I have
been standing after the I.C.H. performance.
As I walk out from the inside laundry,
a massive storming came from the
group of people around the building
with barred and grating. The group
forming a line, I join them
and all the both
myself and the both
others - I before anyone
could. It is the land
the other. It is the land
The landless says: "I don't
it don't break your arm, I don't
know with a single son, I don't
the truth. You see it's true
An alarm goes with subnormal
feared says: "That's right, it's
trained to attack the dog isn't to have
trained to attack. The bannermen
his face set and mean, says: "You
should be ashamed of yourself, forming
I say you with my own eyes, it's
people like you who make
the sack."

09 JUN 1975



AUGUST 1973

18 Saturday



HANDS UP ANY WOMAN WHO...

1969



06 JUN 1979

Vinnod.
11.30 a.m.

[illegible]

JANUARY 1973

28 Sunday 25 July 2014



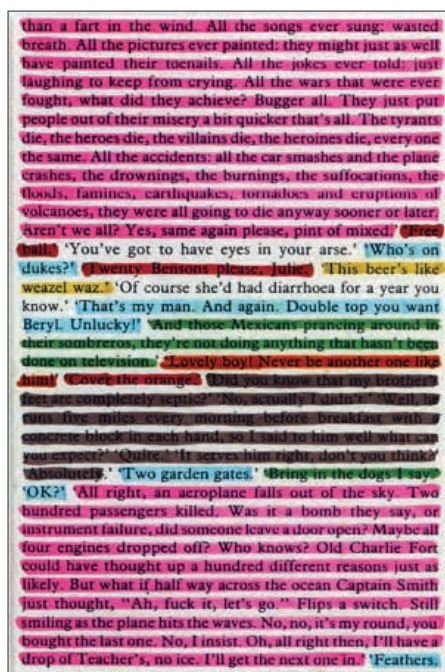
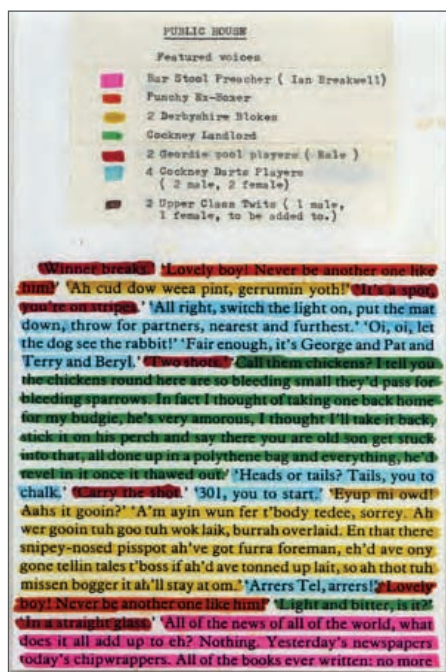
Public House

1985

Typescript and coloured ink on paper, 8 parts,
Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery..

Breakwell had an enduring fascination with people. His diary entries are dominated by observations of people apparently in odd situations, doing strange things, or who are in some way out of the ordinary. He once said that the other side of the street was no more or less interesting than the other side of the world, suggesting his abiding interest in the everyday. Breakwell

even continued this observation from the window of his home, from which the artist could examine the bustle of Smithfield, London. This provided a particularly rich seam of unusual characters. Breakwell also observed people during his daily visit to the same pub. In *Public House*, the artist presents a series of conversations from the pub, each colour coded.



conference, he's frowning and chain-smoking, he's trying to write his speech. Grandma's worried about her son Tony and his wife and the new baby, Margaret's ever so tired and weepy since the birth and little Tracey's sickening for sure. Are you with me so far? Right. Now Margaret, she sits opposite, washed out, worried, and she's got Tracey grizzling on her knee. OK? While Tony, sitting alongside her, he's worrying about Margaret and Tracey and his mother, she's not as young as she was; if only he could get a job, earn some decent money and get them a house and a bungalow nearby for mum maybe. And the man in the window seat he's just moved into a new flat and discovered that the previous tenant was homosexual and now he's worried sick that he might have caught AIDS by cleaning out the toilet with a cut on his hand, that's right, incubating inside him right now maybe, it'll be months or even years before he knows for sure and then it'll be too late, there's a lot of worry ahead. Meanwhile, ten miles up the bleedin' track a bunch of spotty-faced kids are busy hanging an iron girder on a rope from the railway bridge, while one of them keeps a lookout in the road, hopping from foot to foot, a bag of nerves, worried they'll get caught see? Just a half for me thanks. And three minutes later the train hits the girder, wallop! Takes the top of the cab off and the driver's head with it. All the carriages get derailed and mashed up like concertinas, bodies everywhere, absolute mayhem. Here, have one of mine. And all of them worrying right up to the last minute. Fat lot of good it did them, eh? Dear oh dear they never knew what hit them. Grandma killed, Margaret killed, Tracey killed outright. Tony lives on for another 30 years in a wheelchair, the businessman gets blinded, and the bloke who thinks he's got AIDS gets saved with a blood transfusion so he's still fuckin' worried! Cheers. And the kids who did the clever little trick with the girder, they all scarpers; one dies the next month on his motorbike, two get nicked and rot away in clink, and the fourth one gets

clean away, joins the merchant navy and sails the seas for years, then he retires and buys a little bungalow by the seaside and potters about the garden for a few months then drops down dead with a heart attack one day while he's planting his lettuce, so he just went later that's all. You get my meaning? Oh my God, look who just walked in, here comes trouble! Ronnie, you scoundrel, where've you been hiding out, it must be over a year, what do you want to drink you old tow-rag? **Lovely boy! Never be another one like him!** Who wants bets? Ray? Karen? Steve? Tina? 'Two pints of Pedigree and a Snowball.' 'She looked like she'd spent the last six weeks sitting on a cold custard.' **There's a plant on.** 'It's right back-end weather int it?' 'Ay burrit cud be woss. They reckon uz ow it's silin dahn in Derby.' 'Gerrah!?' 'Straight. En yo look aht t'doer, it's gerrin a bit black over Borrowash. Ah wanna be surprised if it inna reenin ere an all bi chukin aht time.' **Lovely boy! Never be another one like him!** 'Can you see it?' **No.** 'Come back up the table then.' 'Two pints of Ordinary and a Ramrod.' 'They went to Majorca, right? And they met these Swedish birds, right? And the things they didn't do ain't worth a mention. It's all on Polaroid, I'm going to see them t'ursdays! 'Hot soup, colour TV. Soon be Christmas. It's all down to the microwave chip innit?' And a box of Swan. **Deep scree into the centre.** **Watch the in-of though.** 'See that couple sitting side by side over in the corner, her with her handbag on her knees and him tapping his fingers on the table, they've been married for 30 years. Never say a word to each other all night, not even when he gets the drinks in. They might just as well put their heads in the oven. Do themselves a favour. They could do it together, save on the gas bill and needn't say a word even then.' **The chair broke up the seat! Buggery, that's what the it is!** **Anyone for an eyeball?** **That's been a really interesting record of documentary on the radio, have you been listening to them?** 'No, what were they about?' 'I can't remember'

'All the sixteens.' 'Put us a half in there Chris.' **Lovely boy! Never be another one like him!** **I take my shot while I get a time.** 'My first wife was one of the George Mitchell Singers.' 'Enough said.' **His guide dog needs some proper training.** **Ronnie he'd shag a bleeding chair leg. Get down you ruddy goat!** 'Ev yo dun owt much today?' 'Norra lot. Ah went dahn rah'n s'nyed aht wur myd aht wi folk, so aht took our Shane along t'cut 'n back, ed mi tee, an aht wer gunna do a bit in t'gardin burrit looked laik it wer tonnin te reen, so aht cum airind furra jar. Worrabout yo?' **Too much left-hand side.** **Two large Belts please.** **Lovely boy! Never be another one like him!** 'Follow through onto the green if you can. It ain't then leave the white safe on the top cushion.' 'I read this book, about France in the eighteenth century, and in it was this philosopher, a very educated man, never had to get his hands dirty. Well one morning just like any other he goes through his usual routine: has a lie-in, breakfast in bed about 11 o'clock, washes, shaves, powders his wig, chooses his clothes for the day and gets dressed, ties his cravat just right then sets off to stroll down to the coffee shop to spend the afternoon philosophizing with his mates, and as he goes out the door of his house he stubs his toe on the step, says "Sod it" or whatever the French for that is, takes out his pistol and blows his brains out. Say what you like, they had style in those days. Better than that stupid git in Poland who hammered four six-inch nails into his head then changed his mind, staggered to the hospital and dropped dead on the step. No style at all the Poles.' 'Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! **Right, let's be having you!** **We've got to go to bed even if you haven't!** 'Tucked it in the corner! Very nice!' **Shift that black!** **Last game on the dashboard!** **Short!** **And the the pony!** **Short!** **Where are you going to telephone calls in the territories per head of population than anywhere else in Western Europe, and in. Orkney the poison pen letters defy belief! Well I never!** 'Eyup yoth, ev yo erd this'n? Oh man und iz missis guz tuh

Marriage Guidance Clinic, raigh? 'N oh man sez, 'Ah reckon uz ow she's frigid laik, or else aht doin summat wrong, cos when weer, y'know, when wey mek love laik, she never sighs nuh moans or owt.' 'So t'doctor sez to er, "Do yo love yerusband?" 'N she sez, "Ah do unall, e's grand uz owt." 'So t'doctor sez, "Well then, yo mon't be afraid tuh sho it!" 'So t'next time they's on t'nest laik, 'n oh's just abah on t'vinegar stroke, she sez, "Tell me when tuh moan," and e sez, "Moan nah! Moan nah!" un she guz, "Yuh never elp wi t'washin up! Yuh never elp wi t'washin up!" 'e! Hehl! Hehl! Hehl! That's a raigh good un sorry! Bogger me, that's a brahma! 'Well, worrahaht the wun abah er from t'manor und the white oss? 'Ah've erd it.' 'The trouble with your friend is he's knitted to death.' **Lovely boy, never be another one like him!** 'Where's the chalk?' 'Oh do drop in! **Come on you two lovebirds, time to go to bubbyoes!** **My treat and like a burrit shag!** **Short!** **All the vegetables and the vitamins and the honeycombs you can chuck them out the window and chuck yourself out after. Honey won't save you. Money won't save you. Bugs Bunny won't save you any more than Mother Teresa, Karl Marx or Jesus Fucking Christ! All the vegetarians will die and so will the cows and the pigs and the chickens. All the doctors will die as well as all the patients. The people who make the bombs will die and the people who camp outside the bomb bases will die whether the bombs go off or not. Now am I right or am I wrong?** **Short!** 'You go off, play pool, leave me here, I had to buy a double vodka for myself! **Well if you want to be a piss-artist that's up to you jumbo!** 'Berrer tuh walk up 'n dahn 'n nowt than set ut om 'n rot. **OK? Love!** 'Ah haven't you gone home to go to bed?' 'Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Dear oh dear!' **Can we have your glasses please? It's well after time!** 'Ha! Ha! Ha! **Cab? Yes in the lounge, him by the window. Finish your drinks please the law outside!** **Aht hand in my glove!** 'Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Go on! Ha! Ha! Ha! **Now are you going to drink that, or am I**

Repertory

1973

16mm film, colour, sound,
Courtesy Lux.

Repertory

1974

Photo silkscreen prints, 5 parts,
Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

In his film *Repertory*, Breakwell set out to recreate his childhood experience of queuing to enter a picture theatre, when he knew only the title of a film and would imagine what it might look like. The camera slowly circles the outside of an old brick theatre, while a voice-over describes what might be going on inside. The viewer is left to imagine the scenarios explained and never gets to see inside the building.

In *Repertory* Breakwell also sought to upend the conventions of film and television in which the viewer sees the picture and hears the sound track. Instead, in *Repertory*, the sound track provides the visuals by instructing us what to imagine, while the camera tells us little.

The performances described in *Repertory* are in fact more tableaux,

as no actors appear. The tableaux are often curious and even bizarre, like the set consisting of a swimming pool into which a herd of stuffed sheep stand gazing. At other times the descriptions suggest an affinity with surrealism, such as the domestic interior entirely covered slabs of butter. The butter itself seems to give the performance as it melts slowly under the stage lights.

In *Repertory* Breakwell also explores the magic of the theatre. Each description begins with the phrase 'The curtains are up, the house lights are dimmed...', reminding the listener again and again of where the scenarios occur. In addition, by circling the building itself, rather than going inside, the artist ponders what special quality is inherent in the walls of the theatre that suspends the audience's disbelief and allows such extraordinary things to occur inside. The final shot in the film adds to the mystery, as the camera gazes through the windows of the theatre into the impenetrable darkness within.



Phototext Sequences

1972

Ink on tinted photograph, mounted on board,
15 individual works,
Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery..

Each work of the series includes a temporal sequence of images (of the same person, on situation) and a statement written above the visual sequence.

The text - often 'pieces of thought' that have no beginning nor end -

relates to the photographs, not by depicting the scene but rather by suggesting what might go on, or has happened in the sequence, in a style which is reminiscent of other works such as *Repertory*.



they were already awake, already putting on their costumes.



a woman on the lower deck of a bus biting her lip, and a man on the top deck moving his head rapidly backwards and forwards.



from the telephone booth he watches the activity in the centre of the town. A slow downhill procession. All sound is cut off by the plate-glass. Cars, motor-bikes, cranes and buses cross efficiently at the junction. The lights change. People hurry across carrying mail. A slow congestion builds up, then the lights change again, and the traffic wheels round past the boardings.



of children, walking in single file, their parents close.



of a man rubbing his shoes against the corner of an outside wall.



Vocals

1990-2002

4 x CD box,

Published by Loughborough University.

Spanning more than thirty years from 1970, this selection of audio works brings to the aural medium a number of major projects by Ian Breakwell. From the BBC Radio 3 serialisation of his Dairy 1970-1980 to a collage of narratives that explore the qualities to the radio medium itself, via the studio-recording of his fictional writings 1972-2002, the selection proposed demonstrates the breadth of his work and his achievement in using the medium of sound.

List of Exhibited Works

Artworks by Ian Breakwell supplied for Derby Quad Exhibition.

All artworks © The Estate of Ian Breakwell (unless otherwise stated).

10 Diary Pages 1969-1982

1983, screen prints on card, 10 parts plus 1 title page, 41.6x32.7cm each.

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

1969 Diary

1969, text, collage and drawing on paper, 42 parts, 31.5x19.5cm each.

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

BC/AD

2005-2008, digital video, black and white, sound, mastered on Blu-ray disc, duration 59 minutes 36 seconds, single-screen installation.

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

Diagnosis Drawings

2005, mixed media on paper, 13 parts, dimensions variable between 57x39cm and 43x33.5cm.

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

Episodes from Face History

1969, black and white photograph, 125.4x153cm.

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

Estate

1971-1976, photographs, pencil and ink on board, 32 parts, 61x52cm each.

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

50 Reasons for Getting out of Bed

2005, vinyl wall text, dimension variable.

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

Growth

1969-1973, photographic assemblage on board, 32x241cm.

Courtesy British Council Collection.

Nine Jokes

1971, 16mm, black & white, silent, duration 12 minutes.

Courtesy Lux.

One

1971, 16mm, black & white, sound, duration 15 minutes. Made with Mike Leggett. Digitally remastered 2003 (DVD).

Courtesy Lux.

Parasite and Host

2005, digital Giclee print on Hanemuehle photo rag paper, 115.7x94.5cm.

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

Phototext Sequence

1972, ink on tinted photograph mounted on board, 15 individual works, dimension variable between 11x64cm and 10x 25cm.

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

Public House

1985, typescript and coloured ink on paper, 8 parts 38.5x29.5cm each.

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

The Regent Snooker Hall, Derby

1964, etching on paper, 46.7x58.7cm.

Courtesy Felicity Sparrow.

Repertory

1973, 16mm, colour, sound, duration 9 minutes.

Courtesy Lux.

Repertory

1974, photo-silkscreen prints, 5 parts, 82x56cm each.

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

The Elusive State of Happiness

1979, newsprint and photograph on card, 59x46cm.

Courtesy Arts Council Collection.

The News

1980, U-matic video. Colour, sound, duration 11 minutes.

Courtesy Lux.

The Walking Man Diary

1975-1978, black & white photographs, hand-written and type-written text on paper, 8 parts, total display dimensions 123x616cm.

Courtesy Tate Collection.

Unword

1969–1970, 16mm, black & white, sound, duration 47 minutes. Made with Mike Leggett. Digitally remastered 2003 (DVD), single-screen installation.

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

Walserings

1991, ink and gouache on paper, 27 parts, dimensions variable between 15x9cm and 19x8 cm.

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

Walsering (ex-series)

1991, gouache and ink on sandpaper and mixed media on paper, 3 individual works dimensions variable between 35x30.5cm and 39.5x31.5cm.

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

Walser's Walk

1992, mixed media on paper, 171x70.5cm.

Courtesy Anthony Reynolds Gallery.

List of TV Collaborations

Ian Breakwell's Continuous Diary

1984 made in collaboration with Anna Ridley, Annalogue Productions, for Channel 4 Television, 21 programmes, total duration 142 minutes.

Ian Breakwell's Xmas Diary

1984 made in collaboration with Anna Ridley, Annalogue Productions, for Channel 4 Television, 8 programmes, total duration 65 minutes.

Public Face Private Eye

1988 made in collaboration with Anna Ridley, Annalogue Productions, for Channel 4 Television, 5 programmes, total duration 57 minutes.

List of Contextual Material

The Continuous Diary

1977, 16mm documentary directed by Alan Yentob for BBC Television, duration 13 minutes.

Mask to Mask

1993, Beta SP video documentary directed by Phil Lewis for Harlech Television, duration 40 minutes.

The Frame - Ian Breakwell

2007, digital video documentary directed by John Wyver, Illuminations, for BFI British Artists' Films, duration 32 minutes.

List of Publications by Ian Breakwell

Awayday to Paradise and other texts

2007

Book

Published by RGAP.

Derby Days

2001

Book

Published by RGAP.

Ian Breakwell

1973–2007

DVD

Published by BFI, British Artists' Films.

Ian Breakwell's Diary 1964–1985

1986

Book

Published by Pluto Press.

The Artists Dream

1988

Book

Published by Serpent's Tail Ltd.

Vocals

1990–2002

4 x CD box

Published by Loughborough University.

With thanks...

Anthony Reynolds Gallery, Arts Council England, British Council Collection, Alan Chaffe, Louise Clements & Alfredo Cramerotti, Derby City Council, Derby QUAD, Anna Drummond, Phil Lewis, LUX, RGAP Researchers Group for Artists Publications, Felicity Sparrow, Tate Collection, University of Derby, Anthony Wall, John Wyver and to anyone else who has helped to compile this guide and produce the exhibition.

Exhibition partners



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