



A GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND

British Landscape and the Imagination: 1970s to Now

30 September 2017 – 21 January 2018

towner
art gallery

An Arts Council Collection National Partner Exhibition



TO VIEW THE LANDSCAPE AS A PICTORIAL COMPOSITION OF ELEMENTS IS SIMPLISTIC. TO PERCEIVE THE LANDSCAPE WITHIN A SET OF RULES (ART, SCIENCE, POLITICS, RELIGION, COMMUNITY, BUSINESS, INDUSTRY, SPORT AND LEISURE) IS A WAY PEOPLE CAN DEAL WITH THE COMPLEXITY OF MEANINGS THAT ARE PRESENTED IN OUR ENVIRONMENT. WE ARE COLLECTIVELY RESPONSIBLE FOR SHAPING THE LANDSCAPE WE OCCUPY AND IN TURN THE LANDSCAPE SHAPES US WHETHER WE ARE AWARE OF IT OR NOT.

Cover: Keith Arnatt, *Untitled* (from 'A.O.N.B' series), 1982-94. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © Keith Arnatt Estate. All rights reserved. DACS 2017.

Above: Susan Derges, *Full Moon Rowan*, 2017.
© Susan Derges. Courtesy Purdy Hicks Gallery.

John Davies. Photographer

A Green and Pleasant Land shows how artists have interpreted the British landscape through the lens of their own cultural, political or spiritual principles. Drawn primarily from the Arts Council Collection, as well as private collections, galleries and the artists included in the show, the exhibition takes 1970 as its starting point and consists largely of photographic works. The early 1970s saw the emergence of an independent photography culture in the UK. New galleries specifically for the exhibition of photographs opened and crucially, in 1973 the Arts Council of Great Britain appointed its first (and only) photography officer, encouraging the growth of the Arts Council's collection of photographs. Freed from the constraints of commercial commissions and supported by Arts Council funding, photographers were able to explore their own ideas. This transformed photography and in particular made an impact on the appearance of landscape photographs.

Comprised of works by over fifty artists, the exhibition investigates diverse approaches to landscape and the imagination. All the artists are united by a desire to explore the landscape as a manifestation of their personal ways of looking at, or seeing the landscape, rather than depicting a representational view of the natural lie of the land or geography. These different approaches shape our understanding of the land we live on, its relationship to identity, place, time, and to the politics of land and its representation. These artistic intentions are contrasting throughout the exhibition.

Artists that are responding to the landscape as a spiritual space, or consider the act of photographing it as transcendental, tend towards a view of the landscape from the inside. They inhabit the space and their

artistic sensibilities result from feeling the presence of the earth. Light, texture and detail are important and viewpoints are often close. On the other hand, artists commenting on the ways in which class, economics and culture shape the landscape tend to look from the outside. Their work is often expansive and encompasses clear evidence of human activity – people, buildings, ruins, pylons – suggesting the landscape is not picturesque, but instead represents a collision of ideologies. Criss-crossed with transport networks, industrial and housing developments they depict the land as constantly evolving to take account of human need.



Fay Godwin, *Maenserth Standing Stone*, 1976. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © British Library Board FG2683-6.

Preoccupied with impermanence and its relationship to landscape, Keith Arnatt created *Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty* (1982-84) and *Pictures from A Rubbish Tip* (1988-89), two striking and influential bodies of work that investigate the traces of human intervention in the British landscape and how the detritus of modern living becomes assumed into the rural environment. By contrast, Thomas Joshua Cooper – American born but resident in Scotland – works slowly, planning single images months ahead by consulting maps and literature,



John Davies, *Agcroft Power Station, Salford* © John Davies 1983.

and making long journeys to coastlines, mountain cliffs and waterways to produce rapturous and sublime images.

In one of the earliest works in the show – Paul Caponigro’s *Stonehenge with Moon. Wiltshire. England* (1972) – the photographer has sought to reveal the veiled meanings of the site by photographing the stones as if they were a still-life. Removing them from geographical context, he imbues the stones with a sense of the mystical and magical. Emerging photographer Theo Simpson produces works meditating on the mutability of the post-industrial landscape. By examining ruins, materials and objects, he explores the temporal impact of manufacturing on the land and the extent to which fragile environments are scarred, but ultimately recovered from industrial activity.

The structures in his work and his frames are forged from the metallic constituents of the structures he has photographed, bringing the physical material of the landscape into his artworks.

John Davies is one of the world’s most important landscape photographers producing large-scale, highly detailed images that unpick the social and political materiality of the urban landscape. Shot from a high viewpoint and often taking in vast areas, his photographs are analytical and considered, a document of the history of human impact on the land. Similarly Emily Richardson’s *Cobra Mist* (2008) explores the relationship between the landscape of Orford Ness and the traces of its military history, particularly the experiments in radar and the extraordinary architecture of the

Atomic Weapons Research Establishment. The film records the physical traces of its often secretive past using the photographic nature of 16mm film and time lapse to construct an impossible experience of the landscape and expose its history to the camera. At the opposite extreme, Susan Derges' camera-less images are meditative and illusory, often created at night using moonlight or hand-held torches for exposure and inserting photographic paper into river or sea water, to track ripples, tides and shadows.

The contested landscapes of Northern Ireland provide the inspiration for socially engaged photographers Paul Graham, Paul Seawright and Donovan Wylie, all of whom address the history and politics of the Troubles in their work. For a period of over a year, Wylie photographed the borderland watchtowers in Northern Ireland. Working entirely from an elevated position enabled by military helicopter he created a systematic survey of the towers, their positions and perspectives within the landscape. In *Sectarian Murder* series

(1988 - 1991) Seawright revisited the sites of sectarian attacks during the 1970's close to where he grew up in Belfast. The texts are from newspaper reports at the time and document the murders of innocent civilians, killed for their perceived religion. Both Wylie and Seawright make direct reference to the relationship between geographical location and war. Graham's work on the other hand is less obviously a document, seeming more an incidental record of an apparently unremarkable view. On closer examination however it reveals the way in which the complexity of conflict is held as a continuous narrative within the landscape itself, in which everything is charged with significant meaning.

Strange worlds hidden within our own form the subject matter in works by Clare Woods and Ben Rivers. *Daddy Witch* (2008), Woods' large-scale panelled landscape painting is inspired by photographs taken at night at obtuse angles peering into ponds, woodlands and forests. Woods refers to her landscapes as 'supernaturally charged rural places', which are settings for ancient rites, pagan rituals and folk traditions. Rivers' film *Ah, Liberty!* (2008) moves between documentary and fiction in a cinematic essay combining unease and joy about a family living, working and playing on a farm in the Scottish highlands throughout the seasons. It captures an untamed sense of freedom.

Considered as a whole, the exhibition shows that the British landscape is unpredictable, contested and interdependent. It also demonstrates the important role that artists play in articulating these concerns.



Melanie Friend, *Avro Lancaster bomber*, (part of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight), Eastbourne International Airshow, Sussex, 15 August 2009
© Melanie Friend. Courtesy Impressions Gallery.



Ben Rivers, *Ah, Liberty!*, 2008. © Ben Rivers. Courtesy of the artist and Kate MacGarry, London.

ARTISTS IN A GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND:

Keith Arnatt, Gerry Badger, Craig Barker, John Blakemore, Henry Bond and Liam Gillick, Paul Caponigro, Thomas Joshua Cooper, John Davies, Susan Derges, Mark Edwards, Anna Fox, Melanie Friend, Hamish Fulton, Fay Godwin, Andy Goldsworthy, Paul Graham, Mishka Henner, Paul Hill, Robert Judges, Angela Kelly, Chris Killip, John Kippin, Karen Knorr, Ian Macdonald, Ron McCormick, Mary McIntyre, Peter Mitchell, Raymond Moore, John Myers, Martin Parr, Mike Perry, Ingrid Pollard, Mark Power, Paul Reas, Emily Richardson, Ben Rivers, Simon Roberts, Paul Seawright, Andy Sewell, Theo Simpson, Graham Smith, Jem Southam, Jo Spence, John Stezaker, Paddy Summerfield, The Caravan Gallery, Chris Wainwright, Patrick Ward, Clare Woods and Donovan Wylie.

A Green and Pleasant Land is curated by Greg Hobson and Brian Cass, Head of Exhibitions at Towner. It is the third exhibition selected by Towner from the Arts Council Collection for the National Partners Programme. As well as the Arts Council Collection and Towner's Collection, the exhibition includes works on loan from The Hyman Collection, Impressions Gallery, Purdy Hicks Gallery, Brighton Museum, Kate MacGarry Gallery, The approach, and from the participating artists.

Free Admission

Tuesday – Sunday 10am – 5pm. Closed 24 – 26 December and 1 January.

Towner Art Gallery

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ASSOCIATED

ARTISTS IN CONVERSATION

Saturday 30 September | 2pm

A *Green and Pleasant Land* artists John Davies, Melanie Friend and Simon Roberts present talks about their work and join a panel discussion with exhibition curators Greg Hobson and Brian Cass.

Tickets: £6 full / £5 concession & members



Jem Southam, *The Pig, the Lamb, and the Goat*, 1989. © Jem Southam.

LEARNING

Taking inspiration from key works and themes in the exhibition is an accompanying Learning programme. This includes a specially designed course for young people to support their mental health, delivered in partnership with Sussex NHS Partnership Trust and artist-in-residence Jenny Arran.

To find out more about programme for all ages, including holiday events, please visit our website and follow [@townerlearning](#)

BRITISH LANDSCAPE ON FILM

Six films made by British filmmakers set in-and-around the British Isles.

Thursday 12 October | 18:00

The Last of England – Derek Jarman, 1987
(15) 88mins

Saturday 14 October | 14:30

Wuthering Heights – Andrea Arnold, 2011
(15) 126 mins
+ introduction by Dr Michael Lawrence from University of Sussex

Thursday 19 October | 18:00

Lady Macbeth – William Oldroyd, 2016
(15) 85 mins

Thursday 26 October | 18:00

Ratcatcher – Lynne Ramsay, 1999
(15) 90 mins

Sunday 29 October | 14:30

God's Own Country – Francis Lee, 2016
(PG) 120mins

Sunday 5 November | 14:30

Sleep Furiously – Gideon Koppel, 2008
(U) 92 mins

Tickets:

£7 full / £5.50 concession & members

PROGRAMMES

ANDREW KÖTTING

WHO YOU WALK WITH ALTERS WHAT YOU SEE:

The View – The Prospect – The Landscape

**Saturday 4 November – 3
December 2017**

An exhibition based on three psychogeographical journey works, made by artist and filmmaker Andrew Kötting in collaboration with writer Iain Sinclair, featuring pinhole photographs (Anonymous Bosch), artefacts, paintings (Eden Kötting) and film installations. The exhibition complements Andrew Kötting's Film Season.



Andrew Kötting, *Gallivant*, 1996.
Photo: Gary Parker. © the artist.

FILM SEASON

Saturday 4 November | 19:30

Edith: A Performance – Andrew Kötting, 2017, 80 minutes

A special live film-music-performance event, incorporating spoken word from Iain Sinclair, with music and soundscapes by David Aylward, Claudia Barton, Jem Finer and Andrew Kötting, set to the spectral images of Kötting's latest film *Edith Walks*, 2016

Saturday 11 November | 19:30

Inscape: Landscape and Coastscapes
An evening of short films and discussion with Andrew Kötting

Saturday 18 November | 19:30

The Moon and the Sledgehammer – Philip Trevelyan, 1971, 65 minutes
+ *This Is My Land* – Ben Rivers, 2006, 14 min

Introduced by *A Green and Pleasant Land* artist and filmmaker Ben Rivers

Saturday 2 Dec | 19:30

Gallivant – Andrew Kötting, 1996, 104 minutes

Followed by an 'in conversation' with Iain Sinclair

Tickets:

£7 full / £5.50 concession & members