
passing thoughts and making plans

Curated by Catherine Yass

Photography may be seen as a site for experimentation and playing with ideas before they are resolved. Before a photographic image has been fixed or shown, it has the provisional quality of a thought which comes and goes before it has settled into a concept. Photography in its most basic state is a latent medium, a negative, an image-in-waiting. Digital photographs offer themselves to continual alteration and transformation; mobile phone images are transitional, fleeting exchanges; Polaroids emerge from nothing and their viscous quality can give way to fading and melting back into the chemical base from which they appeared.

For the artists in *Passing thoughts and making plans* photography is a medium for thinking, sketching and working out ideas. It is open-ended, offering no conclusions but routes through thoughts and spaces and times.

Jeremy Deller describes his photographs as *a reminder and as something to do*. They are a point of reference for his performative works which are also recorded on video. *Procession*, which took place in Manchester in 2009, featured the city's various traditions from the Scouts' Marching Band to the Hacienda club to the Shree Swaminarayan Gadi Piping Band. A steel band is photographed in rehearsal for their performance of Joy Division and Buzzcock songs.

Sharon Lockhart's *Untitled Studies* 1996 – present are re-photographed family snapshots. The process of looking is slowed down as viewers attempt to position themselves in a timeframe where there is no singular moment. Instead we are made aware of the artist's own time. Her editing process is also made evident as many of the snapshots she has chosen to re-photograph show people from the back or in the distance. Rather than looking at images of her past, we find ourselves looking at the time her life has taken to pass. *Each person becomes a figure of vacancy, stillness and deferral within a picture of tense visual expectation.* (Timothy Martin, Teatro Amazonas 2000)

Rachel Whiteread's *Thoughts, Spaces and Places* 2004-2009 form a spatial map across a grid of prints which make connections between different locations she has found herself in, as various as Chamonix, Longyearbyen, Troy, Svalbard and Canakkale. The forms of lone buildings resonate with shapes in the landscape and single objects. *I collect images as memories and store them. They used to be in slide form. They are now on my digital database. I would show them on an adjacent screen when giving lectures. I use them in books. I use them to help create in the studio. They have always been a large part of my practice. They are snippets of places, memories and time. They help me organise my thoughts. I need them.*

Cornelia Parker's meticulous arrangements of hundreds of silver and china objects collected in market stalls are re-composed by her photographic framing into her own collections. *After visiting antique markets for many years buying objects for my work, I thought I would like to go just to look, and photograph the displays and compositions made by others.*

Tacita Dean has filmed and photographed the bottles in Morandi's studio as a way of understanding his work. Each bottle in her photographs is numbered as a reference for the film, which re-positions the bottles in a temporal space. *Amidst his objects, which still held the aura of their depiction, I came at last to a decision as to how I could treat them. I filmed them singly, one by one, centred in my frame, and did as Morandi would never have done: made their composition random.*

Photography is embedded in the paintings of **Alex Katz**. In the images of Lincolnville Beach in Maine, painting and photography interweave, playing a game with each other until their relationship is resolved and condensed into a painting. A snapshot is often a starting point for a work followed by framing a section of it, adjusting postures and gestures, and changing colours or styles of clothing, and even painting studies from models posed in the positions of figures in the photographs.

This immediacy is essential to **Richard Wentworth's** *Shallow Breathing In/Out* 2008, a series of mobile phone images made on in and out calls. The mobile phone is like an eye at the end of his arm, an extension of vision allowing viewpoints from angles and heights that our eye would not normally encounter.

Sarah Jones uses Polaroids partly to test composition and lighting, but also laid out as a form of notation to explore visual and conceptual associations. Some of the images are in pairs, for example a rosebush photographed from front and back. When placed side by side they look at first glance like a Rorschach blot, but rather than closing down around the centre of symmetry, a space is opened up between the inverted planes as they spiral round on themselves.

Catherine Yass' Involuntary Memory is an ongoing series of images derived from glimpses of spaces and scenarios encountered in unexpected memories, daydreams and sleep. The large format transparencies are originals for prints mounted onto light boxes. The dense colour which fills the negative spaces gives the images an ambiguous depth, and the two superimposed transparencies means there is no defining moment which fixes the images down.

Catherine Yass 2009

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