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PRESS INFORMATION
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SLIDE/TAPE

**BLACK AUDIO FILM COLLECTIVE, IAN BREAKWELL, NINA DANINO,
WILLIAM FURLONG, SUNIL GUPTA, TINA KEANE, CORDELIA SWANN**

5 October - 16 November 2013 (closed 20-30 October)
Opening night 6-8pm Friday 4 October. Continues Thursday-Saturday, 12-5pm

Curated by Yasmeen Baig-Clifford and Mo White for Vivid Projects.

SLIDE/TAPE is a new exhibition offering a fresh appraisal of an abandoned medium. Primarily associated with expanded cinema practice in the 1970s-80s, slide-tape installation expanded definitions of sculpture, setting out a dialogue between still image, sound and the physical presence of the media apparatus.

At a basic level, a slide-tape is a series of projected photographic slides with a synchronized audiotape soundtrack. As a technology, it is significant in the UK for being used by a number of key and emerging artists for a brief period in the 1970s-80s before being abandoned in favour of video and emerging alternative technologies. This exhibition aims to acknowledge the importance of slide-tape in the field of moving image media



Heaven from the tape-slide project
London Gay Switchboard (1980).
35mm colour slide projection.

Copyright Sunil Gupta
Courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery

SLIDE/TAPE is presented in association with Loughborough University, who are exhibiting works by Ian Breakwell and Tina Keane between 4-15 November, and hosting a symposium on 6 November. Speakers include Michael Archer, Nina Danino, Katy Deepwell, Paul Goodwin, Keith Piper and Cordelia Swann.

During the exhibition Vivid Projects will be hosting some fascinating discussions on the history and contemporary relevance of slide-tape text on Thursday evenings, plus a participatory residency with artist Cathy Wade as part of the Discovery Season at the internationally acclaimed Library of Birmingham from 15-20 October.

For this exhibition the curators have focused on the visual aesthetic of the slide: hence the reversal to 'slide/tape'. The material presence of the projection apparatus was key to the slide-tape aesthetic. Sometimes described as a narrative with stills, slide-tape was used by significant feminist artists in the 1970s-80s. Emerging from the experimental aesthetic of institutions such as the polytechnics and the London Film Makers Co-op, artists using the form forged a rigorous engagement with structure and narrative. Often, the practice of the artists featured in this exhibition merges art and politics, by bringing installation and performance to bear upon personal experiences. Relevantly simple works bear more socially complex material.

In Tina Keane's *Clapping Songs* (1981) the slide format is used to isolate and emphasise the actions two girls make while singing traditional clapping songs. The accompanying audio comprises a series of clapping game songs which take us from birth to death, with all the morbidity and black humour of the nursery rhyme. Nina Danino's slide-tape twin screen projection *First Memory* (1980) is presented at Vivid Projects in its original form and as it was originally presented in the seminal show *About Time/Women's Images of Men*, ICA, London (1980). The work represents from the woman's experience and from the perspective of absence or what is not able to be represented, using narrative and the performative power of the woman's voice.

Concurrently during the 1980s, young artists from Black and South Asian cultural heritages articulated concerns around subjectivity and emerging cultural identities. Sunil Gupta works between London and Delhi, using photographic and film media to consider the personal and social implications of homosexuality. Presented here in a formative stage, fragments from his 1980 tape-slide work *London Gay Switchboard* (1980) capture the work of a seminal organisation during a key period. Documentation of the daily activities at the 24 hour switchboard are set alongside Gupta's images from the burgeoning gay underground pub and club scene. The audio track remains missing, a reminder of the fragile nature of early slide-tape work.

Influential groups, such as the seminal Black Audio Film Collective who became known internationally with the release of the benchmark essay film *Handsworth Songs*, began working with tape-slide whilst at art school. Their collective practice (the original group consisted of John Akomfrah, Lina Gopaul, Avril Johnson, Reece Auguiste, Trevor Mathison, Edward George and Claire Joseph) was directly informed by contemporary debates in left politics and psychoanalytic theory. *Expeditions 1: Signs of Empire* (1984) is the first of a two-part 35mm slide-tape text. Utilising a hypnotic succession of haunting images, the soundtrack combines tape loops of political speeches and musique concrete to create a powerful and disturbing audio environment.

In *Mysteries of Berlin*, made between 1979-82, Cordelia Swann creates a wholly imaginary representation of Berlin shaped by pulp thrillers and film noir. Hidden behind the wall and infused with the cold war imagination, the piece begins with excerpts from the pulp novel *Torrid Zone Tease* (1963) accompanied by a sound battle

between the Soviet Army Chorus and Kurt Weill's Mack the Knife and moves forward with surging music and a barrage of found images.

William Furlong's Audio Arts supplement *9 Works for Tape Slide* is digitally reconstructed. Internationally renowned for work in sound, with the founding of Audio Arts with Barry Barker in 1973, Furlong began mapping contemporary art through interviews, recordings of performances and purpose made audio art works in a series of cassette editions. Audio Arts is considered to be one of most comprehensive and focused sound archive of artists' voices and sound art. This digital edition includes works from the original c.1978 supplement featuring Dave Critchley, Sally Potter, Paul Neagu, Bruce McLean, Rose English, Reindeer Werk, Jacke Lansley, Kevin Atherton and Marc Camille Chaimovicz.

Finally, at Loughborough only we exhibit the late Ian Breakwell's BC/AD (before Cancer/After Diagnosis). Breakwell is one of our most significant British artists; and in 1998-9 was Drawing Fellow at the Loughborough University School of Art and Design. In BC/AD, a series of head shots from past and present dissolve seamlessly in a journey from childhood to adulthood, inevitably charting his physical decline. Breakwell sought solace in the diaries he composed in the months before he died, and the visual text is self-narrated with highly personal diary entries. In bringing this narration to the visual text, he articulates an experience often unvoiced. BC/AD is a frank, moving and honest dialogue with the deteriorating body.

Note to Editors:

1. Vivid Projects is a collaborative agency dedicated to exploring the convergence of film, video, performance and interdisciplinary practice, and is based in Birmingham, UK. www.vividprojects.org.uk
2. Key support for the 2013 programme is from The National Lottery through Arts Council England, The Henry Moore Fund and Paul Mellon.
3. Exhibiting artists at Vivid Projects are Black Audio Film Collective, Nina Danino (05 – 19 Oct only), Tina Keane, William Furlong, Sunil Gupta and Cordelia Swann (31 Oct – 16 Nov only). The exhibition at Vivid Projects runs 05 October – 16 November, open Thursday-Saturday, 12-5pm. The exhibition is closed from 20 – 30 October. Admission is free. Vivid Projects is based at 16 Minerva Works, 158 Fazeley Street, Birmingham, B5 5RS.
4. The exhibition at Loughborough University Arts runs 04 – 15 November, open Monday – Friday, 10am – 4pm. Admission is free. Address: Loughborough University Arts, Edward Barnsley Building, Loughborough University, Loughborough, LE11 3TU
5. The exhibition is co-curated by Yasmeen Baig-Clifford, Director of Vivid Projects and Dr. Mo White, School of Arts, Loughborough University.
6. For information on the forward programme and hi-res images please contact Programme Manager laura@vividprojects.org.uk. Requests for interviews should be made to yasmeen@vividprojects.org.uk

Quotes for Editors:

"Vivid Projects draws on twenty years of commissioning and publishing, which has taken in original research and presentation within the field, both theory and practice, of UK and European media arts.

In my role as a Professor of Film, I am very interested in the medium of the slide-tape, and the distinctiveness it brought to its broad use in education, in the art gallery, and in creative practices. The aesthetics of slide/tape is one where images and sound can explore new narrative forms, incorporating the physicality and material presence of projection.

Neither a film on a screen, nor a photographic exhibition, the medium of the slide tape has slipped out of use and recognition, in the wake of newer and more nimble technological media; as such, its inherent creative distinctiveness has suffered both academic neglect and archival amnesia, being overlooked by both discourses.

The Slide/tape project promises to generate new academic approaches and critical writings to the interpretation of this 'lost' medium, while also actively curating and recreating examples of the medium itself. The aim of the publication is, therefore, to bring new knowledge to wider public and academic attention, placing this radical work of the 1980s, often undertaken by black and women artists, at the centre of recent British art history, rather than at its margins. In this manner it is hoped to make a significant contribution to the literature in this field, by documenting slide-tape and its contribution to the development of moving image media in the UK."

Professor Roger Shannon FRSA
Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Edge Hill University

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