

PUBLIC FACE PRIVATE EYE by Ian Breakwell

A narrative in five acts, forming a series of five individual television programmes; to be broadcast on five consecutive nights, with an omnibus edition on the sixth night.

The theme of the series is the interplay between the public world of surface appearance and social roles, and the private world of the imagination. The rational and the irrational, the conscious and the subconscious.

"THE PUBLIC FACE IS AN ACTING MASK, THE PRIVATE EYE IS BEHIND THE MASK."

Each of the programmes tells a story which illustrates this theme in different ways. The journey into the private world of the artist Ian Breakwell is the bridge by which we cross from programme to programme as the narrative unfolds. Originator of the scripts, Ian Breakwell, acts as narrator and performer simultaneously presenting both public and private faces.

Formative events in Ian's life are portrayed in the first two programmes, laying the foundations for an insight into his concern as a mature artist in programmes 3 & 4. In the final programme the themes of the previous four coalesce forming a new beginning rather than conclusion.

Visual imagery and narrative voice are progressively layered as a dense montage further intensified by the mixture of music and manipulated sounds specially composed by Ron Geesin, which subtly underpins the complex cross-references.

Programmes 1. BURIED ALIVE

Begins in the womb, then birth is equated with stepping onstage and the start of an acting career.

Home, in Long Eaton, Derbyshire, as an extension of the security of the womb. Learning to act in order to cope with the insecure outside world / stage.

The young Ian (played by Steven Oldham, a boy from Long Eaton) is taught the secrets of conjuring by his Uncle Tom (played by stage magician John Wade), and discovers the world of magic and illusion. This sows the seeds of dissatisfaction with domesticity and paves the way for becoming an artist and thus an escapologist from provincial security.

The central section of the programme examines the basic human need to make one's mark, to prove that you existed. We move into the fringes of society among the misfits, outcasts and dreamers who live out their private lives outside under scrutiny of the public gaze.

Chance brings Ian back to the same high-security mental hospital in the north of England in which years ago, he gave his first stage performance as a boy conjuror in a charity variety troupe. Here, behind closed doors, we meet the Invisible People, those who live their allotted time in a publicly sanctioned private world. Out of sight and out of mind, normally removed from the gaze of the audience, but in the final section of the programme shockingly revealed. Memory images of the boy conjuror are juxtaposed with harrowing scenes of the inmates in their numbing parody of the outside world : some parading up and down, others hidden in single rooms.

Programme 2. THE FENCE AT FORBES

Continuation of formative influences towards being an artist. Escape from the security of the home and small-town everyday life into the unpredictability of a private world as exemplified by fishing.

Shot on location at Forbes Pond, Long Eaton, where the young Ian spent so many days and nights honing his art as an angler. This programme draws the viewer into a world of contemplation where fishing leads to reverie suggesting the equal importance of daydreaming to nightdreaming and the possibility of a private world by day as well as by night.

In atmospheric night scenes of strange events and in daydreams hovering below the surface of the water, the surreal emerges from out of mundane reality. Memories suggest parallels with Ian's adult paintings : art as daydreams which are portrayed.

Programme 3. KEEP THINGS AS THEY ARE

Now we reach the 1980's and the adult Ian has been living in central London for many years : a witness to the unceasing activity outside his window, the source material for much of his work as an artist and writer.

Invited as Artist In Residence by Kings College, Cambridge, the scene abruptly changes for Ian to sleepy, idyllic East Anglia.

Isolated in the private world of his Cambridge studio, with no view from the window, Ian embarks on painting the 120 **DAYS** series of large, imaginary, portraits, a family of characters who will keep him company through the coming months. Public faces with private eyes. Paint as make-up and disguise : layer by layer build up of faces to make the final masks. Unconscious elements of self portrayal. Comparison of the artist's working methods with those of academia. The use of intuition, chance, accident, illogicality and ambiguity. At the end of each day's isolation Ian emerges from his studio to join the college academics in High Table wining and dining. He observes the ritualised sociability of this cloistered world, and eventually takes his giant portraits to meet the diners.

Programme 4. THE HOUSE OF THE DEAF MAN.

Two years later, the Cambridge portraits are exhibited at the Galeria Fernando Vijande in Madrid. Having hung his paintings Ian took the opportunity to see the work of Francisco Goya and was overwhelmed by Goya's vision. This homage to Goya is made vivid by Ian's personal account, a linking of those times and now where human frailty is just as recognisable on the streets of Madrid today as in Goya's paintings, epitomising the combination of public face and private eye. We examine in depth his War Pictures and portraits of the Royal Family in the Prado, his frescoes in the church of San Antonio de la Florida, then the art which Goya made after his deafness locked him into a private world : the unique and terrifying Black Paintings. Private visions which defy rational analysis. Beyond words. The final section of the programme presents the Black Paintings without commentary.

Programme 5. MASK TO MASK

This last programme in the series draws together the narrative threads of the preceding four. Scenes from earlier programmes recur, and characters reappear, some in different guises.

Ian's chance discovery, in a derelict drinking club, of old photographs of revellers triggers a re-examination of the series' central theme : the public face (the rational, social conventions that condition us to operate in the outside world) and the private eye (the inner world of the subconscious imagination). Concentrated upon by symbolic use of the mask, and of the human face whether frozen in paint, worn by age, obscured by an assumed role or revealed by vulnerability.

The programme is built upon the text "The Human Face" by the French poet, playwright, actor and director Antonin Artaud. Homage is paid to Artaud who through his visionary writings and self-portraits exemplifies the private eye.

Ian's portrait paintings reappear, plus self-portraits and paintings of crowds of figures : a faceless mob of masks. The layering techniques involved in their making are revealed as parallel to the layered narratives used in the five programmes. The series, with its inter-connecting threads, can now be seen as a whole.

Ian appears at regular intervals throughout this last episode, speaking directly to camera for the first time since programme 1, personifying the public performer who is simultaneously the private author / artist. The metaphor of the actor and the audience is developed, as is the relationship between the television performer and the viewer. Using layers of make-up, similar to the build up of paint in his portraits, Ian gradually ages until he has turned into a white-haired, frail old man. The series has come full circle, from birth to approaching death. Finally Ian strips off his public face and wears, once more, a private mask : and ending which, like his paintings, is ambiguous and open to personal interpretation to the viewer.