

Ian Breakwell. "The Diary" and related works. May 30 - June 22, 1974.

Throughout 1973, Ian Breakwell produced a diary, which provides the basis for his exhibitions this year, beginning at Galerie Bama in Paris and Angela Flowers Gallery in London. Physically, THE DIARY is a fat, leather-bound, officially styled volume, with two 11½ x 8 in. pages a day; the kind probably preferred by senior executives' secretaries, or professional archivists. But the material it contains tugs against this conventional form. As in so much of his previous work, Breakwell is pre-occupied with the inter-action of words and images. The former are hand-written in six different coloured inks, running at an angle to the page lines. The latter are photographs, drawings, montages and collages, many originating from the miniature camera he carried with him during the year.

The material refers to events (the bomb explosion outside the Old Bailey in March; making love); observations on incidental things seen (the curious behaviour of a girl in the back of a parked car, or the man in the football crowd eating a chicken); fantasies, in which the inherent absurdity of what has been watched is pushed one believable stage further; comments and interpretations ("The idea of going to a specific place to start art for the day, and then back to the wife and kids in the evening seems ludicrous."); and insistent memories (his childhood; his father's fatal illness following an industrial accident five years previously.) Throughout, certain themes constantly recur, among them, the unreality of "real" actions; the struggle of the individuals observed to communicate with each other, and their frequent inability to do so; the frequent absurdity of sexual encounters; the symbolism of the train journey; the hints and oblique clues of some strange happenings to which he cannot get close enough to resolve definitively.

The various distinct elements, like the words and pictures themselves, are inseparable from each other. THE DIARY records on several levels simultaneously. Because he is not confined to the use of language, Breakwell is free to find the forms best suited to a given experience. Of course the schematic rigidity of the normal diary time structure, designed to cater for a purely topical perspective, is deliberately sabotaged. In life we do not just experience the imposition of time as chronology; nor are events, in any meaningful sense, perceived as a logical sequential series. Breakwell's diary incorporates a concept of personal time, and acknowledges that he re-lives certain events and experiences (both biographically strategic and superficially trivial) almost every day, even though they may have "really" happened a quarter of a century ago. Here is an attempt to capture the process of living and perceiving with all its internal and external, intimate and public, past and present implications. In one sense, Breakwell sees his function as a creative individual (not just as the

producer of THE DIARY) in these terms. Significantly the diary format has been suggested in a great deal of his work of the last decade. Evidently the persistent dangers must have been a limiting egocentricity, obscurantism, and lack of formal structure. But Breakwell's creative experiment is significant precisely because it avoids these potential pitfalls. THE DIARY is immediately available to anyone who can read and see. Breakwell has always taken a justifiably cynical view of the indecipherable mass of material presented by some "conceptual" artists. In contrast, THE DIARY never collapses into an externally incomprehensible privacy.

Even in his treatment of tragic happenings, or the traumatic visual and verbal reminiscences of childhood, or his father's death, Breakwell remains constantly aware of the close association of horror and absurdity, the calamitous and the mundane. These pre-occupations permeate his work like binding threads. In fact, he often uses humour as a vehicle which both provides formal terseness and reinforces accessibility. Humour and jokes - often with very serious intentions - give THE DIARY shape and form, and shoot its insights out at the viewer. But at times the humour is of a different kind: Breakwell is also a satirist; despite all his innovations in a variety of media he readily acknowledges a debt to the past.

The raw material of THE DIARY provides the starting point for a series of exhibits in a variety of media: photo-montage, photo-assemblages/texts, albums of drawings, film and slide sequences, tape-recordings and printed editions. "At each venue," says Breakwell, "THE DIARY exhibition will be added to and will breed new aspects."

If we look back over what Breakwell has previously produced, we discover that despite the multiplicity of media, there is a striking continuity, underlined by recurring elements which are at least as conspicuous in his work as a whole as in THE DIARY itself. He appears to be able to confront vital elements in his own history, and make them relevant to an observer outside of himself. Like Freud, he is aware of the close link between the most secret intimacies and the universal experience of men and women.

And so Breakwell's work escapes any trace of self-indulgence because it is thoughtful, meaningful, clear to understand, and funny too. The use of himself directly as subject and object for much of his work is balanced by intense perceptual and political (in the broader sense) involvement with the external world.

Extracts from: "The Continuous Diary", a survey of Ian Breakwell's work, by Peter Fuller.
'Art & Artists': May 1974.

IAN BREAKWELL

Born Derby, England, 1943.
Lives in London.

Recent one-man exhibitions

Greenwich Theatre Gallery, London, 1970.
Angela Flowers Gallery, London, 1971, 1972, 1974.
Galerie Bama, Paris, 1974.
Wolverhampton City Art Gallery, June/July 1974.
Midland Group Gallery, Nottingham, September 1974.

Two-man exhibition

(with John Hilliard) London New Arts Laboratory, 1970.

Some recent group exhibitions

Expo Internacional de Novisima Poesia, Buenos Aires, 1969.
La Poesia D'Avant-Garde, Avignon, 1969.
Experimental Poetry, Arts Council Gallery, Cardiff, 1969; Richard Demarco Gallery, Edinburgh, 1969.
Visual Poetry, N.A.A. Tour. England, 1970.
Experiment 2, Midland Group Gallery, Nottingham, 1971.
Art Spectrum, London, 1971.
Art Systems, Museum of Modern Art, Buenos Aires, 1971; C.A.Y.C., Buenos Aires, 1972; El Encuentro Internacional, Pamplona, Spain, 1972; Instituto de Arte Contemporaneo, Lima, Peru, 1972.
Art Systems II, Museum of Modern Art, Buenos Aires, 1972.
Prospect 71, Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf, 1971.
Activities, Sydney, Australia, 1971.
Exposicion Exhaustiva de la Nueva Poesia, Galeria U, Montevideo, Uruguay, 1972.
Colombia Biennial, Medellin, 1972.
A Survey of The Avant-Garde in Britain, Gallery House, London, 1972.
Fluxshoe, British Tour, 1972-3.
Photography into Art, Camden Arts Centre, London, 1973, and Scottish Tour.
Commissioned multi-media work for "Living Art" exhibition, Dublin, 1973.
"Open Circuit", Scottish Arts Council Gallery, Edinburgh, 1973.
"An Octet from Angela Flowers", Scottish Arts Council Gallery, Edinburgh, 1973.
Some recent performances and theatre-works.
FACE HISTORY, Arts Lab, London, 1969.
UNWORD 1, Compendium Bookshop, London, 1969.
UNWORD 2, ICA, London, 1969.
UNWORD 3, Bristol Arts Centre, 1970.
UNWORD 4, Swansea University, 1970.
PINK MARRIAGE, Victoria Park, London, 1970.
PALACH, (with Alan Burns & Charles Marowitz), Open Space Theatre, London, 1970.
ONE, Angela Flowers Gallery, London, 1971.
THE INSTITUTION (with Kevin Coyne), Alexandra Palace, London, 1973; ICA, London, 1973.

Exhibits:

- 1 THE DIARY 412-page manuscript in six volumes; each page 29.2 x 20.3cm. 1973. Text + drawings, collage, montage, photographs.
- 2 GROWTH Photo-assemblage. 1969-73. 241 x 32 cm.
- 3 IDEAL Photo-assemblage. 1973-4. 230 x 27.5 cm.
- 4 THE JOURNEY Photo-assemblage. 1972-4. 44.5 x 42 cm.
- 5 STORY Photo-assemblage. 1973-4. 163 x 38 cm.
- 6 DAYDREAM Photo-assemblage. 1973-4. 120.5 x 16.5 cm.
- 7 PARKED CARS Photo-assemblage + ink. 1973-4. 44.5 x 26.5 cm.
- 8 PROMENADE Photo-sequence + ink. 1973-4. 91.5 x 30.5 cm.
- 9 SHORT STORY 1 Photo-sequence + ink. 1972-4. 96 x 19 cm.
- 10 SHORT STORY 2 Photo-sequence + ink. 1972-4. 123 x 19 cm.
- 11 SHORT STORY 3 Photo-sequence. 1973-4. 63.5 x 14 cm.
- 12 SHORT STORY 4 Photo-sequence. 1973-4. 63.5 x 14 cm.
- 13 EPISODE 1 Photograph. 1974. 19 x 19 cm.
- 14 EPISODE 2 Photograph. 1974. 19 x 19 cm.
- 15 EPISODE 3 Photograph. 1974. 19 x 19 cm.
- 16 EPISODE 4 Photograph. 1974. 19 x 19 cm.
- 17 EPISODE 5 Photograph. 1974. 19 x 19 cm.
- 18 EPISODE 6 Photograph. 1973. 19 x 24 cm.
- 19 EPISODE 7 Two photographs. 1973. 19 x 24 cm.
- 20 EPISODE 8 Photograph. 1973. 19 x 24 cm.
- 21 EPISODE 9 Photograph. 1974. 19 x 24 cm.
- 22 REPERTORY Photo-silkscreen folio. Published by Tetrad Press 1974. Edition of 30. 5 prints, each 54.5 x 79.5 cm.

Albums:

- 23 FAMILY Drawings: ink, oil pastel, gouache, pencil and wax. 1974. 25 x 26 x 3 cm.
 - 24 GROWTH Toned photographs. 1969-73. 28 x 23 x 6 cm.
 - 25 FESTIVAL Toned Polaroid photographs + text. 1973. 25 x 26 x 3 cm.
 - 26 ABROAD Photographs + text. 1973. 31 x 30 x 3 cm.
 - 27 ESTATE Photographs + text. 1973. 37 x 26.5 x 2.5 cm.
- and a selection of tape-recordings, film/slide sequences, and films including REPERTORY, 16-mm colour. 1973. 9 min.
- Ian Breakwell will read extracts from THE DIARY on one evening during the exhibition.

Films

"Sheet". 1970
Made in collaboration with Mike Leggett, featured in NFT Underground Festival, September 1970 and also at the London New Arts Laboratory. Shown on Belgian tv, December, 1970. 16 mm, black and white.

"Unword". 1969-70
A film by Mike Leggett of the series of theatre-works by Ian Breakwell. 16 mm, black and white.

"9 Films". 1971
Prospect 71, Düsseldorf and European Tour. 16 mm, black and white.

"Growth". 1969-73
16 mm, black and white film and 35 mm transparencies.

"Ideal Home". 1971-74
(Unfinished) 16 mm colour film and 35 mm transparencies.

"Repertory". 1973
16 mm, colour.
in preparation:
"The Journey"
(provisional Title) 16 mm, colour.

Articles about Ian Breakwell's work include

CONTINUOUS EVENT PROCESS, text plus photographs, Studio International, September, 1970.

LESS AND LESS, text plus photograph, Art & Artists, August, 1971.

UNWORD 3, illustrated description, Second Aeon magazine No. 15, 1972.

A PERSONAL USE OF PROJECTED AND TRANSMITTED IMAGERY, illustrated text, Studio International, December, 1972.

GROWTH, illustrated extract from an interview, Baron Samedi magazine, 1973.

SOME NOTES ON THE DIARY, Studio International, 1974.

THE CONTINUOUS DIARY, Illustrated survey of Ian Breakwell's work by Peter Fuller, Art & Artists, May, 1974.

PAGES FROM THE DIARY, 2nd Aeon magazine, Spring, 1974.

Limited Edition Publications

SUMMIT, illustrated text, Gallery Ten, 1967.

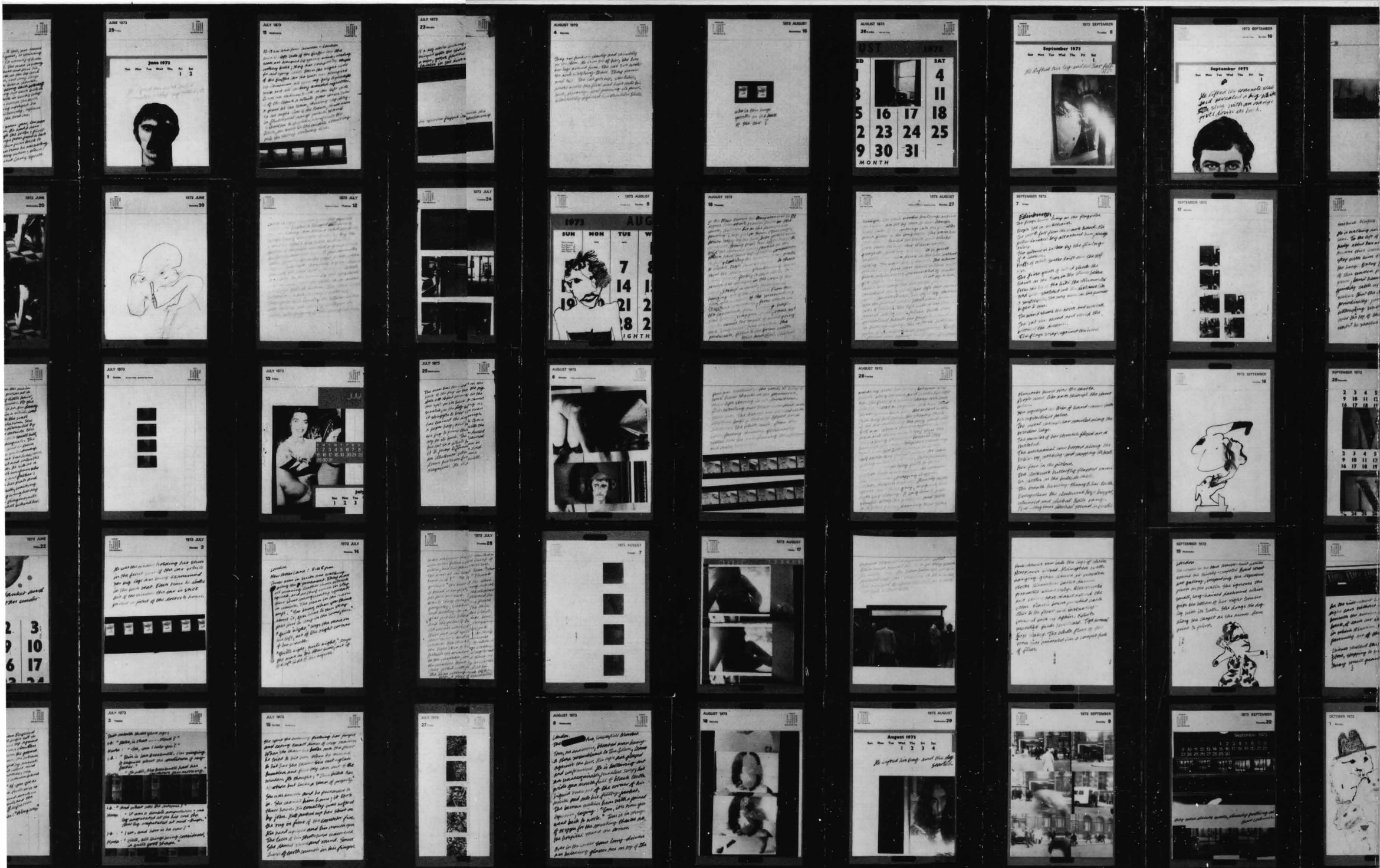
BUFFET CAR NEWS, photo-silkscreen documentation of a theatre-work, Exit Publications, 1970.

CALENDAR, prose/collage text, Peeks Press, 1971.

SIX PHOTO-TEXT SEQUENCES, Tetrad Press, 1973.

REPERTORY, photo-text silkscreen folio, Tetrad Press, 1974.

Illustrated texts, drawings, photographs, etc by Ian Breakwell have appeared in numerous small magazines from various countries



Leggett

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