

TANYA LEIGHTON

PRESS RELEASE

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JOHN SMITH

SLOW GLASS

11 February – 3 March 2012

Tanya Leighton Gallery is pleased to announce SLOW GLASS, John Smith's second solo exhibition at the gallery.

A nostalgic glazier shows off his knowledge and expounds his theories. Taking glassmaking processes and history as its central theme, 'Slow Glass' (1988-1991) explores ideas about memory, perception and change.

"The film begins with a shout in the street and a smashed pane, and ends with a bricked-up window. Between these literal images of opening and closing, 'Slow Glass' spins immaculately shot puns and paradoxes that play on reflection and speculation – words that refer both to acts of seeing and of mind. Glass is the key, as a narrator's running commentary sketches the glassmaker's art, splicing a history lesson with a quasi-autobiography. The authority of word, voice and picture is questioned through the film's gradual revelation of its own (highly pleasurable) artifice. The cutting of glass is matched to the editing of film, and the camera's lens to the surface, which it captures. Through the pub-talk and the downing of glasses, other themes emerge; among them is the constancy of change, as the face of London alters and the past becomes present (conveyed in jump-cuts showing streets and shops changing over time and season, and in a gently ironized evocation of a 50's childhood). The flowing Thames echoes the theme of flux, but also underscores the renewed attacks on East London life in the age of the property war – another kind of speculation. 'Slow Glass' suggests that the living past has been turned into capitalized 'Heritage', that the British Documentarists' noble craftsman only survives as a museum piece, and that reality in film is itself a fiction. In this film, the fiction is a crafted illusion that always has a human face."

- A.L. Rees, London Film-Makers' Co-op catalogue, 1993

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