

TANYA LEIGHTON

PRESS RELEASE

-

JOHN SMITH
FLAG MOUNTAIN / BLACK TOWER
12 JUNE - 24 JULY 2010
PREVIEW - FRIDAY 11 JUNE, 4-9 PM

Tanya Leighton Gallery is very pleased to announce the first solo exhibition of East London artist-filmmaker John Smith in Berlin.

Smith will present two works Flag Mountain (Southern Nicosia, looking towards the border with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus), 2010 (recent recipient of the ARTE prize at the 56th International Short Film Festival Oberhausen), and The Black Tower from 1985-7. Both works in this exhibition, while very different in approach, develop ideas triggered by chance encounters with architecture and landscape. Smith's new work Flag Mountain interprets a panoramic scene viewed from his apartment's balcony during a visit to Nicosia, while The Black Tower creates an enigmatic narrative around an old water tower that could be seen from the window of his house in East London in the 1980s.

Flag Mountain (Southern Nicosia, looking towards the border with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus), 2010

HD video installation, seamless loop (7 mins. cycle)

In Nicosia, the divided capital of Cyprus, a display of nationalism is taken to its logical conclusion. Moving between macro and micro perspectives, Flag Mountain sets dramatic spectacle against everyday life as the inhabitants of both sides of the city go about their daily business.

The Black Tower, 1985-7

23 mins. 16mm film screened as SD video loop (30 mins. cycle, starting on the hour and half past the hour)

In The Black Tower we enter the world of a man haunted by a tower which, he believes, is following him around London. While the character of the central protagonist is indicated only by a narrative voice-over which takes us from unease to breakdown to mysterious death, the images, meticulously controlled and articulated, deliver a series of colour coded puzzles, jokes and puns which pull the viewer into a mind-teasing engagement.

- Nik Houghton

A number of diverse filmic forms - documentary, abstraction, psychodrama and surrealist reverie - are convincingly bound together by the narrator's retelling of his descent into madness. Indeed, in its ability both to contain these various forms, and to create a plausible mimetic world, the film is an eloquent statement on the persuasive power of narrative.

- Nicky Hamlyn

John Smith is concurrently showing two other film and video installations in Berlin as part of the Berlin Biennale.

TANYA LEIGHTON

The popularity of John Smith's film and video work can be explained by his wry sense of humour, his play on language and the elegance of his visual style. Strongly influenced by the Structural Materialist ideas which dominated British artists' filmmaking during his formative years, but also fascinated by the immersive power of narrative and the spoken word, he has developed a body of work which deftly subverts the perceived boundaries between documentary and fiction, representation and abstraction. Drawing upon the raw material of everyday life, Smith's meticulously crafted films rework and transform reality, playfully exploring and exposing the language of cinema.

One of the most talented filmmakers of the postwar generation, he has attracted admirers from way beyond the narrow confines of the Avant Garde. His reputation rests on a quite unique sensibility which has successfully married three traits - humour, documentary and formal ingenuity - into an indissoluble whole.

- Michael O'Pray, Art Monthly

Since the early 1970s John Smith has made over fifty film, video and installation works that have been shown in cinemas and galleries around the world and awarded major prizes at many international film festivals. His solo exhibitions include Royal College of Art Galleries, London (2010), Sala Diaz Gallery, Texas (2010), Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (2006), Kunstmuseum Magdeburg (2005), Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool (2003) and Pearl Gallery, London (2003). He regularly presents his work in person and in recent years it has been profiled through retrospectives at the 2007 Venice Biennale and film festivals in Oberhausen, Cork, Tampere, Uppsala, Bristol, Regensburg, Glasgow and La Rochelle.

Special thanks to Joanne Daly, Ethan Hayes-Chute, Verena Kaminiarz, Irene Piepenbrock, Rupert Smyth, Rob Tufnell, and Luke Warda.

Kindly supported by Eidotech, Just Music, Moplott, and The Embassy of Norway in Germany



For further information, images and viewing copies please email:
info@tanyaleighton.com or telephone: 49 (0)30 221607770