

Pairs: Nick Collins / Cathy Rogers

The Depot, 38 Upper Clapton Rd, London, E5 8BQ, 26 June, 7:30pm, £5/3

Nick Collins has been making films since the late 1970s. They centre on small-scale instances of human geography and habitation, spanning investigations of archaeological sites to contemporary environs. Graphic patterns of light and shadow are the focus of his observational camera. Collins has often collected his films together in short series of 'little films' reflecting their lyricism.

Cathy Rogers' films typically involve very direct means of production including pinhole photography and photograms. Her work is often also site-specific and reflects a mode of looking that is unique to the locations and materials that she works with. While the strategies of her work are straightforward and deceptively simple, the representational images they generate often prompt viewers to question what they might be looking at in productive ways.

Hosepipe (2009) CR, 2mins, Super 8
Scotopic (2009) CR, 5mins, Super 8
An Afternoon (2012) NC, 4mins, 16mm
Arkadian Fragment (2017) NC, 3mins, 16mm
Pan (2008) CR, 2mins, Super 8
Garden Pieces (1998) Margaret Tait, 12mins, 16mm
Rosemary Again & Again; Lavender and Bull Thistle (2014-2017) CR, loop, 16mm & Standard 8

Pro Agri (2009) Nicky Hamlyn, 3mins, 16mm
Field Study (2013) NC, 5mins, 16mm
Bed and table (2017) NC, 2mins, 16mm
Almost There (2009) CR, 2mins, Super 8
Temple of Apollo (2012) NC, 5mins, 16mm
'shadow as volume' and 'trapezoids' from *Messenian Notebook* (2017) NC, 8mins, 16mm
Glass House (2017) CR, loop, 16mm negative photogram film

Nick Collins / Cathy Rogers in conversation

Nick Collins: It's an interesting choice to put us together, as I feel our work is very different. The most obvious difference for me is that you're much more of a materialist than I am and your work is much more process-oriented. In many ways, I'm more of a conventional filmmaker.

Cathy Rogers: I think there is an overlap in our work because although the filmstrip and its analogous relationship to the 'thing' I'm exposing it to (either outside of the camera or directly) is what motivates me, what's equally important is the object being exposed and the place/time where it happens. So, it is also about seeing and perception. I always like to think the work is about the triadic relationship between the film material/apparatus, the object being 'looked at' or examined and the context in which it all happens, which is where the site-specificity comes in. I see a lot about pattern and shadow in your work and you're more willing to linger with the lens, allowing time to let things unfold.

NC: In many of your works a whole series of things comes across to do with the work being the product of all the extremely specific things obtaining at the time of making, including your choices - for example in *Lightstep*, where the intensity and colour of the light, the number and pitch of the steps, the resolution of the image and the shooting procedure are all equally important. The sense of approaching towards and receding from the light is palpable (and appropriate to a church, of course!) and the black prelude seems important too. I like that one very much. Quite often too, other images suggest themselves. *Scotopic* reads to me very much as reflections in an eye, with the black gaps being 'lookings-away'. *Almost There* has a palpable sense of the image (and perhaps also the maker) 'breathing', and gives me a sense that I simultaneously want the image to resolve, but also don't. I am apt to read things metaphorically, and I'd be interested to know if that is ever any part of your intention that you're aware of?

In *VOID* the way in which the images ascend and descend the stairwell appeals to me very much, and reminds me of the sense I sometimes have that in a film the shots are behind each other, latent in the screen and waiting for their moment, or in this case one of their moments. Approaching and receding, as well as sideways movement seem to be tropes of yours in many of the works, and in *Pan* I like the way the continuous approach and recession has a subtle feeling of an overall recession across the length of the film.

One key difference between our approaches I think is that I take using a camera for granted, and also editing. The context where the film happens is only visible in the work through the film itself, or sometimes in a number of films made in the same place. Shooting space is never the same as showing space (as it is in *Between Here...*). I would like to try something new in that regard. The closest I get is in the fascination I have for filming things so that the things filmed are superimposed on themselves. Having tried once or twice to make films with predetermined shooting procedures, I found I couldn't do it, for various reasons.

CR: Just to answer a couple of your questions about some of my work before we continue: *Lightstep* was made during my MA for a show in The Crypt at St. Pancras Church. For me, making work starts with the place in which it is shown. I always plan my work before shooting, mainly because I like the constraints of working with just one cartridge of Super 8 film. So, the process informed the film, a frame shot every step up and the down the stairs of the church's tower. The film was then looped and projected onto a light cover in the crypt. No copy was made and it's broken now, which I kind of like. It's done.

The linear nature of traditional 'framed images' wasn't upper-most in my mind when making *VOID*, as it's a frameless (pinhole) film. It was about trying to represent or make visible that which couldn't be seen - the space of the stairwell. This work was about testing what an image on film could be. That 'making visible' is represented by the movement of the loop, the film object/reference through the space, the subject/image which is being explored. I'm less interested in the image on film, in terms of a recognizable, representational form. The process and the inference of what it is that is being interrogated is primary, i.e. showing what you can't normally see somehow. *Almost There* was a complete break in the structured, pre-determined filmmaking process that I'd developed, and I was inspired by a Charles Maussion painting of a barely visible landscape called *The Valley of the Lakes no. 1*. I'd also read a quote from Derek Jarman that projecting film at 3 frames a second mimicked the rhythm of the human breath, so *Almost There* was filmed in time with my breathing, manually pulling the camera in and out of focus. The next body of work was about trying to represent the volume of things, e.g. plants on film, hence the photogram work with *Rosemary, Again and Again* and *All Around You*.

NC: I sensed that *Almost There* is different to all your other films, and the space of the film is both the changing space occupied by the lungs taking in breath and exhaling and the ambiguous, never-quite-resolving image which moves in the frame, so it's really very bodily.

CR: I was excited to see amongst the *Messenian Notebook* films an inter-title 'shadow as volume' and your tight framing and repetition gently directing us to what you see. Sometimes one reads the shadows as solid objects in their own right. When you say, you take the camera and editing for granted, I think you allow stuff to happen when you're filming. Film time unfolds in a way that is more akin to observations in real time, I particularly noticed that in *An Afternoon*.

NC: *An Afternoon* is half inside, half outside, with one or two shots looking straight back at the flyscreen, which is opaque when viewed from the outside. I think the flyscreen is referential to the projection screen, and sometimes I think that my liking for materials which have 'pixels' is part of some kind of semi-conscious thought-process about the digital.

'Shadow as volume' from *Messenian Notebook* is certainly focused on representing shadows as solid objects (absences of light) rather than as things that are visible because they fall on surfaces. The thing which sparked it, apart from just being in the village, was Roy Sorenson's book *Seeing Dark Things*, where he argues that an absence of light is just as significant as a presence is, and is in itself an entity, with a shape.

When you said, 'showing what you can't normally see - somehow' I can see the link to 'Rosemary', in terms of the way films don't usually deal explicitly with the volumes of things, and certainly not in that way. I can imagine you wrapping the film around the rosemary bush when I watch it, to the point where the images evoke the action. I think that volume sense is there in almost all your work, whereas I tend to think of how best to show the film, which is a pre-existing object. The idea of doing something in, and for a given or chosen space is wonderful and presents so many possibilities, and looking at your work has made me much more aware of that. Quite important is what one can manage in one's life. A private engagement with space, place and time, which may result in a film, is easier for me than choosing to respond to a space in which the work is to be shown, which I might find quite difficult. Although I do have this ambition to make a piece where images of parts of a space are projected onto bits of that space itself. The late Tony Sinden did a show many years ago at the Acme Gallery in which still photographs and possibly even just sections of wall were illuminated by projectors which had no film in, and that has stayed with me as a very minimal way of creating an 'image' of/from a space without other intervention.

Special thanks to Maria Anastassiou, Tilley Harris and Anglia Ruskin University

Next programme, 3 July, Nicky Hamlyn / Neil Henderson

For more details www.contactscreenings.co.uk