

The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

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Video Viewpoints

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Anna Ridley and Ian Breakwell, "Public Face: Private Eye"

Anna Ridley and Ian Breakwell began their ongoing collaboration with the video adaptation of Breakwell's Continuous Diary. The project was first presented as the introductory segments in a series of artists' video produced by Ridley in 1984 for Great Britain's Channel 4 Television. Breakwell is a multi-media artist whose painting, writing, photography, and video depict his unique, seemingly incredible, but real observances taken from daily life. Independent producer Ridley is recognized for her innovative programming and for helping to bring new independent work to television.

Anna Ridley has worked as a designer and producer on a variety of entertainment, current affairs, drama, arts, and music programs for B.B.C. Television in London and Channel 4. She worked on the 1980 film Chariots of Fire and designed music videos for Dire Straits and Godley and Creme. While collaborating with sculptor David Hall on films, videotapes, and installations, Ridley began formulating her ideas to broadcast artists' works on television. The establishment of Channel 4 provided a venue for Ridley's innovative programming ideas. Today she has designed and produced several series highlighting artists' works for television: "Ian Breakwell's Continuous Diary"; Ian Breakwell's Christmas Diary", and "Dadarama". For the latter series, which was produced in 1985, six multi-media artists including John Latham, Rose Garrard, and Michael Nyman, were invited to make original video productions. As in much of her work Ridley sought, "Artists who provoke... I made these pieces in the assumption that artists can tell as much about themselves through their work as through documentary. I had to see a potential in the artists' work which could be evolved for video".

Ian Breakwell's diary began as daily drawings, soon evolved into written form, and now exists in videotape. Each work remains unique, for Breakwell carefully chooses the best medium to convey his ideas. Some incidents are related only in book form while others are re-enacted for videotape, or recorded as they actually occur. By isolating both public and personal moments, Breakwell reveals the absurdity, sadness, and wonder of urban life, providing social and political commentary and personal insight. The artist has commented about his work, "Many of the little incidents in the diary are described without explanation; there are probably logical explanations for a lot of them, but not at the moment they are witnessed. But some of the incidents drag on so that the background to them gradually emerges; this removes the instant mystery but reveals a hidden story underneath".

Ridley and Breakwell are currently working on a new commission from Channel 4, a six-part, "television collage" by Breakwell, Public Face: Private Eye. Following the program at the Museum, Ridley and Breakwell will present and discuss their work at Image Film/Video in Atlanta, GA; Women in Film in Boston, MS; and Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester, NY.

Sally Berger and Barbara London

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