



Teachers Pack

Rik Pinkcombe

BorderLine

14 April – 20 May 2007

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SWAY PARISH COUNCIL



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Exhibition Information for Teachers

BorderLine is an exhibition of new work by Rik Pinkcombe, a photographer based in London who has been commissioned by ArtSway and Autograph ABP to produce a new series of photographs. For his exhibition at ArtSway Pinkcombe travelled to the US to investigate the border between the US and Mexico as a conceptual and physical geographical line. This new work both develops and compliments his previous work exploring the border between the US and Canada, made whilst in residency at Light Work in Syracuse, New York in 2005.

In ArtSway's gallery one are works taken on, or close to the border of the United States and Canada. One image, *Untitled*, depicts a river separating the two countries - and focusing on the ice that acts like a skin over the river. To the right of this work are two almost identical images - close up views of an ice sheet. These two works, and that of the bridge, act as metaphors for Pinkcombe's investigation of modern society. In fact, Rik Pinkcombe's work engages with the concept that contemporary existence in the developed world is saturated by a de-personalised, profit-driven media, affecting our identity and distorting our view of the world around us. Pinkcombe's manipulation and distortion of the visual field in his photography, causing some of his images to look like architectural models or theatrical stage-sets, signifies a misreading of global, personal and political landscapes. The images are captured in great detail using a large format camera and then given a heightened air of artificiality by being digitally cleaned to suggest a 'man-made' superficial veneer.

In the main gallery, and the smaller gallery, are predominantly works from Pinkcombe's recent research trip to investigate the border between the United States and Mexico. Two works on the right-hand wall as you come into the entrance of the main space are from the border between the US and Canada, whilst all others are from more Southern US states such as Arizona and Texas on the Mexican borders. The main work in this gallery is a triptych taken at night, displaying the breadth of human occupation of the border, and human activity. The triptych is mounted upon low untreated wooden lecterns alluding to religious pulpits, and allowing the viewer to both traverse the breadth of this landscape, and to give an omnipotent, masterful view.

Photographs of an abandoned house and a non-descript apartment block with dead, blacked out windows and an anonymous clapboard house in Arizona suggest a border that is both soulless for the American people who live there and a false dream, perhaps for those desperate immigrants trying to achieve their own slice of the American dream. Pinkcombe's mixed-race background particularly informs his work, leading him to visually question different perceptions of identity, and how an individual perceives and is perceived. Pinkcombe considers what it is to be mixed race - quite literally coming from both side of a metaphysical 'border' - and the consequences of being perceived or judged as not being from one side or the other. It is this perception of who we are, where we are from and the difficulty of being classified as a type that motivated Pinkcombe to produce the body of work *BorderLine*. Pinkcombe's work touches upon other forms of liminal status and classification, however, considering those who straddle the borderlines of poverty, exploitation, class, power and migration.

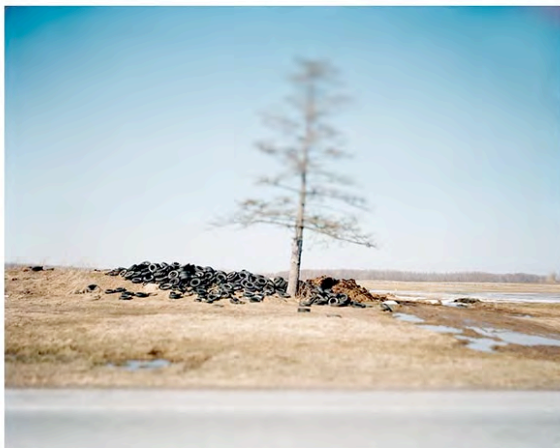
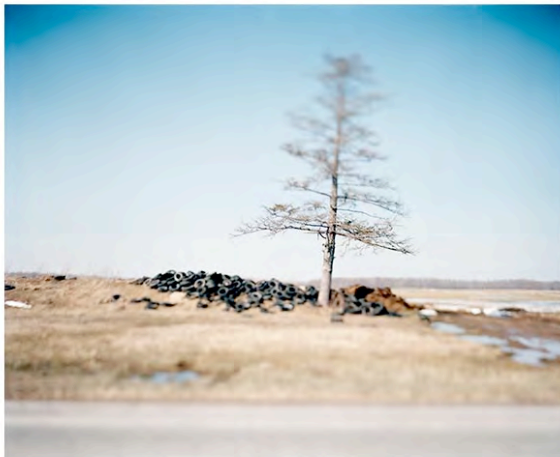
In gallery three there are two lightboxes that hint at a religious perspective of the world. Both lightboxes contain images of the US and Mexico border - the one on the floor, a double-sided work, focuses on the almost supernatural lighting of the border, of city lights that are just out of reach for immigrants, and floodlights that reassure Americans. The lights of the city also have distinct vapour trails overlaid - these are the lights of planes taking on and off, hinting at a metaphysical border as a gateway to and from a place. The lightbox situated high upon the wall alludes to a stained glass window as one would find in a church. Pinkcombe has added the corona of a rising (or setting?) sun - that signifies a promised land just out of reach, and also signifies the lost hope of waiting to be found.

About Rik Pinkcombe

Rik Pinkcombe received a degree in Design Photography at Lancaster University, during which time he garnered two national awards from the Association of Photographers. He was awarded again from the same body during his early career as a commercial photographer. During his first year at university Pinkcombe battled for almost a year against leukaemia, and was strongly influenced by this experience. Pinkcombe has been supported for a number of years by Autograph ABP, and recently completed a Light Work residency in Syracuse, New York in the United States. He also exhibited work made during his residency at the Robert B Menschel Media Centre in Syracuse, the Stephen Lawrence Gallery in Greenwich, London and in a group show at Bargehouse Gallery, Oxo Tower Wharf, London. Rik Pinkcombe lives and works in London.

Images from Rik Pinkcombe: BorderLine

All works shown here are 'Untitled', Lambda prints, sizes vary, 2000 - 2007







Themes for Lessons and Workshops

As described in the **Exhibition Information for Teachers** part of this booklet Rik Pinkcombe's work contains varied themes and ideas – many of which could be adapted for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the National Curriculum for Art.

Themes and Ideas to consider for Lessons:

- **Racial Issues**
- **Research Into a Foreign Culture**
- **Manipulating Reality (Using New Technology)**
- **Consumerism**

Racial Issues

Rik Pinkcombe is from a mixed race background. This leads him to question different perceptions of identity and how an individual perceives and is perceived. The title of his exhibition at ArtSway – BorderLine – quite literally comes from the viewpoint of a person who considers himself to not be from one 'side' or the other. Pinkcombe's photographs from the US and Canada border touch upon how people from different racial backgrounds can be exploited by major corporations to sell products, or to persuade poor people to buy things they do not need.

Pinkcombe's photographs from the US and Mexico border contrast the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Some images are of boarded up houses and churches, and were taken in parts of Texas and Arizona close to the Mexican border. Although Pinkcombe did not shoot many images on the Mexican side of the border, his photographs still speak of the desperation of many poor Mexicans as they try to cross the border for a better life in the United States. However, on the US side it is ironic that many of Pinkcombe's images show the poverty of the people living in what is considered the richest country in the world.

Research Into a Foreign Culture

George Bernard Shaw famously said 'England and America are two countries separated by a common language'. However, the US is not radically different to the UK – but there are material differences – such as the cars people drive, and the style of the houses in which they live. These things – particularly houses – are areas that Pinkcombe focused on when he conducted his research whilst in the US (commissioned by ArtSway and Autograph). For example, an image of a US apartment building is very alien to one in the UK – as are photographs of a boarded up and dilapidated 'shotgun house', and the clapboard identikit house situated in the middle of the Arizona desert. These homes would look distinctly out of place in the UK, and show the sensitivity of Pinkcombe's research and identification of those things that set the US apart from the UK. His photographs show an understanding of US culture, and in particular symbols that feature heavily in that nation's consciousness (such as billboards, cheap housing, religion, etc).

Manipulating Reality (Using New Technology)

Pinkcombe's manipulation and distortion of the visual field in his photographs – causing some of his images to look like architectural models or theatrical stage-sets –

signifies a misreading of global, personal and political landscapes in the minds of many people across the globe.

In fact, Pinkcombe's images are captured in great detail using a large format camera; then they are given a heightened air of artificiality by being digitally 'cleaned' to suggest a 'man-made' superficial veneer. The artist does this by utilizing the software package Adobe Photoshop to manipulate his photographs – for example by blacking out windows in an apartment building to make that building look like it is simply a façade, or a prop in a stage play. He also blurs areas of his photographs to make the viewer look at one particular area of his photographs – usually the area that is pin-sharp – and therefore making them contemplate that area in particular. Usually these pin-sharp areas have small symbols or texts that refer to Pinkcombe's ideas concerning mass consumerism, racial identity, etc.

Consumerism

In many of his photographs, Pinkcombe is attempting to engage with the concept that contemporary existence in the developed world is saturated by a de-personalised, profit-driven consumer industry. This industry in essence affects personal identity – especially that of the poor, and of exploited people – and in the long-term is an industry that distorts the view of the world around us.

Many of Pinkcombe's works include billboards – a very common site in the UK, and particularly in the US – and it is these signs that often try to persuade us to buy an item we do not need, or to wear something that will make us look more attractive and feel better. A sign in one of Pinkcombe's photographs features the smiling face of a man telling us that 'It's all about the money' – an advertisement for a bank. Often these are things that will have no discernible affect on our lives, but are none the less considered by advertising agencies as being essential to our very existence. By focusing on the moral ambiguity of consumerism in the US Pinkcombe is railing against the 'profit-driven consumer industry'.

Guided Tours and Workshops at ArtSway

ArtSway is always keen to welcome school groups visiting the gallery. Please see the **Information for Schools Visiting ArtSway** section of this booklet for more information. **Please note:** we would only be able to accommodate between 20 and 25 children in the galleries per visit.

Guided Tours

One of the best ways to experience an artist's work, as opposed to looking at images in books and on the Internet, is to actually visit a gallery to see their work in the flesh. ArtSway has hosted many school group visits in the past, offering **Guided Tours** around the gallery by the Exhibition and Education Officer and Audience Development Officer.

The tours sometimes involve power point presentations, but usually consist of ArtSway's Officers taking the students from work to work, explaining the origins and content of the works on display. A tour will usually end with a question and answer session.

On some occasions it may be possible to have the artists present for a school visit. Please contact the gallery for more information.

Workshops

ArtSway employs a wide range of artists to lead workshops. However, they are all professional artists who will charge a fee to lead a workshop. If a school is interested in scheduling an artist to lead a workshop, please contact the gallery. Contact details are in the **Information for Schools Visiting ArtSway** section of this booklet. In some instances we will provide an artist free of charge.

There are a series of one-hour workshops available; taking place after the tour of the exhibition that will be lead by ArtSway's Exhibitions and Education Officer. These workshops, that will involve simple drawing and paintings techniques, will be based on the themes outlined in the **Themes for Lessons and Workshops** section of this booklet.

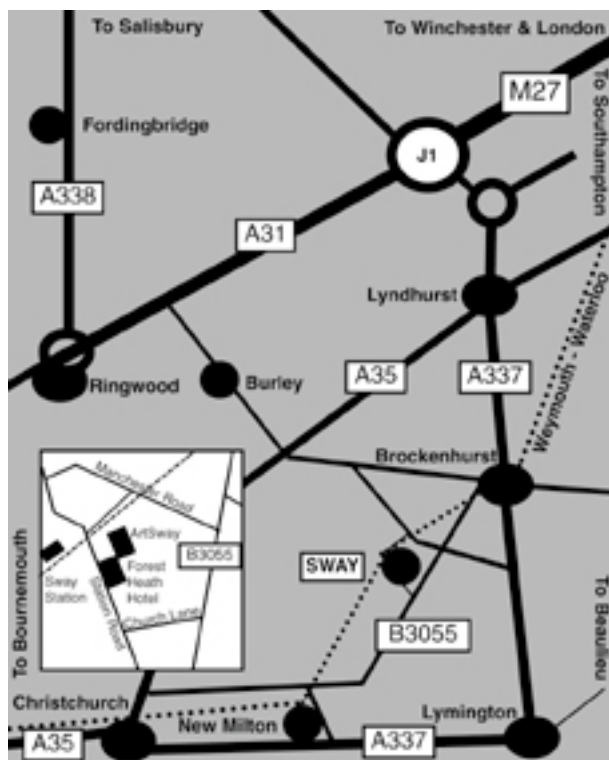
A Timetable of a Typical School Visit to ArtSway

- 10.00am – 10.10am: **Introduction and welcome to ArtSway.**
- 10.10am – 10.30am: **Tour of the exhibition.**
- 10.30am – 11.30am: **Workshop activities.**
- 11.30am – 11.45am: **Discussion and round up of activities.**
- 12.00pm: **End of workshops and school visit.**

Information for Schools Visiting ArtSway

The following is information for school groups visiting ArtSway for **Guided Tours and Workshops**.

Getting to ArtSway:



By Rail: Sway Station is on the London Waterloo to Weymouth Line.

By Car: Follow signs to Sway from Brockenhurst, Burley or Lymington, then follow signs for Village Centre & Train Station. ArtSway is just behind the Forest Heath Hotel on Station Road.

Access: All parts of the gallery are accessible via level access.

Parking: ArtSway has its own car park that is reached along the access drive between the surgery and chemist on Station Road in the centre of Sway.

In the Galleries

Works of art, especially those by Rik Pinkcombe, are very fragile and cannot be touched. We ask that children visiting the gallery take care both of their own safety and of the artworks on display. Teachers and their assistants are responsible for their groups. At the beginning of the tour the relevant ArtSway Officer will give a brief explanation to the visiting children of what they can and cannot do in the gallery.

Contact Details for ArtSway

If you would like to discuss a visit to ArtSway, or what we could offer in terms of educational resources, please contact:

Exhibitions and Education Officer Peter Bonnell on Telephone: 01590 682260 (extension 14), or Email: peter@artsway.org.uk

Address: ArtSway, Station Road, Sway, Hampshire, SO41 6BA

Telephone: 01590 682260 **Fax:** 01590 681989

Email: mail@artsway.org.uk **Web:** www.artsway.org.uk

Opening Times: Tuesday to Sunday, 11am – 5pm. **Admission is FREE.**