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Cockroach Diary & other stories
Anna Fox

2 July to 7th September 2008

This exhibition brings together works spanning more than twenty-five years and is the first retrospective exhibition by Anna Fox, one of the most significant photographers to emerge from the new wave of British colour documentary of the 1980s.

Anna Fox's photographs document the everyday. She is fascinated by the rituals that take place both in the home and in the villages of middle England. Her photographs are often autobiographical, giving us a glimpse into her world, as well as telling stories about life behind the scenes in the rural South.

The Village, made in collaboration with curator Val Williams, is a body of work looking at domestic life in a rural West Sussex village. This is an installation

project re-created for the first time since 1993 with original equipment and transparencies. Surrounding the installation box there are a series of with Black and white photographs of the village gardens photographed secretly, through hedges, as if they are settings for the next village drama. Inside the projection box stunning colour projections display family weddings, fetes and women's domestic lives with a soundtrack telling secrets revealed in village interviews. Anna explains *"I wanted to spend time investigating the realities (which I felt were hidden) lying behind the façade of the typical English picture postcard village"*

The collaboration between Anna Fox and singer/songwriter Alison Goldfrapp, ***Country Girls*** (1996-2001) explores the lives of women growing up in rural southern England, and the story of *Sweet Fanny Adams*, which fascinated them as young girls. The photographs, often disturbingly violent, act as metaphors for the feeling of suffocation felt by young women growing up in the countryside in the 1970's. Anna explains *"We went out into the landscape, often at night or early morning, and made photographs that summed up our memories."*

Pictures of Linda (1983- 2008) is the result of an ongoing documentation of musician Linda Lunas. Anna first photographed Linda at a party, and inspired by the punk movement, which Linda and her band

Fashionable Living Death were involved in, went onto continue photographing Linda's ever changing costumes and hairstyles.

As their friendship grew, Linda became more obsessed with documenting herself dressed in different ways, and recording all the changes she made to herself. Anna went on to create the film ***Pictures of Linda*** that documents Linda speaking about her life and experiences and her response to being photographed for such a long period of time.

Back to the Village is an ongoing series of work observing and rituals that take place in the picturesque villages of Hampshire. On her return to Selborne (after moving out of London in 1999), Anna became aware of how significant the various events that take place are (in the countryside) and started to document fetes, village plays and events. Citing photographer Sir Benjamin Stone as an influence, Anna went on to create her own collection of photographs, documenting the customs that take place in local villages.

41 Hewitt Road, (1996–1999) designed as a series of book dummy pages by *Dean Parvitt* at *Loup Design*, is a series of colour photographs accompanied by a set of emails describing 41 Hewitt Road (the London home where Cockroach diary was made).

“The house was a chaotic place to live, so photographing the rooms enabled me to distance myself from the place”

The photographs appear as if made by an archaeologist discovering a site of interest, recently deserted, but the emails tell a different story.

Notes From Home (2000 -2003) is a series of intimate work produced in artists book form designed and made by book maker Riikka Kassinen. The work started when Anna found herself immersed back into village life after leaving London in 1999. Once again she turned the camera on herself and her immediate family and started to closely document the domestic activities that were happening in her new home. Each series of photographs form short stories about very simple activities such as baking cakes and biscuits.

Making Cakes is a collaboration between Anna and her son Louis and shows a variety of decorative themed cakes. **The Rise and Fall of Father Christmas** records the life size model of Father Christmas her son Felix made for the village art competition.

Pete's Food & Flowers document the extraordinary range of meals made by Pete, who lodged in the house, and records the wild flowers he picked everyday. **Supersnacks** are a series of self -portraits. **Gifts from the Cats** shows a record of all the dead animals the cats brought into the house as presents.

My Mothers Cupboards and My Fathers Words

(1999), designed originally as a miniature bookwork using images and texts, tells an unusual story about family relationships. While her father was ill for many years Anna kept a notebook recording his outbursts that were mainly directed to the female members of his family. These quotes coupled with a series of claustrophobic images of her mothers' neatly kept cupboards reveal a couple struggling to keep an even keel in the wake of a rapidly debilitating disease.

The darkly humorous ***Cockroach Diary*** (1996-1999) documents an infestation of cockroaches at Anna's North London home where she lived with her children, partner and a number of lodgers. First published in 1999 by Shoreditch Biennale, it tells a wicked tale of how an invasion of cockroaches affected the people who lived there. The work combines a series colour photographs of the cockroaches together with a handwritten diary that she kept until the cockroaches eventually left.

To find out more browse the reading table in our Lounge, or watch the specially made film featuring an interview with Anna Fox.

