

The Batsford Gallery, London

3 - 28 April 2024

Vaughan Grylls'
JUST AMERICA



Foreword by Hattie Grylls

Essay by John Carlin

Catalogue annotations by the Artist

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Foreword

My father, Vaughan Grylls, tackles geopolitics, history and morality in his work. His is a remarkable ability to get under the skin of a country or culture, whether that be Australia grappling with its colonial history, or conflicts in the Middle East. On a personal note, I can draw parallels between the 'pictorial journalism' of his work and the unusual, and sometimes challenging family holidays we encountered when growing up. Highlights included a trip to Libya during the Arab Spring uprising of 2011!

In this body of work, the United States of America's last 50 years has been under the Vaughan Grylls lens. His work examines American topics such as advertising, celebrity, displacement, Big Pharma and political tribalism.

It is apposite to hold this exhibition at a time when all eyes are on America as it heads towards an election in November 2024. The divide between the political extremes, as seen in American Mail, has only widened since he made that astonishing work back in 2017.

Vaughan Grylls may not be American, but his informed yet complicated connections with the country and the contrast between his outward-looking life perspective and America's seemingly cultural introspection, make his insights on the country very special.

Part of his deep knowledge of America comes from having lived there in the 1980s, teaching at a prestigious Ivy League college as well as being a visiting professor at several other American universities. When not living there, he has been a frequent visitor for over fifty years.

Despite its drawbacks, my father has always regarded America as the most dynamic, impressive and future-oriented country in the world. And often the most annoying. Yet I'm sure I'm not the first person to see in my father's personality and attitude to life, aspects far more American than British.

Sadly, the magnetic pull of the country was so great, it seriously impacted his personal life at the time he was living there. He moved back to the UK reluctantly in the early 1990s, for which I am rather grateful as otherwise I would never have been born!

Today, I run the Batsford Gallery, a boutique venue situated at the Batsford Bookshop, which specialises in Art, Design and Architecture. Since opening at the end of 2022, we have been fortunate to curate over 15 exhibitions, from textile art to sculpture and watercolour to photography.

At the end of this catalogue is an essay written for *Just America* by the American art critic John Carlin. It is followed by his essay written for the first Vaughan Grylls exhibition held in America, back in 1985.

Both essays are illuminating and I recommend them to you.

I do hope you enjoy Vaughan Grylls' *Just America* and allow for moments of reflection on that country and the important challenges it faces today.

Hattie Grylls
Exhibition Curator
The Batsford Gallery, London



photo: Ferdie Carabott

Vaughan Grylls' JUST AMERICA

Vaughan Grylls at the *Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site*
Hudson River Valley, New York

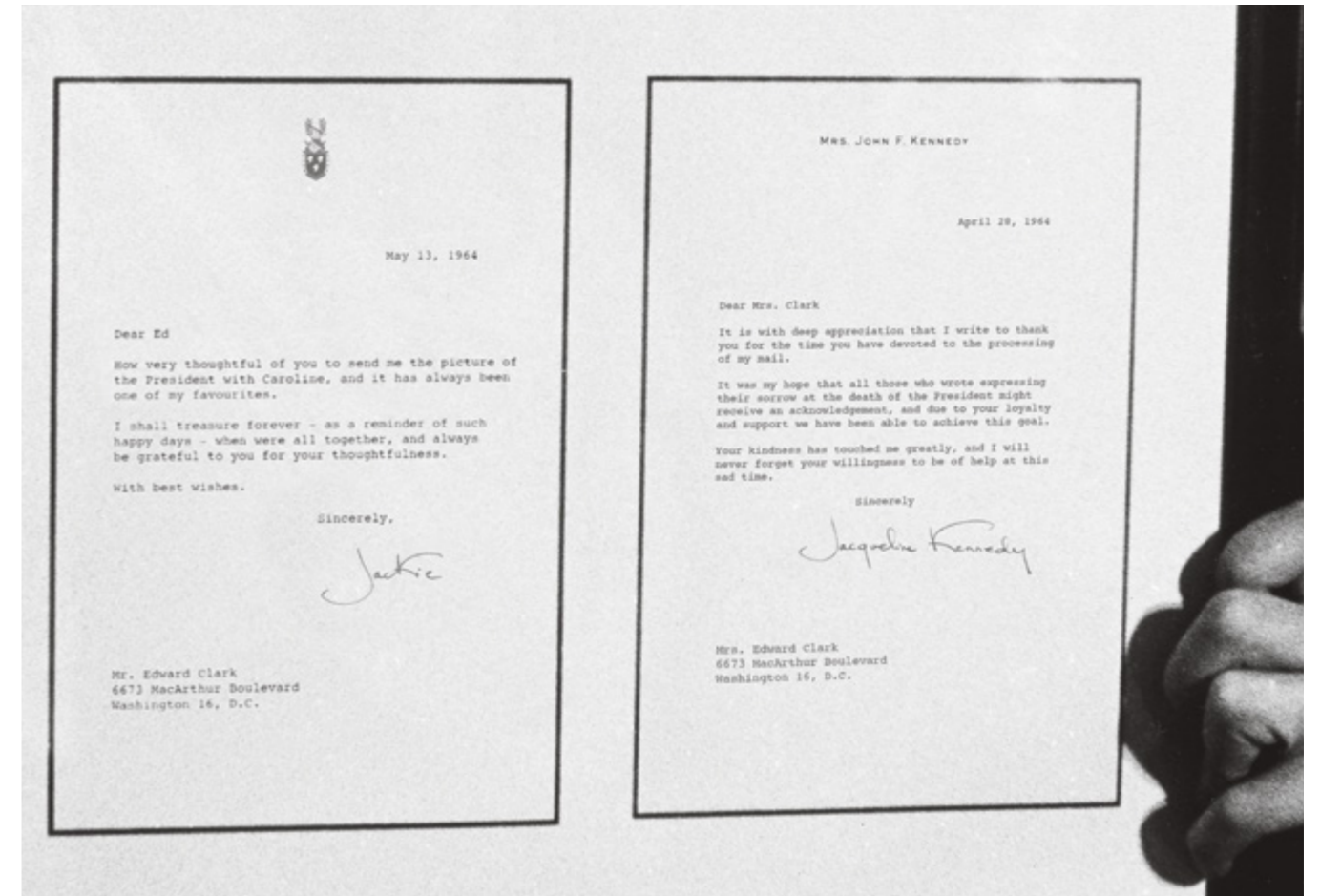


Self-Portrait: Washington, DC 1973

Photocollage under glass 4'6" x 6'5" / 137 x 196 cm
(Collection: Arts Council of Wales)

I chose the subtitle 'Washington, DC' because that is where the photograph was taken. In August 1973, I had the good fortune to stay in Washington with Ed Clark, President Kennedy's official photographer. He had kindly arranged a press pass for me to photograph the Watergate hearings. However, the day I arrived, the hearings unexpectedly went into summer recess, and so I contented myself with the self-portrait.

The work I am holding features a portrait by Ed Clark of the President holding Ed Clark's portrait of the President's baby, Caroline. The correspondence, edged in black, is from Jackie Kennedy to the Clarks following the assassination in Dallas of her husband.





Drawing a Lesson from History 1974

Photo-enlargements of photocopies mounted on hardboard
Suite of twelve paired panels, each 4' x 4' / 122 x 122 cm

Drawing a Lesson from History

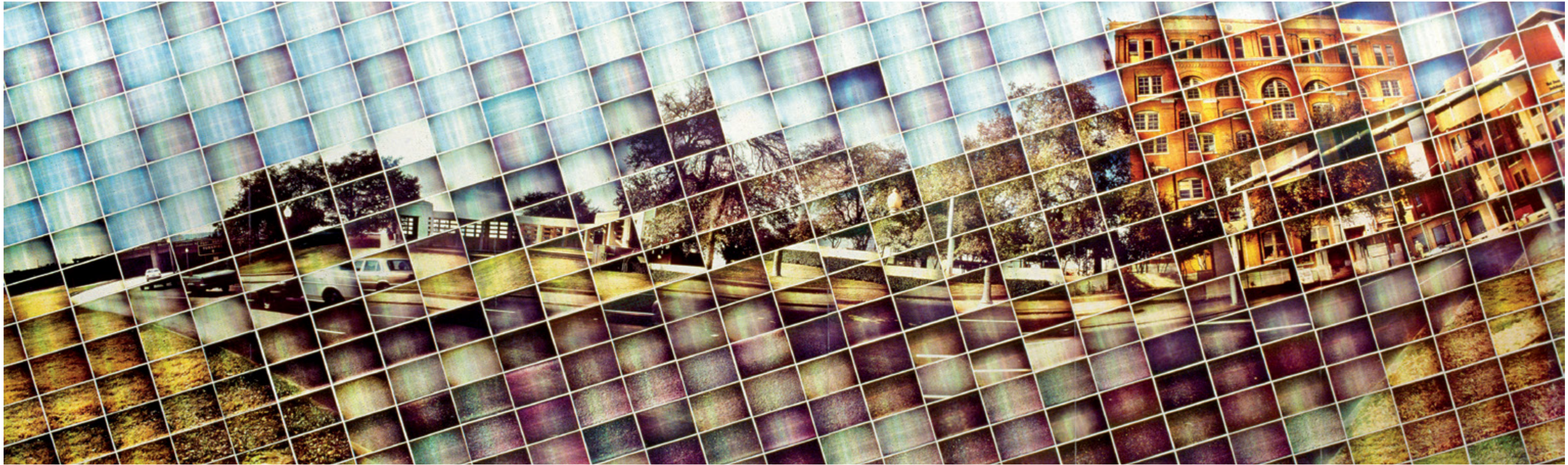
I dressed myself in an hotel bed sheet doubling as a Roman toga, posing in front of, on one panel, Roman style government buildings in Washington DC, and on its pair, real Roman buildings, photographed a couple of months later, crumbling in the deserts of North Africa.

I adopted mirror-image poses in each case, outside the White House, the Washington Monument, the National Archives Building (where I was asked not to photograph without written permission from the Senate for the use of a tripod), the Supreme Court (where I was threatened with arrest), the Jefferson Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial and the United States Capitol.

There were no interruptions in North Africa, except from a man with a camel who insisted on being included in the photograph outside the amphitheatre in the desert at El Djem. I was happy to oblige, and he was juxtaposed with people watching me outside the US Capitol.

The photographs were taken in 1973, at the same time as the Watergate hearings and the continuing war in Vietnam.





Site of the Assassination of President Kennedy 1980 Photocopy collage on wood 7'6" x 25' / 229 x 762 cm

Site of the Assassination of President Kennedy

It has been said that everybody who was old enough at the time can remember what they were doing when hearing of Kennedy's assassination in Dallas. In my case, this is true. However, it was the nature of the remembering that interested me: a jumble of newsflashes, sonorous pronouncements, larger-than-life events. This piece was my attempt to recreate some of that.

This is the site where Kennedy was assassinated as he was being driven through the city in a presidential motorcade in November 1963. He was sitting in the rear of an open-topped car with his wife Jackie and the governor of Texas.

The car was travelling right-to-left in the picture. Three shots are believed to have been fired from the extreme right-hand window immediately below the top floor of the prominent building on the right. The bullets hit Kennedy when the car was in the left-centre-foreground, and the only reference to this may be seen in the small white squares set in the roadway.

The investigating Warren Commission later confirmed that Oswald was the sole assassin, although considerable doubt has been expressed since. It is believed that a shot came from the left of the grassy knoll near the concrete architectural screen, and that the assassin escaped in the resulting confusion.

I have attempted to represent these angles of fire in the structure of this work.





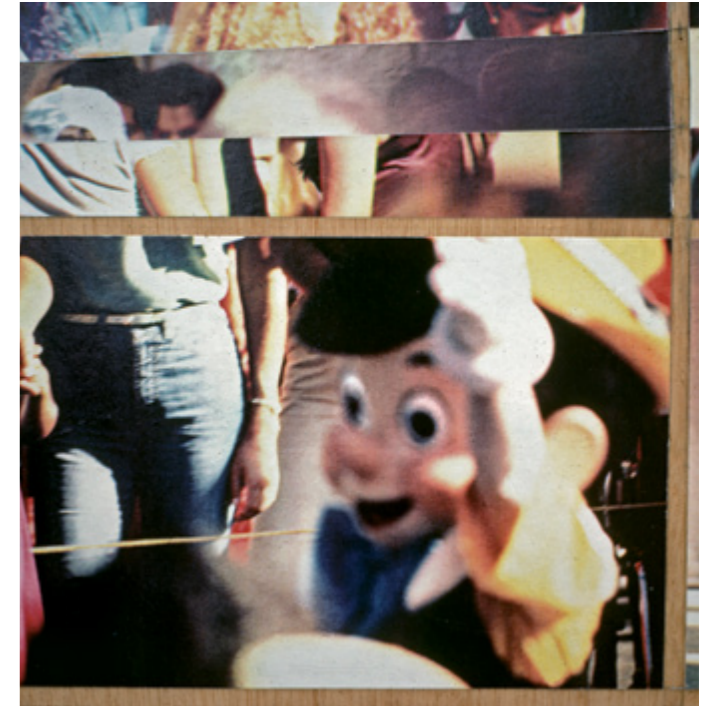
Nuclear War in the USA 1981

Photocopy collage on wood 7'6" x 24' / 61 x 229 cm

Nuclear War in the USA

I took the photographs for this work in Disneyland, California, in August 1981. Subconscious collective escapism is one of the issues at play here I found Disneyland at once cheerful and sinister. Some years ago, an American friend told me that many of his countrymen think of abroad as a sort of Disneyland. Yet this place could not be more American.

There is also a jokey obsession with death in Disneyland - almost an attempt to exorcise it. So I have tried to show people being swept into their own creation.





Invitation to the Ball 1985

Photocollage, drawing pins on honeycomb board 8' x 12' / 244 x 366 cm



Invitation to the Ball

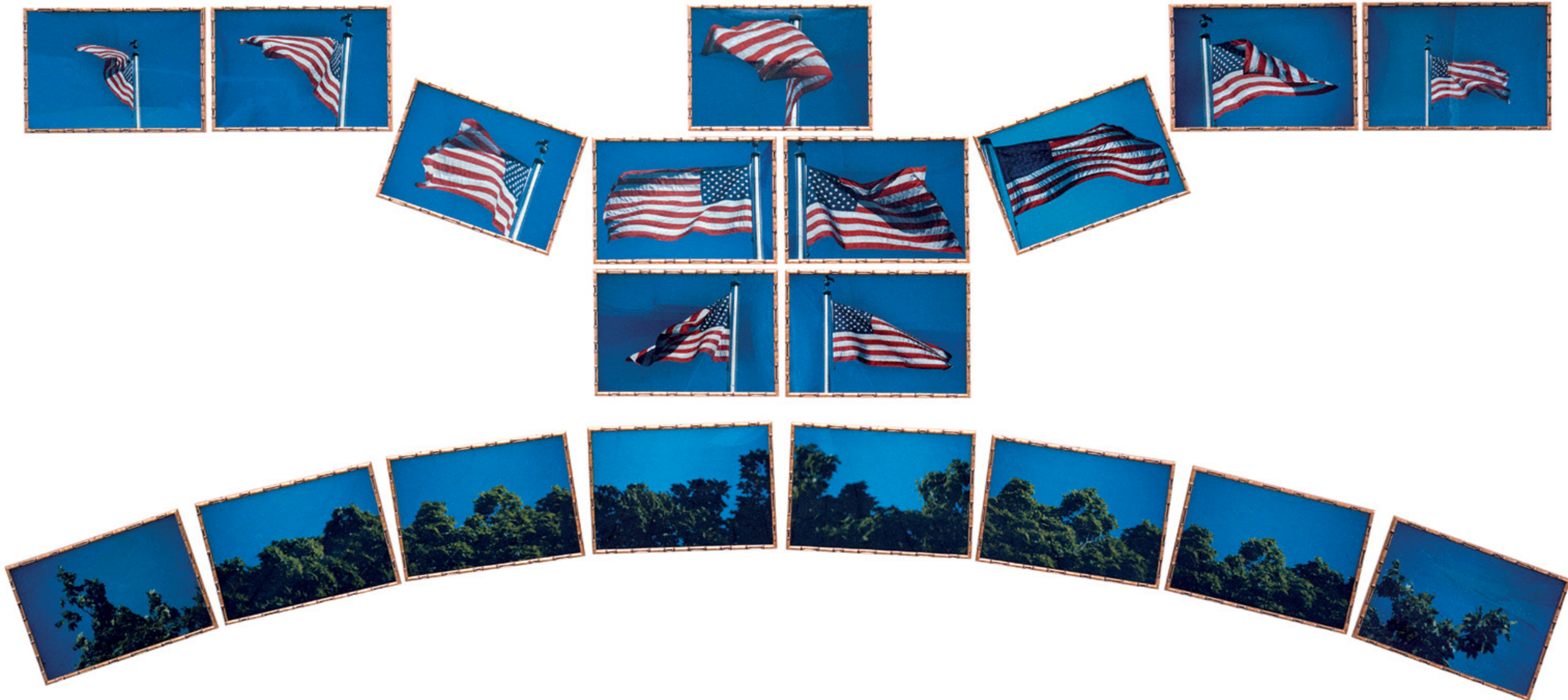
In January 1985, not long after arriving in the United States, I managed to obtain tickets for my students at Williams College, Massachusetts, to Ronald Reagan's second Inauguration, including coveted invitations to the 'Inaugural Ball for Young Americans'.

This work shows massed young Americans celebrating four more years of American exceptionalism. On the dais, George Bush, the Vice President of the United States, and his wife, Barbara, the Second Lady, salute the future.

This was the first work I made while living in America. The images were stills taken with an early, bulky video camera.



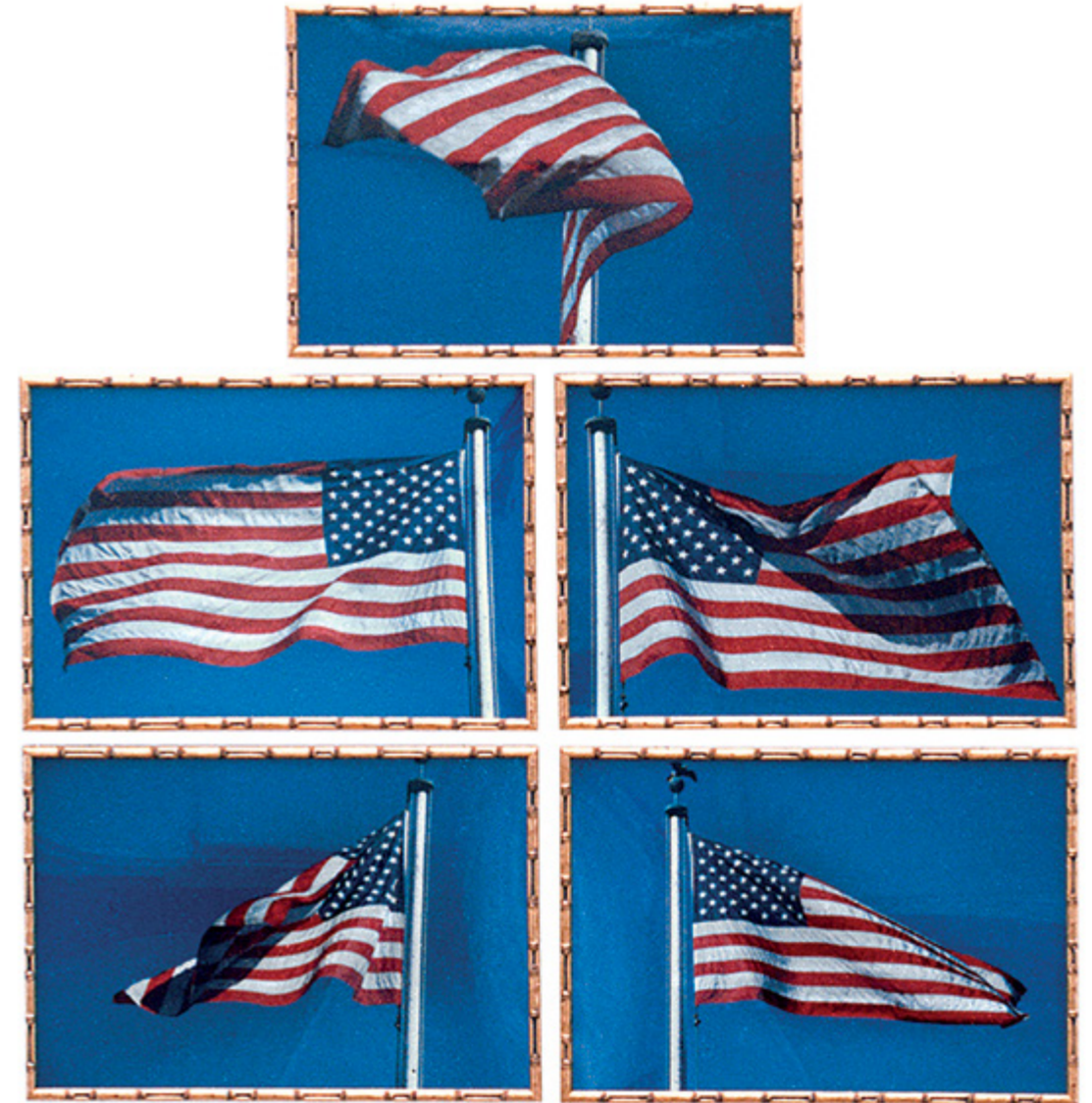


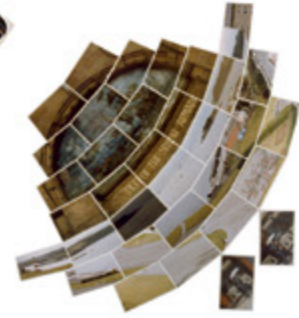
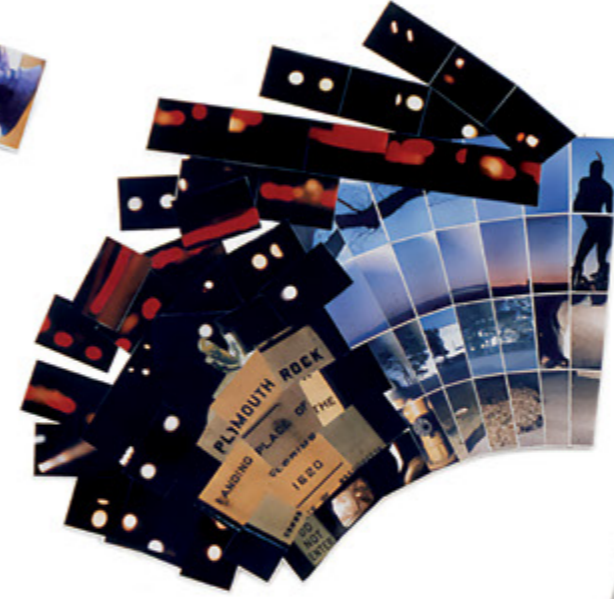


Spread Eagle

This piece was about Ronald Reagan's overlordship of Central America, made infamous by the Iran/Contra affair. It was a world away from the pretty New England town where I was then living. But one, fine Sunday, when I was walking down Main Street, I noticed the shapes made by 'Old Glory' flying outside a church. Sometimes the breeze made an eagle's head out of the flag.

On the opposite side of the street were several maple trees. The result was that my big bird overflowed the maples of Massachusetts instead of the jungles of Central America.





Manifest Destiny

This work came about as the result of a TV documentary on my work entitled 'The Mayflower Project'. The work is autobiographical in that it recorded my westward move to the 'New World' in 1984. I photographed two sections in Plymouth, Devon, and two in Plymouth, Massachusetts. The top section was photographed with a video camera instead of my usual stills. This seemed appropriate, as I was myself being filmed by a TV crew for a documentary on the making of this work.

'Manifest Destiny' is intended to look like a may flower as well as a spaceship taking off for a new world. The work's title is the same as that given to the political doctrine excusing the destruction of the Native Americans, formulated in the 19th century as a justification for genocide. Sections 1 and 2 were photographed in Plymouth, England, sections 3 and 4 in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Section 1 is shaped like a space capsule and features Plymouth Hoe, the Royal Marines exercising in arched body shapes, a reference to the Armada and to the arch in St. Louis, Missouri, which records the westward expansion of Europeans across the North American continent.

Section 2 is shaped like a dartboard or compass and is photographed inside and outside a pub, which overlooks the quay from which the *Mayflower* departed in 1620. The U.S. flag can be seen through the windows of the bar.

Section 3 is shaped like an Native American headdress and was photographed at dawn on Thanksgiving Day behind the statue of 'Chief Massasoit' which overlooks Plymouth Rock. The white and red shapes are from car headlights passing the statue on Thanksgiving Eve 1985.

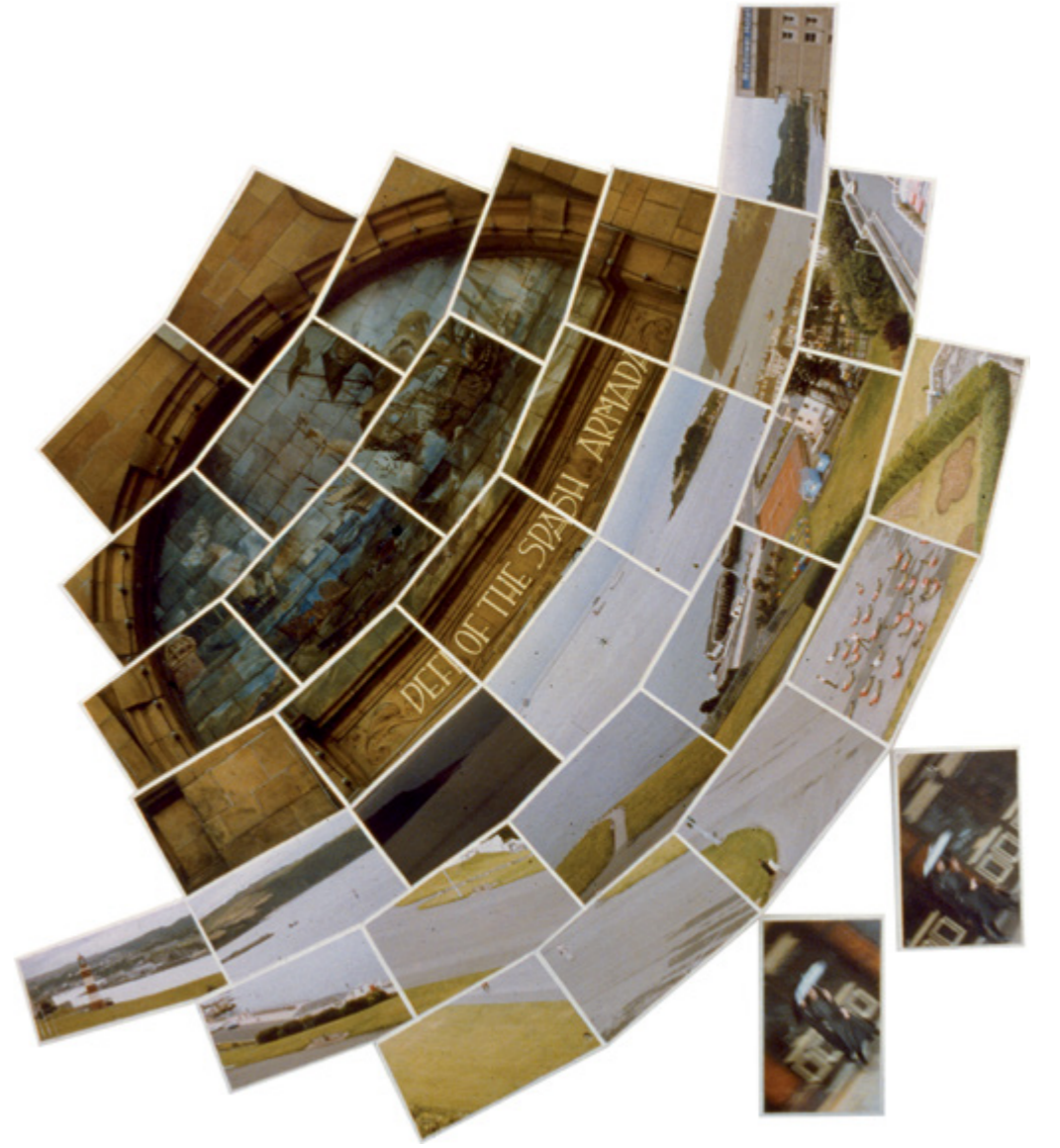
Section 4 is shaped like an explosion and records the demonstration by the New England Native Americans which takes place every Thanksgiving Day under the statue of Massasoit. The Native Americans refer to Thanksgiving Day as the 'National Day of Mourning'.

'The Mayflower Project' was shown on Channel 4 in the UK in 1986 and on PBS in the US on several Thanksgiving Days afterwards.

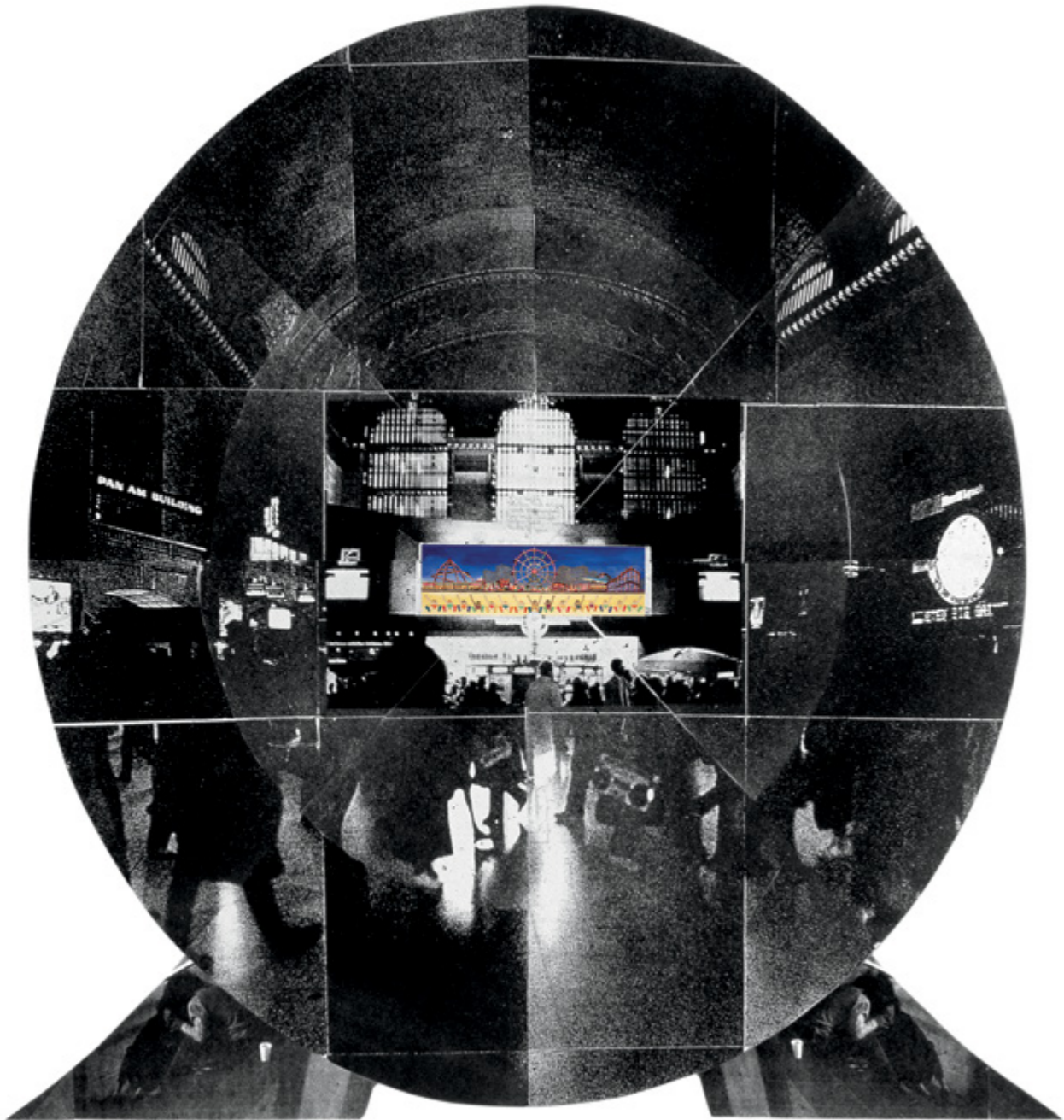
(Commissioned: Television South West)



Grylls' Massachusetts studio, 1986







Grand Central Proposal

New York's Whitney Museum of American Art invited me to select a public venue where my finished work would be shown. The working studies would then be exhibited at the Whitney. I proposed New York's Grand Central Station and Kodak who had a 90-foot-wide backlit advertising screen, permanently displayed high above the station concourse. I suggested a Kodak photograph of the Polar Bear Club of Coney Island whose members swim in the Atlantic every day.

In my drawing I showed slim, young identikit people. But at a meeting with Kodak executives, I admitted that Polar Bear club members were all ages, colours and sizes. And below would be images of some of the homeless people bedding down in Grand Central. Kodak said no way. Only slim, young, white people for their prestigious screen please. And no bums. I didn't concede.

I shouldn't have been surprised. Back in 1973, during my first visit to New York, I had toured the Kodak Gallery where I had been impressed by the sheer professionalism of the exhibition installation, coupled with its total lack of food for thought.



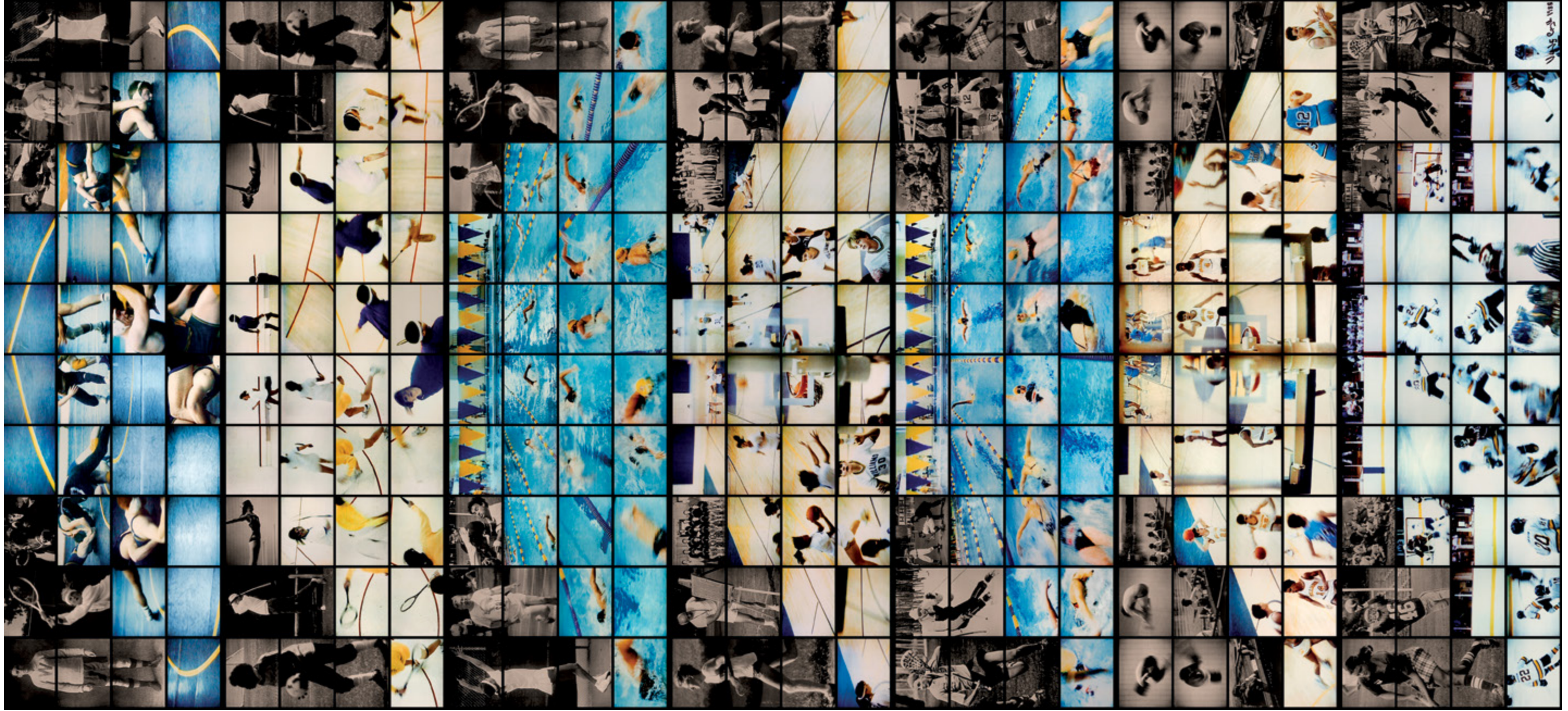


Two U.S. Tour Groups In Xian Museum Viewing One Another 1987 Photocollage in paper 6 x 24 in / 15 x 61 cm



Two U.S. Tour Groups In Xian Museum Viewing One Another

In 1987, I travelled around China and Tibet. This work was photographed in the Xian Museum and showed two US tour groups, one Black, one white. Together in this place, they seemed more unusual than many of the exhibits.



Team Spirit

This work was commissioned by an alumnus of Williams College, a famous and distinguished American liberal arts university where, in the 1980s, I set up their photography and video department and taught for four years.

Team Spirit is installed in the entrance hall of the Chandler Athletic Center and shows contemporary and historic sports at Williams.

I would rather it had been called *Sporting Williams* as I was fired just after completing it.





Sioux Nation

I took the photographs for this work in South Dakota in 1988 but did not get round to resolving it until 1994 because I found it too disturbing.

I include a B52, at Elsworth Airforce Base, South Dakota and Darcy Jealous and his younger brother, who live on the nearby *Pine Ridge Indian Reservation* at Wounded Knee. Their father, who shot himself, is buried in the cemetery.

I could not find where. The highway from Wounded Knee leads west past the Sioux Nation Laundromat and not far from the reservation, Mount Rushmore with its four American presidents may be seen. A little further north, a federal sign informed me I had reached the 'Center of Nation' - i.e. the US centre of nation.

Wounded Knee is where the final massacre of Native Americans by the US Army took place on December 29th, 1890





Street in Phoenix, Arizona

On arrival in Phoenix, I was surprised to discover, in my rental car's courtesy city-map, a sizeable area of the city entitled the 'Salt River Indian Reservation'. There had been no reference to this in the guidebooks I had been reading on the airplane.

So I set off down Indian School Road which, arrow straight, traverses the centre of the city and the reservation. On the same street I selected two crossroads and took a photograph at each - the high-end boutiques of Scottsdale and the crucifixes and shacks of the reservation.



Street in Phoenix, Arizona 2004

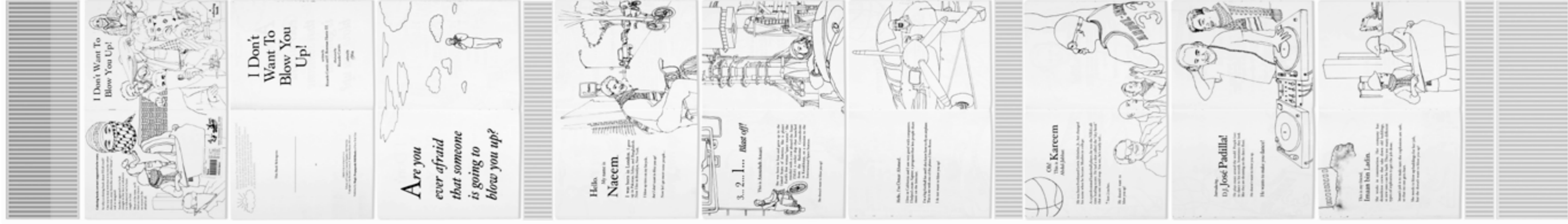
Digitised photographs 5½" x 16" / 14 x 41 cm



Walk of Fame 2010 Digital Photograph 2' x 2' / 61 x 61 cm



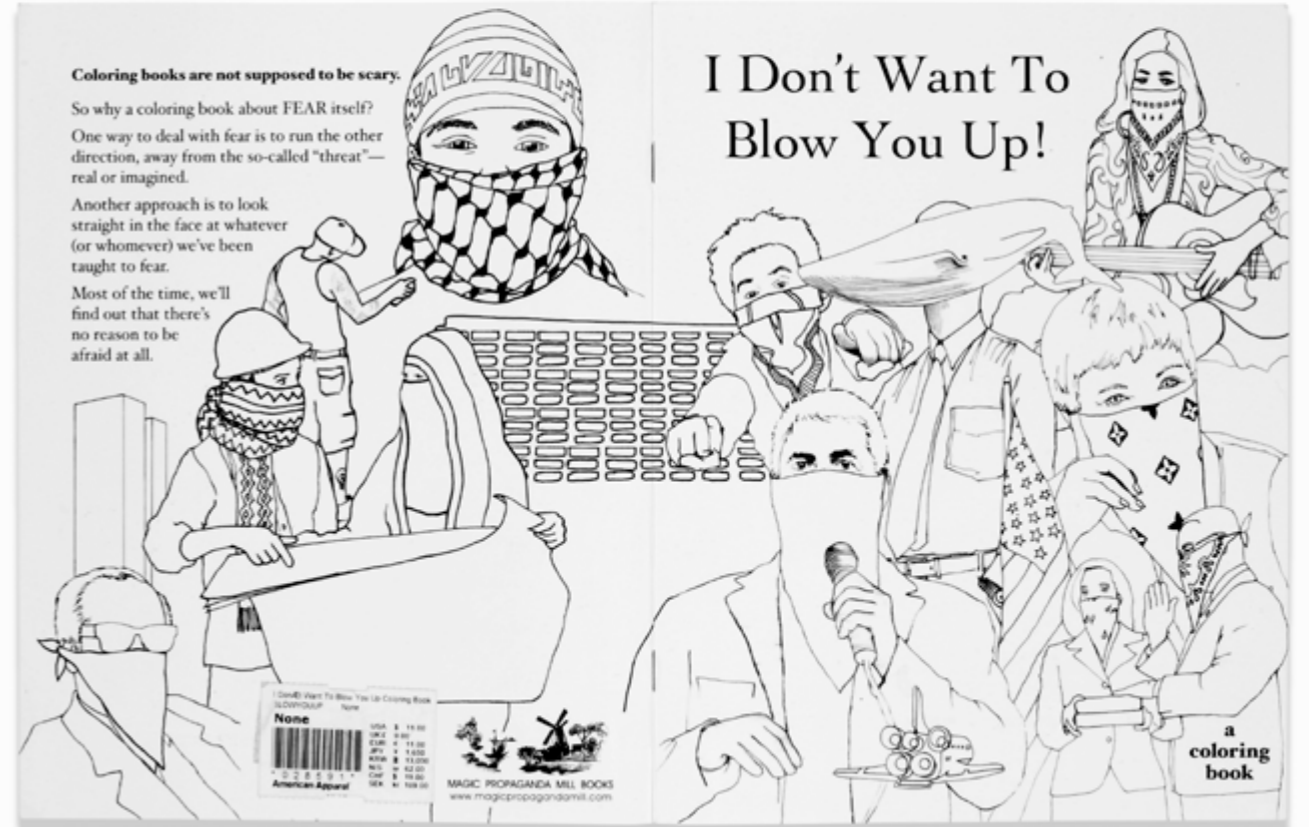
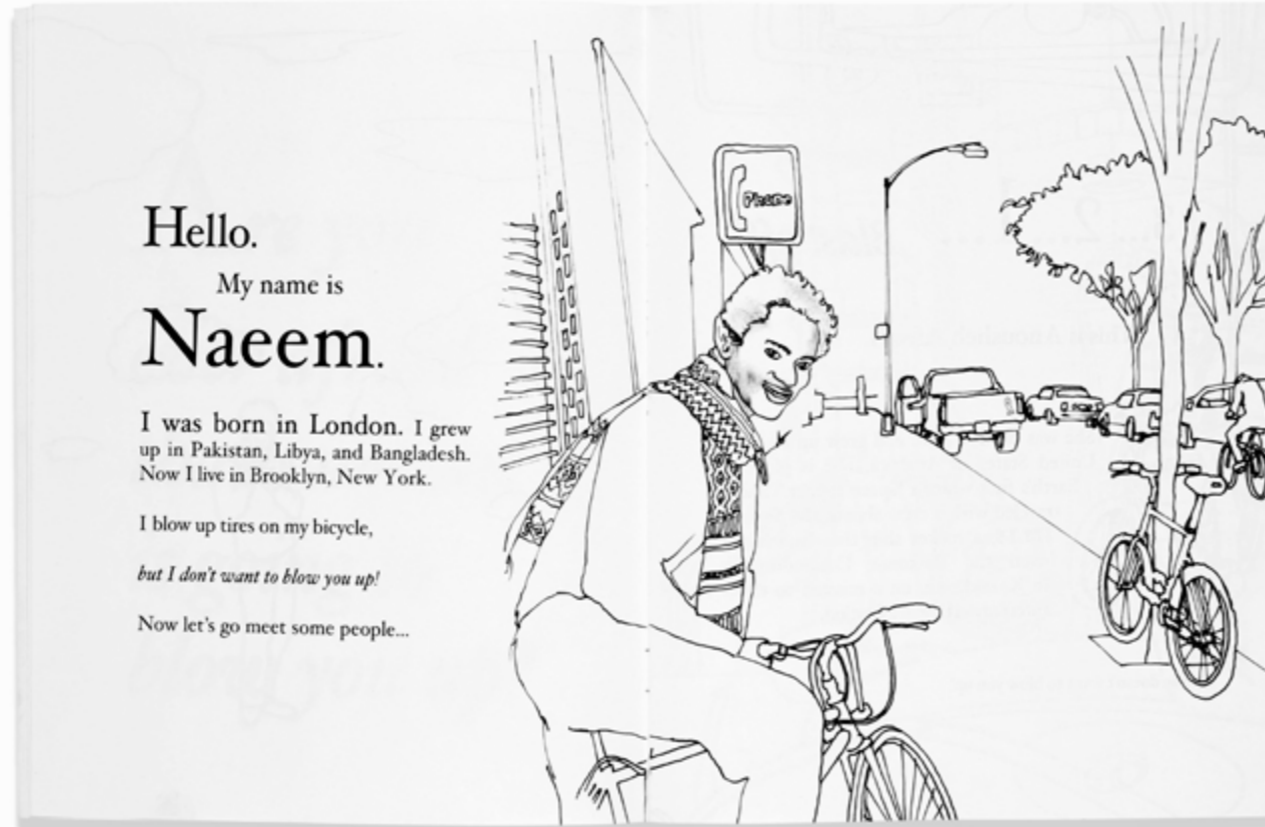
I was in Los Angeles when Michael Jackson had just died. So, at dawn, I captured his instant memorial and afterwards selected four more stars of stars as the day's first tourists trod Hollywood's Walk of Fame.



Twin Towers

I photographed the cover and every page from a New York children's colouring book.

Had I come across the book in London I may have thought it a droll spoof. But in the world's most glitzily sophisticated city, it certainly was not.



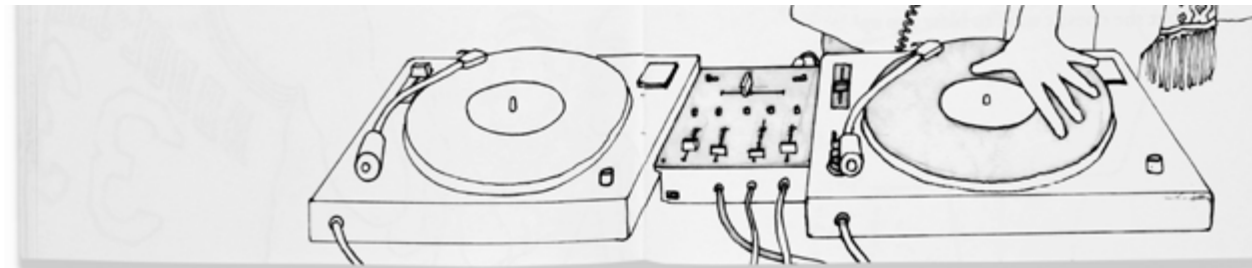



Introducing...
D.J. José Padilla!

He plays music around the world. People love to dance to his records. Sometimes they look like they are dreaming on the dance floor.

He doesn't want to blow you up.

He wants to make you dance!




This is my friend,
Imaan bin Ladin.

She works in construction. Her company has demolition crews that take down old buildings, so new ones can be built. They use many different types of explosives to get the job done.

Imaan's job is to make sure the explosions are safe, so that no one gets hurt.

She needs to blow up buildings for her job, but she doesn't want to blow you up!





Slave Graves 2010 Photo-montage print 1'10" x 5'3" / 55 x 160 cm

Slave Graves

I had the good fortune in the autumn/fall of 2010 to be invited to visit American friends in their early 19th century farmhouse in Virginia.

After the flight over the Atlantic, I wanted to stretch my legs, so they took me on a tour of their house's grounds. We arrived at a tree with a scattering of small, rough stones underneath. I would not have noticed them at all had they not pointed them out.

Each was the gravestone of a slave and although they appeared insignificant enough to have been inadvertently kicked aside, these unnamed markers of people's lives had remained undisturbed since they were first laid.

The light was fading and the only camera I had was the rough-and-ready one on my cellphone. But that was right for the subject.



What Men Wanted 2013 Digital print 2' 6" x 7'4" x / 76 x 224 cm



What Men Wanted

Hollywood Forever, in Los Angeles, is the first cemetery for the stars. Its most famous resident is Rudolph Valentino, whose best remembered film, *The Sheik* lent its name to any attractive man a woman would openly pursue.

Sadly, Valentino died of peritonitis in 1926 at the age of 31. Over 100,000 female fans lined the New York streets for his funeral.

In *Hollywood Forever*, I came across a wall of glass boxes displaying urns containing the ashes of those who wished to spend eternity as near as possible to Valentino.

Most were the ashes of men.





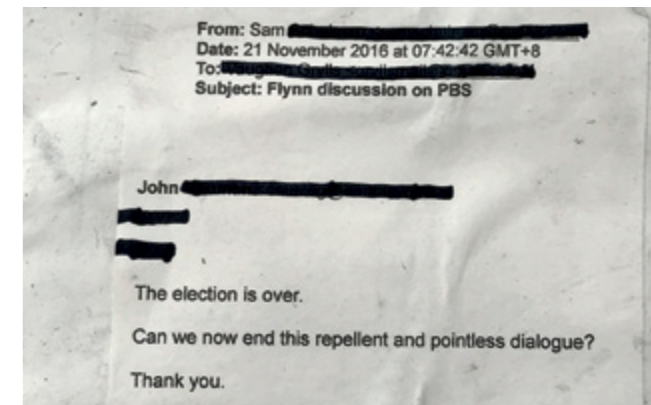
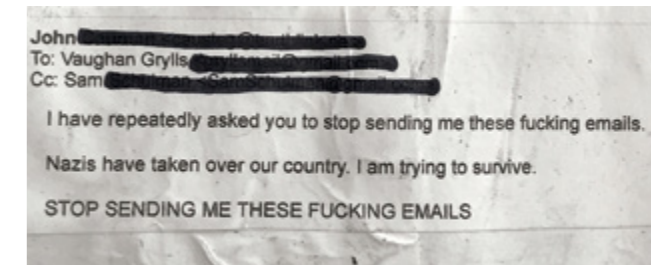
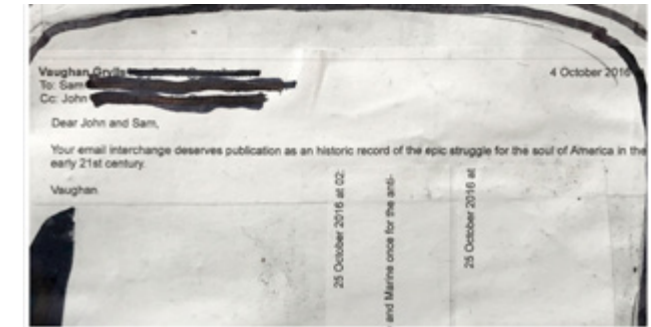
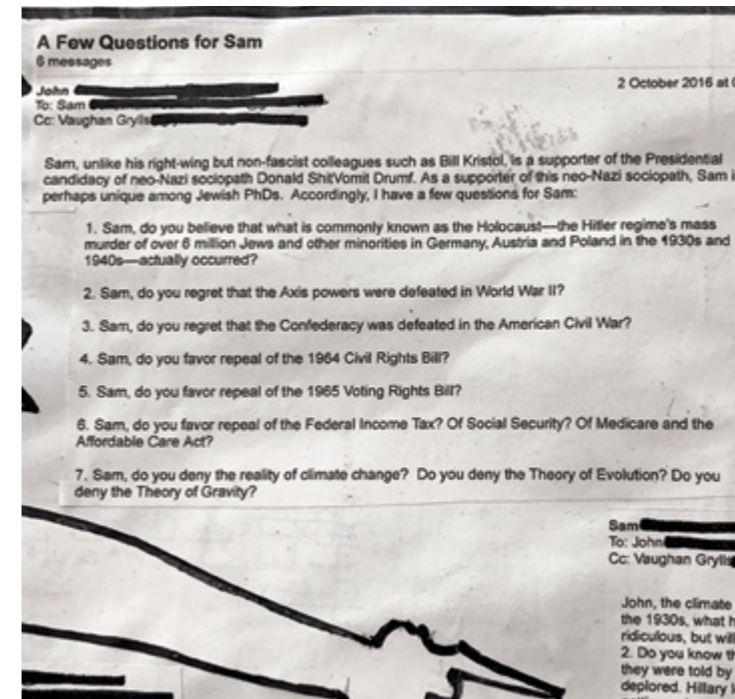
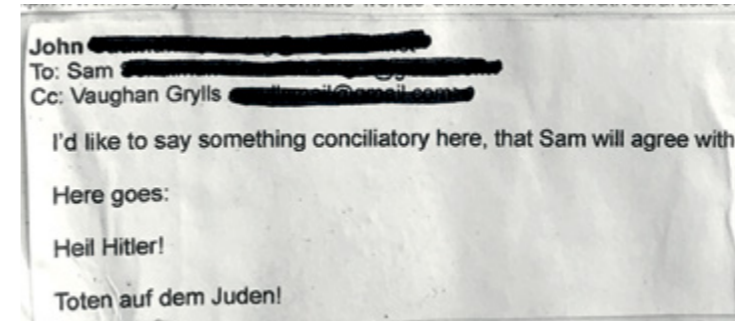
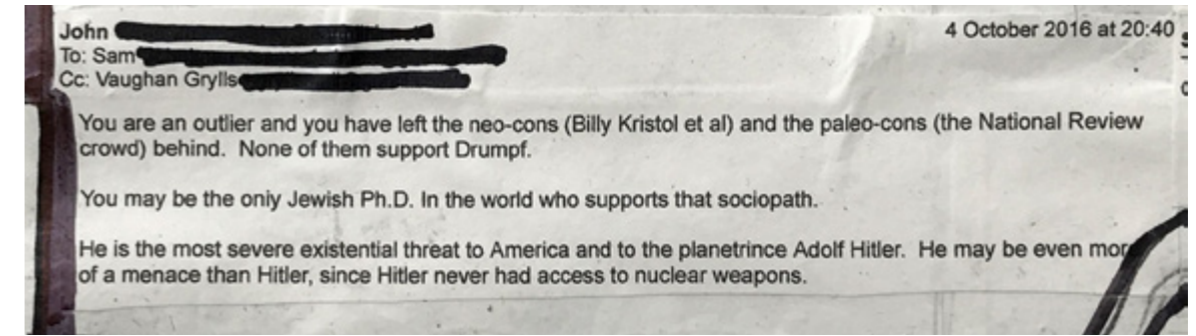
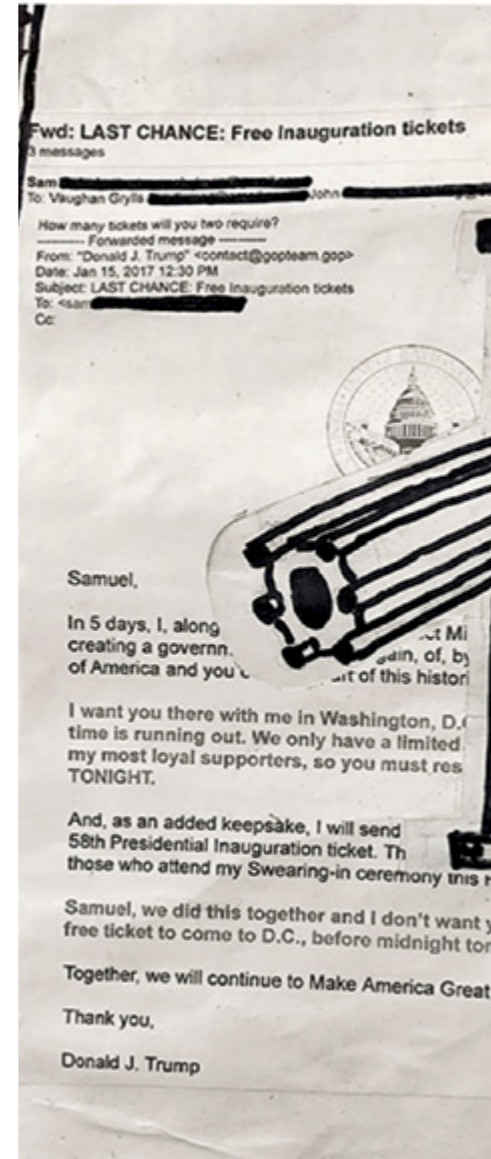
American Mail 2017 Drawing and collage on paper 8' x 16' / 2.43 x 4.87 m

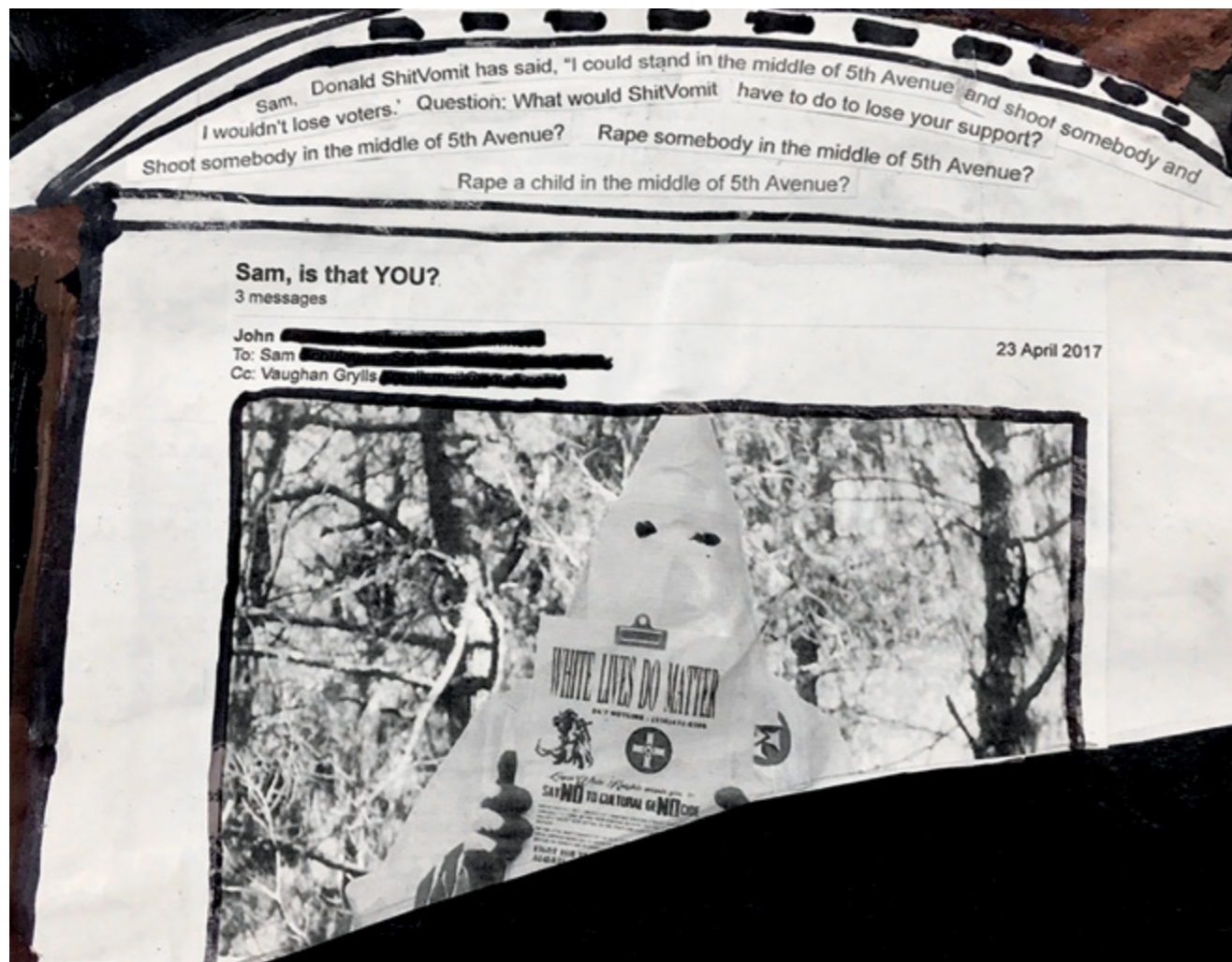
American Mail

American Mail is my comment on the polarisation of America. I used real emails sent between two American friends, John and Sam, throughout the 2016 presidential elections. Although both scions of leftist, Jewish intellectual families, Sam has been moving rightwards for many years. Now he is a full-on, Breitbart News-consuming, alt-right Trump supporter, much to the distress of John who has remained vehemently leftist. Seen in the work is John's droll humour as well as images of shit, swastikas and the finger, all of which he uses in his persistent yet ultimately futile attempts to bring his friend to his senses.

After I sent John and Sam an email saying their interchange deserved publication as an historic record of the struggle for the soul of America, it dawned on me that I had to make a work from it and therefore had to keep their exchange going. I did so by throwing in the occasional contentious remark. But I still needed a metaphor to give my idea form. I decided on a 19th century, noble yet hopeless Native American attack on a US Mail train as it bludgeons its way across sacred Native American land. It may have been about as far as I could get from a 21st century argument between two urbane friends, yet it seemed apt.

Attached to the impotent spear thrown at the iron horse is a final comment from John to Sam. 'O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!' In quoting this bit of Shakespeare, John is mourning the loss of his friend's sanity, (a friend who was, ironically, once a professor of English), the presidential elections and, bearing Hamlet in mind, his view on the future of America.







The Thoughts of John Chau 2019

This work is based on the diary notebook of John Chau, a fanatical American Christian missionary. In 2018, he invaded North Sentinel Island in the Andaman Sea three times. Warned off each time by the island's inhabitants, he was disposed of on his third attempt.



God, I don't want to die. Who would take my place if I do? Oh God I miss my parents, my mom and my dad and Brian and my sister and Noah and Jeremy and Jor and Jennifer and Seth and Bobby (even though he was just here!) and Kristen and someone I can talk to and be understood. None of the guys on the boat know much English and I don't know much Hindi or H to ask them opinions and to tell ~~stuff~~ like this to. I've never ~~felt~~ felt this much grief or sorrow before. Why! Why did a little kid have to shoot me today? His high pitched voice still lingers in my head. Further, forgive him and any of the people on this island who try to kill me, and especially forgive them if they succeed. What made them become this de-forest and hostile? Legend says that through malaria & their escape from a slave ship? Why does this beautiful place have to have so much death here? Last night I had what I'd call a vision as I've never had one before - my eyes were shut but I wasn't asleep and I saw 10 people ~~there~~ here as an island-like city. So a ~~metaphor~~ metaphor or star fell to it.



Fentanyl Drive 2024 Digital Print 4'11" x 20'10" / 150 cm x 635 cm

Fentanyl Drive

Drugs such as crack cocaine have affected all American communities for years, especially minorities. But it is the super-strength opiates such as Fentanyl which have hit middle-class white America hardest.

It started with the pharmaceutical and health insurance industries encouraging the use of powerful pain-killers, even for minor surgery, for those with health insurance.

Prestigious organisations who accepted money from the opiate manufacturers, have now shaken off their embarrassing connections with e.g. the Sacklers. That was easier for them than for the addicts because Fentanyl-type drugs, illegally manufactured in China, are now smuggled in from Mexico and in large quantities.





This view of Warren, New Hampshire was one of the first photographs I took in America during my first visit in 1973.

Some years later, I lost both the print and even the negative. But I remembered my title. A little Googling in 2024 soon uncovered the identical view.



Just America 1973/2024 Giclée print 12" x 1'5" / 29.7 cm x 42 cm



Grylls in his London studio, before leaving for America in 1984

Just America

An essay by John Carlin, 2024

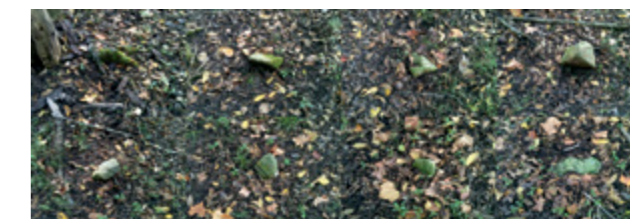
In the 1980s Vaughan Grylls came to America. The former colony had grown up to help win World War II and generated a potent stream of myth and iconography that defined 20th century culture. Edward Paolozzi was the first British artist to make art from it. He transformed magazines left behind by American soldiers into what we now call Pop Art, such as the seminal series *Bunk!* whose title was a pun on where soldiers slept and the junk they left behind.

Paolozzi's use of collage to transform mass produced imagery into personal expression would be used by British artists such as Richard Hamilton, Peter Blake and David Hockney. The trend took the world by storm via popular music, notably The Beatles, who manipulated sound, sampled and layered to create a new form of popular music that would influence everyone who came after. (Peter Blake designed the cover of *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* perhaps the most famous photomontage of the mid-20th century).

Grylls came out of this tradition, took it further and applied new techniques and technologies as he traveled across America, reflecting what it looks like while also showing what it hides.

Take for example, *Slave Graves* (2010). On the surface it's a 'bad' photograph of rocks lying in a field printed at a scale that suggests, but doesn't reveal, something important. The artist notes that he took the photo on his iPhone, while visiting friends in Virginia who casually pointed out the stones on a stroll. They were lying under an old tree to mark graves of enslaved people who weren't allowed proper burial.

The placement in two straight lines of four stones each, indicates something deliberate, like earthworks in the 1970s. But whereas Robert Smithson moved piles of rocks around to form the *Spiral Jetty*, these anonymous enslaved people did so to record the death of kinfolk, a powerful memorial in the only way they could. Grylls records their record to represent not only the injustice wrought upon people treated like chattel, but what we now call the legacy of slavery. "The past is never dead. It's not even past," as the Southern



Slave Graves (pages 60-61)

writer William Faulkner pointed out. These are not 'rolling stones,' the aphorism about 'not growing moss' that came to represent freedom in popular music from Muddy Waters' song with the verse: *my mother told my father/ Just before I was born/I got a boy child's comin', he's gonna be/a Rollin' Stone*. Bob Dylan's breakthrough hit was *Like a Rolling Stone*, the premier *Rock* magazine used the name as did the second most important British rock band of the Sixties.

When The Rolling Stones came to America a decade before Grylls, they immediately made a pilgrimage to the Chess Studio where Muddy Waters (along with Howling Wolf, Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley) recorded and went about appropriating Chicago Blues and American music with savage fury, but little irony about its underlying social reality. *Slave Graves* depicts stones that don't roll, left by people whose compromised freedom still looms over America like a shroud.

Grylls returns to this theme time and time again and America, a country founded on genocide and enslavement, provides ample opportunity.

Sioux Nation (1994) photographed by Grylls in 1988 ("I couldn't get round to completing it because it was so upsetting" said Grylls) is a large mural-sized collage of



Sioux Nation (pages 46-47)

photocopies of video stills taken around the Lakota Sioux Reservation at Wounded Knee, the place of the deadliest mass shooting in American history where roughly 300 Lakota men were slaughtered.

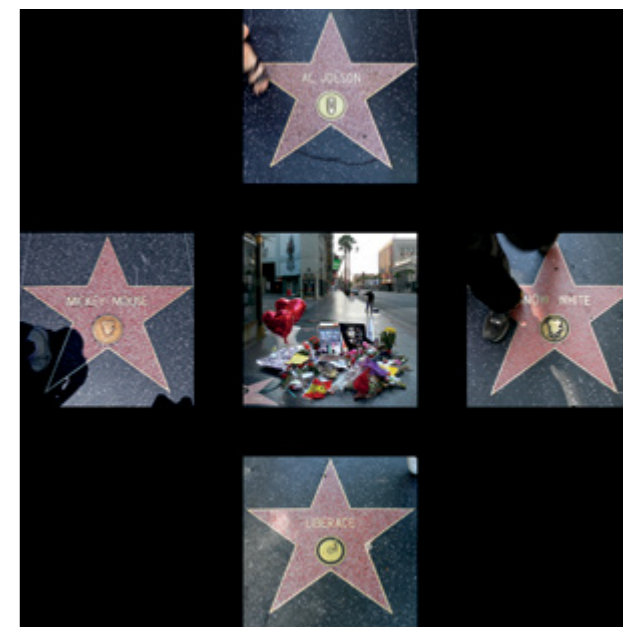
The Native Americans' "Ghost Dance" provoked the massacre because people misread it as a "war dance" based on false stereotypes of native people. Grylls' mural depicts the contemporary location with typical aplomb in a grid of allusions that displace the tragic event into the banality of contemporary life, accentuated by using grainy video imagery in place of elevated fine art photography. As Grylls shows, America's 'Center of Nation' is now here.

The confusion between media and reality is a constant in Grylls' work, from the 1980s to the present. A relatively simple example is *Walk of Fame* (2010), that shows four stars on the famous Hollywood Boulevard

sidewalk, framed in constellation around an impromptu shrine to Michael Jackson's star just after his death.

The stars Grylls chose, combine fictional Disney characters, (Snow White and Mickey Mouse) with real people famous for playing cartoonish characters (Al Jolson and Liberace). Snow White, thanks to the foot of a passer-by, becomes 'now white', a clear reference to Michael Jackson's change of skin color. Three of them: Michael, Mickey and Jolson, share a predilection for wearing white gloves, which seems innocent, but is a legacy of racist minstrel shows. Once minstrelsy was 'cancelled,' Hollywood evolved the underlying concept into cute characters like Mickey, who's literally putting on blackface in one of his earliest cartoons (*Mickey's Mellerdrammer* from 1933).

One of the greatest minstrel artists was Bert Williams, a Black man who wore blackface. He was the highest paid American performer in the first two decades of the 20th century and the first African-American to record a song (in 1901) so there's a direct line from his stardom to the King of Pop, Michael Jackson, whose glittering white gloves continued a tradition no one wanted to talk about.



Walk of Fame (pages 52-53)

No one wants to talk about the other things that tainted Jackson's undeniable brilliance, one of which was the prescription drug use that ended his life.

The most recent piece in this exhibition about *Just America* is *Fentanyl Drive* (2024), which tackles the overdose crisis straight on. It's a twenty-one-foot mural manipulated digitally from a iPhone video Grylls shot from the window of a bus in Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love.

Fentanyl Drive combines ghostly images of over a dozen people loitering on the street with a trash can in the foreground. In the background are horizontal stripes of protective shutters. In the center are two figures from Michelangelo's *Pietà* - 'pity' in English.

The pity here is not just the poor souls trapped in addiction, but also soulless behavior of Big Pharma, notably the Sackler Family, who helped bring opiates to the masses and whose name, until recently, graced many of the most distinguished museums and art institutions in America.

Forty years after Grylls began making art based upon fragmentary mosaics of visual imagery, we live in a world dominated by streams of

pictures on our phones, which look like life but often separate us from it. Doom scrolling has become so commonplace it now has a name.

Grylls' art of the 80s was made before the digital era, but anticipated what it would feel like to live in a world of disconnected imagery perpetually flashing by.

Photography began as a way to record reality, but now is the way we are distanced from it.

Grylls saw it coming. Take a look.

John Carlin
New York, 2024



Fentanyl Drive (pages 78-79)

Doubletakes

An essay by John Carlin in 1985 for *Through The Looking Glass*,
the artist's first solo exhibition in the United States

Wit ... maybe ... considered as a kind of discordia concors; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtlety surprises.

Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*

Where Do We Come From? Where Are We Going?

Vaughan Grylls is an artist who is not a lot of things. Above all, he is not a photographer or a journalist, despite his choice of photography as a medium and historically charged scenes as his subject. Photojournalism represents the world as an endless parade of images from which we are tacitly separated. Grylls's work mimics journalistic representation but in such a way that its artificiality becomes apparent. His work is salutary simply on a moral level for attempting to make us aware of objects and events whose horror has dissipated into the familiar. Commuters waiting for the train in *Dachau Railway Station* (1982) for instance, underscore the irony of learning to live with the incalculable obscenity of recent German history.

But even in exposing horror in the ordinary, Grylls does not editorialize. He is not simply pointing out injustice, or even irony, just the complex and contradictory ways in which vision and memory are used by the human imagination in order to live with ourselves and each other. In this respect Grylls's work forms a picture of the mechanism of meaning more than any particular event or image in and of itself. If that were not the case, his image of *Dachau Railway Station* would be an editorial cartoon, however deadpan, not a full-bodied work of art capable of existing independently of the image it represents. The manner in which Grylls is able to combine the legibility and moral imperative of responsible journalism with the intellectual and visual complexity of fine art is the true measure of his genius.



Dachau Railway Station

Born to Pun

It is hard to see the full complexity and wit of Grylls's work without knowing something of his background and intellectual development. He came of age in the post-Pop era. Like many artists of his generation, Grylls absorbed the post-Modern lessons of Pop Art but qualified its purposefully one-dimensional handling of vernacular imagery. The importance of Pop to later artists was its successful figuration of the shift from symbolic to semiotic representation in the period after World War II. From the Renaissance to the Modern period most visual art had rested upon a direct relation between the painted image and the object to which it referred. Post-Modernism replaced this relation with an arbitrary one of signs deliberately arranged on the surface of the picture plane. One of Grylls's early "pun-sculptures" *A Cycle of Events* (1971), plays upon this notion. The

artist, riding a bicycle into a blank gallery wall, turns toward the viewer and says, "Deep down most people are shallow, sir."

Because semiosis became a dominant mode of representation in Western art after 1960, linguistics and language theory began to have a direct influence on vanguard art. Marcel



A Cycle of Events

Duchamp's attempt to put art in the service of the mind made him the immediate precursor of the tendency toward conceptual rather than what he termed "retinal" art. Grylls's early work not only makes direct reference to Duchamp, but it also relies heavily on making light of semantic philosophers like Wittgenstein, Searle, and Austin, who dominated British thought prior to the influx of structuralist theory in the seventies. The most successful of these early pun-sculptures is *A Case for Wittgenstein* (1969). It consists of three interrelated objects. I will let the artist describe them in his own words:

I ... bought two white vinyl suitcases and wrote 'I brought this in case' on one. I then photographed it and made up a silkscreen incorporating the photograph underneath printing 'A CASE FOR WITTGENSTEIN - BY VAUGHAN GRYLLES' in typeface reminiscent of that used on cheap newsprint in newsstands. I then bought some cheap newsprint and screened this announcement on several sheets of the stuff. Before I threw away the screen I applied the image to the front of the second suitcase.

The piece is clever but somewhat unsatisfying when photographed alone. It works much better displaced into a newspaper photo of the artist with the three objects like the lucky winner of a local bingo contest. The accompanying article reads: "The sculpture is



A Case for Wittgenstein

at once witty, corny, and pretentious. As a pun-sculptor who thinks himself serious, I believe I am a suitable case for consideration." The title of the article published in the *Sunday Times* of London is *Vaughan Grylls, a case in point* (1971). Incorporating various levels of self-participation into the sculpture made it a quasi-performance piece, and notably for Grylls's future development, a wry appropriation of photojournalism.

Duchamp also bought department store items, gave them punning titles, and cheerfully



Vaughan Grylls, pun-sculptor, with his three-piece abstract portrait of Wittgenstein shown recently at the Institute of Contemporary Arts exhibition *Ten Sitting Rooms*

Vaughan Grylls, a case in point

GERALD SCARFE (last week) admits that "few people could make such a corny joke in an elaborate way" as his Chair Man Mao sculpture, now on show at the National Portrait Gallery. "Perhaps it is the only three-dimensional pun in existence," your story added.

I would like to say that I am one of the fortunate few to have been allowed to work for several years as a sculptor of puns.

Illustrated is my abstract portrait of the deceased linguistic philosopher, Wittgenstein. A professor in philosophy who saw it at my ICA exhibition told me that I ought to be shot.

The sculpture is a triple pun, and is at once witty, corny and pretentious. As a pun-sculptor who thinks himself serious, I believe I am a suitable case for consideration. Vaughan Grylls London, NW3

Vaughan Grylls, a case in point

exhibited them in an art context. Yet, whereas Duchamp's readymades often relied upon symbolic, sexual, or alchemical subtexts, Grylls's piece is purely a language game. This is borne out in the physical presence of the sculpture, not just the punning text. The suitcases are empty. Like all good post-Structuralists, Grylls cleverly posits a parable in which containers dominate what they contain. The image here, like the earlier bicycle pun, is literally all surface. And that is precisely what puns are all about, whether used by Alfred Jarry, Marcel Duchamp, or Groucho Marx. Puns simultaneously exalt the power of language and reveal its inadequacy. The result is that words can be given any meaning, but in a certain sense this negates their ability to mean anything at all.

Pictures of an Exhibition

In exploring the limits of language through language, Grylls was part of the overall tendency toward Conceptual art in the 1970s. What linked artists as disparate as Vito Acconci, John Baldessari, Victor Burgin, Ian Burn, Jan Dibbets, Hans Haacke, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Bruce Nauman, and Ed Ruscha was a reliance on verbal texts to give credence to deliberately non-visual objects, processes, or events. The problem with Conceptual art from the standpoint of display and conservation was that it often did not exist, and when it did, only

as a prop for surrounding ideas. Yet, almost inadvertently, these props developed their own distinct visual style. Although Conceptual presentations were largely intended to be neutral, as time went by these displays, printed texts, and photo-documents became an artistic medium all their own. In some ways the Conceptualists appropriated an aspect of Media culture ignored in Pop Art.

Instead of vernacular designs from comics, ads and consumer goods, the Conceptualists appropriated the methodology of corporate presentation, such as crisp letters, forthright anonymous diction, and descriptive photo-documentation. Grylls has stated that one of the major early influences on his work was visiting the Kodak Galleries in New York City in 1973. He was fascinated by how much effort and professional skill was employed in the service of something so void of genuine ideas or an apparent point of view. Grylls explains, "I was interested in presentation. I looked extensively at every display I could find in New York - bank foyers, hotels, companies, trade fairs- I didn't care where they were or what they were about." This is clear in the series of "Displays" that Grylls organized with Nicholas Wegner at The Gallery, London from 1973 through 1975.

The first completely successful Display was *Drug Abuse in Maine* (1974). It consisted of three

screens connected into a Y shape covered with material handed out from a "police-oriented drug bus in Maine." The Gallery manipulated the material to some extent, but not more than in typical corporate displays. The only deliberately wrong note in this low-key farce was a photo of Times Square that somehow hooked into the proceedings.



Drug Abuse in Maine

Other shows included "ready-mades", borrowed from existing displays, installations by invented artists, and just about anything else that could get a rise out of art critics while seeming perfectly ordinary and mildly entertaining to the general public such as *Bungalow*, an exhibition assembled by a northern polytechnic in England about the development of this type of house. Grylls offered its puzzled organizers a West End showing of their exhibition which the polytechnic gladly accepted. One of the most controversial shows because it attracted the attention of some angry art dealers, *Contemporary Art* (1974), was also the most prescient in its blank appropriation of existing artists several years before Mike Bidlo and Sherrie Levine would make their names exclusively using those of others. *Contemporary Art* re-presented works by Andre, Beuys, Buren, Kosuth, Merz, Nauman, Sonnier, and Weiner reproduced in a standard format from magazine illustrations



Contemporary Art

and then mounted on the wall in a 2' x 2' grid pattern.

Selfless Portraits

After the high jinks of pun sculptures and deadpan displays, Grylls turned to more mature reflections on the role art and representation play in the "real" world, not just the hot-house environment of avant-garde art. The transitional pieces in this regard are a series of self-portraits done between 1972 and 1974. The first, *Self-Portrait: The Mad Dog of Europe* (1972), shows Grylls on TV peering out from behind an old copy of the *Sunday Express* announcing the declaration of war on Germany in 1939, which itself carried a reprint of an earlier frontpage declaring war on Germany in 1914. The second, *Self-Portrait: Washington DC* (1973), shows Grylls peering out around a



Self-Portrait: The Mad Dog of Europe

framed photo of President Kennedy holding a photo of his baby daughter. Both pieces set into play a self-reflexive circuit of personal and universal cross-references. This continued in a series of self-portraits collectively titled *Drawing a Lesson from History* (1974) This installation consisted of large photographic blow-ups of the artist wrapped in a bedsheet to look like a Roman senator. He posed himself in front of a number of neoclassical buildings in Washington, D.C. and Roman ruins in the deserts of North Africa.

The polemical self-portraits from 1972-74 are linked by an odd sense of the artist as an intruder in his own picture. He is never the focal point of the image, and he hovers on the periphery, usually overshadowed by some vaguely emblematic object. The pictures often look as if he has wandered in front of

the camera and frozen like a hapless tourist. Of course, that was not the case. Grylls's oblique presence in these pictures indicates a deliberate attack on post-Renaissance



Self-Portrait: Washington DC (pages 6-7)

concepts of selfhood. In other words, these are not really self-portraits *per se*, but pictures of the artist in relation to something else. He exists in the frame in an anti-illusionistic way, reminding us of his presence, but for the most part trying not to get in the way. Above all the artist advertises ideas and execution, not his physical being.

In this light Grylls's use of photography is more than a choice born of convenience. Photography is better suited to depersonalized means of expression than any other. Not only



Drawing a Lesson from History (pages 8-9)

does photography eliminate traces of the artist's hand, but it mechanically inserts itself between the artist and his subject. Grylls does not use the medium as a neutral tool. He constantly calls attention to its implicit ideology and its hidden role as a purveyor of illusion and false presence. Returning to, *Self-Portrait: Washington DC* (1973), Grylls holds a photograph in his clenched hand. This photograph within a photograph shows President Kennedy framed by a painting behind his head and the photograph he holds of his daughter Caroline. The impact of the arrangement is twofold. First, it is somewhat humorous, juxtaposing an aspiring artist with the most famous and celebrated American leader of the post-war era. The second level is more poignant. It is not a picture about Kennedy's presence-but his absence. Notice the date, 1973, the end of the worst years in recent American history with Vietnam, Cambodia, and Watergate combining to seriously challenge this country's sense of values and individual responsibility.

From this point on, Grylls fully exploits the potential of photography to bring the absence of the past into the present. He uses photography as a medium which has irony built into its essence. The camera is something that lies between the observer and the observed, yet somehow leaves the impression of having permanently brought them together. This

lets Grylls collapse not only spatial relations but temporal ones as well, a theme which preoccupies his recent work.

Breakdowns: History in Frames of Reference

In 1976 Grylls produced the first of the photographic panoramas that were the major focus of his work in the late 1970s and early 80s. The first few pieces photographed in Russia are in some respects tentative first steps. They display vestiges of the installation at The Gallery but with a more committed relationship to their subjects. In *Red Square* (1976), Grylls photographed a panorama of the site, framed the individual photos, and then linked them sculpturally into a Russian star. The piece also begins Grylls's understandable



Red Square

preoccupation with nuclear Armageddon. He writes, "I felt when I was setting up the tripod that I was the exact target of the missiles of the 'free world.'" This concern would find complete fruition in Grylls's major work to date, the triptych on nuclear war comprised of *Nuclear War in the UK*, *Dachau Railway Station* and *Nuclear War in the USA* (pages 110-111).

Grylls then turned completely to flat wall pieces. The initial solution, displayed in his photomural *The Wailing Wall, Jerusalem*, (1979) was to photograph something already flat; to put a photograph of a wall on a wall as it were. This economically focuses the viewer's attention on the essential features of the piece rather than on its decorative embellishments.

As Grylls's murals grew more and more thematically complex, the tension between the flat installation grid and the vista created

by the photographic image became a central compositional principle.

Another notable aspect of *The Wailing Wall, Jerusalem* is its scale and color. The enormous size of this piece and of later photomurals may seem similar to commercial billboards, but Grylls says his inspiration was *Cinemascope*, particularly the epic kitsch of *Ben Hur* which he claims to have sat through six times soon after its release. This might account for Grylls's use of the oversaturated colors created by photocopying color prints, an effect that resembles the lurid colors of Hollywood blockbusters from the fifties and early sixties. What follows is Grylls's own description of how he constructed *The Wailing Wall, Jerusalem*:

I wanted to try and convey something about the size and age of the "Wailing Wall" in relation to human beings, and so the camera would have



The Wailing Wall, Jerusalem

to be used as an implement of reconstruction. In other words, the wall would be rebuilt in photographs. After having calculated the exact size of the "Wailing Wall", I used the wall of a factory building in Leicestershire to ascertain that at a certain distance just outside the religious compound that is directly in front of the wall I would have to use a 400mm telephoto lens if I wanted to make each photograph in the composition the size approximately of an A4 sheet of paper. There was a particular reason for this size-35mm colour transparencies would be converted into colour Xeroxes.

This, I thought, would be an ideal cheap way of working out the reassembly before embarking on full-scale colour printing. In point of fact the colour prints were never made, as the colour Xeroxes, after they had been plastic laminated, looked so impressive in the final assembly that I decided to keep them. They introduced a degree of interference and distancing that I feel conventional colour photography does not easily supply.

The Wailing Wall was photographed over a period of about four hours and the line of the photographs made to follow the line of the masonry. Each photograph was then cropped at each end so that each row of photographs lined up pictorially with the line above and beneath it. However, the discrepancies that occurred in the

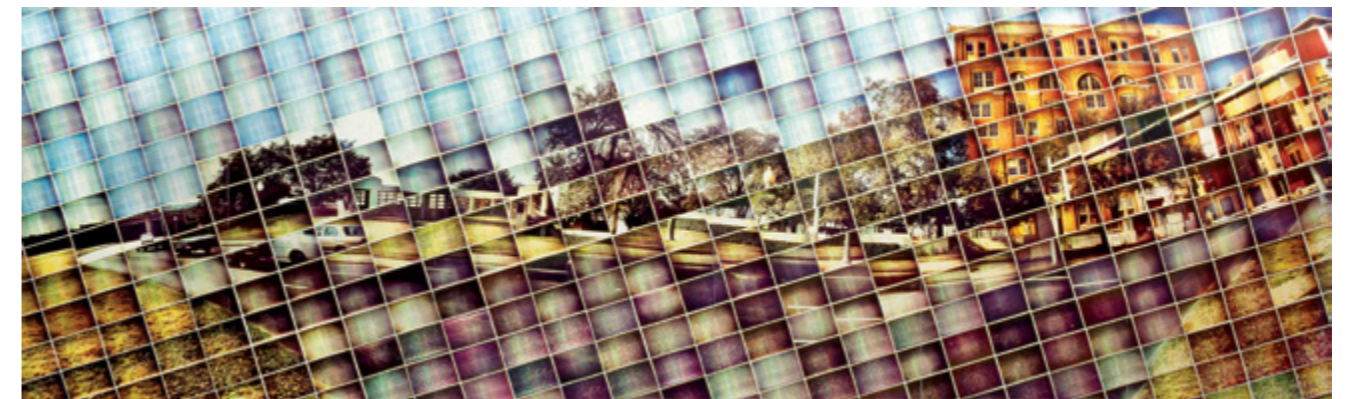
horizontal were retained, and this visual jarring produced a degree of abstraction. I wanted, of course, to create the right interplay between abstract and representational qualities in the finished work. If this were not done, the photographs would become merely records, rather than objects in their own right, as would the whole work itself. Because in this case it was a flat surface that was being photographed, the required effect had to be accomplished by the final editing: In future pieces I would use focus and depth of field to create an interplay between a work's pictorial quality and its picture plane to achieve the same point, i.e., the work's objectivity, or more accurately, "object-ness".

I cite this lengthy passage because it sets out Grylls's method and intentions at the onset of his long relation to historically charged photomurals. It clearly articulates his awareness of the relation of style and subject upon which the work will inevitably be judged. The statement also makes obvious Grylls's direct manipulation of what appears to be a realistic photograph. Grylls also made this apparent in a recent conversation when he stated outright that his work is "designed to appear as if it looks like it really is-but in fact none of them do." This point is essential in understanding Grylls's specific input and his distance from the journalistic stance he seems to imply.

The *Wailing Wall, Jerusalem* appears to configure into a grid, but ends up in a slightly asymmetrical arrangement, perhaps due to the cropping required to fit individual pictures into the overall scheme. There is also a narrow tier of images along the top that gives a sense of structural closure to the picture.

Site of the Assassination of President Kennedy (1980) also uses a regular grid, but which is skewed slightly to a 20° (the angle of Lee Harvey Oswald's line of fire). This panorama begins Grylls's obvious interpolation of objects out of sequence and elaborate manipulation of focus to add deliberately to the overall visual

complexity. On many levels this is Grylls's first completely successful piece. It sets the stage for his remarkable work of the early eighties, and it is little surprise that this work in particular caught the attention of British art critics.



Site of the Assassination of President Kennedy (pages 12-13)

Nuclear War in the UK (1981) and **Nuclear War in the USA** (1981), combine the regular and skewed grids of the earlier pieces to great effect. They are, respectively, the left and right flanks of the triptych on nuclear war. The skewed grids create a funnelling effect in both pieces that are filled with crowds tumbling into *Dachau Railway Station*, and the vestigial mushroom cloud created by the manipulation of images at its center.

All of Grylls's later work to some degree relies on the juxtaposition of a regular grid pattern to Variations within the overall image.

Germany Today: Nuremberg Stadium (1983) uses a de Stijl-like pattern which ironically alludes to Albert Speer's fascist architecture.

Greenwich Mean Time (1984) spectacularly juxtaposes a regular grid to the large circular



Germany Today: Nuremberg Stadium

image at the center of the piece. Here, form completely meshes with concept. The circular image is not merely visually provocative. It directly refers to the concept of time that is the picture's theme.

Grylls chooses iconic scenes with common associations to make his re-presentation of them obvious. Just as grids are juxtaposed to photographic vistas, archetypal scenes

are juxtaposed to the artist's manipulation of them. This reveals the arbitrary nature of "realistic" representation. Grylls shows that the associations that develop around iconic scenes do not exist within them but are functions of cultural ideology. This is particularly obvious in Grylls's crafty use of morbid titles to undercut the entertainment value of realistic photography.



Nuclear War in the USA (pages 16-17)



Nuclear War in the UK

But there are also clues built into the pictures themselves that clearly make their subject the nature of representation more than the representation of familiar scenes charged with caustic irony. By fracturing these iconic scenes into hundreds of small pieces that almost fit together, Grylls makes obvious the impossibility of mimetic reproduction and the artificiality of photo-reproduction. It is clear, as Grylls says, that "there's more here than meets the eye."

One underlying theme is the way in which death is sublimated and evaded in our society by rewriting history. This is not a novel theme, but Grylls presents it in a completely contemporary fashion. His meditations on death do not create epitaphs for a lost sense of self (as did Wordsworth's poetry at the beginning of the Modern period, and Eliot's at its end) but for a collective sense of loss. This

continues the theme of oblique self-portraiture discussed above. Grylls often pictures himself among the crowds in his recent work. He is part of the mob, implicated in the same inextricable forces.

In this respect Grylls's theme is not just physical death but spiritual death as well. By this I mean death in life. Most of his recent pieces concern how people are manipulated by cultural, historical, and personal forces beyond their control. What makes this such an effective theme is that people are controlled in the work as they are controlled in life, and we in turn are controlled by viewing the work.

Grylls has stated that this theme is a personal protest against the insidious measures of control perpetuated in democratic societies by the myth of personal freedom. He said in exasperation after a recent talk, " ... these

people are prisoners of their own creation and they're grinning about it." When I asked Grylls whether his sensitivity to this issue allows him to transcend it he replied, "I'm part of this configuration, but I also have the freedom to stand apart from this—even to see myself being controlled".

This exposes what may appear to be a contradiction in Grylls's work. On one hand he deplores the myth of individuality; on the other he obsessively exposes the quiet horror of depersonalized collective existence. Yet Grylls cleverly turns this contradiction to his own advantage by arguing that the myth of individuality exists because we live a depersonalized collective existence. In this respect his work is not just about political control or ironic self-negation, but also how the language of visual imagery fundamentally affects everyday life. In this respect Grylls's work, above all else, is about the hidden ideology of visual imagery and how that controls our understanding of the world around us.

Much of this subtlety is lost in translating thirty-foot wall pieces into book form. Reduced in scale for illustrations, Grylls's work seems more decorative and straightforward than it does actual size. To recreate this essential aspect of his work to the extent possible here, I will detail two of Grylls's most important

pieces: *Dachau Railway Station* and *Greenwich Mean Time*.

Dachau, as I have mentioned above, is the center of the triptych on nuclear war. Its visual format is different from that of the other two. It employs a regular grid and is less composed than *Nuclear War in the UK*, or *USA*. It is the only piece in the triptych whose title does not refer ironically to the visual image and is included in the picture. Finally, this is the only section of the triptych in which the artist includes himself. He is seen as part of the overall group of people and does not stand out in any way. Grylls's features are somewhat blurred as are those of many of the other people in the picture. Soft focus generalizes their features and intentionally depersonalizes them in the way they have been depersonalized by commuting and by echoes of past and future horrors.

The overall configuration is structured like a railroad timetable with lines of commuters waiting for each consecutive train stacked on top of each other. A clock in the far right of each tier indicates the time of each train. This image of stacked commuters waiting implacably for their transportation to work is meant to refer to both the alienation of modern life and to the stacking of prisoner's bodies piled up and burned at *Dachau*. The unstated irony is the slogan the Nazi's affixed to such "camps":



Dachau Railway Station (details)

"Arbeit macht Freiheit" (work makes freedom). In this respect the piece depends entirely on the juxtaposition of passive commuters to the awful history that transpired on the site they now inhabit.

The larger implications of forgetting the lessons of recent history over the commuters in the form of a vestigial mushroom cloud created by manipulating the focus and intensity of certain images within the scene, notably the graffiti "Auslander Raus" (foreigners out) at the center of the composition. Other less obvious clues abound, for instance, a man is shown holding an umbrella to look like a sub-machinegun; a woman knitting is meant to refer to knitters who frequented guillotining during the French Revolution for their afternoon entertainment.

This detail also brings to the fore an oblique reference to photography, one of many that Grylls folds into his work. The interrelation of people photographed by Grylls and those previously photographed in advertising imagery is prevalent throughout the piece. The cigarette ad, "Let's Go West," cleverly questions layers of reproduction by juxtaposing a male model lighting a cigarette on the far side of the slogan to commuters in similar poses on this side of what becomes another ironic commentary on historical and political divisions.



Dachau Railway Station (detail)

The same preoccupation with history and the inability of humans to control their own fate recurs in *Greenwich Mean Time* with even greater complexity. It is by the artist's own admission a culmination of all his work prior to moving to America. It specifically relates to *Britain Through the Looking Glass*, which is a companion piece. Both meditate on the relationship of Britain, historically and geographically, to the world at large. *Through the Looking Glass* is subtitled, *A Portrait of the Artist's Daughter*, and *Greenwich Mean Time*, *A Portrait of the Artist's Wife*. In both, personal history is integrated into universal history. They are conscious meditations on the artist at mid-life, in the words of Ad Reinhardt, "looking forward to looking back."

Both pieces are based on an asymmetrical relation between mirror images. Looking Glass is divided in half along the central vertical axis



Dachau Railway Station (detail)

occupied by Grylls's daughter, a dead ringer for Alice. The left and right sides of the piece repeat the same image of a mummy display in the British Museum with slight variations in placement and color. *Greenwich* not only repeats the same picture, in reverse, from left to right, but also from top to bottom.

The four corners of the piece, surrounding the central artichoke-like image, repeat the same view of Greenwich Park. The only difference in the four views is among the people who populate the scene. One reason for this quadruple reflection is to represent the four corners of the world and Britain's implied importance as its center. The irony here is that centrality is no longer a sign of power but of vulnerability. The larger central image is a target, ground zero for the Eastern



Britain Through the Looking Glass

and Western bombs to meet. The image can also be read as a gigantic clock face and the flanking imagery as a slightly thick watchband. These geographic and temporal allusions combine to create an ambitious reflection on Britain's role in the world theater. Grylls's attempt to link these universal themes of time and power to personal themes and artistic creation is even more ambitious. Not only is this the first of Grylls's wall pieces to use explicit circular imagery, it is also the first to balance his typically bleak irony with a sense of hope and renewal.

This sense of rebirth is borne out in the polyphony of sexual imagery in the piece. It abounds in Grylls's manipulation of this unlikely tourist attraction where people straddle the



Britain Through the Looking Glass (detail)



Greenwich Mean Time (detail)

Prime Meridian uniting the eastern and western hemispheres. The most obvious sexual image is that of the V created to the left and right of the central image by a concrete wall receding toward the top and bottom of the frame like legs. This "vaginal orifice," as Grylls terms it, is being penetrated by an iron fence distorted by the camera into a phallic image. What makes this image doubly interesting is that it resembles a "grill-work," obviously a pun on the artist's own name. He subtly inscribes an emblem of his own sexuality into what at first glance appears to be a panorama of a British park.

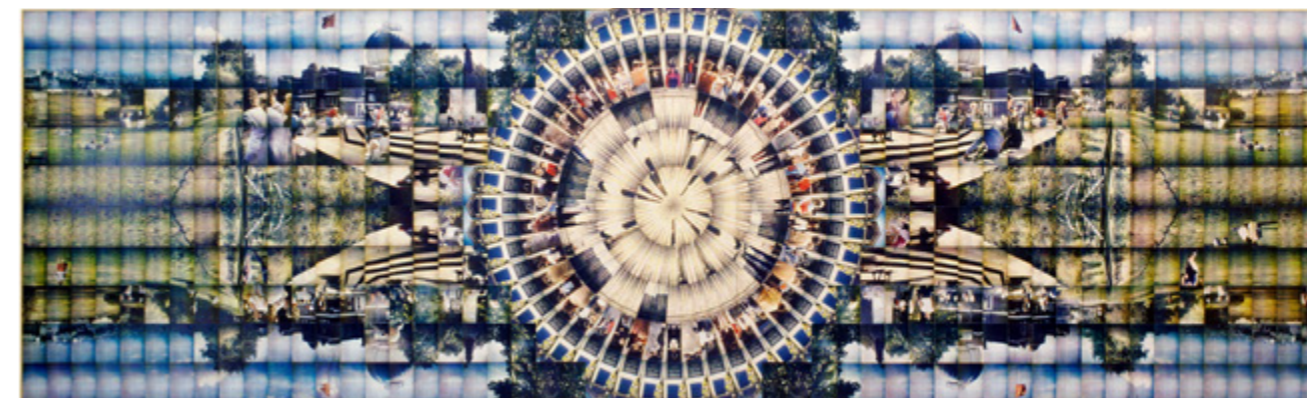
The picture also puts the viewer (albeit male) into a sexually provocative role, staring into the



Greenwich Mean Time (detail)

central image made up of forty-eight pictures of the meridian combined into a mandala-like circle, which is also an explicit vaginal symbol. The combination of the viewer's gaze, the artist's machinations, and the potential penetration of this "target" by foreign missiles adds a new dimension to Grylls's concern with ideology and political control. For the first time, sexuality is overtly added to the list of dehumanized experiences endemic of modern life.

Another interesting aspect of this sexual dimension is its role in a piece credited as a portrait of the artist's wife. A family portrait occupies the 12:00 position on the central



Greenwich Mean Time

"clock face," while a woman appears in the symmetrically opposite position (at 6:00) photographing Grylls photographing others. Grylls has likened this to that of bride and bachelors in Duchamp's "Large Glass."

In the final analysis, Grylls resolves this tension by affirming the unity of father, mother, and child not only by placing a "halo" around his head but also in the overall composition. The family trinity is deliberately echoed in the three arches at 3:00 and 9:00 that form the focal point of the "legs" that flank either side of the central circle. Directly behind each group of arches a pair of clasped hands links the top and bottom of the circle. The area that these arches point toward is particularly dense and central to the picture's theme. There is a black figure in the middle which Grylls likens to the death shadows at Hiroshima. The shadows point toward a baby carriage on the top and

a mother and child at the bottom. To the right of these shadows is a sneaker which deflates the life and death symbols with simple sexual innuendo. These three interrelated images form a microcosm of the entire piece—upstanding themes linking life and death, which become images of procreation and self-renewal constantly stepped on by vanity and personal desire.

John Carlin
New York, 1985



Installation of *Nuclear War* triptych Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison 1985

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Vaughan Grylls

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