

ANTHONY REYNOLDS GALLERY

FRIEZE ART FAIR 2015 STAND A13

PAUL GRAHAM

A1 THE GREAT NORTH ROAD 1981-83

BEYOND CARING 1984-85

A1 – The Great North Road and *Beyond Caring* are among the most important series of photographic work of the past 40 years. Paul Graham (b.1956) is from that remarkable generation of photographers born in the 1950's that have come to international prominence in art photography today. From Nan Goldin through Thomas Struth, Andreas Gursky, Thomas Ruff, Rineke Dijkstra, Philip Lorca di Corcia etc., there is a grouping whose formative creative years coincided with the great flowering of the photographic scene of the 1970's. After seeing the William Eggleston retrospective at MoMA in 1976 and responding to the work of pioneering contemporary American photographers, Graham abandoned black-and-white and turned his colour camera towards the social constructs of his environment.

The A1 runs like the spine of Britain from London to Edinburgh and over a two year period (1981-83), Graham travelled the route, producing a portfolio of brilliant images - portraits, landscapes, cafés, service stations - which rekindle the imagination in telling fragments of a Britain in transition at the time of the Thatcherite revolution. *A1 – The Great North Road* was conceived as both publication and exhibition and the work had wide circulation (the British Council toured the series internationally) and a correspondingly transformative effect on the black-and-white tradition that dominated European documentary practice. Its importance is evidenced by the acquisition of a complete set by MoMA.

Beyond Caring was produced in 1984-85 and provides a photographic record of the human misery, suffering and degradation experienced by millions of people in Social Security offices across Britain. Produced during a period of high unemployment and harsh economic measures by the Thatcher government, *Beyond Caring* depicts those places where, according to Graham, 'economic decisions and human lives meet head on'. His stark documentary style provides a disturbing portrait of bleak spaces and conditions where loss and despair are met with indifference by a state that fails to care for its most vulnerable citizens.

Graham abandoned convention to establish a new documentary aesthetic. Using larger formats and colour, he produced work with a much more personal approach which bridged the divide between the documentary and emerging fine-art traditions. The acknowledgment that 'truth' was a subjective viewpoint allowed Graham to engage with his chosen themes to reveal the complex layers of cultural and social meanings within contemporary society. The shift to colour was adopted thereafter by many prominent artist photographers. Highly influential since the early '80s, Graham's photographs continue to inform the work of new generations of photographers just as their imagery continues to have a powerful resonance for the society of today.

A1 - The Great North Road was never editioned and was never re-printed. The very rare examples which are still available are vintage prints made by the artist at the time. All those on display at Frieze are from those examples. Occasional images from *Beyond Caring* were exhibited in different formats through the late '80s and '90s but were not editioned until 2001. The examples on display are of this first c-print edition, made by the artist. They have been included in museum exhibitions internationally.

This presentation at Frieze coincides with *The Whiteness of the Whale*, Graham's exhibition of his American work at Pier24 in San Francisco. It is the first time this major photographic venue has devoted the whole space to the work of one artist.

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