

## Foreword

### CELEBRATING THE LANDSCAPE

Nature has been depicted universally by man throughout the ages, ever since the first prehistoric cave paintings. A portrayal originating in humanity's complex relationship to the world. Nature is, of course, a construct and as such, is constantly changing and affected by our perception and our interaction with our World and the Universe. Our culture, religion and science have mostly defined nature as something quite separate from ourselves – nature as an independent reality. Fortunately many artists conceive nature quite differently.

Early photographers quickly realised that the photographic medium excelled in an exact and believable depiction of place. Artists who claimed to portray realistically the Wild West yet had never set foot in North America, filled their landscape paintings with alien European vegetation and topography. The photographer unlike the artist had to be present in the landscape to make the picture. Being present at the location is something that the photographic artists Roger Polley and John Woodman make into a ceremony. Or as they call it a 'celebration'. Their works take time. Not just a brief camera exposure of 1/125th of a second or even one-second, but hours and days are spent in observing the changes that are taking place before them, around them and even within themselves. Sometimes they return again and again to the same location to record the transformations that have taken place with the shifting of the seasons. They have also had the opportunity to develop their work through projects and commissions within the United Kingdom and abroad.

Polley and Woodman's photographic artworks consist of panoramas and close ups. There are changes in scale and sometimes complete seasons of references, assembled in multi-images, consisting of often 30 to 40 prints. The grouping of these build a whole within one frame. Some works occasionally verge on abstraction, but are nevertheless identifiable for what they represent. They were equally involved and present in all stages of the making of this work. Even their technique itself is quite democratic and recognisable; the colour prints which they assemble, are the same size as those used in family albums. By choosing to exhibit their projects in the same region as they are photographed, an immediate relationship between the viewer, the work which is presented, and the local environment is upheld. This relationship helps strengthen the ultimate and crucial aim of their work, which is quite simply to make us care for the world around us. The freshness of seeing familiar rural countryside areas depicted in this colourful yet contemplative and studious way, can aid in preserving the land's value as a source of inspiration and well being for us all. We must learn to see, love and care for the beauty, of not just *the wilderness*, or the majesty of the National Parks, but of the landscape much nearer home where most of us live. Finally we must learn that we are a part of nature and the Earth and must cherish all the gentle relationships between humanity and the land that we can, if our species is to survive.

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