PRESS RELEASE

IAN BREAKWELL DIAGNOSIS 10 MARCH – 8 APRIL 2006

IAN BREAKWELL died of lung cancer on 14 October 2005, aged 62. A great artist for whom the remarkable lay firmly embedded in the everyday. For 40 years, Breakwell dug and sifted, a prospector for gold in the shifting muddy silt through which life ploughs on. An exceptional artist in any medium he handled, it is Breakwell's mastery of the word, written, spoken and depicted, the word as a visual stimulus, a partner in image-making that sets him apart. On the occasions when no words appear in the work, for example in the sublime and deeply moving video installation, *The Other Side* (Tate Collection), there is still a story to be told; or remembered; or imagined. Since 1962, Breakwell's diaries have been exhibited, published, broadcast on radio and television. The humour, mischief and oblique wonder at the world that permeates his verbal and visual legacy is already legendary.

When Breakwell was first diagnosed with the particular growth that was to silence him, he embarked upon a major, autobiographical, audio-visual work called BC/AD - before cancer/after diagnosis. An extract from the text reads as follows: *'I made a series of thirteen drawings in late summer 2004, during the two weeks after my final diagnosis. Shock, and feverish consideration of the implications meant that I could not sleep, and I made a drawing each night, sometimes in the hours of darkness, sometimes at dawn, in a physical state of fatigued insomnia and slight hallucination. The flower-like drawings are images of organic growth and blooming. On the fourteenth night my normal sleep pattern returned and the series ended'.* This sequence of thirteen works is the subject of the current exhibition. It has an intensity, a pain and above all a dark beauty that testifies to the consummate skill and profound passion of this most humane of men. This is but a small memorial; the exhibitions and publications to come will illuminate the astonishing range, unique achievement and long lasting influence of one of the most exceptional artists of the past fifty years.

A comprehensive publication featuring Breakwell's own definitive selection of writings and associated images, *The Diary Re-invented*, is currently in preparation and a DVD anthology of his film work is to be published by the British Film Institute later this year.

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