

return

Prema Arts Centre , Uley, Glos. UK
March 29 - May 10 1998



A celebration of continuum
the idea of *return* is based on the course of nature.
the movement is cyclic, and the course completes itself.

Annie Lovejoy 1998



the garden

beyond control (750 daffodils planted in memory of Davin)
one of Davin's last wishes was to pick the daffodils



*I remember...holding your hand through town as you said
'hello' to strangers / 'that was a nice lady' / taking off your
wellies to go in the bank because there was carpet on the
floor / red wellies with yellow tops / the ones you loved /
the ones you died in / finding onions in my shoes / won-
dering / where you were / with little May-may / on the
path / between our home & hers / where we and the wind
/ scattered your ashes / I remember / your little arms
around my neck / the feel of your cheek pressed against
mine ...and how you loved the daffodils*

return

© Annie Lovejoy 1998



the entrance foyer

spade

(spade, soil, video monitor)

comfort

(6 'hotwater bottles' - roots of wheatgrass & magnifying lenses)

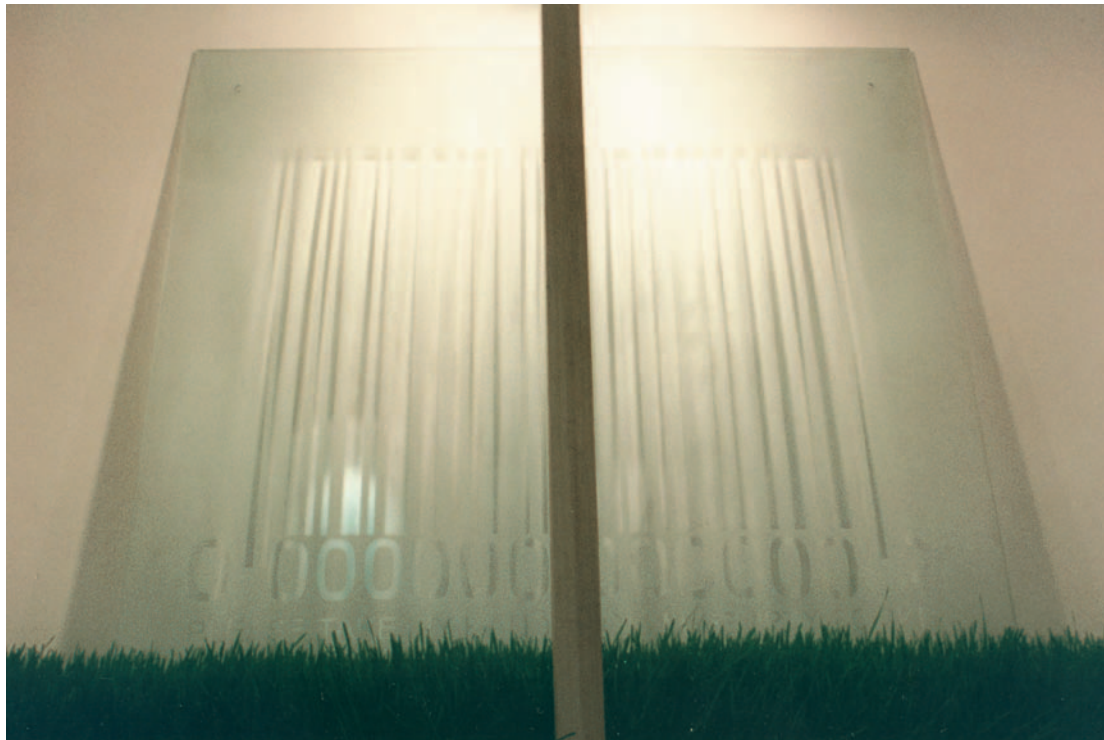


the entrance foyer

spade detail

(spade, soil, video monitor)
a time-lapsed video documents
the communal planting of the 750 daffodil bulbs.





the entrance showcase

grass & glass (wheatgrass & etched glass barcode)

normally used for object display the cabinet becomes a living glasshouse planted with wheatgrass; the barcode, a reference to product, displays a numeric value of zero accompanied by the text:

'please take my hand from my empty pocket and hold it whilst the sun rises'



*the red room
installation
'comfort':*



'blind' (large scale digital print)



'sofa' ('hotwater bottles', soil, lenses, water, lightboxes, images, text & grass 'teddy')

'peephole' title piece
(hotwater bottle, peephole, lightbox & slide)
a development from an earlier CDROM work which
considers the photograph of Davin (where he is
wearing the clothes he died in) as a horrific
reminder of the violence of his death and
in comparison, the depth of comfort,
warmth & memory his teddy evokes.



the red room installation 'comfort'
'sofa':



image visible through 'hotwater bottle' lens
and moving water:

*its sixteen years later
your gran just sent a photo of you
I've never seen it before
you're looking through the gate
out to the field
to the path
to the road
that was to take you away*

text:
*sometimes theres a trigger that removes reality
and I am there again
at the terrible scene of your death
...all I can do is cry.
...and then its OK.*

'sofa':

A nested series of 'bottles' grown
with embedded lenses through which
images and texts were visible
below a surface of moving water.

Air bubbles in the water moving across
the surface acted as lenses,
magnifying sections of handwritten text.

Situated adjacent to a video monioter
displaying abstractions
created from slowing down
footage of wind and rain affecting
the surface of a pond.

*the wind blows across the water making visible
the effects of the invisible (video)*





the stairs

'candle' (aluminium, video monitor, text in wax, flickering candle bulbs)
text embedded in wax: 'an average of ten people a day die in road accidents'

source:

Europe, Statistics & Research Directorate

UK Road Accident Statistics for 1996

3,598 died,

48,071 died or seriously injured

320,302 all severities



the small video monitor displays footage of a candle continually being relit.



the upstairs room

..and how you loved the daffodils (video projection)

the daylight is framed by a video of daffodils moving in the wind, sometimes gently, sometimes more frantic, filmed in a location close to a busy road ..a tension develops as we hear the constant sound of busy traffic and emergency services occasionally pause to reveal the quiet and natural sound of birdsong.

Through the window we view 'beyond control': the 750 daffodils planted in memory of Davin completing our journey through the building a sense of continuum.



report : Gordon Scott (Director, Prema Arts Centre, Uley, Glos.)

The Outcome of "Return"

Return opened on Sunday 29 March - a cold, wet and gloomy afternoon in Uley. The kind of day when you stay at home and watch the omnibus edition of Eastenders followed by a Cary Grant film ... however, people switched off Eastenders, got in their cars and drove (in some cases up to 90 miles) to get involved with Return.

Prema received 400+ visitors at the opening - some to see Annie and her family back in the local area, others (who did not know the artist) to see the work - but mostly a mixture of people wanting to spend some time with the work (in the respectful way one visits an impressive Cathedral) and people wanting to talk with each other about the work, the history of Return and personal histories with each other. It was interesting to stand and watch the developments at the opening - people entered the space and warmly greeted one another, they then moved toward the work and 'switched off' from the bustle of the crowd to look at the work. Having completed their time with the work, the gallery spectators then rejoined the 'party' atmosphere.

Many people returned to the work a few days later, as they felt that the party was not conducive to viewing the work - which, perhaps, needs a more tranquil setting to receive its optimum viewing. There were many varied responses to the work - from "I don't understand it" to "We love it", from "What's it meant to mean" to "It really speaks, doesn't it?". Many of the "Philistines" were pointed in the direction of the accompanying text and the catalogue. When looking at why this happens, it should be noted that Prema is the only gallery in Gloucestershire which is showing installation work - therefore, installation is an unfamiliar format. Some found the 'subject matter' a little too harrowing - which begs the question what is art's function - to entertain, to stimulate a response (albeit positive, negative, introspective or extravagant). The consensus was, undoubtedly, that this was a tender piece which struck a chord with 99% of viewers.

This unfamiliarity was pronounced by a representative from the JA Clark Charitable Trust, who asked for a 'tutorial' on the work. Myself and our Exhibitions Officer illustrated the context of the work and advised her to approach the work with an open mind, to talk to Annie and talk to us again. The representative (who is in her early 80s) took the time to view the work again. When she approached us again, her statement was "I can't pretend to understand it all, but I certainly understand where it's coming from. I will come back with a friend and view it when it's quieter". She did return and commented how "beautiful" and "serene" the work was.

It should be noted that Lovejoy's knowledge about the JA Clark Charitable Trust was instrumental in the investment of Return. The Trust have intimated (perhaps as a result of the Prema/Lovejoy alliance) that they wish to continue in dialogue with Prema with a view to funding other, dynamic initiatives at the Centre. Therefore, the links forged in Return could bring about a Trust investment into one of the region's most under-resourced, under-staffed and under funded - yet most ambitious, challenging and forward looking galleries (therein lies a huge debate about funding structures, investment in performing arts versus visual arts ... discuss!).

The interest in Return was certainly fuelled by coverage in the press - both local rags Stroud News and Journal, Dursley Gazette, Gloucestershire Citizen ... and national publications like Artists Newsletter and the Guardian. The Guardian article was quite a coup for both Prema and Annie. The article was informed, informative and thorough - it has certainly raised public awareness of Prema (as a promoter of visual art) and of Annie Lovejoy as a maker of dynamic work which has a strong emotive, yet not 'in yer face' quality.

Throughout Return, Prema received in the region of 2,000+ visitors to the work. The piece is still talked about (six weeks after it came down) and will certainly provide Prema with some good lessons learned - in terms of putting a greater emphasis on our visual arts programme, the dynamic between funding opportunities and exhibitions / commissions and the role of the artist in the public arena.

Return was (and continues to be) a positive experience for Prema, Annie Lovejoy and the many people who visited the work. Return could work in many gallery settings, but I feel that Prema provided a safe environment for the artist to experiment and develop the work, a significant venue (geographically and aesthetically) for the showing of the work and an appropriate sized venue for the right feel for the piece.
