

Paul Graham: Troubled Land

22 January - 01 March 2025



Flag in Tree, County Tyrone, 1985

Huxley-Parlour are delighted to announce *Troubled Land*, an exhibition by renowned British photographer Paul Graham, opening at our Maddox Street gallery in January 2025. The exhibition will present Graham's disquieting photographs, made between 1984 and 1986, documenting the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland. *Troubled Land* innovatively framed the conflict through the country's landscapes and daringly subverted the traditions of British documentary photography.

Graham avoids explicit representations of violence in these images. The photographs initially appear to depict prosaic towns: rain-soaked, common-place settings with rolling hills below cloudy skies. It is not until closer inspection that a viewer discovers, for example, a kerb painted with the Irish Tricolour, or a Union Flag flying atop a tree. In one seemingly mundane seaside image, a viewer follows the diminishing lines of a road, and discovers the unsettling scene of a road-side stop-and-search. These vignettes are fragments of one volatile, violent, and bitter whole. All is the subject of dispute, and Graham's images reveal how the 'Troubles' permeated the entirety of both rural and urban life in Northern Ireland.

Land itself becomes partisan in these photographs. Tension is brought to a pitch by the ever-present notion of 'territory', though human figures never form the main subject matter. *Troubled Land*, therefore, exists in ambiguous ground between documentary and landscape photography. The effect of this blend of genres is one of a pathetic fallacy: the landscapes themselves speak of their political allegiances. Here, the fraughtness and unease of political and cultural conflict are expressed through the land itself.

Much of Graham's technical approach to this series was both bold and contentious. To many of his contemporaries, the use of colour photographs for a project of this nature lacked seriousness. British

documentary photography had until then been almost entirely confined to monochromatic images, making Graham's panchromatic project a pioneering example of what was soon to come in the genre. However, the photographer's compositions reveal him to be the heir of his predecessors in British documentary photography. Framing is simple, and functional; low horizon lines marry with sloping diagonal lines; perspective is repeatedly used to construct the images. Graham simultaneously offers quiet and sober innovations: colour remains subdued and descriptive; photographs are largely devoid of human figures, and the sinister silence that hangs over the hills, roads, and towns is emphasised. *Troubled Land* is a uniquely laconic, haunting depiction of war.

Paul Graham was born in the UK in 1956. Paul Graham's work has been the subject of more than eighty international solo exhibitions. Works from Graham's series Paintings were included in the exhibition, *Plateau of Humankind*, as part of the 49th Venice Biennale in 2001. In 2011, a twenty-five year survey of Graham's work, *Paul Graham: Photographs 1981-2006*, was held at the Museum Folkwang, Essen and the Whitechapel Gallery, London. More recently, in 2014, Graham staged exhibitions of his project *Does Yellow Run Forever?* at both Carlier Gebauer Gallery, Berlin, and Pace & Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York. Other exhibitions include *The Whiteness of the Whale*, Bombas Gens Centre d'Art, Valencia (2017), *La Blancheur de la Baleine*, Les Rencontres d'Arles, Arles (2018), *Mother*, Carlier Gebauer, Berlin (2020), and *The Seasons*, Pace Gallery, New York (2020). Graham has been awarded a number of prestigious awards, including the Hasselblad International Award for Photography (2012), the Royal Photographic Society Award, the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize (both 2009) and a Guggenheim Fellowship (2010). His works are held in the collection of Arts Council of Great Britain, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Museum of Modern Art, New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, the Tate Gallery, London and the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

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Private view 21 January, 6–8pm

HUXLEY-PARLOUR

45 Maddox Street, London W1S 2PE

Opening Hours Monday to Friday, 10:00am - 5:30pm

Saturdays, 10:00am - 1:30pm

Entry is free

More information can be found online at www.huxleyparlour.com