

**HUMID  
TACITA DEAN  
CHRISTINE BORLAND  
JUAN CRUZ  
MARIE-ANGE GUILLEMINOT  
JEAN-JACQUES RULLIER  
NARELLE JUBELIN WITH  
MARCOS CORRALES LANTERO  
SONYA HANNEY  
& ADAM DADE**

Published on the occasion of  
**TACITA DEAN**  
Under/Above

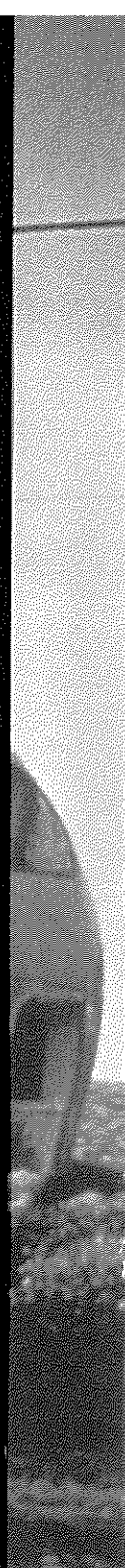
Melbourne Festival Australia  
11 October – 3 November 2001



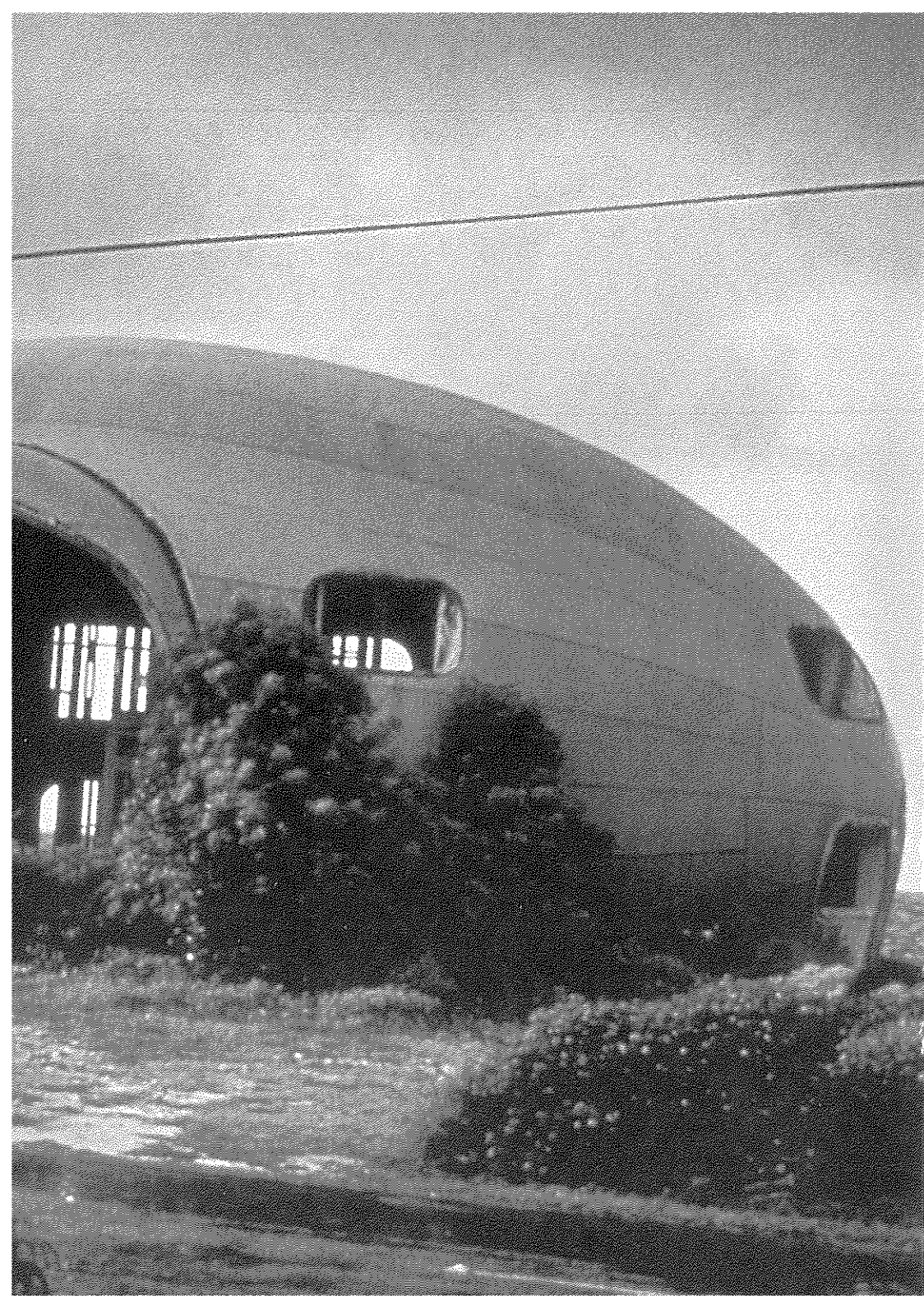
SUPPORTED BY



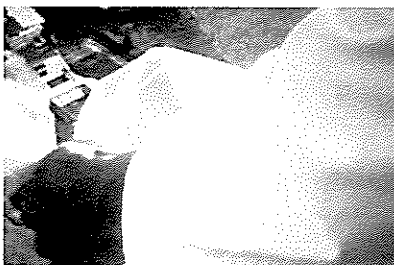
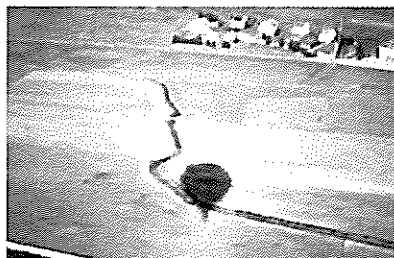
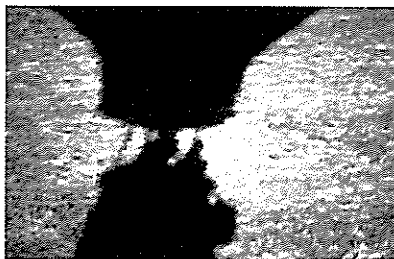
The  
British  
Council



Tacita Dean



Tacita Dean



## The Coincidence Keeper

Susan Stewart

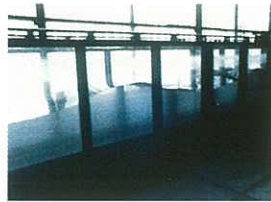
KEEPING TIME, A GESTURE OF INTENDED CARE, is a counter to the ceaselessness of all ceaseless things, among them the unending sky and sea, and the unending silence and darkness of eternity. Yet when waves of sound come to us, like waves of the sea, they arrive amorphously, without a graspable limit or edge; their reception is both the end of their insignificance and the beginning of their return to formlessness. It is unbearable to be left on the scale of human life without the scale of human time with which to measure this encounter. Tacita Dean's decade of work centering on issues of time and sound reveals the myriad ways in which aesthetic experience is a resource or, to take one of her own recurring images, a bulwark against the irreducible fact that human beings must suffer time as they suffer within a time that is of their own making.

Like all works of art, her films and photographs and objects exist at the place where the inner time consciousness of the maker encounters the external world — that world known through spatial extension and coordination with the lives of others. Time itself is a made or given feature of consciousness: it is not nature, but rather is one of the aspects of mind by which we are able to know nature. This



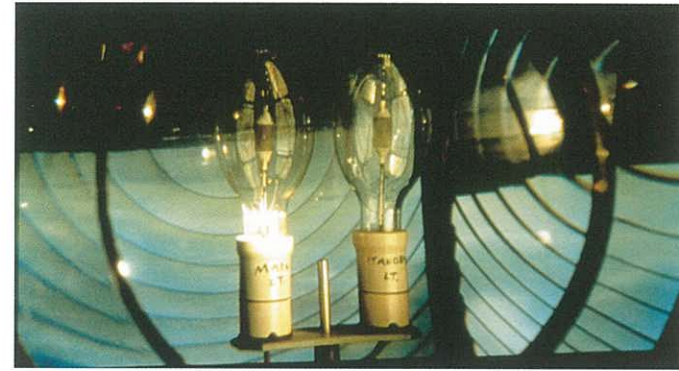


problem of time as a derived order of being and of the multiplicity of various realms of time is a recurring theme, often expressed as a matter of geometrical or nautical coordinates, in everything the artist has created. Whether she is considering the birth of a wave, a mariner's doomed obsession with a chronometer, the accelerated ruin of the twentieth-century built environment, the persistence of legend, the fleeting life of technologies of representation, the ephemerality of masterpieces, an ordinary sunset at the end of an historical era, or the event of an eclipse on an ordinary day at a farm, she does not merely juxtapose the cycles of natural, historical, and social time. Rather, she constantly brings before us the coincidence of our encounter with her work as part of the larger coincidence of her existence intersecting with the temporal phenomena that are her subjects.



No art could be more personal and yet no art could be less narcissistic. Her emphasis on coincidence and the emphasis coincidence has impressed on her own being remind us that coincidence is the intersection of multiple times within the frame of an individual moment observed from a single point of view. That point of view is both a fiction and a place of departure for the imagination. There is a detached and yet immediate *now* to the event of coincidence — a *punctum*, a point or mark where reality is pierced by an insight that is often a matter of imaginative transposition. Whereas ironic retrospection realigns the relations between causes and consequences and makes rather world-weary claims for the omniscience of the observer, the retrospection involved in noting coincidence is closer to awe— and the more disparate the times conjoined in coincidence, the deeper and more marveling is our observation. In Tacita Dean's work the sublimity of nature is full of surprises, and comedy and tragedy come into intermittent, random, and yet profound intersection with one another.

The most basic formal gestures of Dean's work involve the intersection of circular motion and cyclical time systems with sequential time and narrative development. For example, her two films entitled *Disappearance at Sea*, as stately in their formal coherence as a dance of planets or bees, reveal two kinds of images from within a



lighthouse: the cyclical figure-eight-like pattern of the lighthouse beam cast into the darkness as seen from the coincidence of the lens of the light meeting the view from the lens of the camera — and then, in the second film, the progression of frames, first in sequence and then in repetition as the camera, resting on the light's rotating lens, steadily panning the landscape through the windows. Underlying these patterns, or overlaying it, are narratives of the disappearances at sea of the amateur mariner Donald Crowhurst and the conceptual artist Bas Jan Ader. These narratives may seem to have nothing to do with each other except for the fact that Tacita Dean has made works that take them as preoccupations. And then we learn belatedly, as the artist herself learned belatedly, that in a locker in California opened after his death, Ader had left a book about Donald Crowhurst.

Such a sense of belatedness haunts all of Dean's work. She comes upon a world already made and already abandoned or decaying, yet she never 'appropriates' the things of this world as



curiosities or mere objects. Each has a narrative and that narrative intersects with every other narrative on some plane of knowing yet to be uncovered or revealed in the punctuating process of making art. Coincidence is of course the meeting place of freedom and determination: the artist's work takes up this theme as it intersects with the world and at the same time shows us the struggle between freedom and determination involved in both its making and reception. Belatedness is in fact what makes determination a source of freedom and, in the end, originality in Dean's work; this very belatedness is the means by which her art speaks to the present. Her early film of the process of building a ship in a bottle is a charming illustration of her aesthetic: the contingent fact of the bottle emptied by the drinking sailor, the patient and long editing of materials that creates the necessary connection between all the elements of the 'boat'; the pull of coincidence as the unifying string lifting all into place: then the world is inside out, the boat is in the bottle, the bottle no longer merely in the boat; bottles contain liquid against leakage into air, boats contain air against leakage into liquid. In this fragile image of boat and bottle now preserved and safe from the elements, the vehicle and tenor of metaphor swell and recede in turn.

Coincidence preserves experiences and knowledges from the ephemerality of time passing, making them, by their intersection, cohere as events and phenomena of significance. Loss is the counterforce to coincidence; the lost arts of certain crafts and technologies are preserved by the coincidences that are Dean's works themselves intersecting with such gestures in time. *Banewl*, the film that might be considered her masterpiece, records a total eclipse of the sun that occurred on 11 August, 1999 at 11:11 a.m. on the coast of Cornwall.







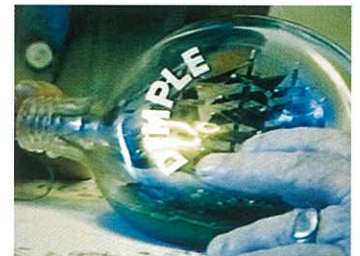
This event so cosmically joined to eternal cycles of matter and space intersects with the everyday—that is, sun-determined cycles—of life on a farm that has now in fact been vacated; the self-renewing world of agricultural work and animal life crosses monumental patterns of the sun's movement and local patterns of cloud formation and weather. Each time the film is viewed, the lives of the viewers coincide with a vanished moment in a vanished world. The gap in the continuity of the sun's light becomes replete with a human meaning that must necessarily be supplied and resupplied by acts of human intention and meaning. The film records a relation between the living world and eternity, yet this intersection now appears in the light of the farm's dispersal, so that it is the film itself that is the surviving, fragile, connection between these majestic dimensions of time.

In the West, the dominant metaphor for time as movement within an unspecified eternity is time as a river or flow. This liquification of time aptly indicates the notion of water's eroding power, the force of time in wearing down all things. Near the close of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid writes: "Time itself flows on with constant motion, just like a river, for no more than a river can the fleeting hour stand still. As wave is driven on by wave, and, itself pursued, pursues the one before, so the moments of time at once flee and follow, and are ever new."

He describes how every minute gives place to another, how night passes into day, morning into night, the sky passes through

its colors from red at sunrise to red at sunset, the moon waxes and wanes, the seasons change, human bodies pass from infancy to youth to middle and old age, earth and water are heavy and sink down, fire and air are light and rise up, the earth becomes liquid, water becomes air and wind, air flashes into the fiery atmosphere of the heavens, fire condenses and thickens into air, air into water, and water, under pressure, turns into earth. Rivers appear and disappear, marshes become deserts and deserts marshes, seashells lie far from the ocean, volcanoes become extinct, bees are born in the rotting carcasses of bulls, hornets in the carcasses of war horses; within the silence of the tomb, the rotting marrow forms into a snake. Ovid realizes that his own account is taking place in time and that as he has seemed to embrace time within his writing, so will time eventually overcome that inscription: "The day will end, and Phoebus sink his panting horses in the deep, before I recount all the things that have been altered to a different shape. So we see times change, and some nations gain strength, while others sink into obscurity."

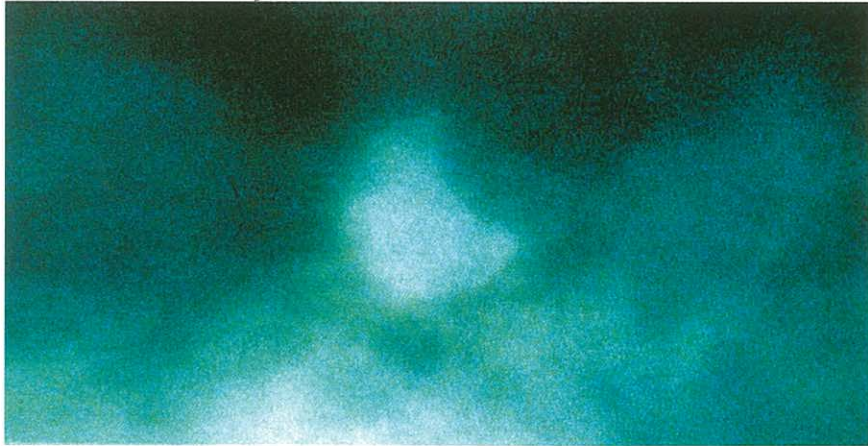
When Dean returns over and over to images of waves and water she returns the liquification of time to a state of eternity — the ceaselessness of the sea and the earth circling beneath the light of the sun. All inscription is abraded back into the earth and the earth itself will be abraded away into the sea. Her work is an archive of lost voices, extinct words, and vanished practices. Dean reminds us that the universe, though spatially symmetrical, displays a temporal asymmetry: galaxies appear to be distributed evenly in all directions, but rather than approaching each other, they are all receding from each other in time and so time appears as a *direction*. In our everyday experience of time, we similarly think of both the past and the future as commensurable infinities. But we have traces of the past, memories and records, and no traces of the future.





All of Dean's objects, images, and moving pictures have a memorializing and temporizing function at once. There is a picaresque aspect to her themes. In her wandering toward Smithson's 'spiral jetty' or the wrecked hull of Crowhurst's 'Teignmouth Electron', she uncovers evidence of the ruin and disappearance of all made things. If it is impossible to know what she will do next, it is inevitable that what she chooses to be subsequent will have to do with another coincidence between her movement through time and her encounter with time. What comes into relief will fall back into recession and there will be considerable beauty in the pulse of that disappearance — a disappearance that in the end acquires endurance through the form-giving work of art in time.





## Images

end pages:

*Bubble House* 1999, colour photograph

*A Bag of Air* 1995, 16mm film still

*A Bag of Air* 1995, 16mm film still

*A Bag of Air* 1995, 16mm film still

*Sound Mirrors* 1999, location photograph

*Delft Hydraulics* 1996, 16mm film still

*Disappearance at Sea* 1996, 16mm film still

*Disappearance at Sea* 1996, 16mm film still

*Teignmouth Electron* 2000, 16mm film still

*Teignmouth Electron* 2000, 16mm film still

*Teignmouth Electron* 1999, black and white photograph

*Banewl* 1999, 16mm film still

*How to put a boat in a bottle* 1995, video still

*How to put a boat in a bottle* 1995, video still

*Sound Mirrors* 1999, location photograph

*Sound Mirrors* 1999, location photograph

*Fernsehturm* 2001, 16mm film still

*Fernsehturm* 2001, 16mm film still

*Fernsehturm* 2001, 16mm film still

*Banewl* 1999, 16mm film still

all images courtesy of the artist, Frith Street Gallery, London  
and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York/Paris



## Works

*Disappearance at Sea* 1996  
16mm colour anamorphic, optical sound, 14 minutes

Camera: John Adderley  
Sound Transfer: Steve Felton  
With thanks to Jamie Bennett, Pippa Coles, Helen Davidson, Ian Fairnington, Thomas Stewart  
Anamorphic lens loaned by Joe Duntan  
Edited at Four Corners  
Dubbed by Warwick Sound  
Neg cut: Triad  
Original print by Rank Film Laboratories  
Exhibition print by Soho Images  
Filmed on location at St Abb's Head, Berwickshire  
Made for *Berwick Ramparts Project* 1996

*Delft Hydraulics* 1996  
16mm black and white, optical sound, 3 minutes

Camera: Tacita Dean  
Sound Assistants: Esther Boende, Roland Groenenboom  
Sound Transfer: Steve Felton  
Edited at Four Corners  
Dubbed by Studiosound  
Neg cut: Triad  
Original print by Rank Film Laboratories  
Exhibition print by Soho Images  
Filmed on location at Delft Hydraulics, De Voorst, The Netherlands

*Trying to find the Spiral Jetty* 1997  
Audio CD, 27 minutes

With Tacita Dean, Gregory Sax  
Sound Editor: Tacita Dean  
Digital Sound Post Productions:  
The Sound Design Company  
With thanks to Steve Felton, Sandra Portman  
Recorded on location at Rozel Point, Great Salt lake, Utah

*Bubble House* 1999  
16mm, colour, optical sound, 7 minutes

Camera: Tacita Dean  
Assistant: Kjetil Berge  
Sound Transfer: Four Corners  
With thanks to John Adderley  
Edited at Four Corners  
Dubbed by Worldwide Sound  
Optical Sound Transfer:  
Martin Sawyer Sound Services  
Neg cut: TKT Film Services  
Original print by Metrocolour  
Exhibition print by Soho Images  
Filmed on location on Cayman Brac

*Sound Mirrors* 1999  
16mm black and white, optical sound, 7 minutes

Camera: Tacita Dean  
Assistants: Mathew Hale, Maya Orme, Myles Orme, Ryan Orme  
Sound Editor: Paul Hill  
Digital Sound Post Production: Wexner Center Media Arts Program  
With thanks John Adderley, Steve Felton and Julie Crowe  
Edited at Four Corners  
Optical sound transfer:  
Martin Sawyer Sound Services  
Neg cut: TKT Film Services  
Original print by Metrocolour  
Exhibition print by Soho Images  
Filmed on location at Denge Sound Mirrors in Kent  
Made for the Public Art Development Trust *Fouth Wall* Project, The National Theatre, London



*Banewl* 1999

16mm colour anamorphic, optical sound, 63 minutes

Assistant Director: Mathew Hale  
Director of Photography: John Adderley  
Camera Operators: Jamie Cairney, Nick MacRae,  
Tom Wright  
Clapper Loaders: Chris Connatty, Sam McCourt  
Sun Tracking Motion Control: Michael Geissler,  
Lucien Kennedy-Lamb, Mark Seaton from  
Tronbrook Ltd

Anamorphic lenses loaned by Joe Duntan, with  
thanks to Mason Cardiff  
Arriflex loaned by Arri GB Ltd, with thanks to Alan  
Fyfe

ACL Camera and Magazines loaned by  
Graeme Stubbings and Simon Sturtees  
Sound Recordists: Camden Logan, Sara Sender  
Digital Sound Post Production:

The Sound Design Company  
Sound Editor: James Harrison  
Runners: Katy English, Rose Lord, Emily Whittle  
Pinhole Research and Stills Photography:  
Richard Torchia

Eclipse Photography Consultant: Francisco Diego  
Catering: Katy English

Barbecue: Blaise Vasseur, Lewis Horsman  
With thanks to Emma Tod and Guy Waddell,  
Angela Adderley, Steve Felton, Anya Gallaccio,  
Martyn Ridgeway

With special thanks Norman Truscott; the cowman,  
Andrew Marment and Roger Eddy for the loan of  
the cockerels; Ian Stuart for his advice on the  
local weather; Blue and David and Helen Hoskin  
for helping us film Burnewhall Farm and their  
Pengwamron Herd of Pedigree Holstein Friesians

Edited at Four Corners

Neg cut: TKT Film Services

Optical Sound Transfer:

Martin Sawyer Sound Services

Original print by Metrocolour

Exhibition print by Soho Images

Originated in Kodak Motion Picture Film  
Filmed during the total eclipse of the sun,  
Burnewhall Farm, St Buryan, Cornwall,  
11 August 1999

Commissioned by St Ives International for *As Dark  
As Light* 1999, with thanks to Katy Sender  
Supported by The National Lottery through The Arts  
Council of England, Visual Arts Department of The  
Arts Council of England, South West Arts, South  
West Media Development Agency, Elephant Trust,  
Henry Moore Foundation, Frith Street Gallery,  
London, Marian Goodman Gallery, New York

*Teignmouth Electron* 1999

16mm, colour, optical sound, 7 minutes

Camera: Tacita Dean  
Assistant: Kjetil Berge  
Sound Editor: James Harrison  
Digital Sound Post Production:  
The Sound Design Company  
With thanks to John Adderley, Steve Felton,  
David Spence, National Maritime Museum,  
Greenwich

Edited at Four Corners

Dubbed by Worldwide Sound

Optical Sound Transfer:

Martin Sawyer Sound Services

Neg cut: TKT Film Services

Original print by Metrocolour

Exhibition print by Soho Images

Filmed on location on Cayman Brac

*Teignmouth Electron* 1999

Black and white photograph  
136 x 101 cm

*Totality* 2000

16mm colour anamorphic, mute 11 minutes

Assistant Director: Mathew Hale  
Director of Photography: John Adderley  
Camera Operators: Jamie Cairney, Nick MacRae,  
Tom Wright

Clapper Loaders: Chris Connatty, Sam McCourt  
Sun Tracking Motion Control: Michael Geissler,  
Lucien Kennedy-Lamb, Mark Seaton  
from Tronbrook Ltd

Anamorphic lenses loaned by Joe Duntan,  
with thanks to Mason Cardiff

Arriflex loaned by Arri GB Ltd,  
with thanks to Alan Fyfe

ACL Camera and Magazines loaned by Graeme  
Stubbings and Simon Sturtees  
Runners: Katy English, Rose Lord, Emily Whittle  
Pinhole Research and Stills Photography:

Richard Torchia  
Eclipse Photography Consultant:  
Francisco Diego

Catering: Katy English  
Barbecue: Blaise Vasseur, Lewis Horsman  
With thanks to Emma Tod and Guy Waddell,  
Angela Adderley, Steve Felton, Anya Gallaccio,  
Martyn Ridgeway

With special thanks to Norman Truscott;  
Ian Stuart, David and Helen Hosking  
Edited at Four Corners

Neg cut: TKT Film Services

Optical Sound Transfer:

Martin Sawyer Sound Services

Original print by Metrocolour

Exhibition print by Soho Images

Originated in Kodak Motion Picture Film  
Filmed during the total eclipse of the sun, Burnewhall  
Farm, St Buryan, Cornwall, 11 August 1999

*Fernsehturm* 2001

16mm colour anamorphic, optical sound, 44 minutes

Assistant Director: Mathew Hale  
Director of Photography: John Adderley  
Camera Operators: Jamie Cairney, Tom Wright  
Clapper Loader: Chris Connatty

Anamorphic lenses loaned by Joe Duntan

Project Coordinator: Friedrich Meschede

Locations Manager: Rüdiger Lange

Locations Assistant: Bettina Springer

With thanks to the Staff and Guests of the Fernsehturm  
especially Herr Wellner, Heinz Schulz and Hans Jurczik

Keyboard Player: Jo Larisch

Additional German Dialogue: Karin Fiedler,  
Friedrich Meschede

Sound Editor: James Harrison

Foley Artist: Paula Boram

Foley Mixers: Dave Tyler, Edward Colyer

Digital Sound Post Production:

The Sound Design Company

With thanks to Steve Felton

Edited at Thomas Geyer Filmproduktion

Optical Sound Transfer:

Martin Sawyer Sound Services

Neg cut: TKT Film Services

Printed by Soho Images, with thanks to Len Thornton

Originated on Kodak Motion Picture Film

Supported by Tate; Frith Street Gallery, London; Marian

Goodman Gallery, New York; Berliner

Künstlerprogramm/DAAD

All works courtesy of the artist, Frith Street Gallery,  
London; Marian Goodman, New York/Paris

## Tacita Dean

Tacita Dean's work seeks connections - between history and the present, fact and fiction. Her starting point can be a chance encounter or discovery. Dean pursues her investigation like a detective, piecing together evidence which is then presented in a loosely woven, inconclusive narrative.

Born in Canterbury in 1965; she studied at Falmouth School of Art and the Slade School of Fine Art, London. Her work has been exhibited widely both nationally and internationally including De Pont Foundation, Tilburg, Netherlands, ICA Philadelphia and tour (1998). Dundee Contemporary Arts, Newlyn Art Gallery, Cornwall (1999). Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel (2000). Sala Montcada de la Fundació "la Caixa", Barcelona, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona; Tate Britain; *Elusive Paradise - The Millennium Prize*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (2001).

Tacita Dean is represented by Frith Street Gallery, London and Marion Goodman Gallery, New York and Paris

## Susan Stewart

Susan Stewart is a poet and critic. Her most recent books are *The Forest* and the forthcoming *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*.

published by the Melbourne Festival to  
conincide with the exhibition of

Tacita Dean

SPAN Galleries, Melbourne, Australia  
10 October - 26 October 2001

curator: Juliana Engberg  
project manager: Rebecca Coates  
technician: Colin Griffiths

with thanks to Jane Hamlyn, Rose Lord, Dale  
McFarland, Peter Berwick at Frith Street  
Gallery, London; Emma Kranz, Sue Hampel at  
SPAN; Jo Markac, A.L.M. Pty, Ltd; David  
Thomas; Ross Brown, Powerstation;  
Corporate Culture, Australia; Mathew Hale



