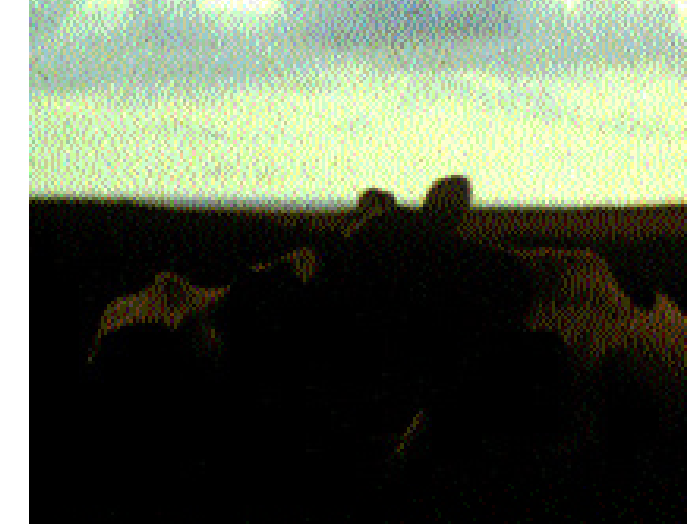
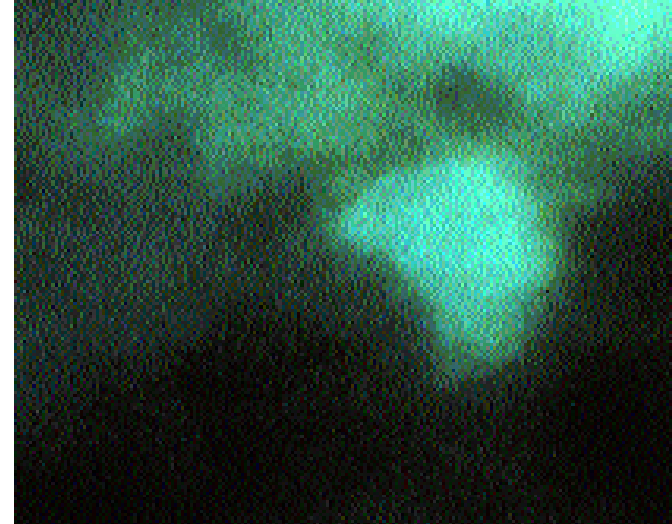




Tacita Dean/MATRIX 189

“It is beyond rational explanation, but for some short time after that day [of the solar eclipse], I really felt like I would never recognize the sun again. The eclipse was about waiting for darkness to happen and then equally for the return of a normal sun. The clouds allowed us to experience this coincidence of cosmic time and scale



## Tacita Dean/MATRIX 189

### Banewl

November 29, 2000 – January 28, 2001

University of California  
Berkeley Art Museum

Concealment, serendipity, story telling, duration, and process are all recurring concerns in British conceptual artist Tacita Dean’s work.<sup>2</sup> Films are an important element of her art; lasting several minutes, they are shown on a continuous loop, and are always accompanied by a text crafted by the artist. But in contrast to the film installation format employed by many of her peers, Dean’s films are shown in a traditional environment with viewers seated in a darkened space facing a screen, and are intended to be watched as films. Dean can also be distinguished from other Young British Artists in her formal, straightforward use of media and the simple, unsensational content of her work. In addition to her 16mm films, Dean has created large-scale blackboard drawings, photographs, and acoustic works. Thus, she must be considered as a filmmaker, a writer, an object maker, a drafts-person, an installation artist, a photographer, and a radio producer.

Dean’s subjects range from beards, breasts, and saints to boats, lighthouses, and cows. There is an underlying obsessive quality to her art, a strange but mesmerizing amalgam of thoughts and occurrences, the essence of which may be an attempt to reveal connections between seeming opposites. As art historian Patrick Murphy has noted, her works can be seen as investigations, a series of corollaries between truth and fiction, video and film, subject and medium, drawing and idea, science and art.<sup>3</sup>

At sixty-three minutes, *Banewl* (1999), the film that comprises Dean’s MATRIX installation, is of unusual length for the artist. The 16mm anamorphic film was shot in Cornwall, England, during last year’s total eclipse of the sun. Using four cameras, the piece slowly moves through the event from the overcast morning to the appearance of the partially eclipsed sun later in the day. Dean explains that, while the film was initially intended to be about the event, the resulting work is about the place in which it occurred. *Banewl* begins with several establishing shots: the sky, a tree and meadow, the barn and stable of a farm, and an old stone farmhouse. The sound track is constant: the ocean, chirping birds, squawking gulls, buzzing insects, a helicopter, and cows alternately mooing and chewing. The formal qualities of the film are forefronted: Dean uses a limited palette, a slow and steady pace, a static camera position, and very long shots. Action shots, in which cows walk around and eat, are interspersed with static shots of the monochromatic sky. Due to the

use of an anamorphic lens, the projection is strikingly horizontal, thereby emphasizing the reference to historical landscape painting. *Banewl* recalls the work of seventeenth-century Dutch painter Aelbert Cuyp, known for his moody, open scenes of cows, as well as that of John Constable and the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British pastoral landscape tradition. The experience of *Banewl* is about waiting and watch-ing, for the passage of time and the reemergence of light.

*Banewl* is characterized by duality and juxtaposition. There are two narratives. The first comprises the daily rituals of farm life, including the task of taking the cows out to pasture. The second is the extraordinary event of a total solar eclipse. The film is split into two parts, as if to ensure that the viewer grasp the subtlety of the subject. In the first half, the effect of totality, the covering of the sun by the moon, is witnessed on the earth through the changing behavior of the cows. Through the focus on the sun and the clouds, totality is experienced in the sky in the second half of the film. Abstract images of sky alternate with representational images of earth that are then horizontally divided on the screen into equal parts sky and ground. Dean presents a series of contrasting pairs: time against sequence, image against sound, day against night, light against dark, sun against moon, and, finally, the distinction between the spelling (Burnewhall) and pronunciation (Banewl) of the farm on which the film is shot.

In *Banewl* Dean highlights the inherent magic in bringing about darkness in the middle of the day. The artist used some of her footage of the eclipse to make another film, *Totality* (2000). As Dean describes it, in this work “you are looking directly at the sun; it is all but entirely covered. Suddenly the moon seems to lurch across it, and the sun is gone. For two minutes and six seconds there is nothing.” *Totality* is comprised of a slowly shifting monochromatic gray screen, barely distinguishable from a blank screen. It is an extremely subtle work, so subtle that the uninformed viewer might not notice the progression or even the existence of the film.

*Disappearance at Sea* (1996) is loosely inspired by Donald Crowhurst’s failed around-the-world sea voyage. He was one of nine competitors in The Sunday Times Golden Globe Race to be the first to circumnavigate the world solo and nonstop. His disappearance was preceded by a deception regarding his whereabouts and supposed lead in the race. Extreme isolation and distress marked his eventual death at sea. Despite the narrative basis, the subject of Dean’s film is

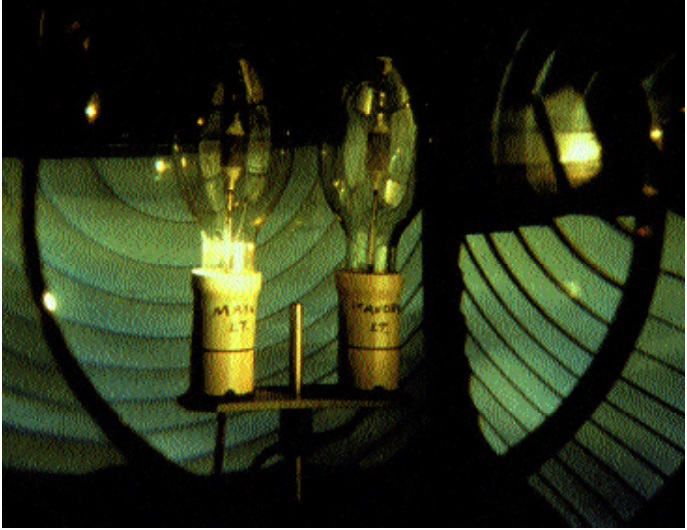
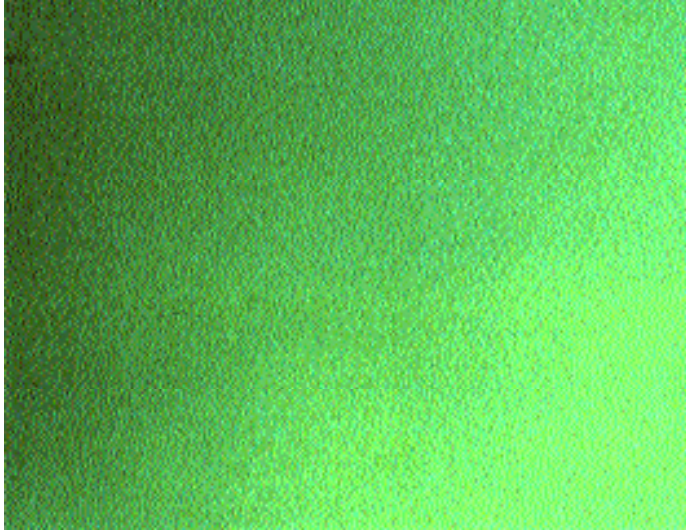
*Banewl*, 1999, film still. Photo courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, and Frith Street Gallery, London.

the mechanism of a lighthouse. Commissioned for presentation in the lighthouse at Berwick-upon-Tweed, England, the film consists of the movement of time and light from day into night.<sup>4</sup> Thus, *Disappearance at Sea* can be seen as a metaphorical precursor to *Banewl*. Dean describes the environment: “At night, you watch in the blackness for the rotations of the lighthouse and you decipher time in the gaps between the flashes. Without this cipher, there is no time. Crowhurst’s ‘time-madness,’ where he believed he was floating through prehistory, utterly alone in an unforgiving seascape so far removed from human contact, is only just possible to imagine standing in the last human place where the ocean starts and the land ends in a solitary beacon of safety.”<sup>5</sup> *Disappearance at Sea* is about the phenomenon of projection, a beam of light being transmitted through a lens—in actuality, the essence of film.<sup>6</sup> Here, real and filmic space merge seamlessly.

Dean is fascinated with the fictions underlying truth. The Teigenmouth Electron, Crowhurst’s boat, is the surviving icon from which any truth about Crowhurst’s journey can be deciphered. Dean therefore tracked the current location of the boat, to Cayman Brac Island. *Teigenmouth Electron* (2000) records her trip there to photograph and explore the vessel. Ironically Dean’s images are classic shots of a tropical island paradise with sunny skies and calm water, the opposite climate and conditions of those which Crowhurst encountered.

In 1997, after having spent two weeks at the Sundance Institute Screenwriters Lab, Dean embarked on a pilgrimage of sorts to Rozel Point on the shores of the Great Salt Lake, the site of Robert Smithson’s infamous earth work *Spiral Jetty*. *Trying to Find the Spiral Jetty* (1997) is a twenty-seven-minute-long sound work presented as an imageless “road movie.”<sup>7</sup> Contrived as an in-car commentary, positioning the viewer in the backseat, the recording is largely [re]constructed. In fact, Dean recorded only the end of the actual voyage. The remainder was created through an exchange of audio tapes sent transatlantically between the artist and her companion. The product was based on their individual memories of the trip. Such overlay of memory and fictionalization of narrative are characteristic elements in much of Dean’s work. Equally revelatory is Dean’s fascination with disappearance: she traveled to Rozel Point based on a rumor she had heard in New York that

*Banewl*, 1999, film still. Photo courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, and Frith Street Gallery, London.



the *Spiral Jetty* had reappeared. Dean has made several works concerned with disappearance, including those of the *Spiral Jetty* and David Crowhurst, the mysterious vanishing of Dutch conceptual artist Bas Jan Ader, and the apparent disappearance of the sun.

The first of Sol LeWitt's "Sentences on Conceptual Art" reads, "Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach."<sup>8</sup> Dean's fascination with the blurred boundaries between truth and reality, knowing and premonition, art and magic locate her firmly within the tradition of Conceptual Art as defined by LeWitt. Dean's creations, be they filmic, photographic, literary, or aural, reflect her ongoing interest in the hidden, the evolving, and the alchemical.

Heidi Zuckerman Jacobson  
Phyllis Wattis MATRIX Curator

<sup>1</sup> Tacita Dean, "an aside," in *Tacita Dean: Selected Works from 1994-2000* (Basel, Switzerland: Museum für Gegenwartskunst, 2000), p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Higgs, "Tacita Dean," in *Cream: Contemporary Art in Culture* (London, U.K.: Phaidon, 1998), p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> Patrick T. Murphy, "Dean's Alembic—An Introduction to the Art of Tacita Dean," in *Tacita Dean* (Philadelphia: The Institute for Contemporary Art, 1998), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Dean, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Barry Schwabsky, "Cine Qua Non: The Art of Tacita Dean," *Artforum*, March 1999, p. 100.

<sup>7</sup> Higgs, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>8</sup> Theodora Vischer, "Afterword," in *Tacita Dean: Selected Works from 1994-2000*, *loc. cit.*, p. 54. Sol LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art," originally published in 0–9 (New York: 1969) and *Art Language* (London, U. K.: May 1969).

Tacita Dean was born in 1965 in Canterbury, England. She attended the Falmouth School of Art in Falmouth, England; the Supreme School of Fine Art in Athens, Greece; and the Slade School of Fine Art in London, England. Currently, Dean lives and works in London.

#### Selected Solo Exhibitions

2000  
Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel, Switzerland  
Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, NY  
Blackwekk Tunnel ventilation shaft, Millennium Dome, London, U.K.

1999  
Artist in Residence, Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH  
Madison Art Center, Madison, WI  
Marian Goodman Galerie, Paris, France  
Millennium Sculpture Project, London, U.K.

"Banewl," Newlyn Art Gallery, Penzance, Cornwall, U.K.  
Site-specific work for Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, U.K.

1998  
Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA  
De Pont Foundation, Tilburg, The Netherlands  
"Statements," Frith Street Gallery, London, U.K.

1997  
Witte de With, center for contemporary art, Rotterdam, The Netherlands  
The Drawing Room, The Drawing Center, New York, NY  
Frith Street Gallery, London, U.K.

1996  
"Foley Artist," Art Now Project Room, Tate Gallery, London, U.K.

1995  
"Clear Sky, Upper Air," Frith Street Gallery, London, U.K.  
"Galerie La Box," Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Bourges, France

#### Selected Group Exhibitions

2000  
"The Sea and the Sky," Beaver College Art Gallery, Glenside, PA  
"Mixing Memory and Desire—Wunsch und Erinnerung," Kunstmuseum Luzern, Lucerne, Switzerland

1999  
"Robert Smithson, Tacita Dean and the Spiral Jetty: A program of audio and film at the rooftop Urban

*Disappearance at Sea*, 1996, film still. Photo courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, and Frith Street Gallery, London.

"Park Project," DIA Center for the Arts, New York, NY  
"new visions of the sea," National Maritime Museum, London, U.K.  
"0 to 60 in 10 Years," Frith Street Gallery, London, U.K.  
"Geschichten des Augenblicks: An Exhibition on Narration and Slowness," Lenbachhaus Kunstbau, Munich, Germany  
"Appliance of Science," Frith Street Gallery, London, U.K.  
"Un monde réel," Cartier Foundation, Paris, France

1998  
The Turner Prize, Tate Gallery, London, U.K.  
"Breaking Ground," Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, NY  
"La Terre est Ronde—Nouvelle narration," Musée de Rochechouart, Rochechouart, France  
"Wounds: Between Democracy and Redemption in Contemporary Art," Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden

1997  
"At One Remove," Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, U.K.  
Screenwriters Lab, Sundance Institute, Utah  
"The Frame of Time—Openmuseum," Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Limburg, Belgium

"Flexible," Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich, Switzerland  
International Film Festival, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

1996  
"CCATV," Centre for Contemporary Art, Glasgow, Scotland  
Art Node Foundation, Stockholm, Sweden  
"State of Mind," Centrum Beeldende Kunst, Rotterdam, The Netherlands  
"Swinging the Lead," International Festival of the Sea, Bristol, U.K.

"Berwick Ramparts Project," Berwick-upon-Tweed, U.K.  
1995  
"Mysterium Alltag, Hammoniale der Frauen," Kampnagel, Hamburg, Germany  
"Whistling Women," Royal Festival Hall, London, U.K.  
"Videos and Films by Artists," Ateliers d'Artistes de la ville de Marseille, France  
"British Art Show 4," Manchester, U.K.; Edinburgh, Scotland; and Cardiff, Wales

#### Selected Catalogues and Publications

*Tacita Dean: Selected Works from 1994-2000*, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel, Switzerland, 2000.  
*Tacita Dean*, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, 1998.  
*Cream: Contemporary Art in Culture*, Phaidon Press, London, U.K., 1998.  
*Wounds: Between Democracy and Redemption in Contemporary Art*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden, 1998.

*Teigenmouth Electron*, 2000, film still. Photo courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, and Frith Street Gallery, London.

*At One Remove*, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, U.K., 1997.  
*Tacita Dean: Missing Narratives*, Witte de With, center for contemporary art, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 1997.  
*Tacita Dean*, Ecole National de Beaux-Arts, Bourges, France, 1995.  
*Mise en scène*, Institute of Contemporary Art, London, U.K., 1994.

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Brownrigg, Silvia. "Interview with a Dead Deceiver," *Frieze*, March/April 1998, pp. 70-72.  
Cork, Richard. "Out with a clop, whir and clunk," *The Times*, London, September 3, 1996.  
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Schwabsky, Barry. "Cine Qua Non," *Artforum*, March 1999, vol. 37, no. 7, pp. 98-102.  
Searle, Adrian. "Noises off," *The Guardian*, August 27, 1996.  
Wollen, Peter. "Tacita Dean," *Afterall*, 1999, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 105-112.

#### Work in MATRIX

Tacita Dean  
*Banewl*, 1999  
16mm color anamorphic film, 63 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist; Marian Goodman Gallery, New York; and Frith Street Gallery, London

Screening schedule:  
11:45 a.m. , 1:45 p.m., 3:45 p.m., 5:45 p.m. (Thursdays only)

#### Please note:

Heidi Zuckerman Jacobson will give a curator's walkthrough of the exhibition on Thursday, January 25, 2001, at 12:15 p.m.

**The MATRIX Program at the UC Berkeley Art Museum is made possible by the generous endowment gift of Phyllis Wattis.**

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The museum also wishes to thank Nancy Goldman, Head of the Pacific Film Archive Libraru, for offering her technical expertise.

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cover: *Banewl*, 1999, film still. Photo courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, and Frith Street Gallery, London.  
above: *Rozel Point, Great Salt Lake, Utah*, 1997, 35mm color slide projection from *Trying to Find the Spiral Jetty*, 1997. Photo courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, and Frith Street Gallery, London.

*Totality*, 2000, film still. Photo courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, and Frith Street Gallery, London.