



**Chris Killip  
Graham Smith**

20/20 brings together work by British photographers Chris Killip (1946-2020) and Graham Smith (1947) for a reconceived telling of their seminal show, *Another Country*, originally exhibited at the Serpentine Gallery, London, in 1985.

Killip and Smith photographed in the North East of England throughout the 1970s and 1980s at a time when heavy industry was still thriving, followed by an unforeseen and devastating collapse. They documented the individuals and communities whose lives depended on these industries, people who were facing a politically forced change to the landscape and their ways of life that had been settled for generations.

Smith mostly worked within the region he was born and grew up in, and observed the industrial architecture, people, and history of the Teesside area. He photographed people at work and in specific Middlesbrough and South Bank pubs dependent on heavy industry, pubs used by his parents. His photographs of people drinking, often friends and family, and the spirit of bar-room spaces depict a warm interior to the hard industrial exterior surroundings. During twenty years of documenting the landscape, people, and traditions that were being irrevocably changed, Smith's work formed a complex picture of a place and culture he knew intimately.

Killip's first engagement with the North East was through a two-year Northern Arts Fellowship which began a lengthy stay of over 15 years. During this time, he spent extended periods within the communities of the sea coal camp on Lynemouth beach, the tight-knit fishing village of Skinningrove, and a punk music cooperative in Gateshead. He also observed the ordinary day-to-day life in and around the Tyneside area where he lived, looking at the changes to housing, and often the activities of young people whose futures looked increasingly uncertain. Together his images formed a symbolic landscape of Britain at the time, immortalised in his book *In Flagrate* published in 1988.

The two photographers first met in 1975 through Amber, a film and photography collective in Newcastle upon Tyne. They were both involved in this fledgling group of creative individuals, whose philosophy was to hold witness to working class communities and culture of the region. It was here that Killip and Smith formed a friendship that was built as much on a shared outlook, as it was to a seriousness for their work and craftsmanship. Debates about how best to represent the place they worked in, and shared anecdotes of their experiences with the people that they worked with, nurtured a relationship that inspired some of the most seminal photographs made in post war Britain.

*Another Country*, when it was first shown at the Serpentine Gallery, displayed their work anonymously with no distinctions or separations between each of the two artists. Together, the images combined to form a collective vision of what was happening in the North East at the time. It presented an indictment on the effects that political-decision making had on those most vulnerable to economic change, but also showed the complexities of the people, their character and a togetherness of working class culture that was colliding with the capital driven politics of the time.

On view in Hyde Park, within the capital city where policies were made and the economy operated from, the exhibition presented a contrasting reality from the surroundings of the metropolitan venue. Large scale prints made by Killip and Smith, showed in black and white, scenes of communities laid waste by political ideals, and hard work followed by the aftermath of hard unemployment. The exhibition toured to the Arnolfini in Bristol and to the Auckland Museum in New Zealand before being acquired by the National Museum of Photography in Bradford. Despite the ephemerality of exhibitions, and the lack of a publication for the show, it has lived on in the memories of those who attended, and continues to be revisited as a powerful and progressive approach to exhibition making.

When gallerist Augusta Edwards proposed a retelling of *Another Country* in 2019, it was in the wake of an election year and a short time before the impending Covid pandemic, which highlighted disparities in British society along geographical lines. Shown again today, the photographs of Chris Killip and Graham Smith allow us to revisit a key reference in British photographic history whilst giving a view of another country that feels both distant and familiar in equal measures.

20/20 is curated by Augusta Edwards and was first shown at Augusta Edwards Fine Art, London, 2022. Introduction text by Isaac Blease.