

ROB TUFNELL

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**47 BEDFORD STREET
LONDON WC2E 9HA**

**STEPHEN SUTCLIFFE
'YOU CAN COME IN BUT YOU WON'T LIKE IT'
5 – 28 OCTOBER 2023**

Rob Tufnell presents two short films by Stephen Sutcliffe.

'September Song' (2023) incorporates archive footage of the World Coal Carrying Championship in Gawthorpe, Yorkshire. Sutcliffe lived in the village in the 1970s and 1980s. The hyperbolic Championship, began following a bet made in 1965 between a coal miner and a farmer in a pub. They sought to determine which of them could carry a 50kg sack of coal from the site of the Shaw Cross Colliery to the village maypole quickest. The race subsequently became an annual event. The soundtrack to Sutcliffe's film is an orchestral adaptation of the song 'Be Not Too Hard' that Donovan Leitch created using Christopher Logue's poem, 'September Song', for Ken Loach's film adaptation of Nell Dunn's novel 'Poor Cow' (respectively 1968, 1966, 1966, 1967 and 1967). Logue's sympathetic lament for mankind is quoted by Sutcliffe without specifically being incorporated within the film. Once sponsored by British Coal, the World Coal Carrying Championship is now sponsored by a local undertaker.

'City of Dreadful Something' (2019) uses a reading by George Szirtes of fellow poet Martin Bell's sequence of the same name (1967). Bell's damning depiction of Leeds ('Leeds is hell...') is accompanied by Google Street View footage that retraces part of Sutcliffe's father's bread van delivery route in the city in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The journey is punctuated by seemingly unrelated imagery taken from the covers of Anarchy (1961-1970). Copies of the magazine are held in the archives of the poet and art critic, Herbert Read at the University of Leeds. Sutcliffe isolates and animates Rufus Segar's illustrations to create brief glimpses of synchronicity in the otherwise incongruous material.

Sutcliffe's films are accompanied by Christopher Logue's poster poem: 'September Song' (1966). Designed by Germano Facetti, it incorporates a historical photograph of the cowboy Rube Burroughs, in an open casket after he was shot dead in Sioux City in 1879.

Sutcliffe would like to thank Lucy Byatt and Hospitalfield, Abroath and also the Yorkshire Film Archive for their support in the making of 'September Song'. 'City of Dreadful Something' was commissioned by Pavilion for an exhibition in the Brotherton Gallery, University of Leeds: 'Art in an Electric Atmosphere: The Library and Archive of Herbert Read' (2020).

Opening reception Thursday 5 October, 18.00 – 20.00
Exhibition open Saturdays 12.00 – 17.00, and by appointment
For further information please contact mail@robtufnell.com