

HYBRID

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RIVER CROSSINGS

Camerawork and various
East End locations, London
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Nick Stewart's installation *Beyond the Pale* was located in a disused staircase off the northbound platform of Shadwell tube station. The station building to which this stair once led was demolished in the early '80s: the only reminder of those days was a damp and decayed London Underground map bearing the memorable graffiti, "Margaret Thatcher is pregnant from black men".

Stewart's video projection gave us a series of anonymous ghost commuters, who trudged up another, phantom, set of stairs. Lights sputtered and the commuters were gone, replaced with a tumultuous rabble of pilgrims descending the rocky slopes of Croagh Patrick in Ireland. *Beyond the Pale* was (thank goodness) far more than an examination of "Anglo-Irish relations ... in the context of the underground commuter", as Camerawork's reductive explanatory text claimed. By conflating these images Stewart seemed to question our reading of them. Aloneness in London's rush hour seems, initially, as unlikely as spiritual improvement in the clamour of the Croagh Patrick pilgrimage. This was a rich, poetic work and Stewart also evoked some of the fear and the excitement of the forbidden space, the wrong turning. One was reminded that London rests upon networks, generations, of such disused subterranea.

With the help of a few working steam engines, Stubbs and Gawthrop aimed to investigate post-industrial decline and the coal industry. The sounds of steam and shovelled coal were put through a powerful PA and, while locomotives chuffed up and down the line, Stubbs and co. walked around the audience with walkie-talkies upon which one could hear fragments of statistics regarding the aforementioned post-industrial decline and the coal industry. As to whether this actually constituted an investigation I remain unconvinced. Unlike Nick Stewart's work at Shadwell tube station, the piece never really exceeded its own rhetoric.

Tony White

Tony White is a performance artist and writer, and programmes performance at the Showroom Gallery in East London.