

Introduction: Simon Roberts (né en 1974) est un photographe britannique qui s'intéresse beaucoup aux paysages, aux territoires, aux lieux et aux personnes qui les habitent. Les questions d'identité et d'appartenance sont très présentes dans son œuvre. Il a mené de nombreux projets en Normandie.

Simon Roberts est soutenu le Centre Photographique Rouen Normandie, où il a été en résidence.

Il a fait l'objet d'une exposition monographique, 'Nos jours de fêtes', présentée à Rouen (76) en 2017, puis à Flamanville (50) en 2021.

Simon Roberts était l'un des invités de la Journée culturelle anglophone de novembre 2022.

<https://www.simoncroberts.com/>

Contact pour les projets éducatifs du Centre Photographique Rouen Normandie (au 01/01/2024):

Yvan Lebocey

T. : +33 (0)6 66 60 86 18

education@centrephotographique.com

<https://centrephotographique.com/>

'Stonehenge, Amesbury, Wiltshire, 3rd of August, 2013'



Audio recording - duration: 1 min 46 sec

Script:

“This photograph is called ‘Stonehenge, Amesbury, Wiltshire, 3rd of August, 2013’. For many English tourists of the romantic Victorian period, Stonehenge was a staging post on the journey to Wales. Today, it receives over 1 million visitors a year and is a World Heritage site. When it was first opened to the public, it was possible to walk among and even climb on the stones. However, they were roped off by English Heritage in 1977 due to problems with erosion. Today, despite attempts to guide visitors to the area’s wider neolithic landscape, tourists always want to see the big one. Such is a paradox of modern tourism that sites have to be protected and promoted at the same time. As Francis Pryor, the author of *The Making of the English landscape* writes, “the ever present visitors at Stonehenge have themselves become a feature of the modern Stonehenge landscape. And as the crowds leave with their Stonehenge hats, Stonehenge t-shirts, Stonehenge Christmas decorations, Stonehenge beer and gin, they are taking with them pieces of this place, just as surely as Victorian tourists literally chipped chunks off for their mantelpieces.” In recent times, Stonehenge has become a disturbing history as an icon for English and British nationalists, and has increasingly become a political plaything for right-leaning newspapers in recent years, a symbol of Brexit Britain.”

Simon Roberts, February 2024

‘Willy Lott’s House at Flatford, East Bergholt, Suffolk, 20th of July 2014’



Audio recording - duration: 2 min 33 sec

Script:

“This photograph is called ‘Willy Lott’s House at Flatford, East Bergholt, Suffolk, 20th of July 2014’ and features in my book *Merrie Albion: Landscape Studies of a Small Island*. Visitors to Constable country as it came to be called in his own lifetime are often surprised by how small it first seems on the ground. Many of the sites of John Constable’s major paintings, such as ‘The Hay Wain’ (1821), are located within a few miles of Flatford Mill. On the surface, ‘The Hay Wain’ is an image of an idyllic pastoral scene, but in

its time it was revolutionary. Visitors to the Royal Academy in London in 1821 were horrified that Constable should exhibit a piece of local landscape on a scale usually reserved for subjects from the Bible, or national history. It was painted during a period when England was engaged in bloody war against France. There was turbulence in the countryside and industrial revolution in the cities. All the most significant developments in English landscape art have happened at a time of great national crisis, the Napoleonic wars, the 1st and 2nd World wars, when Britain was cut off from the continent and our artists were compelled to look inwards. In terms of the geography of Flatford, over the past twenty years, many of the views around Willy Lott's house have been cleared of blocking trees and vegetation, so that the landscape on the ground now imitates that in Constable's paintings, no matter what licence the painter took in his own time, assembling pictures from a variety of sources. Constable's paintings of Suffolk have been credited for putting parts of the county previously thought of as unremarkable on the picturesque map. Visitors act out their own roles in this fantasy where time stands still, and yet the scene is charged with a sentiment of the picturesque, that notion so intertwined with the English landscape, where the simplest countryside resembles a picture itself, charming and quaint. To Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, Constable's landscapes were so deeply etched into the landscape, that they had ceased to be separated from it. "a plough [team] coming over the brow of a hill, the sight that has been seen in England since England was a land."

Simon Roberts, February 2024

Key words:

Stonehenge, Victorian era, tourism, mass tourism, Francis Pryor, heritage, nationalism, Simon Roberts, Brexit, John Constable, The Hay Wain, Suffolk, Royal Academy of Arts, landscape, country side, painting, National Gallery, World Heritage, English Heritage, visitors.

Key quotes:

"Such is a paradox of modern tourism that sites have to be protected and promoted at the same time."

"The ever present visitors at Stonehenge have themselves become a feature of the modern Stonehenge landscape."

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Links with the curriculum:

- L'imaginaire (cycle 3)
- Rencontre avec d'autres cultures (cycle 4)
- Voyages et migrations (cycle 4)
- Représentation de soi et rapport à autrui (2nde)
- La création et le rapport aux arts (2nde)
- Sauver la planète, penser les futurs possibles (2nde)
- Le passé dans le présent (2nde)

- Identité et échanges (cycle terminal)
- Art et pouvoir (cycle terminal)
- Espace privé et espace public (cycle terminal)
- Territoire et mémoire (cycle terminal)