

Talkbook multimedia performance 1988 Commissioned for Live Art in The Midlands, Birmingham/Stoke/Wolverhampton



Talkbook was a performance and installation made during a residency at Wolverhampton Art Gallery and Lighthouse Media Centre in 1988 and was produced for a touring show that was presented at Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, and Stoke City Museum & Art Gallery.

The work took as its starting point the changing demographics and industrial landscapes of the West Midlands, an area of Britain that had been associated with heavy industry and manufacturing since the Industrial Revolution. By the 1980's industry had gone into an irreversible decline. Cities like Wolverhampton suffered high unemployment, and at the same time were home to new communities who brought with them different cultures, traditions, languages, lifestyles and work patterns. New forms of industry were emerging, driven either by new technology and the communications revolution, or by what has been termed "The Heritage Industry" where local history is packaged and sold as a tourist commodity. At the same time, communities with a different cultural background, in this case largely Bengali, had their own economic networks based on small businesses, home-working and sweatshops.



The research for the project included a period working in a local school with children from mixed communities, and interviews conducted with older residents who had experienced the decline of the traditional manufacturing industries.



The form of the performance oscillated between a documentary style, where videotaped interviews were inserted into the live action, and an oratorical style that borrowed heavily from the rhetoric of business presentations while at the same time calling into question the logic of advanced capitalism.