

## **Perry Ogden for Tatler.**

**By Richard Strange**

“The future of film-making is safe in hands like these” So spoke the great director Ken Loach (*Kes, Riff Raff, Hope and Freedom*) as he awarded Perry Ogden *The Satyajit Ray Foundation Award* at London’s National Film Theatre recently. The Foundation offers an annual prize to a first-time feature director whose film “best captures the artistry, compassion and humanity of Ray’s vision”. Ogden’s film *Pavee Lackeen*, about a 10 year old Irish traveller girl, Winnie Maughan, was shot on a high-street digital camcorder in a semi documentary, semi-scripted style, and follows the frustrations, disappointments and occasion highs of Winnie and her extended family, with a sensitivity worthy of the great Indian director.

Shropshire-born Perry Ogden charmed the NFT with his acceptance speech. I suddenly remembered the first time I had met him. A friend of mine was his art teacher at Eton, and I was at the school one 4th of June. Perry was editing the school magazine at the time, and also took most of the photographs in it, to boot. We chatted briefly about his work, and it was clear, even then, that this boy with a loopy smile and modest manner was special, and was bound to succeed in whatever creative field he chose.

Sharing coffee and croissants with Ogden more than 25 years later, in the spring sunshine at his London hotel, we pieced together the artistic journey he had made since that day at Eton in 1980. Throughout his career, his first love has been photography, and indeed, when his week of promotional interviews for *Pavee Lackeen* (the title translates as *Travelling Girl*) was done, he was heading straight to Florida to do a three day photo shoot.

After leaving school he started working as assistant to the fashion photographer Tony McGee, and was soon striking out on his own, doing fashion shoots and portraits of the London glitterati of the early 80’s. He worked for Italian *Vogue* and *The Face*, and has shot advertising campaigns for Ralph Lauren, Chloe and Calvin Klein. His extraordinary baroque fashion spreads with Michael Roberts for *Tatler* are still remembered.

As Perry’s star rose, he went to seek his fortune in New York, living for a while with Flora McEwen, model and muse. “We all shared a house on

Broome St., with (graffiti artists) Keith Haring and Kenny Scharf, and loads of others.” he recalls. “Crazy days. I could have bought any of Keith’s work for nothing. Paintings, vases, you name it, but all I ended up with are some handkerchiefs he printed!” He laughs a laugh untinged by regret, remembering the days when everything was possible.

When he left New York he moved to Ireland, and married Marina Guinness. In 1987 their daughter Violet was born. Ireland has been his home and the inspiration for most of his projects ever since.

Between 1995 and 1997 he shot series of memorable images of the Smithfield Horse Fair in Dublin for a book, *Pony Kids*. Perry had become interested in the phenomenon of urban kids in Adidas and Nike casuals riding horses through the half-derelict, heroin-infested housing estates that ring the City. It was his association with these kids which led to him meeting the Maughan Family.

“My co- writer Mark Venner and I spent two years sitting in on childrens’ courts in Ireland. We got to know some of the families quite well,” he explains, “We became very interested in the idea of life on the margins of the Irish economic boom. When you hear about 11 and 12 year old kids sleeping rough you think, ‘what chance do they have?’ ” It was his desire to highlight the plight of the travellers, who in reality travel little further than from one depressed muddied motorway layby to the next, that led to the making of *Pavee Lackeen*. The process was not without headaches and heartaches, as the filming was frequently disrupted by evictions, runaways and a co-star’s occasional brushes with the law, but Perry remained on good terms with his subjects throughout. “Even now, I see them at least once a week. Our lives have become entwined forever.”

Another high-profile Irish project Perry was involved in was the documenting and archiving of Francis Bacon’s studio in Kensington after the artist’s death. “Barbara Dawson, the director of Dublin’s Hugh Lane Gallery, was offered the entire contents of Bacon’s studio by Brian Clarke, the executor of the Francis Bacon Estate. She asked me to photograph the process of relocating the studio” Moving the legendary mess and chaos of the studio required all the rigour of an archaeological dig. Every single item was photographed, labeled, boxed, transported and reinstated in the Hugh Lane, in exactly the same relationship as it had been in London. Ogden’s

book 7 *Reece Mews: Francis Bacon's Studio*, is a fascinating document of a fascinating enterprise.

Now 45, and as boyish as the first time we met, I wondered if Perry had time, amid all these diverse projects, and with the critical acclaim for his film debut still ringing in his ears, to think about his follow-up picture. “I have an idea for something in Trinidad”, he said enigmatically, “Outsiders interest me, and I have my eye on some Trinidadian outsiders.” The Eton boy is now a man, but his energy, curiosity and unerring eye are undiminished.

*(The DVD of Pavee Lackeen is released in May 2006)*