

Athens, 30 March 1999

PRESS RELEASE

The British Council and the Deste Foundation
are pleased to present an exhibition of photographs by

Julian Germain (England, 1962)
In Soccer Wonderland

31 March - 16 May 1999

at Cosmos Bar/Restaurant

The work of Julian Germain combines various types of photography including material from his own newspaper archives and family snapshots. The images in the exhibition represent the artist's personal view of soccer and relate to both the reality and myths surrounding the professional sport. The exhibition deals with the emotional aspects of the game: the romanticism, fantasies, dreams, hopes, fears, rituals, traditions and memories of soccer fans. The picture frames are made of resin fused with miniature trophy cups, or of an amalgam of grass and mud surrounded by cards and album snapshots.

Most of the archival photos were shot before the advent of auto-advance and telephoto lenses. Until the mid-50s, most soccer photographers were equipped with bulky professional cameras focused on the goal area. Thus, the only actions usually captured were scoring attempts or the goalkeepers' spectacular lunges - the total output from an entire game barely reaching six or eight shots. The now familiar close-ups of skillful tacklings by individual players were achieved at that time during the processing of the negatives.

Although processed, these archival images from 30 or 40 years ago are equal in quality to contemporary photographs shot using state-of-the-art technology and produced in the hundreds during every major match. Printed in enlargement, they become transformed and reveal a much wider picture. No longer conventional photographs of soccer plays, these snapshots are impressive images depicting the spectators, the stadium, a general view of the field, as well as the decisive moments of the game. Successfully combined in single images, these elements succeed in reproducing the experience, atmosphere and suspense of the game for the enjoyment of all those not present.

Ipswich - Floriana, 10-0.

"I was born on September 25, 1962, the day Ipswich beat Floriana of Malta for the Cup Holders' Cup. I had always wanted to be a famous soccer player. At 36, however, I have lost all hope of ever leading England's National Team to glory. Instead, I knock on my neighbours' door and ask whether their 14-year-old-son is available for a few kicks. I then rush back home to put on my outfit with the orange Ipswich T-shirt - a precious relic by now. Half an hour later it is getting dark, and still no sign of Paul. Damn! After a while it will be no use, it will be completely dark! But just when I start considering other, less pleasant ways to spend the afternoon, I finally hear the familiar thud of the ball on the concrete which announces his arrival. We play at the small goal area of a primary school. There is a drizzle and the grass is wet, muddy and soft. The setting is perfect."

Julian Germain