
David Cotterrell: Spooky Action at a Distance - 22.09.23 - 29.09.23

Date: 22nd September 2023

Spooky Action At A Distance is a group installation of two films with an independent surround sound work centred on the politics of the landscape. The exhibition is presented as part of DeptfordX 2023.

The installations address the past and present of human drama as seen through a sense of place within the landscape. Cotterrell & Altheimers two-channel installation addresses the contemporary issue of migration at the US border, while Ducker & Thompsons film evokes military history at the MoD site on Orford Ness, Suffolk.

Location : Empathy & Risk C.I.C. 1 Borthwick St, London, SE8 3GH

Private View: Friday 22nd Sept, 7-9pm

Opening Times: Friday, 22nd Sunday 24th & Friday 29th Sunday 1st , 2-6pm

Closing Drinks: Sunday 1st, 4-6pm

Description of Works:

Cotterrell / Altheimers two-channel video installation, *Mirror VI : Border*, shows two strangers in darkness, separated by undefined distance in untrusting environments; but somehow held together through the fragile beauty of an intermittently blinking light and the powerful human curiosity of the unknown. Set against the dramatic topography between La Rumorosa, Tecate and Jacumba Hot Springs, California, against the fluctuating paranoia of the Southern US Border; the regions deep historical experience of migration for work, opportunity and exploitation;

Mirror VI references the restrictions, censorship and disruption that the Bracero men experienced when trying to write to their families, the artwork involved broadcasting an archive of letters, which the US Postal Service had failed to deliver. The project explores the longing of a thwarted conversation and the poetry in imagining another.

Portable encoding devices were fabricated to enable broadcast via focussed spotlights in Morse Code. This form of communication has been used traditionally to convey a situation of human emergency but also offers the potential for messages to be shared without defining the recipient. To the layperson, the language offers the possibility of discovering and interpreting coded meaning in distant flickering lights, mirrors, reflections and beacons. It raises the possibility of chancing upon a broadcast or sharing in a silent language.

Ducker / Thompsons project, *The Accurate Perception Available When Our Eye Becomes Single*, is a non-narrative film evoking the emotional specifics of place, Orford Ness on the Suffolk coast that explores the elasticity of time, history and myth.

Orford Ness is an eight-kilometre shingle spit, used for secret military testing during the First World War until the end of the Cold War in the 1990s. The site is now desolate but the decaying architecture from seventy years of military occupation remain. These strange elemental structures are formed out of an alien landscape that resembles a lost movie set. The film is mostly shot slow motion black and white inviting the viewer to slowly absorb the extraordinary landscape and ruined buildings that appear like post-apocalyptic ancient burial sites. Intercut with this are sections in colour, shot with a handheld smartphone camera and telephoto lens as a deliberate counterpoint. The films slow tempo sustains a narrative tension without ever revealing

it, inducing a sense of arrested curiosity. The telephoto shots, by contrast, suggest a snipers view through the sight of a gun looking for targets, or information, revealing details of the place in the process.

The soundtrack is a spatialised arrangement of prevailing features in the Orford Ness soundscape: sea, stones, and structures. It accompanies the imagery but is not synchronised to it. As such, sound and image combine to create constantly shifting counterpoints. The sonic elements characterise a specific sense of place before, during, and after military occupation, expressing the relative permanence of the Ness and its soundscape heard across many centuries.



Exhibition Invite Credit: © David Cotterrell & Richard Ducker (2023)