

Searchlight

David Cotterrell



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Why was a US military specification balloon inflated in the middle of a ravine at 3am on a cold, wet morning in March 2005? What relevance did this act have to a 15-year regeneration vision involving over £1 billion of private investment?

In 2005, artist David Cotterrell was commissioned by Sunderland Arc's Ben Hall and curator Dan Dubowitz to develop a project that would engage with disused sites in the city. Cotterrell's response was a series of interventions that projected subtle interventions into the landscape, leaving local communities with memories of the project: an image of the moon-like balloon in the sky and disembodied shadows patrolling a square. Many of those who congregated to witness these curious events were present on both sides of a contentious territorial divide: standing to watch footage of their shadow selves beamed from the balloon like the Bat-Signal, not across the sky, but a formerly 'no-go' area of public land in the area surrounding the River Wear.

Searchlight is the story of a politically influential art event. Offering an alternative public art model to the monumental sculpture traditionally aligned with inner-city regeneration, it is an experimental journey through technology, contested territories and fragmented communities.



This publication celebrates the risk and uncertainty of the project, drawing attention to unresolved questions being explored by Britain's public art community as it seeks to re-evaluate its relationship to context.

David Cotterrell

David Cotterrell is an installation artist working across varied forms including video, audio, interactive media, artificial intelligence, device control and hybrid technology. Cotterrell is Professor of Fine Art at Sheffield Hallam University. His work has been extensively commissioned and exhibited in North America, Europe and the Far East for gallery spaces, museums and the public realm. Recent exhibitions include: Eastern Standard at MASS MoCA, Massachusetts, Map Games at the Today Museum of Modern Art, Beijing and War and Medicine at the Wellcome Galleries, London.

Rebecca Geldard

Rebecca Geldard is a critic based in London currently writing for TimeOut, Modern Painters, Saatchi Online, Kulture Flash, Miser&Now. She has contributed and edited numerous essays and texts for contemporary art publications and is a board member at London gallery Coleman Projects.

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