

David Cotterrell: Bunker

Collaborators: Tom Humphreys

Date: 1st April 1996

Materials:

Meccano, Super8 film loops, sound equipment, PIRdetectors and other media.

A decommissioned nuclear bunker was opened to the public as a venue for a series of site-specific installations produced in a wide variety of media.

A collaboration between Tom Humphreys and David Cotterrell, Bunker saw the artists granted access to a decommissioned Civil Defense Emergency Control Centre in Eastleigh. They worked with the fabric of the bunker, which, although disused, contained all of the communication, life support and administrative files that had originally been installed in the facility immediately following the Falklands crises in the Eighties. Wet wipes, maps detailing predicted fallout statistics for nuclear weapons detonated in both London and Southampton and instructions for how the local council could create an autonomous government until central government could be re-established were all present. It became obvious to the artists that these plans relied on an unstated assumption that communications and essential supplies in Eastleighs post-nuclear world would be reinstated within 14 days.

The resulting series of site-specific installations worked with and subverted the spaces intended uses. New narratives were established, suggesting possibilities of cabin fever, megalomania and chaos. Original entrances to the site were retained for the exhibition and the public gained access through either the Council Chambers or a submarine door concealed in a shed in the local park. The muffled and distorted sounds of surface dwellers were fed through the bunkers pipes; Ronald Reagans address to the nation, in which he first publicly outlined the Star Wars concept was played on a continuous loop within the reconstructed living quarters; some spaces were barricaded and only visible through fish-eye door viewers, suggesting a siege as time progressed. Sensors tracked visitors movements, which cued sound in other parts of the bunker, creating the impression of a populated space, part domestic, part ad hoc militaristic. The addition of Meccano and toy soldiers to an existing light fitting created a shadow play of warriors drifting across the walls. A Super 8 film loop of a chess game was projected onto a local area map from above and a bottle of milk, sitting in a room with a found Geiger counter slowly went off well in advance of the fourteenth day.



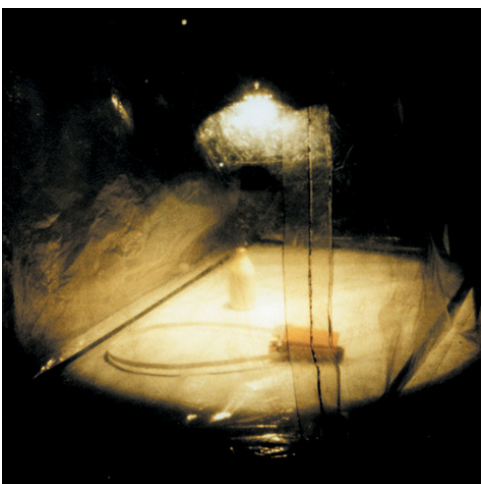
Entrance to Bunker Credit: David Cotterrell & Tom Humphreys (1996)



Super8 Loop of Reagan's StarWars Presentation Credit: David Cotterrell & Tom Humphreys (1996)



Corridor view of barricaded room Credit: David Cotterrell & Tom Humphreys (1996)



Gieger Counter and Gold Top Milk Credit: David Cotterrell & Tom Humphreys (1996)



Exit from Bunker Credit: David Cotterrell & Tom Humphreys (1996)