

From Common Differences

1 – 31 May 2013

St David's Hall

What set of characteristics define a locality or place? Or can they be identified? The photographers in *From Common Differences* attempt to address these notions, asking questions about place, identity and the notion of locality.

The notion of "place" is a malleable concept, ingrained with history, identity and narrative. Our own shifting idea of the "local" can be defined in relation to the individual's immediate location in time and place, with both a connection and relative disconnection to the space in which they exist.

Peter Finnemore & Timothy Nordhoff offer two differing versions of Wales, steeped in history and industry. Finnemore's *Photographs 1990* re-examines the artist's own archive of images he took of post-industrial Welsh landscapes, whilst Nordhoff's *Combustible* presents a document of a surviving industry, an open-cast mine in Tairgwaith. Both series present a view of industrial Wales but from different perspectives; Finnemore's images are rooted in the past whereas Nordhoff's industrial portrait shows the present, away from nostalgic viewpoints.

Ryan Moule's series of images *Latent Frequencies* addresses the impermanence of space. Moule photographed empty spaces on the East Coast of England that are succumbing to the inevitability of the erosion of the cliffs on which their foundations lie. Occupants have moved out, only surfaces remain. The unfixed images begin to fade over the course of the exhibition, a poignant reminder of the buildings' fate.

Humberto Gattica's torn and ruptured images point towards a layering of time, exploring themes of family, loss, and memory. As Chilean exile, Gattica's locality is split between his locality in Swansea, and the lost Chilean landscape of his youth. His images speak of displacement, the layering of torn images fragment and distort memory.

Inger Brigitte Ritchenberg presents *I wish you could be here to see me now*, projecting her grandfather's family photographs in their original location creating a layering of time. Exploring the narrative and memory of a place and its particular familiar nuances.

Both Ritchenberg and Gattica look to the past and its effect on their present and future. The spaces addressed are embedded with memory and personal memory. Both photographers' sense of place, living in Swansea, away from their original nationalities becomes important when viewed through the context of their respective works, a sense of personal belonging embeds itself within the images.

The bird is a reoccurring theme in the exhibition, appearing in Hamish Gane's *Borias* as a silhouette on a window, in Eva Bartussek's *The Minutes* as a flock takes flights and also in Lasma Poisa's *Parliament* as a large crow looms over the figure in the frame. The bird is a transitory animal, defying a locality and often shifting from place to place, surveying the scene from multiple vantage points. In this way, the bird acts as a metaphor for the photographer, on the periphery, always moving views, always looking.

“No matter how close a photograph comes to the space it records, the interaction between photographer and the space always resembles the act of scratching on a solid surface.”ⁱ

The photographers do not attempt to define locality, but to scratch on the surface, and ask questions of what it might be. Each photographer explores these themes shaped through personal reflections and interactions in an attempt to reveal something about the problematic definitions of place, identity, and locality.

Rory Duckhouse

ⁱ Jan Verwoert, *Research and display: of transformation of documentary practice in art*. In Neuerer, G. *Untitled (experience of place)*. (London: Koenig Books, 2003) p.18