Jim Woodall is interested in transitory spaces, in the utilitarian, semi-derelict sites whose identity changes in accordance with human requirement, and where - as he puts it - ‘there is endless accumulation, instability and disappearance.’ The subject of this project, Landscapes of Uncertainty, is a plot of land in the London Borough of Newham. The elements that make up the installation sample both the different physical features of the site and the varied uses to which it has been put in recent decades. All landscapes, he suggests, might be likened to wormholes in the ways that they connect ‘different times and different places, or different classes of living organisms and inanimate objects’.

The installation seeks to ‘probe the ontology of landscape, both of the specific place … and of landscape as an object in relation to others’; while it is based on a site in Newham, similar plots might yield up an equally rich history. Woodall’s artistic strategy can be likened to that of a social-historian-cum-psychogeographer-cum-archaeologist. His process involves archive and sociological research and he then extends his investigation through fieldwork - for example, by camping out on the site (seeking an immersive awareness of the place, as opposed to just visiting it); by making analytical films of the landscape; by casting its surface crust and by digging into the ground to find evidence of past usage.

Woodall represents the site and events associated with it in an amalgamation of media and forms: video, printmaking, a landscape model, cast concrete objects and a customised odour. He aims to explore both the means of recollection and display methods used to point to future intention. His project also investigates indications of land ownership, human-accelerated entropy, and how technology affects our relationship with, and memory of, landscape. Fleeting and impalpable digital images sit beside emphatically present concrete objects. He explains: ‘I am interested in the gaps in-between being and not-being, of the noumenal and phenomenal. Digital media promise us the guarantee of being, of coded order and mathematical truth. But paradoxically it is the basis for an era of unsureness, of duplication, subterfuge and ciphering … uncertainty rules the day’.

The site and its representation resonate with Foucault’s concept of the heterotopia, which ‘is capable of juxtaposing in a single real space several places, several sites that are in themselves incompatible’. The memories and traces of human activity represented within the installation include the manufacture of paint; a Norwegian Seaman’s Mission; late-80’s rave culture; a landfill site; the aroma of strawberries that masked the smell of a sewage outlet; its current use as a council refuse amenity.

Taking up Schopenhauer’s observation that people are usually disappointed when they go back to see a place, Woodall notes this can be seen to point to the fact that ‘what we are really nostalgic for is times rather than places, and times cannot be retrieved … We are nostalgic for a lost world, not just a set of buildings in a street’.

---

Clockwise from base of stairs:

For Those That Know, 2014, UV print on concrete (on floor)

Untitled, 2014, UV print on concrete

Untitled, 2014, UV print on concrete

The Final Mapping of New Constellations, 2014, video installation

Adrift, 2014, UV print on concrete

Historical Layer, Disappeared Object, 2014, UV print on concrete

Geological Construct, 2014, concrete, bitumen, printed media on plinths

The artist would like to thank the following who have helped to make this project possible:

Jim Woodall [b. 1978] studied at Camberwell School of Art (2000 - 2003) and in the Sculpture Department of the Royal College of Art (2011 - 2013). He was a founding member of CutUp collective, an interventionist art group active from 2004 - 2009. His work has most recently been seen in The Uneventful Day (2013), at Carroll/Fletcher, London. An earlier intervention, Olympic State (2010), was a two-week, 24/7 residency within a hut built on the rooftop of a warehouse in Hackney Wick, which was filled with surveillance monitors linked to CCTV cameras (some aimed at the Olympic site’s own security cameras). The project was subsequently exhibited at See Studio Exhibition Space (2011).

www.jimwoodall.co.uk

Marsden Woo Project Space is curated by Tessa Peters

The Marsden Woo Project Space is a space for experimental new work in art, craft and design and runs alongside our established programme of solo and small group exhibitions by gallery artists. The Project Space allows us to respond quickly to significant bodies of innovative work, particularly that of talented emerging artists and designers, as well as fresh directions in the work of more established artists. The exhibitions are organized at short notice, so please check our website regularly for news of forthcoming shows and events.