

MOVED

Catherine Bertola, Cath Campbell, Joe Clark, Paul Merrick, Richard Rigg, Wolfgang Weleder

28th July – 31st August 2007

Thurs - Sat, 12 -5pm (or by appointment)

Workplace Gallery are pleased to present MOVED a group exhibition of new and existing works by six gallery artists. This will be the last of a series of exhibitions in 34 Ellison Street Gateshead, beneath Owen Luder's 'Get Carter Car Park'.

MOVED shows works by artists who each reveal a tendency towards the uncovering and exploration of architectural form, site, and ideology.

Catherine Bertola has methodically filled and gilded a crack in the concrete floor of the Gallery. Bertola's intervention is predictive of the fate of the surrounding building, and significant in its symbolic function as a 'Seam' - a stratum of a mineral embedded as a distinct layer or vein in other layers of rock. Bertola's choice of material - Gold - is rich in meaning, symbolic for wealth and class, as well as alchemy and religion. The base standard for the international monetary union Gold is a material that is irreducible, basic, yet arguably lies at the heart of the motivation and aspiration for many, perhaps all, things.

Cath Campbell's drawings and architectural models take modernism as a point of departure. Her cutout works begin by constructing a complex grid structure on a two-point perspective system within which Campbell builds her drawing before cutting away and removing vast areas of work and labor. Campbell's architectures are constructed either from memory, imagination, or from an encounter with plans of places that are closed off and inaccessible. Titled with popular love songs such as 'If You Leave Me Now...' or 'All I Need Is The Air That You Breathe' the works occupy a space both poignantly romantic and pointlessly throwaway representing secret and intimate spaces, into which we are granted entry through acts of disclosure.

Joe Clark's photographic works take the spaces bordering urban dwellings and industry as their subject. Taken at night on long exposure with a large format camera, Clark spends his time walking away from cities, getting lost in his explorations of places foreign and unknown to him and often returning empty handed. Once photographed Clark's work is then subjected to a lengthy, filmic, post-production. Perspective and symmetry are subtly altered before being sealed behind acrylic; serving to further dissociate the viewer from a 'Real' place and push the viewer towards experience. In Clark's work the viewer is confronted with a scene, dramatically lit, yet without event. These are works that occupy and explore the memories experienced primarily through the dramatic mode of cinema and film rather than reality.

Paul Merrick's practice is notable for his ongoing investigation of surface and substance through repeat procedure. In previous works the impasto mark is sanded back to an absolute flatness at odds with its own image. Built from sheets of aluminum scavenged from junkyards and riveted together, Merrick's recent work has taken a darker turn. Moving beneath the surface Merrick's enquiry concerns itself with the raw matter of the supporting plane. Paint in these new works acts as a blanket material to conceal and hide, to bond together, or to be scratched back and reveal. As Merrick pushes the entropic logic of his new method towards collapse and dumb-down, something base is touched upon...embodying a state that can't be easily put into words, Merrick's new paintings nod toward redemption through their materiality and simplicity.

Richard Rigg's work conflates the object and its ideal form (or use). Merging our ideas of 'things' with their physical limits Rigg finds the reflexive crux point in his self-referential sculptures. In 'Piano' he has retuned a domestic Piano to the note 'C'. The mid point of the stave, 'Middle C' represents compromise and balance, a middle way. Conforming to this ideal the Instrument is placed under extreme tension, making it a dangerous object ready to spring. Rigg's work functions like a trap, catching us somewhere between object, definition of object, and use of object. His work can be both tautological and contradictory at the same time, inhabiting the realms of paradox. For Rigg, everyday objects become a proposition or conundrum that ultimately (and unnervingly) unpick and destabilise themselves, and us.

Wolfgang Weleders latest photograph and film 'Transfer' derives from an architectural project commissioned by Milton Keynes Gallery, wherein each of the four walls of the white cube space is built and unbuilt - one at a time - in white concrete block work. The optimism of building and its oppositional force of demolition and deconstruction dissolving together into an eternal palimpsest maintained through Weleders photography: Super long exposure images burnt through a pinhole lens onto film during weeks. Through his practice Weleder challenges us to accept activity and project as photograph, and thus accept photograph as sculpture. Weleders works bleed into each other; documentary and actuality substitute one another. Interrogating architecture and the impulse to build Weleder renders buildings as object, and therefore invests them with the same values, inadequacies, and impermanence's, revealing the sad truths intrinsic to the spaces which we inhabit.

MOVED marks the end of Workplace Gallery's occupancy of 34 Ellison Street in Owen Luder's Trinity Court Shopping Centre, better known as the 'Get Carter Car Park' after its prominent appearance as the backdrop to Mike Hodges' 'Get Carter' (1971) starring Michael Caine. Luder's 'Trinity Court Shopping Centre' is exemplary of a key point in the architectural landscape of the UK and the development of 'Brutalism'. Deriving its name from '*Béton brut*' (French for exposed concrete) a phrase coined by the influential Swiss Architect Le Corbusier. In Post-war Britain 'Brutalism' became synonymous with socially progressive utopian ideology, and in the coming years with the failure of that ideology to develop fully and positively. Only in recent years has Brutalism been re-examined and reinvigorated as a significant and important Architectural style in the UK.

Brutalism is characterised by raw and unadorned functionality and a rejection of decorative superfluity. It's internationalist modernist forms stand as a counterpoint to classical architectural form, which represent an imperialist dialogue of centre and province. Locating itself within such architecture, Workplace Gallery has found this building paradigmatic of our position as a group of artists initially living and working in the North East of England and our conviction to reassert our position within the mainstream of international culture, outside of any notions of provincialism.

Trinity Court is due to be demolished later this year by Tesco's and Gateshead Council. The 'Get Carter Car Park' will be replaced with a new supermarket development as part of Gateshead Town Centre's regeneration strategy.

Workplace Gallery will continue to deliver a programme of exhibitions, and we will be announcing our new location soon...