

Memorability as an Image

Friday 3 March, 2017

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17 March-6 May 2017

Opening Night: Thursday 16 March 2017

Northampton-based photographer James Smith brings together a five-year study of Brutalism. *Memorability as an Image* (2011–2016) is the governing title of three photographic studies, *Heavy Simplicity (Patterned)*, *Brutal Relics* and *Civic Stage*. Together they examine the structures of experiences in loss and vision, of a post war movement that refuses to disappear.

Memorability as an Image lifts an idea through photography and offers a structural rhetoric of an Anglicised movement, which perhaps is now being viewed as an era of a 'Brutal Romantic' by means of verification, confirmation and comparison. Smith challenged further research from 2011, which observed form, object and/or structure through theories of Brutalism. That same year the journal *October* (edition 136) was published with Ben Highman's essay "Image-breaking, God-making": Paolozzi's Brutalism, which featured this germane quote from the Smithson's;

"...Brutalism has been discussed stylistically, whereas in essence is ethical." Ethics, here, is seen as a form of objectivity; "Any discussion of Brutalism will miss the point if it does not take into account Brutalism's attempt to be objective about 'reality'".

The essay also highlighted architectural critic Reyner Banham's seminal description of his own coined term, New Brutalism.

1, *Memorability as an image*: 2, *Clear exhibition of structure*; and 3, *Valuation of Materials "as found"*. Remembering that an image is what affects the emotions, that structure, in it's fullest sense, is the relationship of parts, and that materials "as found" are raw materials.

One of several works to emerge from this initial research period was *Heavy Simplicity (Patterned)*, the title taken from a Brutalist design term; 'an embrace of natural forms', realising how climates of northern and southern hemispheres can effect peoples' perception and opinion of the movement's aesthetics.

A more recently produced work that pays homage to Banham is *Brutal Relics*. Presented as maintained objects against black voids, these relics are all that is left from the former neglected Brutalist structure, Greyfriars Bus Station. They serve to inform a mood of the regressive thinking of media and local governance, which left the site blighted to nothing. For *Civic Stage*, while still referencing Reyner Banham's '1,2 & 3', Jacques Lacan's Mirror Stage inspires the title, relating to an observer's first immersion and apperception of a built landscape, found within itself but viewed entirely as surface.

Events accompanying the show include Crit Group, Write Club, From Art To Commerce as well as an Artist Talk.

To accompany the exhibition there will be a publication with three newly commissioned essays by Jonathan Hale, Ben Highmore & Nicholas Smith plus a further photographic study appearing in the exhibition of the Greyfriars Bus Station. The book is being published by scpio EDITIONS, with the support of NN Contemporary Art and Centro de Comunicação e Representação Espacial (CCRE), a research group of the Faculty of Architecture, Porto University (FAUP), Portugal.

More information on the project and information about NN are at www.nncontemporaryart.org

About James Smith

James Smith, after completion of MA Photography (2012) at the Royal College of Art, has since gone on to be shown in both solo and group exhibitions. Underpinning his current research and practice is a debate regarding the architecture of territory and the projection of politics, through aesthetic and cultural definitions of geographic positioning within the English landscape. The articulation of territory through form can be seen as a presentation of intuitive structures that radiate and demand their coexistence

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within a landscape. A structural rhetoric of the obstinate, the stubborn and the immovable become established chapters of identification.

Solo exhibitions include, *Temporal Dislocation*, Photofusion, London 2012, and the ACE funded *London Overspill* commission of four exhibitions; *London Overspill*, UH Galleries, Hatfield, 2012, *Luton Overlay*, Departure Lounge 2012/13, *Estate*, Gibberd Gallery, Harlow 2014 and *Parkway*, Peterborough Museum, Peterborough 2014. He is also a visiting lecture to a number of universities and his work is housed in several private and public collections.

Ends

Notes to editors:

NN is a contemporary art space in the centre of Northampton.

Opening hours: Wednesday–Saturday 11am–6pm

Free admission

NN is supported by:

Arts Council England

Northampton Borough Council

Northampton County Council

The University of Northampton

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http://www.nncontemporaryart.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/James_Smith_A3_06.jpg

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