

David Cotterrell: Searchlight (v)

Collaborators: Dan Dubowitz

Date: 15th March 2007

Materials:

military balloon, projector, weatherproofed computer and custom software.

Disembodied shadows move through a projected searchlight in a square in Sunderland

The area surrounding the River Wear is no longer public territory and was abandoned after the collapse of glass, coal and shipbuilding industries forced many people to relocate. In 2005, Sunderland Arc commissioned Cotterrell to develop a project that would engage with disused sites in the area. Cotterrell worked with Dan Dubowitz and Ben Hall in the creation of a series of interventions that could project subtle interventions into the landscape. Planted stories of sightings preceded the appearance of a giant military balloon, tethered and hovering above the ground and projecting anonymous shadows onto the ground.

Films of local people, projected in negative onto Sunnyside Gardens square suggested ghostlike entities moving through dead space. The work was installed without media attention; instead it was gradually discovered by the local community who, after spreading the word about their encounters with these shadows on the square, started generating local interest and curiosity.

The work was deactivated as silently as it commenced, and the equipment remains on the site. Instead of creating the permanent presence of a physical artwork, Cotterrell opted to leave local communities with the experience and memory of the project: the odd presence of the moon-like balloon in the sky, the shadows occupying the squares space and, with this, a new found imagination for the possibilities of deserted spaces.



Testing in London Credit: David Cotterrell (2005)



Gally's Gill Credit: Unknown (2006)