

David Cotterrell: Shangri-La (v)

Collaborators: Jim Copperthwaite

Date: 26th May 2002

Dimensions(m):0.2, 0.6, 0.5

Materials:

Brass & Glass jewellers case, LCD screen, headphones, software: Macromedia Director

Time-based photographic montage of 80 semi-detached houses in Gant's Hill morphing together showing their unlikely diversity

Now that you've found your paradise This is your kingdom to command You can go outside and polish your car Or sit by the fire in your Shangri-la Here is your reward for working so hard Gone are the lavatories in the backyard Gone are the days when you dreamed of that car You just want to sit in your Shangri-la Ray Davies, Shangri-la, 1969

Shangri-la, Cotterrells affectionate ode to his childhood home, is a time-based photographic montage depicting 80 of the hundreds of identical semi-detached houses built in Gants Hill in the 1930s. The piece, named for Ray Davies suburban idyll, was commissioned for exhibition at the Museum of Garden History, London.

Within a glass case, an LCD screen morphs digitised images, enabling one identical house to gently flow into the next. The cameras relentless study of the architecture invites us to recognise differences between seemingly similar buildings. We see the faade of each house has been altered, autographed by its inhabitants: one is covered with a veneer of stone cladding, another decorated with gnomes, but all share the desire to stand out. Residents have gone to startling lengths to create uniqueness out of sameness.

An ambient soundtrack of sprinklers and birdsong, composed by Jim Copperthwaite, accompanies the work via headphones. Exposing the choice involved in placing the car outside the house when ample street parking exists, Cotterrell celebrates the spaces where the Fiesta is placed in higher esteem than the freesia and asks his audience to consider the inherent prejudice involved in aesthetic judgement. Housed within the vitrine, the piece queries the amnesiac history offered by the museum - an institution in which the aristocratic gardens of Lancelot Capability Brown are held in higher esteem than the DIY gardens of working and middle class England.



Installed within a Jewellers Case Credit: David Cotterrell (2002)



Class 'C' House 1 Credit: David Cotterrell (2002)