

David Cotterrell: David Cotterrell : Searchlight Book Summary

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A one page printable summary of the Searchlight publication (for resellers, agents and distributors).

Why did a group of people end up inflating a US Military spec balloon in the middle of a ravine at 3am on a cold and wet Thursday morning in March 2005? What possible relevance was there to the 15 year regeneration vision involving over 1billion of private investment?

The billowing jellyfish form of a US military balloon clinging to the sky over Sunderland does not signify a rent in the special relationship between Britain and America. Rather, it marks the first phase of a cultural plan to make visible a political struggle of a more local kind. This elaborate mode of surveillance turns the notion of intelligence gathering on its head. Many of those that congregate to witness this curious event are simultaneously present on both sides of a contentious territorial division: standing to watch footage of their shadow selves beamed from the balloon like the Bat-Signal, not across the sky, but a formerly no-go area of public land.

Searchlight is the story of a politically influential art event. Offering a public art model in direct contradiction to the monumental sculpture iconically aligned with inner-city regeneration. Searchlight is an experimental journey through technology, contested territories and fragmented communities. This publication celebrates the risk and uncertainty of the project, while drawing attention to the unresolved questions being explored by Britain's public art community as it seeks to continually reinvent itself and reevaluate its relationship to context.

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