



**VISUAL SPACES OF CHANGE**

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## **Temporal Dislocation**

*James Smith*

Scopio Architecture, Art and Image

Utopia Vol.1 | publication year: 2023

ISSN: 1647-8274 [online]

DOI 10.24840/1647-8274\_2023-0001\_0001\_3

## Temporal Dislocation

*James Smith*

### **Abstract:**

This body of work navigates the dialectical tension between the destruction and renewal of our relationship with landscapes, both contemporary and historical, and the intricacies of activities evident within constructed environments. These quasi-sculptural forms serve as poignant markers of power, class, and labor embedded in the English landscape.

The work probes the fragile equilibrium between stability and impermanence, highlighting the cyclicity of the natural world after human intervention. It seeks to illuminate how form naturally follows function, unveiling the innate aesthetics within ordinary "found" objects. These forms offer an enduring narrative of their utilitarian evolution, underscoring the beauty inherent in utilitarian simplicity.

At its core, this work is driven by phenomenological intent, bridging the gap between the photographer's deliberate framing and the casual viewer's passive encounter with these constructed landscapes. The photograph becomes a subtle language inviting viewers to reevaluate the ostensibly banal and ubiquitous.

Keywords: destruction, renewal, landscape, photography, brutalism

**James Smith**, after completion (2012) of the MA Photography programme at the Royal College of Art, has since gone on to be shown in both solo and group exhibitions. Solo exhibitions include Memorability as an Image, NN Contemporary Art, Northampton 2017, 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. Group exhibitions include Open16, Brighton Photo Fringe 2016, Speaking Space, Day+Gluckman 2014, Worcester Open 2013, Territory, Liverpool Biennial Fringe 2012, Guest & Host, NN Contemporary Art, Northampton 2012/13 and Document, Peninsula Arts, Plymouth 2013. Features of Smiths work have appeared in the Saatchi Gallery magazine Art and Music (issue 20) 2012, Seeing For Others, Black Dog Publishing (Includes essay by Alexander Garcia Duttman) 2012, ICON (issue 119) 2013 and reviews by Roy Exley on Photomonitor.co.uk, 2012, British Journal of Photography, article Feb edition, 2014, C20 Journal, issue3, 2014 by Elain Harwood. Smith has also co-authored the book Continuity, with Dr Christine Garwood, published by University of Hertfordshire Press, 2014.

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The dialectic presented in this body of work oscillates between the destruction and renewal of our contemporary and historical relationship with landscape, and the nuances of activity that are made manifest by edifices and constructions within it. These dislocated forms of quasi 'sculpture' are evidential signs of power, class and labour positioned in the English landscape.

The work explores the precarious tipping point between stability and impermanence, and the inexorably cyclical nature of the physical environment after human intervention. A primary intent of the work is to expose how form follows function in order to reveal the inherent aesthetics and resonances contained within the seemingly effortless gestures of 'the found'. The forms offer a continual loop of their functional evolution; pragmatically laying bare the beauty of utilitarian banality provides a structural rhetoric through verification, confirmation and comparison.

The indication of function is predominantly revealed by its aesthetics and therefore colour is not an expressive value here. Rather, the forms' nakedness is revealed through a considered, dispassionate scrutiny, which results in formalising their evidential residue.

Underpinning the work is a phenomenological motivation<sup>1</sup> which aims to bridge the divide between the photographer's explicit framing of the constructed landscape and the casual viewer's benign, unknowing or unconscious dismissal of its functions, resonances and attributes. The image therefore situates itself as a meeting point, a catalytic conduit between the viewer and the photographer – a potent interface arising from the indifferent gaze of the viewer being counteracted by the experiential nature of the observer, i.e., photographer.

The photograph becomes an understated language aiming to lure the viewer into re-examining what is too readily dismissed as banal, functional or ubiquitous. In this way the works function as 'mirrors' held up to the viewer. The viewer is aware of the stance of the photographer and the topographical standing of the subject.

By choosing to shoot at an angle that offers two faces of a given form, the viewer is made aware of a distortion and is invited to engage with the work by viewing 'around' the subject and beyond its 'face value'. This work aims to allure and provoke a reflective experience of unrecognised recollections or logic.

The methodology of this body of work tests the nuances between literal fact and objectivity, in the process referencing and testing a more scientific approach. The deliberate exploitation of angles intrinsic in the work also offers a specific examination of the subject, drawing on the language of the survey<sup>2/3</sup>.

1. James J. Gibson, 1986, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, Psychology Press, New York.

2. Delegation for Territorial Planning and Regional Action (DATAR), 1984–1989, *La Mission Photographique de la DATAR*, Government of the French Republic, (since *Temporal Dislocation* all information on DATAR has been collated into this website, 2013) <<https://missionphotodatar.anct.gouv.fr/mission>>

3. Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art (MACBA), Universal Archive, *The condition of the Document and the Modern Photographic Utopia*, 2008, <<https://www.macba.cat/en/exhibitions-activities/exhibitions/universal-archive>>

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This body of work is informed by the photographer's own empirical data relating to theories of brutalism<sup>4</sup> and an ongoing interpretation of human responses to the utilitarian environment through its cycles, narratives and evolutions.

4. Reyner Banham, 2011, *The New Brutalism*, *October*, (136), pages 19–28





Temporal Dislocation 003 Spiral Structure



Temporal Dislocation 004 Wooden Crates



Temporal Dislocation 00S Scaffolding





Temporal Dislocation 006 Antenna



Temporal Dislocation 007 Haystack



Temporal Dislocation 008 Portacabin