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Experimental Ruins: West Edition

Arts Catalyst

Background

Experimental Ruins: West Edition was a critical excursion and an artwork devised by Neal White of The Office of Experiments (OOE). It uses a technique called Overt Research to explore the UK landscape as a multi-layered territory that can be interpreted through aesthetic, archaeological, geographical and techno-scientific interpretations. This participatory project focused attention on the history and geography of post-1945 scientific research, and the facilities and spaces created to house technological advances, that were developed around the periphery of London and especially the corridor to the west.

Our first site was the archive of 17,000 corpses (closed to the public) in the Ossiary at Museum of London. A few weeks later we visited Churchill's underground bunker on a suburban housing estate in North London. After viewing cold war archive footage, an extract of Bruce Connors 'Operation Crossroads' and nukewatch protest films, the excursion arrived at atomic weapons establishments at Burghfield and Aldermaston. Here we met our anonymous guide to sites used by the UK nuclear peace protestors, taking in sites of their camps at both venues. After stopping for a brief chat with the MoD Police, we set off to Greenham Common, where we took time to ponder the low level industrial park as a potential site of ruin and heritage.

A collaborative publication of our experiences, *Field Guide*, has been collated and can be downloaded from the Arts Catalyst site.

A selection of my photos and a piece of artwork are included in that publication.

Photos



The Colour of Water



Using my mobile phone, I recorded a variety of sounds inside the Paddock bunker, including dripping water, the guides and people wading through puddles. I chose to work with the dripping water as it represents the purest expression of the bunker, extant from human interaction apart from the edifice guiding its path and the inevitable quantum conundrum regarding the recording of such phenomena.

I converted the amr files to mp3, and used algorithm software to convert the mp3 files into midi. I then imported the midi files into a notation software system, defaulted the output to Piano mode and was delighted to hear something akin to the lovechild of Satie and Bartók. Given the restrictions of the printed project publication, I converted the score into a cryptogram, based on system developed by an American occultist in the first half of the 20th century, which maps the relationship between vibration, colour and lightwave octaves. The result is a coded mosaic – secret, magical, unique.

Tea Beyond Reading (conversations on the coach)

Behind the secrets, the intake and secretions,
I'm already thinking about food.
You've brought sandwiches. I've got a croissant.
Do you want a croissant?
I haven't had Wagon Wheels since school.
They split the atom and breach a digestive.
So prosaic, this process of munch and crunch and discharge.
Like the same decisions about buying an Israeli avocado.
It's exhausting, all this subversion, isn't it?