



Lost and Found

April Virgoe

The output is a creative project called 'Lost and Found' comprising a boat, models, projections, films, 12ft smoke drawing of a ship and a disco ball. It was produced by a collaboration between April Virgoe, Patrick Holley, Chris Lillywhite (visual artists) and Joanna Lee (filmmaker). The work was funded by the Arts Council and supported by the Shoreline Housing Trust.

Research Process

The installation was created in response to the East March tower blocks, formerly occupied by the residents of the Freeman Street area, which is the centre of the former fishing community in Grimsby, with a strong connection to the sea. The project was the result of a continual process of negotiation with Shoreline Housing, who supported the positive effect of the project as a 'farewell' to the tower blocks. The boat is mirrored inexactly by an elusively rendered smoke drawing of a shipwreck, Murmansk, photographic fragments and layered sounds.

Research insights

The installation is located in one of the garages between the tower blocks, not actually subterranean but underneath the raised garden: a windswept, utopian communal space which, in its dereliction, is gradually turning into a meadow. Inside this cavernous space is a boat, wedged on its side, an unnatural position, like in the abandoned aftermath of a flood. There is something alluring and haunting about a boat in the wrong place. This boat has no story of its own, and therefore could become all stories. It looks as if it has either been dredged from the bottom of the sea, or has never sailed. There is something strange about the scale of it, like a scaled-up model boat, the kind children sail, onto which they can project their dreams.

Dissemination

The installation was disseminated at the Lightworks Festival, Grimsby, 15 October - 13 November 2016.

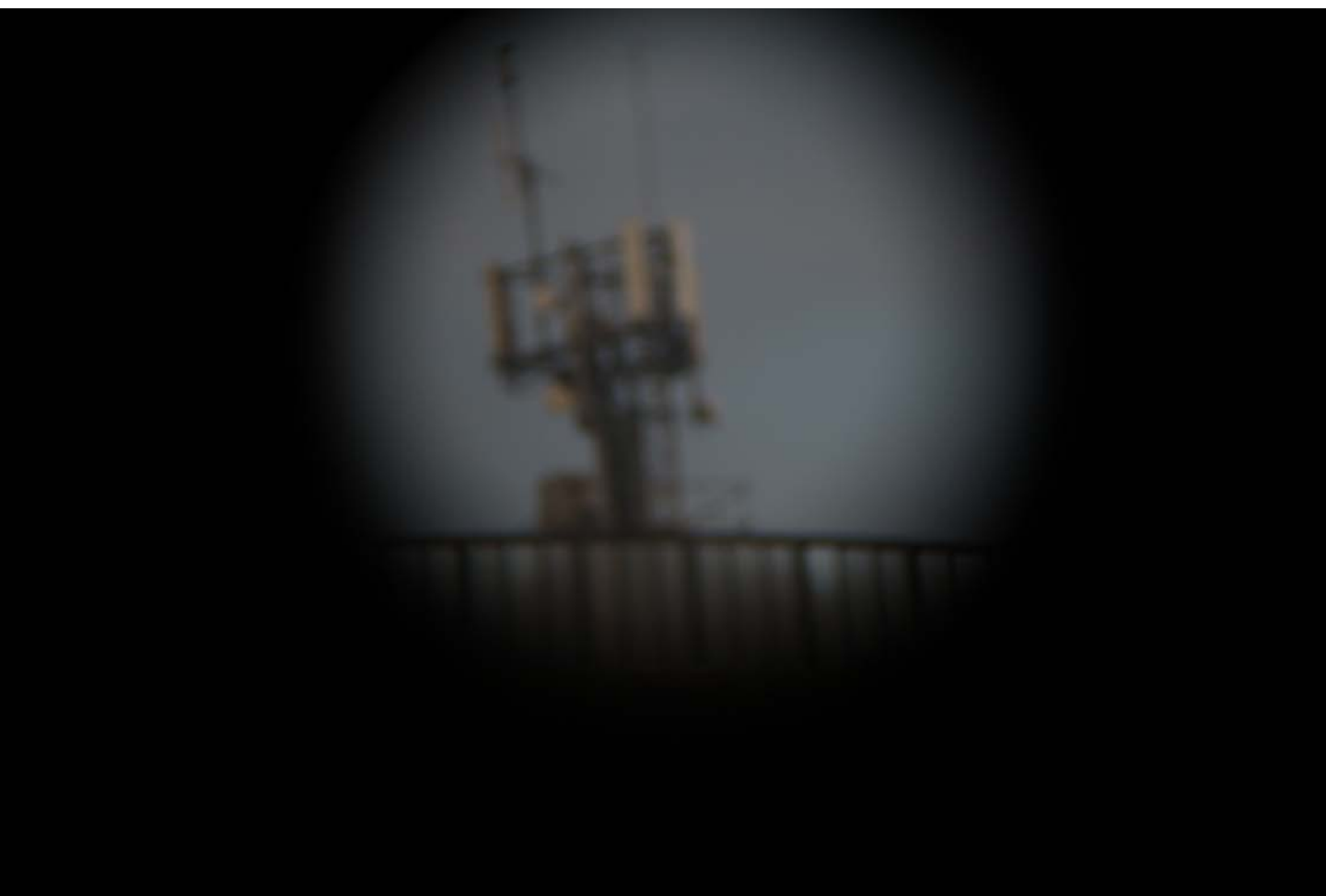
















In his 1967 talk to architects on the theme of *heterotopias* (spaces of *otherness*), Michel Foucault cited ships as “the greatest reservoir of imagination”. Ships and boats pervade literature, myth, ghost stories and folk tales. Seafaring communities have their own legends and superstitions that continue to filter through the imagination of generations who have not themselves left dry land.

Lost and Found is an installation created in response to a set of six tower blocks in the East Marsh of Grimsby, due for demolition in 2017. These buildings are the only high rise structures visible, apart from the dock tower. They afford an uninterrupted view across the estuary, and must have been equally visible as a beacon to those returning from sea. Since their construction in 1962 the tower blocks have been occupied by residents of the Freeman St area, the centre of the former fishing community in Grimsby, and the connection to the sea is still strongly felt. There is a story that at one time a proposal to paint the towers green was met with disbelief by residents because of the superstition that it is bad luck to paint a boat green.

The buildings, now almost empty of residents, have, like an abandoned ship, become pure space again: corridors, stairs, open spaces, subterranean storage, and even a crow’s nest. These are now spaces to roam through, navigating their labyrinthine circuits and ascending their heights in the last few functioning lifts. These can now, for a while, exist as spaces for the imagination. Devoid of human sounds the buildings now hum and buzz, as electrical circuits and ventilation shafts keep the life support of the buildings working for a little longer.

Lost and Found is an installation located in one of the cavernous garages between the tower blocks, not actually subterranean but underneath the raised garden: a windswept, utopian communal space which, in its dereliction, is gradually turning into a meadow. Inside this cavernous space is a boat, wedged in on its side, in an unnatural position, like the abandoned aftermath of a flood. There is something both alluring and haunting about a boat in the wrong place. This boat has no story of its own, and therefore potentially, could become all stories. It looks as if it has either been dredged from the bottom of the sea, or has never sailed. There is something slightly strange about the scale of it, like a scaled up model boat, the kind children sail, and onto which they can project their dreams. The boat is mirrored inexactly by an elusively rendered smoke drawing of a shipwreck, *Murmansk*, photographic fragments and layered sounds.