

The Arts Catalyst presents:

Dark Places

**Office of Experiments, Steve Rowell, Beatriz da Costa,
Victoria Halford and Steve Beard**

24 November 2009 - 23 January 2010

John Hansard Gallery, University of Southampton, Southampton, SO17 1BJ

Dark Places uncovers sites of secrecy and technology across Britain. Commissioned by The Arts Catalyst and co-curated with the Office of Experiments, SCAN and the John Hansard Gallery, the exhibition presents new artists' works that explore spaces and institutions below the radar of common knowledge.

The Office of Experiments' (OOE) *Overt Research Project* sets a background for the show by mapping and recording advanced labs and facilities that are unwittingly – or purposefully – concealed from public view. The work features an interpretive slideshow and a field guide to local sites through an information kiosk. Elsewhere in the gallery, OOE brings together *The Mike Kenner Archive*, revealing years of campaigning by one man into the public biochemical warfare experiments conducted by Porton Down, Salisbury.

Victoria Halford and Steve Beard's film *Voodoo Science Park* traces a secret geography of the Health and Safety Laboratory in Derbyshire, where train crashes and industrial accidents are re-created to examine their destructive pathways. Mixing fact and fiction, the film imagines a delayed encounter between poet William Blake and political philosopher Thomas Hobbes, drawing affinities to this unique site.

Beatriz da Costa's *A Memorial for the Still Living* is a sombre reflection on endangered species of the British Isles. Presenting a selection of rare animal, insect and reptile specimens, including loans from the Natural History and Horniman Museums, da Costa identifies these collections – and the bleak future they imply – as 'dark places' of zoological science.

Steve Rowell, a collaborator with the US-based group the Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI), in his solo project *Ultimate High Ground UK*, uncovers shared US-UK spaces of military power. Realised as a multiscreen video installation, the work focuses upon RAF Menwith Hill, North Yorkshire, a satellite ground station and communications intercept site, known for its distinctive radome structures.

Dark Places is revealed in greater depth in a filmed artists' interview, on show throughout and a special publication, featuring a new essay by writer and critic Sally O'Reilly.

Events:

The Culture of Enthusiasm - Passion & Technology

Monday 23 November 2009, 4-6pm

Love technology? Collectors, inventors, artists and curators bring the objects of their fascination for a 'show and tell' discussion around their passion. With Bee Thakore,

Professor David Perrett, Artist Neal White from the Office of Experiments and Steve Rowell, chaired by Rob La Frenais, Curator, The Arts Catalyst. **The Culture of Enthusiasm** is inspired and informed by the research of geographer Dr Hilary Geoghegan into the cultures of technology and collecting.

Secrecy and Technology Bus Tour - The Cold War Legacy in the South
Saturday 23 January 2010, 10am-6pm. Tickets £10

Artists from the Office of Experiments and other experts lead this fascinating bus tour of critical sites of advanced technological development in the South of England. The tour will focus on sites that emerged during the tensions and paranoias of the Cold War. Participants will need to bring photo ID and may bring cameras or other recording equipment and materials, as desired. Tickets cost £10, with lunch and refreshments provided. To book call 023 8059 2158 or email info@hansardgallery.org.uk

Dark Places is commissioned by The Arts Catalyst and co-curated with the Office of Experiments, John Hansard Gallery and SCAN and funded by Arts Council England. The OOE's *Overt Research Project* is supported by UCL Department of Geography and The Media School, Bournemouth University, led by Neal White with Steve Rowell and Lisa Haskel.

John Hansard Gallery: open Tuesday - Friday 11am - 5pm, Saturday 11am - 4pm (closed 24 December 2009 to 4 January 2010)

www.hansardgallery.org.uk

www.artscatalyst.org

www.scansite.org

www.o-o-e.org

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