

Pigeon Lofts

PIGEON LOFTS IS A SLIDE INSTALLATION IN WHICH IMAGES OF THE LOFTS PIGEON-FANCIERS BUILD TO HOUSE THEIR BIRDS ARE PROJECTED TOGETHER WITH A VOICE-OVER DESCRIBING A RANGE OF PRODUCTS – THE TONE SUGGESTS CONSERVATORIES, HOUSE EXTENSIONS OR UP-MARKET SUMMER HOUSES.

... / Nathan Coley has given his work the appearance of an audio-visual presentation, like those to be found, for instance, at trade fairs: a slide projection with professionally spoken, taped commentary, a screen and chairs. By referring to a style of presentation used for information and instruction purposes, Nathan Coley attempts to withdraw his projection from the fetishisation process surrounding the image in the context of art. This is in fact the reason why he does not, for instance, simply hang framed photographs on the wall. This discursive element of the work is not just to be found in the form of its mediation, but could be said to be at its very centre. It is a work of documentation, information and reflection.

39 slides photographed by Nathan Coley are projected in succession. In close up and in long shots, photographed in various ways, they show pigeon lofts found in the Glasgow area, constructed by local inhabitants, without planning permission or architectural instruction, and using available, second-hand or found materials. All these constructions are different from each other. They reflect the skill, pretensions, imagination, and care of their builders and show what materials are available. They are unique

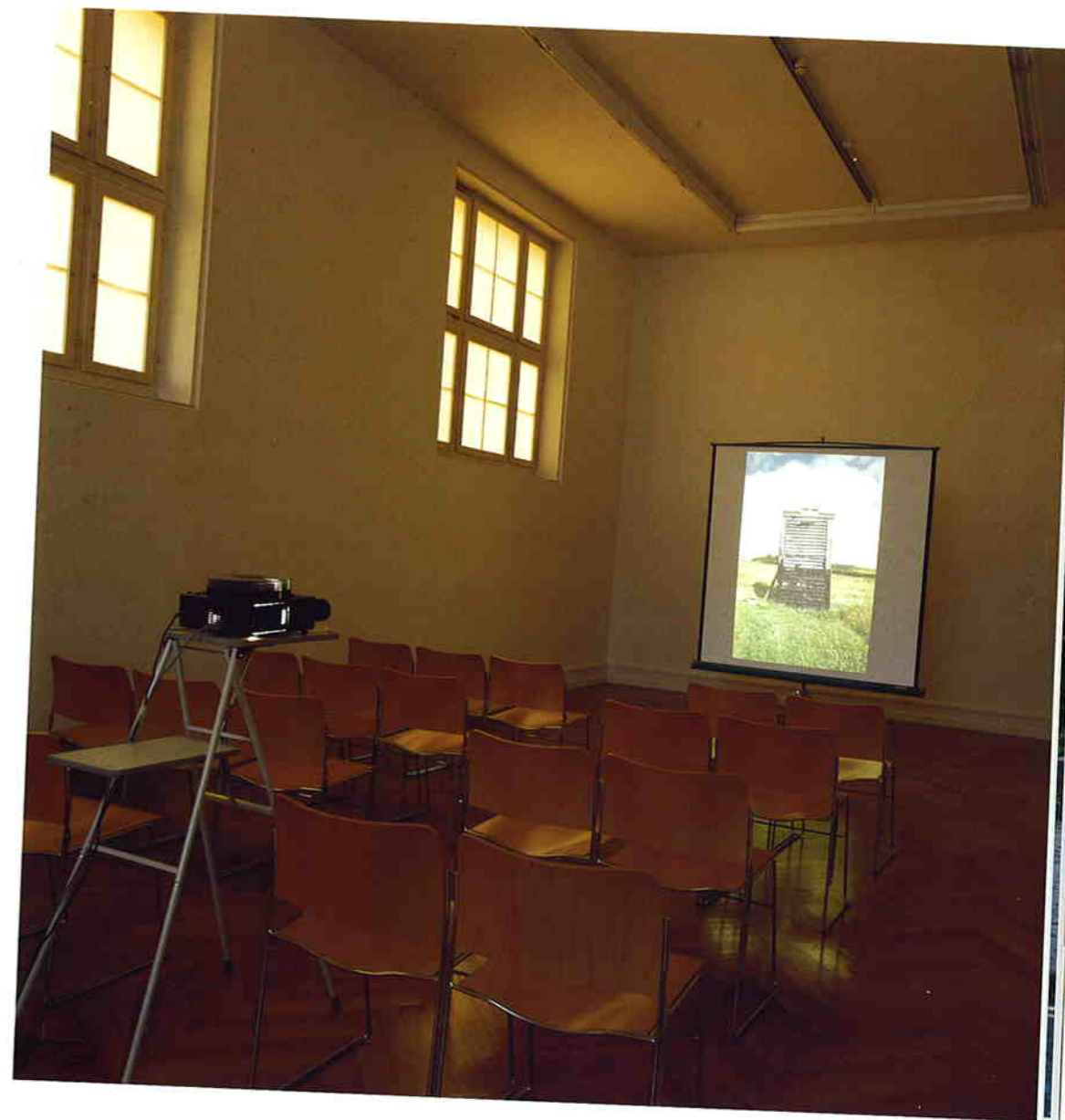
entities. Aesthetic considerations, though, seem to have played no part in their construction. On the other hand there is a whole series of features, based on functional requirements, which the individual constructions have in common: the tower shape, the high position of the entrance accessible by ladder, the lack of windows, the distance from human dwellings, etc.

The projection of the slides is accompanied by a pleasant yet neutral voice, commenting on each image in such a way as to give the impression that the objects shown are the products of some firm and are being presented to potential customers. The actual purpose of these constructions, though, is not made apparent in the presentation: it is limited to the general rhetoric concerning the proposed advantages, opinions, usefulness and status of the various models, all camouflaged as information.

The photographic documentation of these individual and anonymous constructions, which are functionally orientated according to improvised construction methods ('bricolage', Claude Levy-Strauss) but devoid of stylistic considerations, obviously contains many art-historical references. The clearest connection is with Bernd and Hilla Becher's photographic project of *Anonymous Sculptures*, though in Nathan Coley's photographs neither such strictness of method nor such photographic isolation of the subject are attempted. Like the Bechers, Coley proposes to consider these objects within the context of public sculpture. [...] The decisive difference between

Coley's work and that of Bernd and Hilla Becher, though, is that his first step is to use a spoken commentary as a framework for the photographs and only secondly does he put them into an art context. This commentary, then, contradicts all the characteristics of the pigeon lofts themselves: these anonymous constructions are passed off as elements in some unspecified firm's range of models, the individually produced structures are presented as being commercially mass-produced, and something quite lacking in stylistic and aesthetic features is passed off as the outcome of specific prestige-laden formal commitments. What is noticeably absent in the commentary is any statement about the function of these structures, which is, on the other hand, announced in the overall title of the work: pigeon lofts. If, however, this advertising message, which point for point misrepresents the reality of the structures documented by Nathan Coley, is seen as the presentation of a range of sculptures in public spaces, it functions as an ironic commentary on the assumptions inherent in this field.

From
Ulrich Loock, 'Mutual
Contextualization', *Glasgow*,
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THIS IS OUR STANDARD MODEL, INCORPORATING CORRUGATED IRON, STEEL SHEETING AND REINFORCED PLYWOOD.



WHAT IS ILLUSTRATED HERE IS OUR UNIQUE SEPARATION DESIGN BETWEEN THE LOWER GROUND LEVEL SECTION AND THE UPPER LEVEL.



THIS IS ONE OF OUR NEWEST LINES.



THIS SHOT SHOWS THE THREE-LAYER CONSTRUCTION, GIVING YOU DURABILITY, STRENGTH AND AN ATTRACTIVE APPEARANCE.



SEEN HERE, SINGLE STANDING, THIS IS 30% HIGHER THAN MOST, GIVING YOU A LITTLE EXTRA HEIGHT WHERE REQUIRED.



THIS IS AN OLD FAVOURITE.

