





# SENTINEL [SOUTH]

MARTIN NEWTH

PIPPA OLDFIELD

text + work



51°24'45.86"N 0°32'34.51"E

## PIPPA OLDFIELD

### SENTINELS OF WAR: THE PILLBOX AS CAMERA OBSCURA



1. Donovan Wylie *OP3, Forward Operating Base, Mašum Ghar, Kandahar Province* (2010).

<sup>1</sup> Gerry Badger, 'Donovan Wylie's Outposts' in Anne McNeill (ed.), *Ways of Looking: Evidence* (Bradford: Impressions Gallery, 2011), pp.58 - 63.

<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault, 'The Eye of Power: A Conversation with Jean-Pierre Barou and Michelle Perrot' in Colin Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (London: Harvester, 1980), pp.146 - 165.

As suggested by the term 'sentinel'—a soldier who stands watch—the relationship between surveillance and military power is intrinsic and long-standing. At its most rudimentary, the stone watchtower on a strategic hilltop is one of the oldest and most ubiquitous forms of military building.<sup>1</sup> In the late 18th century, social theorist Jeremy Bentham advocated a more complex and refined surveying structure in the principle of the panopticon, a circular tower of prison cells watched over by a single guard at the centre. As Michel Foucault has asserted, this all-seeing central 'eye of power' enabled territory to be controlled not with weapons or armies, but through a gaze, 'a field of total visibility'.<sup>2</sup> For precisely this reason, in World War Two some 18,000 watchtowers, commonly known as pillboxes, were constructed on Britain's coasts and hinterlands. Whilst never used, they performed a symbolic function, both discouraging German invasion and assuring Britons that they were watched over by the protecting state. Surveillance technologies today are increasingly sophisticated, from night vision technology to unmanned military drones, but the principle remains the same: sight bestows power.

The corollary between sight and military control has been explored by numerous contemporary photographers. Taysir

Batniji's series *Watchtowers* (2008) presents a typological survey of structures in Palestine's West Bank; whilst Donovan Wylie's *Outposts* (2011) offers a series of views made both of and from military watchtowers in Afghanistan. In an intriguing and multi-layered addition to the field, Martin Newth's *Sentinel* (2011) depicts older constructions that are no longer in use, yet which remain embedded in the British landscape. Pillboxes are primitive and paradoxical structures: hastily erected to serve a temporary purpose, yet of necessity built to withstand bombardment; constructed without aesthetic considerations, yet functionally flawed, for they would have potentially trapped soldiers under attack. Like Batniji and Wylie, Newth employs a systematic photographic approach to his subject, mapping and recording the structures through consistently repeated viewpoints. By contrast, his combination of photographic methodologies (black and white typological studies, and colour negative prints made via camera obscuras) more explicitly foreground questions about the materiality of photography, whilst suggesting how we might photograph war and its legacies.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of *Sentinel* is Newth's application of camera obscura technology to military structures by turning the pillboxes themselves into cameras. To do so emphasises the ways in which the principle of human military surveillance—the soldier's guarding eye—is extended into the domain of the photographic. Of course, military and photographic sight has always been closely intertwined, with innovations such as infrared technology and aerial reconnaissance photography being the direct result of military research. It is telling that Newth has chosen to appropriate the pillboxes' gun embrasures as ersatz



2. Hamilton Field, California, Dated 9/16/35 Camera Obscura at war. The Magic Mirror of Life Jack & Beverly Wilgus <http://brightbytes.com/cosite/coatwar.html>

<sup>3</sup> John H. Hammond, *The Camera Obscura: A Chronicle* (Bristol: Hilger, 1981), p.105.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.152 - 153; see also Jack and Beverly Wilgus, 'The Camera Obscuras at War' (2007) <<http://brightbytes.com/cosite/coatwar.html>> [accessed 30 January 2012].

apertures, thereby equating the gunsight with the camera lens/viewfinder. At a linguistic level, this correlation is reflected in our terminology: we load, aim, and shoot in order to 'capture' images or territories. Newth's methodology takes the analogy between photographic surveillance and military dominance to its logical conclusion.

The camera obscura, from the Latin meaning 'dark chamber', is an ancient pre-photographic technology. Based on a natural phenomenon, light passing through a small aperture into a blacked-out chamber casts an inverted image on a facing surface. Both the human eye and the modern camera function on this principle. Whilst the camera obscura has most prominently been applied to the fields of science, astronomy, and art, we might situate Newth's work within the overlooked genealogy of military camera obscuras. This still undeveloped history might include experiments made in Anvers, Belgium in the 1860s, where a room-sized camera obscura was created to produce a projection of the River Scheldt on a viewing table. By marking on the table the position of a previously submerged mine, observers were able to identify the optimal detonation point in real time as the image of enemy ships came into range.<sup>3</sup> Smaller camera obscuras, in the form of portable canvas tents and later as human-sized metal capsules, were utilised in both World Wars to test the accuracy of bomb simulations, wind velocity, and flying precision, using a viewing board and metronome to trace and measure pilots' manoeuvres.<sup>4</sup> In Newth's work, however, pillboxes are creatively re-purposed to function as post-hoc camera obscuras. Rather than functioning as durational scientific recording devices, they are used to produce photographic prints



3. Martin Newth plus assistants, Will Marsden and Jon Maguire, transforming a pillbox at Thurrock on the Thames into a camera. Image: Peter Stockton.



4. The spectacle lens inserted into the embrasure of the pillbox used to transform the structure into a camera obscura. Image: Jon Maguire.

<sup>5</sup> For an introduction to this approach and its practitioners, see Katy Barron and Anna Douglas (eds) *Alchemy: Twelve Contemporary Artists Exploring the Essence of Photography* (London: Purdy Hicks, 2010).

that are inflected by the particular aesthetic, conceptual, and memorial connotations of the process and the space itself.

The transformation of the pillbox into a camera obscura in which photographic prints can be made is a painstaking process. Working with a team of assistants, Newth blacks out the entire interior, leaving only a small aperture in one of the gun embrasures, and pins colour photographic paper to the facing wall. A spectacle lens is inserted, both to shorten exposure times, and to further emphasise the link between camera lens and watchful human eye. This aperture is uncovered for a pre-determined exposure of around twenty minutes, and then the paper is removed for processing. The process is then repeated with further embrasures, to give a panoramic sequence of prints. Due to the extreme sensitivity of colour paper, certain aspects must be carried out in complete darkness. Changes in ambient light over the course of the day complicate assessing exposure lengths, and the entire process is prone to accidents, mistakes, and irregularities. Newth's methodology calls for attention to be paid to the physicality of photographs and the intervention of the photographer, notions that are generally elided in the modernist conception of photographs as seamless, reproducible, machine-made images.

Newth's approach is consistent with the school of contemporary practitioners such as Gary Fabian Miller and Susan Derges, who embrace anachronistic and 'alchemical' photographic processes.<sup>5</sup> Often abandoning the conventional camera lens, these artists create direct or one-off images (such as photograms) that do not attempt to replicate naturalistic vision. Of this school, *Sentinel* has perhaps the most affinity with the work of German artist Vera



5. Dr John Murray *Taj Mahal* 1855. Waxed paper negative. The Rubel Collection.

Lutter, whose black and white negative images of industrial spaces are made in shipping-container camera obscuras. Newth himself cites as a primary inspiration the paper negatives of 19th century British photographer Dr. John Murray, specifically his triptych *Three Negatives of the Taj Mahal (Not Finished)* (1864). Whilst, as the title suggests, Murray saw his negatives as an interim stage in production, Newth is drawn to what he calls 'the dislocated view' of the negative that makes the familiar seem strange, effectively slowing down the process of looking and foregrounding the gulf between photographic and human vision.<sup>6</sup>

Newth's negative images differ in two key ways from those of Murray and Lutter. Most immediately, they have a vivid red cast caused by the use of colour photographic paper, as opposed to Lutter's black and white or Murray's sepia. Newth states that his decision to use colour paper is partly due to its greater sensitivity and increased margin for error, which calls into question his control as a photographer and emphasises the physical-chemical nature of production. Aesthetic effect is also key: the benign coastal vistas, drenched in blood-red crimson, become associated with violence and destruction. Secondly, and perhaps more intriguingly, Newth's images diverge from those of Murray and Lutter in that their architectural subjects—the pillboxes themselves—are not visible in the image, but are inferred through the view they command. Both these aspects connect the contemporary pillbox and its image to its history as a site prepared for armed conflict, and, I argue, place *Sentinel* within the extended canon of war photography.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Newth, 'Sentinel' (Unpublished artist's statement, 2011), n.1.

The fact that the camera obscura prints are made by and within

the pillbox itself bears further consideration. Hilary Roberts, Head Curator at the Imperial War Museum Photograph Archive, asserts that photography may often be physically affected by the very conditions of war it strives to depict. For instance, initial attempts to photograph the use of poison gas in World War One resulted in gas shrinking the leather bellows of the camera until it was irrecoverably damaged; whilst a rescue at sea produced negatives almost entirely destroyed by salt water.<sup>7</sup> In this sense, we might consider how war may have a very material impact on photography—a twist on the more conventional notion that photography, particularly concerned photojournalism, has an impact on war. Whilst the camera obscura images of *Sentinel* differ in that they were made long after the event, they too are imbued with the residues—the very dust and atmosphere—of the war-contaminated space in which they were made. This inflected site, together with the volatile nature of the physical-chemical camera obscura process, combine to give what Newth terms ‘a sense that the thing that made the image could also destroy it’.<sup>8</sup>

Newth’s images bring to mind Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin’s *The Day Nobody Died* (2008), a series of non-figurative photograms made whilst embedded with British troops in Afghanistan. Broomberg and Chanarin employed a military vehicle to act as a basic portable darkroom, briefly exposing a roll of colour photographic paper at the scene of ‘newsworthy’ events such as a suicide bomb attack.<sup>9</sup> Whilst divergent in intention and appearance, both bodies of work function as relics of war, in which the specificity of the print itself is paramount. Its potency hinges on its status as an ‘index’, defined by Charles Sanders Peirce as an artefact or image that has

<sup>7</sup> Hilary Roberts, panel discussion for the exhibition *Bringing the War Home* (Impressions Gallery, Bradford, 16 October 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Conversation between the author and Martin Newth, Bradford, 2011.

<sup>9</sup> Pippa Oldfield, *Bringing the War Home: Recent Photographic Responses to Conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan* (Bradford: Impressions Gallery, 2010), pp. 41–42.



50°46'21.95"N 0°09'21.54"E



50°45'32.25"N 0°09'20.23"E



50°42'18.66"N 2°16'35.41"W



51°28'40.66"N 0°37'45.60"E



SENTINEL - THE THAMES AT DARTFORD  
2011, unique c-type negative, 76 x 124 cm each



SENTINEL - MEDWAY  
2011, triptych of unique c-type negatives, 50 x 61 cm each



53°41'50.34"N 0°04'22.77"E



53°42'47.25"N 0°03'16.70"E



51°23'28.01"N 0°45'07.42"E



KIMMERIDGE

Three single channel HD video projections, 2011, Dimensions variable



EAST TILBURY

Three single channel HD video projections, 2012, Dimensions variable



52°28'38.73"N 0°37'27.91"E

<sup>10</sup> C.S. Peirce, 'Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs', in Robert Innis (ed.) *Semiotics: An Introductory Anthology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

<sup>11</sup> Martin Newth, 'Sentinel' (Unpublished artist's statement, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> The notion of *mise en abyme* derives from heraldry. In its modern sense, it is most commonly applied to literature, originating with French novelist André Gide and popularised by Lucien Dällenbach's in *Le récit spéculaire: Essai sur la mise en abyme* (1977).

a direct causal relationship to its referent, such as a footprint in sand.<sup>10</sup> Both the image and chemistry of the paper is imbued with the physical traces of its source: the reflected light, atmosphere, dust and debris, and touch of human hands, all of which connect the print to a particular site and moment. In the case of *Sentinel*, the very pins that attach the paper to the pillbox wall are recorded, both as 'shadows' cast on the exposed image, and as holes in the paper itself. As Newth asserts, his prints are 'indexical of the view... but also indexical of the process by which the image was rendered'.<sup>11</sup> In other words, each print contains the history of its own making.

This aspect is further enhanced and complicated by the accompanying series of black and white 'straight' photographs of the structures themselves. Presented as 10x8" prints in the manner of archival records, they function in part as a means of mapping and documenting the pillboxes, suggesting that these overlooked and abandoned buildings merit recording before they are entirely obliterated. They offer a formal survey of the design patterns used in different regions, recalling the architectural typology work of German artists Hilla and Bernd Becher, or Paul Virilio's study of the proto-Brutalist forms of German defences on the Atlantic coast, *Bunker Archeology* (1975). However, in Newth's case, the pictures of pillboxes are also pictures of cameras. Together with the camera obscura prints they function like a set of Chinese boxes, in which each contains the other. Such an approach brings to mind the concept of *mise en abyme* in recent post-modernist cultural theory, in which the subject is repeated and reflected within itself, like a hall of mirrors.<sup>12</sup> Whilst *mise en abyme* is most commonly applied to literary devices—the book

within a book, or the writer writing about writing—here the act of photographing rebounds on itself.

Whilst photographic *mise en abyme* might most literally depict a photograph-within-a-photograph, in *Sentinel* the story of its own creation is shown within itself. Within the context of territorial photography, there are numerous historical precedents to this, such as Timothy O’Sullivan’s *Sand Dunes Near Carson City, Nevada Territory* (1867), a photograph made during a state-sponsored geographical expedition to the American West. Joel Snyder observes how O’Sullivan’s ‘view’ is a featureless desert, and the real focus of attention is a horse-drawn darkroom (where glass plates were prepared for exposure) and the photographer’s own footprints leading from it towards the vantage point and the (unseen) tripod.<sup>13</sup> The territory surveyed, the production of the negative, and the photographer’s intervention are neatly encapsulated in a single image. Perhaps an even more pertinent instance is Francis Frith’s *Temple Hypaethral, Philea* (1858), cited by Newth as a direct influence. Frith was a producer and purveyor of commercial views to tourists on latter-day Grand Tours. In this image, the photographer’s floating darkroom is seen moored before the view of an ancient ruin in Egypt. The act of photographing itself, and in this case more specifically the act of photographing ruins, becomes the subject of the image. The *mise en abyme* device purports to demonstrate the photographer’s mastery over territory and vision, whilst also emphasising the materiality and transience of both the building and its photograph.

Photographing ruins has been a fundamental impulse since the invention of the medium. In part this genre stems from the tradition of 17th and 18th century French landscape painting, in which



6. Francis Frith, ‘*The Hypaethral Temple, Philea*’ 1857. Scottish National Portrait Gallery, photography by A Reeve.

<sup>13</sup> Joel Snyder, ‘Territorial Photography’ in W.J.T. Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and Power* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1994), p.193.

allegorical ruins demonstrate how great empires may be reduced to dust and desolation. In the era of 19th century colonialism, photography was employed to preserve the crumbling treasures of civilisation in a more material and possessive sense. Frith’s image is representative of this project, answering Baudelaire’s call for photography to ‘rescue from oblivion those tumbling ruins [...] which time is devouring’.<sup>14</sup> Clearly the subjects of Newth’s images depart from the canon of great monuments that Baudelaire envisaged, yet they are nonetheless ruins, subject to benign neglect and intentional destruction: environmental erosion, amateur demolition, graffiti tagging, and the encroachment of vegetation.

Photography shows itself to be uniquely placed to depict ruins. Both are artefacts in which the past is embedded, and which anachronistically endure to our own epoch. As Joel Smith asserts in his photographic survey *The Life and Death of Buildings*, both photographs and buildings are ‘records—deposits—of the past’.<sup>15</sup> In his discussion of Leandro Katz’s photography of Mayan ruins, Carlos Jiménez Moreno takes the analogy to its logical conclusion, arguing that

‘any photo... is itself a ruin. It is an image which is no more than a residue, a trace of a past, each day becoming more incomprehensible’.<sup>16</sup>

In the same way that we might consider the images of *Sentinel* to be photographs about photography, they are also ruins of ruins, in which the material traces of the past are forever embedded. They are objects that will deteriorate, just like the pillbox cameras that made them.

What, though, might it mean to photograph ruins in the context of modern warfare? In comparable projects, Donovan Wylie’s

<sup>14</sup> Baudelaire made this claim in 1859; cited in Kitty Hauser, *Shadow Sites: Photography, Archaeology and the British Landscape 1927 – 1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.4.

<sup>15</sup> Joel Smith, *The Life and Death of Buildings: On Photography and Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum, 2007), p.16.

<sup>16</sup> Carlos Jiménez Moreno, ‘The Lasting Instant: Ruins and Duration in Latin American Photography’, *Third Text*, No.39 (1997), p.79.

*Outposts* (2011) and Simon Norfolk's series *Afghanistan: Chronotopia* (2002), large scale, highly detailed colour images present the ironically photogenic effects of systematic destruction. Such images hinge on the notion of a so-called military sublime, an awe-inspiring vision of potential or real devastation: what Gerry Badger terms a 'terrible beauty'.<sup>17</sup> Norfolk consciously references the ruins-in-landscape painting tradition to critical effect, whereby viewers positioned in the foreground survey the ragged glory before them, bathed in golden light. By contrast, Newth's pillboxes are squat, rudimentary blots on the landscape, more in keeping with the Bechers' images of prosaic industrial architecture than with the painterly sublime.

Although Newth's approach has some resemblances to the Bechers' detached cataloguing approach, underscored by titling the images after their geographic coordinates from Google Earth, Newth elects to use a shallower depth of field, more commonly used in portraiture. This anthropomorphises the structures and emphasises both their pathos and absurdity. In an image entitled 50°42'18.66"N 2°16'35.41"W, a single embrasure covered by trailing ivy becomes an eye peeping out from overgrown hair; whilst 53°42'47.25"N 0°03'16.70"E appears as a figure forlornly half submerged by the sea, a victim of coastal erosion. After World War Two ended, the pillboxes were abandoned: farmers were paid to smash them up, and others were left to decay. Despite this, some 6,000 are thought to remain. Rather than evoke the military sublime, then, Newth offers an alternative history of lowly war defences that have deliberately been neglected in favour of official war memorials, and yet which have somehow become accidental monuments of war.

<sup>17</sup> Gerry Badger, 'Donovan Wylie's Outposts' in Anne McNeill (ed.) *Ways of Looking: Evidence* (Bradford: Impressions Gallery, 2011), p.63.

*Sentinel* should be considered part of the contemporary movement of aftermath or 'late' photography, in which the conventional subjects of photojournalism are visited after the event rather than in the so-called decisive moment.<sup>18</sup> This approach asks the viewer to consider the long-term effects of war, disaster, or human rights abuses through their (sometimes almost imperceptible) traces. Rather than reproduce explicit and potentially exploitative images of suffering, aftermath images encourage the viewer to imaginatively reconstruct the past, and to consider the more far-reaching implications of the traumatic event. In this sense, *Sentinel* quietly subverts the conventions of war photography, typified by heroic and dramatic moments of action from the frontline. Instead, Newth's images call for attention to be paid to the peripheral material remains of war, and to question what is considered appropriate to remember and preserve through national history and collective memory. Both the pillboxes themselves and their photographs, I suggest, function as alternatives to the official cenotaphs that were erected in countless towns in the post-war period. Like cenotaphs, those symbolic tombs for those who died elsewhere and whose names are slowly forgotten, they too are monuments and apt memorials—inglorious, eroded, but enduring traces of war.

<sup>18</sup> For an anthology of the 'late' photography approach, see Natalie Herschdorfer, *Afterwards: Contemporary Photography Confronting the Past* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2011).



## REDEND POINT

Three single channel HD video projections, 2011, Dimensions variable

## MARTIN NEWTH

### MOVEMENT NOT STILLNESS

It could be argued that photography is a medium with its origins in movement, not stillness. Photography is of course about stillness: the freezing of a moment or the compounding of a duration into an image. However, the claim that this is how photography began does not account for the camera obscura. The precursor of still photography may be as old as art itself. Indeed, Matt Gatton, in his 'Paleo-camera theory'<sup>1</sup>, argues that it was the accidental formation of camera obscuras, by way of light passing through small holes in caves and ancient tent dwellings, that might have directly led to the formation of the first drawings of animals. Gatton suggests that pre-historic cavemen and women might have traced the form of projected images of animals onto cave walls, or these projections might have at least provided the inspiration. This is a tantalizing theory, which neatly evokes Plato's 'Allegory of the Cave'. Recent analyses of early cave drawings including *Lascaux: Movement, Space and Time* by Norbert Aujoulat<sup>2</sup>, show how animals in early cave paintings were rendered as if they were moving and perhaps adds some weight to the paleo-camera theory. Whether or not there is any veracity in Gatton's thesis, it is a truth that the camera obscura produces an image that is moving in real time. It is also true that the camera obscura has a well-documented

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.paleo-camera.com/>

<sup>2</sup> Norbert Aujoulat, *Lascaux: Movement, Space and Time* (English-language translation by Martin Street, Thames & Hudson, Ltd., London, 2005).

history in art long before images were frozen by Henry Fox Talbot and others to produce the first still photographs.

As well as being the precursor of still photography, the camera obscura precedes the work I made for the *Sentinel* project in two ways. Firstly, explorations into the camera obscura have been an ongoing concern in my work. In a year-long project in 2006-7, *Solar Cinema*, I transformed a marquee-style tent into a camera obscura with the express intention of exploring the way viewers might interact with the mediated view of the inverted, projected moving image. My concern was not to make photographic images but instead to present the process by which all photography and vision operates. As Alison Green notes in her essay for *Solar Cinema's* accompanying publication<sup>3</sup>, some of the most interesting insights into the use of the camera obscura are by Jonathan Crary in his *Techniques of the Observer*<sup>4</sup>. Crary is interested in the camera obscura's potential to transform the viewer into an observer, the experience of the dislocation from the scene and a contemplation of this separation. For Crary this experience has parallels with philosophical questions about perception, knowledge and ownership of one's environment.

Secondly, the transformation of a pillbox into a camera obscura came before any of the still photographs were made for *Sentinel*. In the summer of 2008, when I was considering embarking on the project that has consumed me for the past few years, I transformed the pillbox at Redend Point in Studland, Dorset into a camera obscura. Using sheets of cardboard, to block the entrance and embrasures, and an uncut spectacle lens I turned the small chamber into a camera. But instead of capturing and

<sup>3</sup> Alison Green, 'Not Pictures', in *Martin Newth: Solar Cinema*. Martin Holman, Alison Green and Paul Tebbs, (London, Cella for Art Works in Wimbledon, 2007) pp.19-20.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1990).

recording the images in photographs I wanted to experience the projected view. With grazed knees from crawling around the partially sand-filled building and in some discomfort following the effort of installing the cardboard I sat with my back against the hard concrete wall, which was ruted with the striations of the corrugated iron that formed the cast into which the concrete was poured to build the structure. Despite my discomfort it was at this moment, whilst observing the projected image and with the sound of the constant tempo of the lapping waves, that I decided that these structures would be the perfect vehicle for a continued exploration into landscape, memory, photography, duration and movement. It is a feature of camera obscuras that the colours appear to be amplified. Objects with which we normally have a linguistic and material relationship, are transformed into pure light and colour. But in this small chamber the sound of the lapping waves was also amplified. This brought to mind the effect of those other strange, concrete wartime relics, sound mirrors<sup>5</sup> that were obsolete before ever being used as they were immediately superseded by the invention of RADAR. It is the experience of witnessing the sound and vision together that allowed for my transformation into an observer in the way that Crary describes. At this moment I saw the potential for these structures to be used to explore the nature of photography and also resonate with ideas about history and our relationship to the landscape. Perhaps most striking was the disruption between the orientation of the horizon and the building, which was tilting due to coastal erosion. The pillbox at Redend Point is the victim of slow encroachment by the sea. It has moved several meters from its original position just above the beach. Without

<sup>5</sup> Sound Mirrors, also known as Acoustic Mirrors, are large concrete structures intended to act as early warning devices to listen for approaching enemy aircraft. They were built in at least 14 locations around the UK coastline in the 1920s and 1930s.

intervention, like hundreds of other pillboxes, it is sure to eventually succumb entirely to the waves' constant barrage. The disruption between the horizon and the angle of tilt of the pillbox, aside from indicating the pillbox's slow demise also appeared to echo ongoing political disputes between the National Trust and the local community about whether or not the beach should be protected. The dispute was documented in the BBC's *The National Trust*<sup>6</sup> explaining the Trust's policy not to interfere with nature. This opens up questions about what it is to manage the environment and highlights how a landscape, no matter how picturesque, might be a space of conflict.

In 2011 I returned to the pillbox at Redend Point on Studland Bay. This time I went with the intention of making a work that might provide viewers with a sensory experience equivalent to the disembodied, projected image I had created three years earlier. My way of representing the experience of the camera obscura (that most ancient of techniques) was to use the potential of the latest function of digital still cameras: that they might also be used to record high-definition moving images. I have heard predictions that at this year's London Olympic games there may be no official still photography. This prediction dictates that, instead, all events will be shot in their entirety in high-definition video. Images required for printed material, for example in newspapers, will be grabbed from a continuum of real-time movement. One reading of this prediction is that through technological advance photography has returned to its origins in the camera obscura: that is, being about movement rather than any prediction of a 'decisive moment'.

<sup>6</sup> *The National Trust*, 2007 (BBC TV Programme) episode: 'The Beach' 06 August, 2007.

Positioning the camera at the pillbox's embrasures, thereby replacing the intended position of a gun with a camera, enables the creation of a multi-screen, moving panorama. The three separate screens are reoriented to the flatness of the horizon, echoing the tilt of the structure. Each screen shows the waves approaching the structure from each view's angle of attack. There is no direct sign of the structure in the images. The paradoxical experience of a camera obscura—that one feels like an observer, dislocated from a scene, but also contingent with that scene—is replicated through the installation. The moving images are partly disembodied but they nevertheless have an umbilical link to the architectural state of the slowly tilting pillbox. And like a camera obscura projection the emphasis is on movement, which is simultaneously multi-layered and multi-directional. The intention is that the viewer might consider the persistent rhythm of the sea set against the imagined, imperceptibly slow movement of the architectural structure, which, undermined by exactly that relentless motion of the waves, makes its slow-motion dive into the sea. In this way, the viewer is invited to consider the change in what the pillboxes signify. Once these peculiar little structures were indicators of a united stand in defence of imminent enemy invasion; now they may be seen to signify the contemporary threat of rising sea levels and the encroachment of the sea caused by climate change and the impending ecological crisis.



50°38'42.48"N 1°56'48.86"W

## BIOGRAPHIES

### MARTIN NEWTH

Martin Newth is an artist and lecturer. He studied at Bournemouth and Poole College of Art and Design (now the Arts University College at Bournemouth), before going on to Newcastle University and the Slade School of Art. His work is primarily photographic and might broadly be described as experimental. He employs numerous processes including very long exposures and purpose built camera obscuras.

Martin Newth has exhibited nationally and internationally including solo and group exhibitions at: George and Jørgen, London; Axel Lapp Projects, Berlin; Focal Point Gallery, Southend; Ffotogallery, Cardiff; Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool; the Kunstverein Konstanz, Germany; and most recently, the V&A Museum of Childhood, London. Martin Newth is part of the University of the Arts London fine art photographic research group 'Photographic Practices'. In 2011 he curated the group's first international exhibition in Beijing, China entitled *Scope: New Photographic Practices*.

Martin Newth's work has been published in books and catalogues including: *Sentinel* (2011); *Future Images*, (2010); *Sequences: Contemporary Chronophotography and Experimental Digital Art*, (2009); *Martin Newth: Solar Cinema*, (2007); and *Slow Burn*, (2006). He has organised and co-curated numerous exhibitions including a series of artists' projects at Central Space, west London (2001-2004). Between 2005 and 2011 Martin Newth was Course Director of BA Photography at Camberwell College of Arts. He is now Programme Director of BA Fine Art at Chelsea College of Art and Design.

### PIPPA OLDFIELD

Pippa Oldfield is a photography curator and writer. She is Head of Programme at Impressions Gallery, Bradford, and a Doctoral Fellow at Durham University, where she is undertaking research into women's engagement with war photography in the Americas. She has curated numerous exhibitions including *Bringing the War Home*, an exploration of contemporary photographic responses to conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq (Impressions Gallery, Bradford, 2010); and co-curated *Once More, With Feeling: Recent Photography From Colombia* (Impressions Gallery, 2007 and The Photographers' Gallery, London, 2008).

Projects in development include an exhibition of archive photographs of women participants in the Mexican Revolution, and a major new solo show by Melanie Friend, examining military air shows and arms trade fairs, for Impressions Gallery in 2013. Pippa has contributed to journals including *Portfolio*, *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, and *Media, War and Conflict Journal*, and has written for numerous artist's monographs including most recently *Farhad Ahrarnia: Canary in a Coal Mine* (London: Beyond Art Production / Rose Issa Projects, 2012) and *Paul Floyd Blake: Personal Best* (Stockport: Dewi Lewis Publishing / Impressions Gallery, 2012).

She regularly gives lectures and participates in discussions at academic institutions and arts organisations, and is a member of DCAPS (Durham Centre for Advanced Photographic Studies).

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