

The Fruitmarket Gallery

Exhibition Archive

Nathan Coley

Exhibition 22 May – 18 July 2004

Place is an important concept in architecture. The time and location profoundly affects the interpretation and meaning of architecture.... Different cultures throughout time have shown different interpretations of place, and this is reflected in their built environment.... Man constructs a physical environment in order to give himself a place in the world. This ranges from the archetypal primitive hut through to the pyramids, both show a spiritual foothold that man is making in an otherwise anonymous and rootless world.

Lester Korzilius, essay 'The Importance of Place in Architecture', 1999

Nathan Coley (born in Glasgow in 1967, lives and works in Dundee) is an artist whose work questions the way in which the values of a society are reflected in its architecture. His work is based around an interest in public space, and addresses issues such as the importance of place, the social value of architecture and the meaning and relevance of contemporary monuments. Coley has become known for works of public sculpture, yet this is only one part of his practice. This exhibition concentrates on work intended to explore ideas from the built environment in the context of the gallery. Research motivates Coley's practice, he is an ideas-driven artist whose methods include site visits, archival research, interviews and extensive photographic documentation. The works in this exhibition exemplify the range of media he uses in his work, including sculpture, photography, drawing, video, installation and an artwork that takes the form of a book.

In a recent interview, Coley stated that he has an interest in the way that religious buildings, as architectural constructions, still hold great importance for our cultural identity even though their spiritual significance has declined. Acknowledging their continued power within the contemporary cityscape, he identifies these buildings as gathering places, landmarks and navigation aids. For this exhibition, Coley has made *The Lamp of Sacrifice, 286 Places of Worship, Edinburgh 2004*, a new work motivated by this interest and by the argument of the 19th century artist and academic John Ruskin, that architecture is distinguished from mere building by the level of personal and financial sacrifice that goes into it:

It is not the church we want, but the sacrifice: not the emotion of admiration, but the act of adoration: not the gift but the giving. John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1848

The work involves the artist recreating all the places of worship listed in the Edinburgh Yellow Pages, a list which encompasses a huge area including Lothian, Fife and the Borders. The artist chose to sacrifice his time and effort in the reproduction of these sacred sites as perfectly-constructed cardboard scale models; a vast array of churches, synagogues, temples, meeting houses, salvation army halls and mosques which flood the upper gallery floor. The mapping of the religious profile of the region became the focus of Coley's life for the three month period leading up to the exhibition. On receipt of digital photographs of each place of worship taken by Edinburgh-based artist Lyndsay Mann, aiming each to make four models a day, he and his assistant, Dundee-based artist Tony Nolan worked on little else but the completion of this mammoth task.

Coley's art involves examining the scenes and acts that make up reality, altering their arrangement better to ask questions of and reveal truths, problems and incomplete possibilities of the structures by which we find ourselves surrounded.

Gavin Wade, *How to read a black tent, tabernacles and other stories*, Art and Sacred Places, Portsmouth 2003

On 22 December 1988, the American airline Pan Am 103 was blown up over Lockerbie in Scotland. 259 passengers, the flight crew and 11 residents of Lockerbie were killed in the disaster. After 13 years of investigations, suspicion fell on two Libyans, who, because of the politically sensitive nature of the issue, were tried in a Scottish court of law set up on neutral ground at Kamp van Zeist in the Netherlands. After a 14 month trial, one suspect was sentenced to 25 years imprisonment in a Scottish jail whilst the other was acquitted.

Fascinated by the cultural, political and geographical ramifications of the trial, Coley applied to become an unofficial artist-in-residence at Kamp van Zeist in 2000. Quick to clarify his lack of personal motivation - he knew no victims - he wanted to witness the physical and political impact of one land upon another. The moment the artist set foot in the base, having spent all day travelling from his home in Dundee to the Netherlands, he was back on Scottish territory. As he sat watching the trial, he realised that his particular interest in it was focused on the witness box, a controlled space in which we swear allegiance to religious and legal systems, a physical symbol of truth. *Lockerbie* (2003) includes an exact replica of the

witness box used during the trial and a series of drawings which Coley made from official press photographs of evidence. He has since collaborated with the Imperial War Museum in London on the acquisition of the original witness box for their weapons and firearms collection.

Typically of Coley's practice, both *Lockerbie* and *The Lamp of Sacrifice*, *286 Places of Worship, Edinburgh 2004*, though very different in the way they are made, exert a powerful presence in the gallery. The witness box is fabricated to an immaculately high specification, while the drawings that accompany it and the models which make up *The Lamp of Sacrifice*, *286 Places of Worship, Edinburgh 2004* are more obviously hand made. Elsewhere in the gallery, ad-hoc structures made by individuals (*Pigeon Lofts*) sit alongside a memorial to 1960s urban brutalism (*I Don't Have Another Land*), and a testament to architectural idealism (*Hurt Burn me Daddy*) can be seen in the context of a small sculpture that seems uncertain whether it is a model of a distressed building, or a distressed model of the building. In a room by itself, a large-scale film projection of animated 1950s archival photographs repeatedly demolishes a pair of industrial chimneys and a beautiful sixteenth century tower (*The Land Marked*). These works, though speaking very different visual languages, share a common purpose in the artist's quest to find physical and emotional triggers for urban experience in order to find out how values and beliefs are articulated in the built environment.

Described by *The Scotsman* as 'one of the brightest stars of his generation of internationally celebrated young artists' (Elizabeth Mahoney, 2000), Nathan Coley has been involved in a range of international exhibitions, including *Days Like These* at Tate Britain 2003, *Scope: Art and Industry Urban Arts Biennale*, Christchurch New Zealand 2002, and has had solo exhibitions at Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon 2001 and Westfälischer Kunstverein, Munster, 2000. Coley is the only British artist to be selected for the Sidney Biennale in July 2004.

Publication

Nathan Coley

There will be no miracles here, £15.00

Hardback, 128pp, 160 x 240mm
Fiona Bradley, Susanne Gaensheimer

An extensive monograph covering the breadth of the artist's practice over the last ten years. The book documents the artist's major projects, discussing them both in the context of their original making, and in the light of newly-commissioned essays by Fiona Bradley and Susanne Gaensheimer. Bursting with images and ideas, the book offers the first opportunity properly to assess Coley's intriguing work.
Co-published by Locus+.



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Talks and Events

Artist's Talk, Nathan Coley

Saturday 22 May, 2pm, free

Directors Talk, Fiona Bradley

Thursday 27 May, 6pm, free

Poetry Promenade

Saturday 12 June, 2–4pm

Tickets £3 / £1.50 concession

Take a poetry promenade through Nathan Coley's exhibition with poetry selected by Jim McGonigal and Ken Cockburn. In collaboration with The Scottish Poetry Library.

Place

Old St. Paul's Church, 39 Jeffrey St, Edinburgh

Thursday 24 June 5.30 – 8.30pm

Tickets £10 (£7 conc). Booking essential.

A public forum examining the political, spiritual and cultural significance of place, encouraging debate about cultural identity and representation. Speakers include Nathan Coley, Richard Holloway, Magnus Linklater, Malcolm Fraser and chaired by Janice Forsyth. In association with BBC Radio Scotland and The Scotsman.

Family Workshop

Saturday 10 July 2 – 4pm, free

This workshop enables parents and guardians to work hands-on with their children to create artwork in response to Nathan Coley's exhibition. For children aged 3 – 6 years with one chaperone. 20 places available.

Bookings for talks and events must be made at the Bookshop

P 0131 225 2383 or

E bookshop@fruitmarket.co.uk

Schools Project

Fort Primary School and Bonnington Primary School, Edinburgh will be participating in The Fruitmarket Gallery *Faith and Place* education project during this exhibition. Working with artist Tony Nolan, pupils will create work in response to the exhibition.

10 schools will be invited to visit the exhibition. Each school will receive a tour and a substantial education pack. Project supported by The City of Edinburgh Council and Artworks. If your school is interested in booking a visit to the exhibition please contact:

Tracy Morgan

Education Manager

The Fruitmarket Gallery

P 0131 226 8183

E education@fruitmarket.co.uk

Reading Room

A range of artist resource material and a exhibition interpretation film presentation of Nathan Coley discussing the exhibition is available in the gallery reading room. Nathan Coley's exhibition DVD is available priced £15.

New Publication

A major monograph on the work of Nathan Coley accompanies this exhibition. Published by The Fruitmarket Gallery and Locus+, it covers the breadth of the artist's practice over the last ten years. Priced, £15.

Gallery Information Assistants will be on hand daily between midday and 3.30pm for impromptu tours for small groups and individuals and to answer any questions.

We particularly welcome group bookings from universities, schools, community groups, disabled people and minority ethnic communities.

Group bookings must be made two weeks in advance of your visit by contacting:

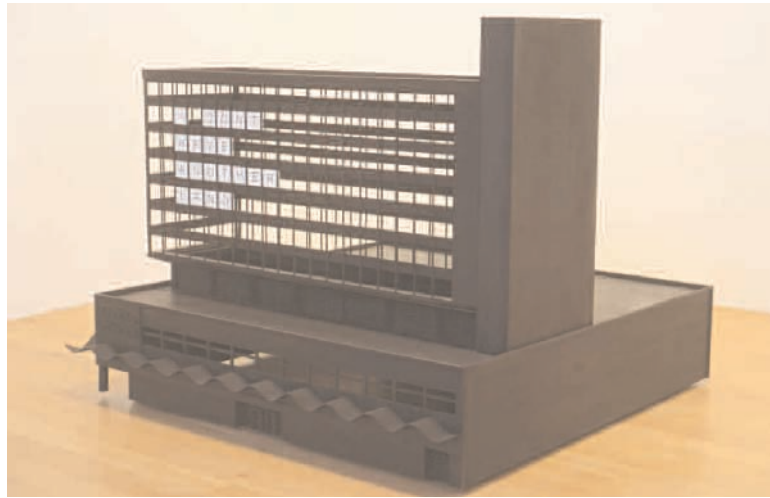
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Nathan Coley, Installation view
Top: Lamp of Sacrifice, 286 Places of Worship, Edinburgh 2004, Lockerbie, 2003, Installation view,
I Don't Have Another Land, 2002, ~~Hurt~~, Burn Me Daddy, 2001, The Land Marked, 2001