



Jeremy Till:  
These photographs of "A Space" are scaleless and placeless, which gives a certain ambiguity to them – the space when you told me how high some of these mountains in your images were, was astounding. Maybe we shouldn't know that, to keep the viewer guessing, but I quite like those little secrets about the work and there are just enough clues for the eye to track to understand the scale.

Steffi Klein:  
That's exactly the point, the images deal with one's own comprehension of a landscape or city. They raise questions of region, my photographs take inspiration from Romantic landscape paintings to heighten the modern illusion of a natural landscape tradition. Romanticism stressed emotions as a source of aesthetic experience especially those which are experienced in confronting the sublimity of unmeasured nature and its picturesque qualities. Panegyric by Caspar David Friedrich, Thomas Cole or John Martin have influenced the series. There is an appeal to the sublime in my photographs, that awe inspiring power of nature identified by Burke and Kant but in my images these mountains only mirror the naturally awesome and one slowly registers the fine tropics, plastic bottles, and 'stay here'. So maybe one can talk about them as a form of an industrial sublime in that what appears to be natural is actually man-made. The photograph stands in scale and materiality and in that which creates a sense of dislocation, a placeless place or a non-place. But by that I do not mean to refer to non-place as discussed by Marc Auge but much more in relation to Robert Emmons' non-places. I feel that my London sites have a similar spatial relation to the city as Smithson's New Jersey had to Manhattan in his "Monuments of the Past".

Jean Wainwright:  
There are kind of untranslatable objects and I think that it actually also a general theme in your work: a definition of objects, a lack of scale and a dislocating sense of non-place. They're strange spaces to navigate and to find out where you are.

Steffi Klein:  
Yes, my images don't frame a moment in that sense, an instant in the ebbing qualities of place. So I always seem to depict a place as empty and lost rather than human presence. It is like Eugène Ionesco, who was concerned to record the architecture of things in the incrustation of the city. But Auge moved away from the idea and showed the city but rather showed us a sleek and desolated Paris.

Jeremy Till:  
"Non-places" which has a sense of absolute emptiness, photography empties out the image of objects on the one hand and empties out the image of objects on the other. What's really interesting about these photographs is that they take that attitude to an extreme, and so force one to look for the life



that has been abolished. Because they're so empty, so abstracted and so equated or time, in a way time comes running back in again. That's what really gave me about them, they take the convention of architectural photography, which is always about excluding something, you need to reoccupy it again because there's so uncomfortable.

Jean Wainwright:  
There is a familiarity to the idea of the model village or the architectural plan that you appear to be playing with. We question whether it is a real place or not. We may or may not know it's Proulxville, but if we do know, what are we actually looking at here? I think there's that sense of dislocation again, how do we navigate that space, where are we in the space, do we belong in the space?

Jeremy Till:  
Most architectural photography does not allow you to do that because it's not as extreme as this, it's kind of the norm that you take pictures of buildings and they're empty. And that's it.

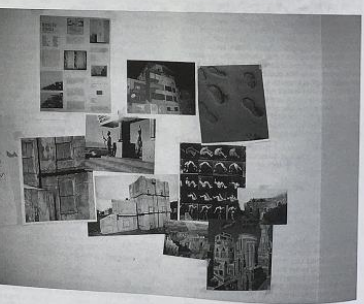
But why is that?

Jean Wainwright:  
That might be because in architectural photography you want a building to take the greatest role in it, you don't want to be distracted by people. Whereas in the photographs of "Non-places" the buildings are not the main subject, they take a secondary role in the relationship between all the different elements and the imagination of who might live there.

Steffi Klein:  
I agree with you, I always feel that architectural photographs are contrived images of focused people but I'm much more interested in our urban fabric being engaged in the metaphorical questions of the real and the world. For me the idea of the city must incorporate and include both physical and material structures. So I'm very interested in the values and beliefs that inform the built environment.

Jeremy Till:  
"Non-places" very much does that, dealing with the fiction of utopia. The idea of utopia as the fictional imagination of the perfect place for the good civic order is very much at the core of this series. But about that I'm very interested in the values and beliefs that inform the built environment. "Non-places" is located in the town of Proulxville, which is built on land owned by the Duchy of Cornwall and planned by the architect Leon Krier. It draws its inspiration from English market towns. Prince Charles' ideas of the city, expressed in his catalogue "A Vision of Britain", revives modernist architecture as an inhuman habitat. So the town appears to offer organic growth, employing the co-existence of buildings from quite different periods and styles. The idea is that modernist development can happily meet to 19th century classical buildings, intertwining the vernacular.

- From top row:  
Dan Graham, 'Homes for America', 1966  
Anri Sala, 'Dammii i color', 2005 (coloured houses)  
Alora e Cataldilla, 'Land Mark (Foot Printer)', 2001-2002  
Denise Scott Brown, 'Figures of Romans, Caesar Palace, Las Vegas', 1966  
Rachel Whiteread, 'House' (details), 1993-1994  
Edward Maysbridge, 'Animal Locomotion' (selection), 1884-1887  
Steffi Klein, 2 photographs of houses in Tyneham, 2005  
Acon Brzezinski, 'Painting of Futuristic Buildings and City'



Jean Wainwright:  
Also closure: when you look at these streets and individual houses, you can't penetrate the window because of the metal blinds that have been put up by the council. There is something in these images that discusses the denial to enter this space.

Jean Wainwright:  
I just see these streets as absolutely full of the traces of life. It's a frozen moment but absolutely full of what's been there. The traces and signs of people, who once tried to make their life better.

Steffi Klein:  
It is like the photographic plate itself: the surface of the city has received the impact of events that has irreversibly transformed it. And this is what made me think of Pompeii in relation to this work. So for me these urban situations of "Non-places" become an architectural and almost archeological archive in themselves. Like Pompeii did, it becomes a palimpsest of present, past and future.

Jeremy Till:  
I think technically it's interesting that in "Humanism" parts of houses appear twice. At first you think it's a trick but then you think no, which just makes you look harder.

Jean Wainwright:  
Again you're being thrown off balance. And why the repetition?

Steffi Klein:  
I wasn't interested in a kind of seamless sequence at all. There is this deliberate intention for the viewer to engage with every single house of the street. The repetition is never the same. Sometimes a window is repeated, sometimes it repeats more, there's no exact and it creates a staccato in the fluid movement of viewing. So the houses overlap and one uncovers and exposes the crossings. The streets are these avenues that seemed to create a photographic space that captures the streets in their disjunctive, fragmentary forms.

Jeremy Till:  
Although you mentioned your work to be about the idea of the periphery, it is also about extreme conditions.

Jean Wainwright:  
When you look at "Humanism" you realize that this is an extremely unusual situation for a city. Usually vacant properties are as a premium and developers can't wait to get people to redevelop. And here people are leaving and it's staying empty. No one wants it.

Jean Wainwright:  
You wonder why they don't want it. There's always that question mark, commodity, the housing market, the industry, because you're thinking who are they vacating, what is it about those streets and areas that had to be vacated.