

# THIS MUST BE

Camille Fallet  
Mimi Mollica  
Xavier Ribas  
Eva Stenram  
Lillian Wilkie  
Tereza Zelenkova  
David Company

Curated by writer and  
artist David Company.

17 Nov – 12 Dec 2010

JVA at Jerwood Space  
171 Union Street  
Bankside  
London SE1 0LN

[jerwoodvisualarts.org](http://jerwoodvisualarts.org)  
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# E THE PLACE

*This Must Be The Place*, curated by David Company, is the ninth exhibition within a series of shows we call Jerwood Encounters. Since 2008, Encounters have taken the form of one-off exhibitions which provide artists and curators with new exhibition opportunities. They aim to explore the issues and territories in the borderlands between the main disciplinary fields of the Jerwood Visual Arts programme, which include drawing, painting, sculpture, applied arts, photography and moving image.

From 2003 to 2008, Jerwood Visual Arts and Portfolio Magazine ran the Jerwood Photography Awards. Each year a panel of selectors awarded prizes to five outstanding emerging photographers, who received not only a bursary award but publication in Portfolio Magazine and the opportunity to be part of a key exhibition within the Jerwood Visual Arts programme. We are currently developing ideas for a new initiative to support artist-photographers at critical early stages of their careers, and whilst these ideas develop, we are keen to support exhibition opportunities in photography through the Jerwood Encounters series.

In 2009 Catherine Yass curated *Passing Thoughts and Making Plans*, looking at the different ways in which artists use photography in their research processes, often towards final work which is realised in other mediums. Writer, artist, curator and lecturer David Company wrote a thoughtful, playful catalogue essay for this show, and we were delighted when he agreed to curate a Jerwood Encounter himself, exploring contemporary photography. The show David has brought together, *This Must Be The Place*, takes us through specific works from seven artists who approach themes of place from different artistic, philosophical and social perspectives; we are extremely pleased that David is also presenting his own work within this context. The exhibition offers a journey not only through deeply sensitive and sometimes surprising representations and interpretations of place and subject, but allows us to consider the differing methods and forms each artist explores through their practice. I would like to thank David Company and each of the participating artists for bringing together this show.

Shonagh Manson  
Director, Jerwood Charitable Foundation

## THIS MUST BE THE PLACE

by David Campany

Few could have failed to notice that much of the current discussion about photography revolves around questions of time, duration and history. Critics, commentators, theorists and photographers tend to frame their interests and understanding of it in thoroughly temporal terms. At the same time (pun intended) photography is, arguably, as space- or place-based as it is time based. Its optics demands it. Photography is almost automatically spatial, and to make it otherwise requires great and perverse effort.

When Jerwood Visual Arts asked me to put together an exhibition of contemporary photography many of the practitioners whose work was really engaging me were intimately involved with exploring places, locations of one kind or another. This had something to do with the revival of discussion in the UK about the role of photography in the production and critical understanding of what has come to be called 'globalization'. That's a grand and general term so I leave it to the viewer to discern its presence here.

*This Must Be the Place* brings together responses to several locations around the world: Barcelona; Dresden; London; Dakar; Xiamen and Shanghai; Zabriski Point; and the virtual space of the internet. Each project makes a different approach to the idea of location, a different approach to the medium and a different approach to presentation. The show includes collaged composites, books, found images, sequences, installations, films and slideshows.

**Camille Fallet** lives in Marseille and Paris but studied for two years at the Royal College of Art here in London. During that time he made a hugely ambitious photographic study of the character of London's varied environments, almost postcode by postcode. His carefully assembled groupings of the city's architecture and citizens recall something of Walker Evans' survey of the vernacular anonymity of 1930s urban America. Fallet was fresh to London and covered the city very fast, almost as if he knew his judgment would be most acute before he became too familiar with it, too adjusted to its ways of life. Do Fallet's findings ring true? We must measure them against our own experiences of London. The project exists in two forms: as an unpublished book and as a series of large framed collages of related imagery. The three collages on show here are Fallet's responses to post-war brutalist architecture and high street shoppers. The project is titled *London Photographs*, after Walker Evans' celebrated book *American Photographs* (1938). Evans had himself



Camille Fallet  
'Estates' from *London Photographs* (2004-5)

visited London in the 1950s and published his findings as a short photo-essay in the magazine *Architectural Forum*. Titled 'The London Look' it is shown here as a counterpoint and precursor to Fallet's work.

Zabriskie Point is a remote, arid and epic spot in the Californian desert. The desire to go there is usually motivated by having seen or heard about it in advance. It's one of those places with a mythic reputation, an aura even, for those who have not seen it for



Tereza Zelenkova  
from *Zabriskie Point* (2009)

themselves. Next to nothing lives on the bone dry, sand-blasted rocks. Spend too long in its baking heat and you will soon become delirious. Hallucinations are commonplace. It is usually reached by air-conditioned vehicle, as did the radical philosopher Michel Foucault with two friends in 1975. They took LSD and sat listening to *Kontakte* by Karlheinz Stockhausen on the car's tape player. Foucault called it 'The greatest day of my life', changing forever his understanding of himself and

human nature in general. For others the soundtrack is Pink Floyd, whose music plays throughout Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Zabriskie Point* (1970), with its famous orgy of bourgeois-rebel students trying to lose themselves in the lust and dust. Such associations may float around the photographs made by **Tereza Zelenkova** (born in the Czech Republic, based in London). The 'Point' itself is a promontory from which one can look out over a primordial landscape of undulating hills. From there Zelenkova shot a discontinuous panorama of the otherworldly vista, presented in black & white and colour. It's cinematic enough to connect with any number of 'desert movies', fragmentary enough to allude to the mind-altering nature of the place and, with the presence of just one small female figure in the landscape there's just a hint of a self-portrait too.

For **Xavier Ribas** (from Barcelona, based in Brighton) photography is a medium belonging equally to many disciplines: documentary; anthropology; history; politics; social geography; and art. His installation *Nomads* (2008) is a response to a very particular site in Barcelona. In 2004 around sixty gypsy families



Xavier Ribas  
Grid of 33 black & white photographs,  
part 1 of *Nomads* (2008)

were pushed out of an empty industrial plot where they had settled, first by intimidation and then by the arrival of diggers that broke up the concrete surface to make it uninhabitable. Without secure finance or coherent plans to develop the site, it was left empty, suspended cynically between its past and an unknown future. Ribas's first training was in technical drawing and very often his photographic projects show it. The chaotic forms of the site are made all the more striking by the diligent, quasi-forensic documentation and the geometry of his presentation. A formal grid of thirty-three black and white prints of the broken ground is flanked by a prosaic Google Earth view of the site and a 'poetic' diptych of storm clouds. Although its form is finely calculated, *Nomads* attempts no authoritative assessment of the situation, preferring to meet its audience half-way.

Dresden I-IX (2009) is a maquette for a suite of books by **Lillian Wilkie** (based in London). Bombed and nearly flattened by Allied forces in 1945, the German city of Dresden has become a symbol of what is at stake for the fraught project of postwar remembrance. The rebuilding of a city in a defeated country is faced with



Lillian Wilkie  
*Dresden I-IX*, artist's book (2009)

the task of deciding what should be memorialised and how. But memory itself is unruly, unconscious and unpredictable. Each of Wilkie's books emerged from a walk across the city, weaving together photographed details, associations and historical research. The project is very much her own, but there are echoes of the re-imagined histories of such celebrated writers as WG Sebald and Walter Benjamin. All three have seen the fragmentary and enigmatic qualities of the photographic document as a path to return afresh to what we think we know of the past, and how we think we know it.

**Eva Stenram** (originally from Sweden, based in London) produces images that make a healthy mockery of the very idea of location, in more ways than one. The photographs included here are, on first sight, a loose group of fairly pretty forest landscapes. Light dapples through trees onto sites good for picnics or a rest on a country walk. On closer inspection the images break up into the blocks of colour we associate with low-resolution digital files. Stenram has visited porn websites, downloaded photos and 'removed' the human bodies to leave us with empty stages. 'Bare' landscapes, if you will. Should we be attempting to re-imagine what was there or is it best to presume it was as formulaic

and predictable as the settings? Are we being protected coyly from something, or encouraged to enjoy it in its absence?



Eva Stenram  
top: *pornography/forest\_pic\_2* (2004-7)  
bottom: *pornography/forest\_pic\_4* (2004-7)

In Senegal a new motorway is being constructed to connect the city of Dakar with the country's 'hinterland'. It is an attempt to close the extreme cultural and economic gap between city and country that characterizes so many African countries. Seven kilometers of it have been built, twenty-five have not (although it is due for completion next year.) For several months the motorway and its transitional environments were photographed by **Mimi Mollica** (originally from Sicily, based in London). The resulting project, *En Route to Dakar*, is shown here as an extended digital slide show of over one hundred colour images. Mollica uses a square format camera to cohere a range of photographic approaches – portraits, topographic studies, landscapes, cityscapes and street photography.

The project is a highlight of the recent survey Street Photography Now (Thames & Hudson, 2010). The genre has had something of a renaissance in recent years and in part Mollica's work emerges from a desire to reinvent the form of street photography on a more experimental basis, reconnecting its essentials with a newly energised social reportage.



Mimi Mollica  
from *En Route to Dakar* (2007-8)

My own contribution is the film/photo projection *One Way Street in China* (**David Company**, 2008). I spent seventy days in Xiamen and Shanghai, with my Mandarin-speaking wife and our daughter. While unpacking my bags I realized it was not the first time that I had brought on an overseas trip Walter Benjamin's



David Company  
from *One Way Street in China* (2007)

*One Way Street*, the collection of aphorisms and observations on city life published in 1928. Why was it useful to be an Englishman in China with an eighty-year-old German text? The project was my attempt to answer that. I've always assumed Benjamin wrote it a paragraph a day, assembling a loose collection as he went along. So I took that as a model. With a simple camera that could shoot stills and reasonably good silent films I made a small piece of work every day. Of the seventy made, around twenty are presented here. In the 1920s there was much excitement at the prospect that one day making films could be as simple and as variable as writing. Current cameras and simple software have certainly made that possible. Each piece was sequenced the day it was shot using Apple Macintosh's 'Keynote'. It's not even a proper filmmaking programme but it can be. I use it to make art, structure books and plan exhibitions, including *This Must Be the Place*.

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