



Teacher's Notes

Dan Dubowitz & Fearghus Ó Conchúir
Tattered Outlaws of History
Jaywick Martello Tower, 1 April - 21 August 2011

For further details about Fleet visit:
WWW.FLEET-ART-ORG or contact Commissions East on 01353 669094



Introduction and Contents

These notes provide useful background information, discussion points and suggested activities. They are not intended as a definitive guide but a collection of ideas to inspire conversation and encourage practical work.

Contents

- **Fleet: Art in the Haven Ports**
Overview
- **Jaywick Martello Tower**
Information on the site
- **Dan Dubowitz and Fearghus Ó Conchúir**
Information about the artists and 'Tattered Outlaws of History'
- **Teaching Through Contemporary Art**
Engage with contemporary art practices
- **Key themes in the work**
Information about the main themes of the artwork
- **Artistic Links**
Links to relevant artists, movements and styles
- **Artist Quotes**
Referencing the work and responses to the site
- **Discussion Topics and Questions**
Starter questions to inspire discussion
- **Activities**
Practical art activities
- **Selected links & publications**
Relating to the Fleet project, Dan Dubowitz and Fearghus Ó Conchúir

Fleet: Art in the Haven Ports

From Autumn 2009 to Summer 2011 'Fleet: Art in the Haven Ports' brings the contemporary visual arts to a number of historic and endangered sites in the East of England.

All of Fleet's sites are influenced by their location, close to the rivers Orwell and Stour or looking out to the North Sea. The Suffolk and Essex coastline is internationally renowned for its natural beauty and wildlife habitats. Because of the area's high conservation value, all Fleet's venues are a 'hidden gems' that can be easily accessed without having to use a car.

Fleet is the UK part of an international arts programme called Face2Face – the programme includes residencies from French as well as UK artists. There are commissions, residencies and events, plus film screenings and other works brought to the UK by our partners from the Nord Pas de Calais region.

Fleet: Art in the Haven Ports is developed and presented by Commissions East and its partners. For more information about Commissions East visit.

www.commissionseast.org.uk

Jaywick Martello Tower

Since opening in 2005, the Tower has grown to become one of the most innovative cultural venues in Essex.

Built originally as a Napoleonic Fort in the early 19th century the tower now acts as a central hub for the local community and visitors. There are regular arts and heritage exhibitions, talks and events.

Many elements combine to make Jaywick Martello Tower such a distinctive venue. The historic Martello Tower and its location in the seaside town of Jaywick, the natural environment that surrounds the town, its dramatic sea and sky, have all proved inspirational for artists and visitors alike.



www.jaywickmartellotower.org

Dan Dubowitz

Born 22 June 1969, British. Based in UK and Italy.

The spaces that we abandon reveal much about ourselves and the psyche of contemporary societies. The ways in which we respond to these 'leftovers' shape not only the emerging city but the society it constructs.

Dan Dubowitz has been investigating wastelands for 17 years, as an artist and as an architect. Trained in architecture at Sheffield University and after working for Peter Eisenman in New York in 1992-93, he began to develop a practice as an artist using photography in parallel to architectural work. From 1996-2002 Dan co-directed the Heisenberg project in Glasgow, UK, and taught at architecture and fine art faculties in UK universities.

In 2003 Dan established Civic Works, to concentrate on photography and 'cultural masterplanning'. Since then Dan has developed cultural masterplans for Glasgow, Sunderland, Newcastle, Manchester and Stoke-on-Trent in the UK. This has led to a number of permanent and temporary city-scale artworks in public places:

photography/installation: 'The Peeps' and 'The Cutting Room' public square, Manchester.

film/performance: 'Tattered Outlaws of History', Dublin, now touring, with choreographer Fearghus O'Conchuir.

film/projection/air balloon: 'Searchlight' with artist David Cotterrell, Sunderland.

architecture/photography: 'The Peeps' & 'The Cutting Room', Ancoats Manchester.

Throughout this period Dan has undertaken a number of purely photographic projects. In 2008 Dan began shifting the focus of his practice from cultural masterplanning to photography. In 2010 two books have been published to accompany exhibitions touring Europe and America:

'Fascismo Abbandonato' and 'Wastelands' Dewi Lewis Publishing.

Fearghus Ó Conchúir

Independent choreographer and dance artist. Brought up in the Ring Gaeltacht in Ireland, he completed degrees in English and European Literature at Magdalen College Oxford, before training at London Contemporary Dance School.

In addition to his own choreography, he has danced for other companies such as Adventures in Motion Pictures, Catapult Dance Company, Ciotóg, Claire Russ Ensemble and Arc Dance Company, where he was assistant to the choreographer, Kim Brandstrup.

He was the first Ireland Fellow on the Clore Leadership Programme and continues to contribute to the programme as a facilitator and speaker. He is a current Board member of Dance Ireland, of Project Arts Centre and of Dance Digital and a former board member of Create. He also contributes as an occasional reporter to Imeach, TG4's flagship arts programme.

His current creative preoccupation is the relationship between bodies and buildings in the context of urban regeneration, a preoccupation that has manifested itself in film and in live

performance in Europe, the US and China. Recent projects have included a collaboration with composer Rachel Holstead, based in the Gaeltachts of Munster, a public art commission for Fingal County Council on the Martello Towers of the area, and a development of his collaboration with Chinese choreographer, Xiao Ke performed in Beijing, Edinburgh and at the World Expo in Shanghai. He has also organized and curated Pick'n'Mix:The Dance Selection, a day of dance in an empty Woolworths in East London. His dance film, Mo mhórchoir féin, premiered on RTÉ.

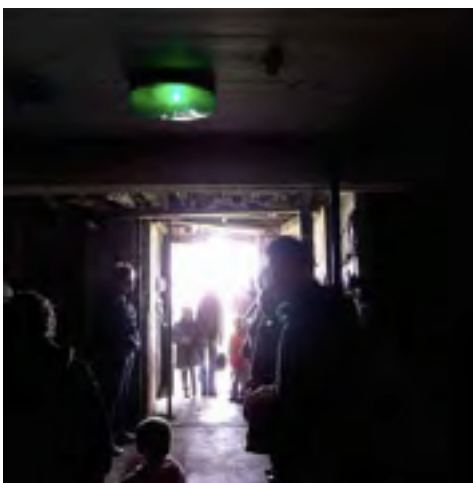
Background Information - Tattered Outlaws of History

A twelve-screen installation of performances filmed from the gun turrets of each of Fingal's Martello towers. A reunion of the towers built to defend against a Napoleonic invasion that never came.

Commissioned by Fingal County Council 2007-2009 as part of their Percent for Art scheme, Tattered Outlaws of History is a collaboration between Dan Dubowitz of Civic Works and choreographer Fearghus Ó Conchuir.

The Martello Towers are part of an international family of defence forts built in the 19th century throughout the then British empire. They were inspired by the Genovese tower at Mortella point in Corsica which successfully resisted British attack in 1794. The towers were round, with thick walls to resist cannon fire. They were built to accommodate a garrison of 30 men and a single roof-mounted cannon that could rotate 360 degrees.

About 50 Martello towers were built on the Irish coast, twelve of which are in Fingal. The Fingal towers were built between 1804 and 1806 in expectation of a Napoleonic invasion; but that invasion never happened and new, more powerful artillery rendered the towers obsolete. It is said that the towers were built within sight of one another to make possible communication of an impending attack, although not all are.



Communication and failure of communication are a strong guiding principle for Tattered Outlaws of History. The Martello Towers were built to function as a defensive unit, but never fulfilled that function and never found a unified purpose again. Each tower has developed an individual and distinct history evidenced in their current states of ownership, use and repair. Tattered Outlaws of History acknowledges that individuality in the particularity of each performance; but it also re-establishes a tentative communication between the towers, as one performance echoes another and family resemblances become apparent.

For this project, a tripod was placed where the

cannon would have been on the roof of each tower and a motor was built that enabled the camera to rotate continuously through 360 degrees. The camera does 12 revolutions in one hour and in that time, it films solitary performers whose activities are sometimes seen, sometimes missed by its impassive rotation.

Each performance was filmed in one take, and the 12 synchronised films are brought together in a semi-circular installation of screens. In assembling Fingal's towers for this reunion, Tattered Outlaws of History also signals to the wider international family of Martello towers to which this collection belongs.



Teaching Through Contemporary Art

“Whenever I take children to see contemporary artwork, the adults who come along with me often say ‘I don’t get it’ yet the children are prepared to walk miles intellectually to make sense of things.” *teachers comment*

Dan & Fearghus’s work makes connections with many areas of the National Curriculum, not only with the more obvious areas of history and geography but also with numeracy in its design and making, with Physical Education in the choreography and movement and PSE within its underlying family connections and communication.

It’s fundamental role as an artwork can be explored within both primary and secondary, challenging opinions of what art is and what it can be. Contemporary art is not just about the objects in front of you its also about the ideas the artists have and how they get them across and reach out to the viewer. How contemporary practices work can be utilised within classroom activities, giving youngsters opportunities to explore ideas based artworks. The incorporation of contemporary art can be used as a broadening of the subject, a discovery of other conceptual spaces and extending the capacity of the art & design curriculum.

Key Themes

Architecture & Regeneration

Building first evolved out of the dynamics between needs (shelter, security, worship, etc.) and means (available building materials and attendant skills). As human cultures developed and knowledge began to be formalised through oral traditions and practices, building became a craft, and "architecture" is the name given to the most highly formalised and respected versions of that craft.

Dan trained in architecture at Sheffield University and after working for Peter Eisenman in New York in 1992-93, he began to develop a practice as an artist using photography in parallel to architectural work. In 2003 Dan established Civic Works, to concentrate on photography and 'cultural masterplanning'. Since then Dan has developed cultural

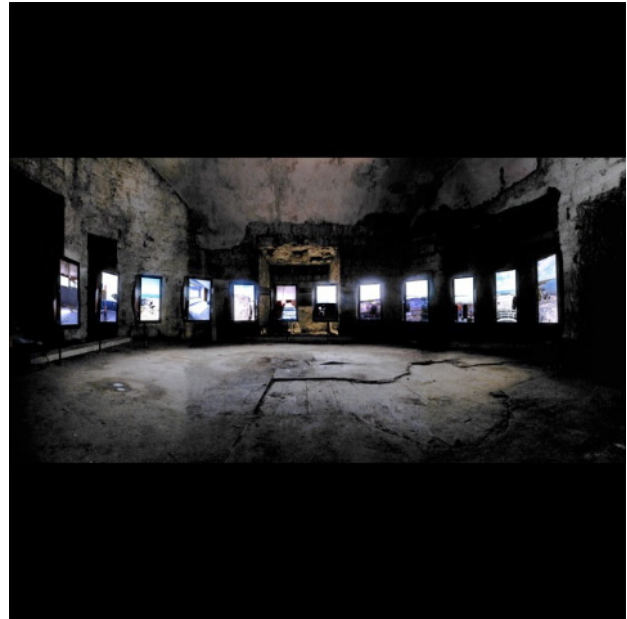
masterplans for Glasgow, Sunderland, Newcastle, Manchester and Stoke-on-Trent in the UK.

Fearghus often takes dance to unexpected locations and as part of a recent residency investigated how bodies react to the big changes in urban architecture that take place with the regeneration of cities such as Dublin and Shanghai. He creates dance that looks for its place inside, outside or alongside the buildings that are growing and dying with such speed.

Heritage & Contemporary Art

We use heritage to shape our ideas about who we are, what we define as 'heritage' is constantly changing in light of the present as we look to the past to imagine our future. So our heritage has less to do with the past and more to do with how we conceptualise the future.

We are aware of objects of heritage because they are still meaningful to us, not because they may tell great stories about the past, but because we can use them to tell stories about ourselves. Dan & Fearghus combine these ideas with contemporary art, using their medium to open up these objects, these buildings, to new audiences, changing the way people see the sites and enriching their history.



Collaboration

In the last 10 years or so collaborative art practices have moved in to the mainstream of cultural production, and collaboration is now largely taken for granted as one of the numerous ways that artists can choose to operate. Despite this, artistic collaboration still raises some interesting and crucial questions about the nature of authorship, authenticity and the artists' relationships to their works & audiences.

Fearghus and Dan's collaboration crosses disciplines bringing Dan's experience as an architect and his current practice as an artist using photography together with Fearghus's choreographic and dance practice. Their combined interests in urban decay and empty buildings results in mesmerising performances against a backdrop of contrasting architecture.

"Working with people who are too similar may be comforting but it reinforces where I'm at already rather than move me to a new understanding. Dan's way of looking at a project is more technical and hard-edged than my intuitive, person-centred approach. But when I saw his photos at the Screens in the City conference in 2006, I could see in his work a sensibility that we shared, a cherishing of texture and perhaps, a romantic celebration of the fertility of decay, life in death and death in life." O'C

For other collaborations see Langlands & Bell, Jane & Louise Wilson, Bernd & Hilla Becher below.

Family & Communication

In their literature Dan and Fearghus refer to the Martello Towers as an international 'family' of defence forts. Their response to this within the work was to create connections between each of the twelve towers in Fingal whilst retaining an element of individuality. This was achieved through the performativity of various 'characters' including Fearghus himself and Dan's son and daughter. Acknowledging individuality in the particularity of each performance, a tentative communication between the towers is re-established as one performance echoes another and family resemblances become apparent. "however solitary each tower seems, it is an echo of another tower. It is part of a family that share a structural DNA, however the vagaries of history may have shaped its members in different ways." O'C

The camera, positioned on a motor at the exact position the cannon would have been, rotates 360 degrees catching or missing partly choreographed intimates moments. This act of sometimes catching, sometimes missing 'snippets' of action, reflects the origins of the towers and their failure to function through no fault of their own. The Martello Towers were built as defensive units, but were never given the opportunity to fulfill their role and have never found a unified purpose again. This guiding principle of communication and failure of communication is an over-riding theme of the work.



"Although the artists refute the popular belief that they are in line of sight of each other, they have visually restored communications onscreen, helped by the sounds of Dillon's constant Morse code" Michael Seaver, Irish Times

Choreography & Performance

On his blog Fearghus talks about dancing in a studio and on a stage, how for the most part there is a relationship between the movement and the space that you can take for granted. One of the things he is referring to is the floor which will generally be even and solid, but dancing on the towers was a constant dialogue between the movements he prepared and what he found in each tower, most of his performances took place in the derelict towers.

A solo performance was filmed on each of the 12 Martello Towers in Fingal and whilst some of the participants would not think of themselves as performers, Fearghus notes that performance was definitely the right word. "They are inhabitants of the towers – people who spend time in those squat and solid buildings, some with recent temporary histories in the towers, others with long associations to them,. Some of the inhabitants have the expanded physicality of dancers, some don't. Maybe they're a kind of animus of or in the

towers. There's definitely an encounter between the bodies of the inhabitants and the body of the tower they inhabit." O'C

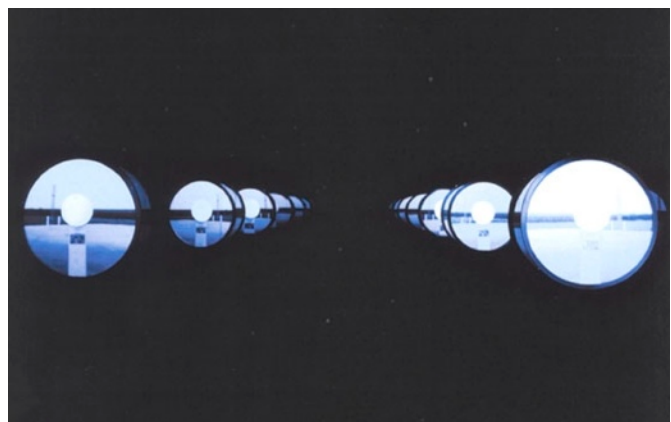
Artistic Links

Langlands & Bell

Artists, Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell explore the complex web of relationships linking people and architecture and the coded systems of circulation and exchange which surround us. Based in London. Langlands & Bell have been collaborating since 1978, and exhibiting internationally since the early 80's. The sculptures of Langlands & Bell range from architectural ground-plans presented as immaculate models or monochrome reliefs, to the full scale architecture of the monumental steel and glass bridge recently completed at Paddington Basin in London.

Doug Aitken

Aitken explores the themes of temporality, space, memory, movement, and landscape in his work. History and themes of both the past and present are interwoven and reconfigured. His work deconstructs the connection between idea and iconography allowing each to reinvent itself.



Darren Almond

Darren Almond's diverse work, incorporating film, installation, sculpture and photography, deals with evocative meditations on time and duration as well as the themes of personal and historical memory. Almond is interested in the notions of geographical limits and the means of getting there – in particular, culturally specific points of arrival and departure. Many of Almond's works are filmed in wide ranging – and often inaccessible - geographical locations such as the Arctic Circle, Siberia, the holy mountains in China or the source of the Nile.

Jane & Louise Wilson

Twin sisters Jane and Louise Wilson have been working together since the late 1980s, making psychologically charged films, videos and photographs that explore evocative and often historically resonant spaces. These have included the former Stasi headquarters in East Germany, the decommissioned US military base at Greenham Common in Berkshire, and the houses of Parliament. More recently they have turned their attention to disused World War II bunkers in Normandy, a microchip manufacturing plant in Tyneside and Victor Pasmore's modernist pavilion for the new town of Peterlee in County Durham, all of which the Wilsons present from multiple viewpoints and in often intricate installations.

Erasmus Schroeter

When the Leipzig photographer, Erasmus Schroeter, chooses a subject for his camera, that subject invariably undergoes a process of transformation. There is always a sense of

theatricality about the way in which he achieves this transformation in his photographs, and this phenomenon has become even more pronounced in his most recent series, *Komparsen* (extras). In this series of staged photographs, despite his abandonment of the theatrical lighting, which has featured prominently in his previous work, theatricality is referenced through his use of theatre extras or 'bit-part' players. Schroeter's previous works includes *Architecture & Ideology : Hiding in plain sight* which includes a series of photographs of bunkers built to protect the coasts of the Nazi dominated *festung* (fortress) *Europa* and 'Theatre of the Unseen' which uses garish colours to reveal the imposing and frightening beauty of structures we may never really see.

Bernd & Hilla Becher

Since the end of the 1950s, Bernd and Hilla Becher have been traveling around Europe and North America. They photograph mines, winding towers, gas containers, blast furnaces, power stations, cooling towers, grain silos, warehouses. They have to this very day remained true to their project of an almost encyclopedic stocktaking of anonymous utility buildings from the age of industrialization. In doing so, they opt for a decidedly matter-of-fact and sober visual idiom that is appropriately expressed by black-and-white photography. This ensures that the steel edifices stand out particularly vividly. In the serial setting, the individual shots (which reveal basic shapes and deviations, similarities and differences) merge to form typologies.



Artist quotes

"Tattered Outlaws has been about connecting the different and acknowledging the common DNA of buildings/people/experiences that don't look so similar on the outside." O'C

"I'm always surprised when I'm asked my why I collaborate with people who are so different from me. It seems that I need the stretch and challenge so that there is something for me to learn in the process." O'C

".....on the advice of some passing schoolboys, I was able to climb in to the tower at Loughshinny and make my way on to the roof. The physical buzz of climbing into the towers, the nervousness of making my way around the spiral staircase in the dark, the emergence on to the roofs which open to the sea and the surrounding coast, dark, light, sunshine, rain, all fed in to the dances I made for the films." O'C

"My projects are always about a space that is pregnant with latent history and has an energy to it if we look at what we abandon and discard, we seem to get a much better understanding of what the city is about and what it should be making as we move on." D

“After those initial visits to the towers I went back to the studio to develop some physical material, phrases of movement that had enough nooks and crannies for me to explore each time I danced them. I brought that material to the towers for the filming and adapted it to each tower, the conditions I found there and the feelings evoked in me by the encounter between my movement and the place.” O’C

“Dancing on the towers is a constant dialogue between the movement I'd prepared and what the tower offered. For the most part, I danced in the derelict towers. There's broken glass, rough stone, grass, bird shit, steps, wind, rain. So each time I put my foot down and slid and rolled, my intention was challenged by the tower.” O’C

“Though the tower is strong and my interaction with it temporary , I leave traces of myself on it, small bits of my DNA scraped off, pebbles shifted, grass disturbed - small, impermanent traces - but tokens of my presence nonetheless.” O’C

“I may have prepared the material but there was nothing predictable when I brought it to the tower.” O’C

Questions and Discussion Topics

Discuss collaboration. Dan & Fearghus have very different practices, do you think the dynamics and possibilities within a collaboration are strengthened by difference? Can you name any other artists who work collaboratively?

The way the work is presented makes it impossible to view all 12 films in their entirety, does this affect how you read / see the work?

‘Tattered Outlaws of History’ is about the 12 Martello Towers in Fingal and was originally shown in the Skerries tower. How does this change the viewing of the work? does it have the same meaning outside of its space of making? consider the derelict interior of the Skerries tower in comparison to the regenerated Jaywick tower.

In one of the films Jo sits at his bench calling each tower in turn with his morse coder, consider other ways of communication between the towers. Think about communication in the time of the towers being built and the technology of communication now.

In another film Dorothy has a personal history with the tower, do you have a personal history with a building? perhaps your home or school or maybe a site of regular holidays?

How important do you think buildings such as the Martello Towers are to our heritage? should we celebrate them? should we save them?

All 12 of the towers along the coast line of Fingal remain intact, in the east of England many of our towers have disappeared, what’s the biggest threat to our towers?

Consider the space of the tower, Dan and Fearghus found many uses for the towers in Ireland, what other uses could be made of the towers either singularly or collectively, be imaginative as you like!

How does ‘Tattered Outlaws of History’ make you feel? do you have an emotional response to the work? would you consider the work a celebration or does it make you feel sad for forgotten spaces and past lives?

The towers were built to defend against a Napoleonic invasion that never came, discuss their construction and consider their success had they been utilised in an attack situation.

Dan Dubowitz has been investigating wastelands for 17 years, as an artist and as an architect, he is interested in the spaces we abandon. Discuss abandoned sites in your own locality, how are they used, do they make a difference to how you feel about where you live?

Fearghus takes dance to unexpected locations, investigating urban architecture and regeneration, discuss who his audience is, if you discovered a performance taking place in a public space how would you react? Is it different in different locations? Discuss performance and public spaces.

Activities

Bodies and Buildings

Materials: digital or disposable cameras, magazines & newspapers, scissors, gluesticks

Working in groups use the cameras to photograph each other in various positions around the school building. Try to capture movement and think about body shapes and the roundness of the figure against the angular lines of a building.



After developing the films or printing out the digital shots, cut out the figures from their background and using the magazines and newspapers find new architectural backgrounds to insert the figures into. If it's difficult to find the right building, search for books on architecture and buildings in the school library and photocopy the background. Consider using black and white backgrounds and colour figures or the reverse. Add a series of figures to your background or create a story board for a possible film based on movements across the new spaces you've discovered.

Structures

Materials: cardboard tubes/ pringles/biscuit tubes, masking tape, scissors, paint or felt tips OR lego bricks OR wooden skewers and masking tape OR newspaper and stapler

Create miniature versions of Martello Towers using a variety of materials, concentrating on structure and stability. Research the construction of the towers and draw plans before beginning the structures, consider the possibility of adding a second floor, can you work out how to create a staircase? and don't forget the roofspace. The tower in Aldburgh in Suffolk is the shape of a four leaf clover, use computers to research the tower - can you re-create this structure?

You could take this one stage further and work in groups to create a coastline of towers within a space in the classroom.

NB roll newspaper to make it strong. Roll two or three sheets of paper together to make even stronger structures, staple the ends and joins and tape over the staples at the joints to prevent accidental cuts.

Selected Links & Publications

Links

<http://www.civicworks.net/>

<http://www.fearghus.net/>

<http://www.bodiesandbuildings.blogspot.com/>

<http://selfinterestandsympathy.wordpress.com/2009/09/02/tattered-outlaws-of-history/>

<http://www.jaywickmartellotower.org/>

<http://www.fleet-art.org/>

<http://www.commissioneast.org.uk/>

Publications

- * Teaching Through Contemporary Art, Tate Publishing, ISBN 978 1 85437 812 5
- * Fascismo Abbandonato by Dan Dubowitz, Dewi Lewis Publishing, ISBN-10: 1904587801
- * Wastelands by Dan Dubowitz, Dewi Lewis Publishing, ISBN-10: 1904587836
- * Wastelands: Ancoats, Manchester, United Kingdom, 2003: The Presence of Absence by Dan Dubowitz, Civic Works Press, ISBN-10: 0954598008
- * Searchlight by Dan Dubowitz & David Cotterell, Civic Works Press, ISBN-10: 0954598059