CHARLIE STIVEN

MODEL & METAPHOR

29 July - 10 August 2013.

Галерија Графички колектив/Grafički Kolektiv Gallery
Београд/Belgrade
MODEL & METAPHOR

The model...

„As representation, generally in miniature, to show the construction or appearance of something“. 
„To simulate...(a process, concept or ‘system’).
„The manifestation of a conceptual representation of a phenomenon...“.
„Something that represents another thing...“.

As first glance my work may appear to be faithful and detailed recreations of existing structures and environments. They are however, complete fabrications, inventions distilled from the research into particular European vernacular architecture, which I then use as ‘props’ in subsequent photographic works in order to provoke thought about wider ‘realities’.

The photographs aim to open up a contemplative resonance which has at its core a concern about aspects of the human condition and the social, political and economic consequences of these.

The physical construction of the models, - design, surface and detail, and the orchestration of tone, focus and atmospherics within the photographs, is very much like the process of drawing, - manipulating key technical, tactile and aesthetic considerations in order to engender visual and psychological impact.

The documentary ambience of the work is intended to both provide a slow realisation that what one is looking at is not ‘real’ (thus prompting deeper thought about content and purpose), and also to emphasise that the work is not about art...but about life.

Edinburgh, June 2013

Charlie Stiven
E-STATE

E-state is a response to the current uncertainties surrounding the economic climate throughout Europe, reflecting the state of flux and tension which has created significant difficulties in a Pan-European sense, and which potentially will affect the conditions and thinking of every individual within this ‘collective’.

Having visited a number of states in the U.K., Germany and Poland, I built an architectural model based on a generic industrial estate, the kind of environment common in the outskirts of any town or city; - designed for function rather than aesthetics, unremarkable, unnoticed.

I then used this construction as the setting for a series of photographic tableaus, orhestrating lighting and atmospherics, focusing on detail, and suggesting but not showing narrative and incident. The black and white format of the photographs is employed both to reflect the epic nature of our present circumstances, ie – it borrows from the cinematic drama of film nior, and at the same time is intended to give the images a documentary atmospheric – this is not art, this is life.

The images are intended to create a slow ‘double take’ response, recognition between real and manufactured delayed, so that the realisation that what one is seeing is not ‘real’, but ‘made’, will prompt metaphorical consideration of my point and purpose, - that it is worth the effort to look really hard at things, to truly investigate,...and to truly understand.

I am using architectural motifs ans structures to create intial anchors of recognition, but my primary ambition is to trigger a broader socio/psychological reaction to architectural space, form and condition.
THE HIGH GROUND

The genesis of 'The High Ground' is consideration of dogma and intransigence, the setting up of immovable parameters, be they physical, ideological or moral, and the tensions and conflicts which result. These exist on both a micro and macro level; - between nations, within societies, and between individuals.

As a metaphor for these 'fixed positions', I arrived at the watchtower, a symbol of control, demarcation and superiority.

Having constructed a number of maquette towers, I turend them upside down in order to question and subvert assumed positions of authotity and 'righteousness', thus undermining perceived notions of strength and correctness. Instead of looking down from abave, the towers are now literally falling, uncertain and fluid within a wider special context, and within the world.

The dynamics of their architectural form, both individually and collectively, leads me to consider this work as being similar to a wall drawing, - the skeletal form of the legs providing the line, and the solid forms of the platforms acting as punctuation points within the space in which the work is sited. Thus I am able to orchestrate the architectural rhythm of the work, marryng this to psychological consideration of specific installation spaces.

The main facades of the towers are identical in construction, reflecting a superficial conformity and rigidity of thinking. The bases however are each composed using different combinations of architectural detail. The tactic is employed to emphasise the fact that what is most important, of most value, is not which is on the surface........but that which lies beneath.
Charlie Stiven was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, and graduated in Drawing & Painting at Edinburgh College of Art. Over the past 25 years his work has been shown widely in the U.K., Europe and the U.S.A., and is held in numerous public and private collections.

He first exhibited at Graficki Kolektiv in 2006, and has had solo and group exhibitions in Edinburgh, London, New York, Boston, St Louis, Berlin, Basel, Bern, Wroclaw and Olsztyn. His work was also represented at art fairs in Madrid, Seoul and Zurich.

Last year he participated in '20 Jahr – Drawing', a major survey of European drawing over the past two decades held at the Rigassi Gallery, Bern, Switzerland, which included the work of Joseph Beuys, Francesco Clemente, Louise Borgeois, George Baselitz and others.

He has received many awards and scholarships from the U.K. and abroad, including those from the Greenshields Foundation of Montreal, I.A.A.B. Basel, and the British Council. In 2010 he was elected an Academician of the Royal Scottish Academy.

Charlie Stiven is a lecturer in Painting at Edinburgh College of Art, and in recent years has also instigated student projects with the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Kunste, Stuttgart, and the Universitat der Kunst, Berlin.

email: c.stiven@ed.ac.uk

E-STATE, an architectural photo installation, model size 180x120x25cm, wood/acrylic/mixed medium, photo sizes variable

THE HIGH GROUND, installation in the form of 100 photographs, model size 12x12x60cm, wood /acrylic

Чарли Стивен, аутор текстова у каталог / Charlie Stiven, author of the texts in the catalogue

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