

ARTIST STATEMENT

Gesche Wüfel is a visual artist whose practice is primarily photographic. She engages with spaces in transition through genres of urban, landscape and architectural photography. Her interest lies primarily in the notion of place, the relationship humans have to space, and the methods employed for changing (in)habitable places. Her work is influenced by her training as a photographer and as an urban planner and by having lived in diverse settings – from rural to suburban to urban – across Europe and the United States. These experiences have given her a wealth of comparative and in-depth knowledge about spaces and developed her critical eye towards the politics of spatial developments.

“Go for Gold!” is an ongoing series of photographs, begun in 2006, that depict the changing landscape of the Lower Lea Valley in London, UK. The Lower Lea Valley is undergoing a massive transformation as its traditional industrial and pastoral landscape is being replaced by the modern economic structures of the 2012 Olympic project. This Olympic project attempts to eliminate all traces of the past and imposes an entirely new reality. Although the Olympic future is still invisible to the naked eye, it is present in the impending Olympic masterplan. The “Go for Gold!” series highlights this contrast and evokes discordance with images that capture the site’s past while their titles denote the site’s future. “Go for Gold!” critiques the use of regeneration to bolster London’s status as a global economic centre at the expense of the local inhabitants’ needs. “Go for Gold!” started in 2006 and 2007 with a series of images on the sites of future sports venues in the Lower Lea Valley, on the eve of their transformation. These photos capture the last moments of the Lea Valley landscape as it used to be, before it was razed to make way for the Olympics’ international development programme. More recent work focuses on sporting venues in central London and across the nation. These photos broaden the approach to demonstrate how the Olympics are affecting the entire country.

The theme of spaces in transition is further developed in “Farewell from the Garden Paradise”. “Farewell from the Garden Paradise” (2007) depicts the long process of eviction of the Manor Garden Allotments plot holders. The allotments were closed in September 2007 and demolished to construct a footpath for the 2012 Olympic Games. The images present the contrast between the small personal spaces of sheds and the grand spaces of international development. The images also raise questions about the most appropriate approach to regeneration. They problematise the notion of the 2012 Olympics as ‘green’ (as often cited in promotional literature), by documenting the destruction of allotments that were a rare example of sustainably managed green spaces in East London. Furthermore, the photos reveal the complex and nuanced relationships between the plot holders and nature.

The series “London - Luton. The Meridian” (2008-2009) traces the landscape along the Greenwich Meridian in the Lea Valley. In the 19th century, the Lea Valley provided London with essential raw materials and industrial output that contributed to the power of the British Empire. During this time the Meridian was established as a literal and symbolic expression that this land was the centre of the world. “London - Luton. The Meridian” explores the evolution of space over time as the

Meridian is no longer an important power line. The series shows placid nature, mundane leisure sites, and relics of the industrial past that are no longer teeming with Imperial force. Central to the approach is the concept of Psychogeography, which explores the relationships of place to its social and cultural history. The image N 51°30.806 – W 000°00.066 received a merit at the Fujifilm Distinctions Awards 2008 and was selected best-in-show at the Manchester National Juried Fine Art Exhibition: Small Works 2009.

Gesche Würfel continues shooting for the "Go for Gold!" series and is currently working on a book dummy. Furthermore, she has started to create two new bodies of work in the Washington, DC area: "On the Edge" investigates the everyday life along the border of Washington, DC through photos taken while walking along the streets that divide DC from Maryland and Virginia. DC is the politically constructed capital that was created with the premise that it should be distinct from the other states and this project explores how borders function in contemporary society.

Gesche usually photographs either with a twin-lens 6x6 Rolleiflex camera or with a 5x4 Wista Field Camera. Her images are printed as digital C-type prints on Fuji Chrystal Archival Paper. Most commonly the images are presented in a size of 20x20 or 24x20 inches, mounted onto aluminium.

Gesche Würfel was born in Bremerhaven in 1976 where she spent her childhood. After having completed her degree in Spatial Planning from the University of Dortmund, Germany, she worked for several years in the field of regeneration and public participation. She then moved to London to study for an MA in Photography and Urban Cultures, Goldsmiths, University of London, where she graduated with a distinction. She currently works and lives in Cambridge, MA and London. Her work has been exhibited widely, among others in the Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2007 show, which is an exhibition of the most promising new talent to emerge from art schools across the United Kingdom. Her work has recently been published in "Younger Than Jesus: The Artist Directory", co-published by the New Museum and Phaidon.