

Artist Statement

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Gesche Würfel 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.

Gesche Würfel was born in Bremerhaven, Germany, and currently lives and works in New York City, NY. She received a B.S.+M.S. in Urban Planning from the Technical University of Dortmund, Germany, and an M.A. in Photography and Urban Cultures from Goldsmiths, University of London, UK. She has had recent solo exhibitions at Wolk Gallery, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cambridge (2010); Civilian Art Projects, Washington, DC (2010); and Goldsmiths, London, UK (2009). Her work is in several public and private collections in Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States. In her photographic practice, she engages with spaces in transition by exploring notions of place, the relationships humans have with their environment, and the methods employed for changing (in)habitable spaces.