

Uncertain Terrain 2000-2002

This body of work was exhibited at the Yard Gallery in Nottingham and the 2002 International Liverpool Biennial, Independent Strand. The exhibition catalogue included an essay entitled 'Ordering Nature' by Mark Durden, lecturer in photographic theory at Derby University and a freelance writer for 'Portfolio'. The essay located the work within the wider debate on art, technology and science. The research was funded by AHRC and the final work received photo-industry sponsorship. The works were developed through methods of practice-led research and were informed by theory of the post-photographic society, philosophical debate on biogenetic technologies and studies of the 'natural' within visual culture. The research explored questions concerned with the romantic tradition in landscape art and contemporary reconsiderations of the visual representation of nature and science. The broad context and motivation for the work included accelerated scientific interventionism in the natural world and moral issues in emerging areas such as biogenetics and cloning. Methods centred on the digital reconfigurations of naturalistic photographs and visual assembling associated with symmetrical organisation of space and pattern repetition. Durden (2002) writes that the series,

"...both reference the world and deny that reference. In many senses they are hybrid pictures. We are caught between their realist allure - the density of 'photographic' detail through which the rich bio-diversity of natural forms in this beauty spot are rendered - and a sense of an overt rationalisation of vision, as these varied organic forms are brought to a seemingly unnatural and fake symmetrical order in the picture." ..." Original natural forms are spun, pulled and woven through digital processes. Langford's subjection of nature to a deliberate and calculated ordering principle also raises another issue. It mimes the biogeneticist's transformation of the natural world. The parallel exists in terms of the reshaping, the 'cloning' of natural forms and elements through the computer."

The framed images suggest alternatives to the conventional viewpoint offered by camera lenses and how space and the relationships between details and the whole might be alternatively reorganised. The final works borrow characteristics of veracity and referent normally associated with photography, but in fact offer ambiguous assemblages achieved through electronic collage. They aim to project a subtle incongruity between traditional landscape pictorialism and visual control/human imposition. The works also allude to the phantasmagoric effect seen in kaleidoscopes. Durden (2002) describes the impact of the images as possessing something of the scale, colour and presence of abstract paintings, but when viewed at very small scale as jewel-like miniatures. The work was shown as a series of twenty high definition large-scale Lambda prints and projected in gallery settings.

Durden Mark, *Uncertain Terrain* catalogue, Nottingham Museums and Galleries, 2002