

LIVING LONDON: GERRY FOX

31 January-20 April

176 Gallery, London

[Review by Jamie Mitchell](#)

*Far right:
Detail from Living
London, showing
Soho at night*

*Right: The
installation of
Fox's films*

It is appropriate that Will Self – a compulsive nightwalker of the city streets – has written an introduction to Living London, Gerry Fox's first major art exhibition at the 176 Gallery in Chalk Farm. This is a flaneur's view of the city. Through a series of films



PHOTO BY JACK GOFFE, COURTESY OF THE ZABLUDOWITZ COLLECTION

shot from point-of-view perspective, Fox hopes to immerse the viewer 'in a total environment'. Multiple screens placed on the walls, ceiling and floor of the gallery allow you to look up to the sky above Soho or catch sight of a speeding taxi in the periphery of your vision. This is a lucid yet ethereal journey through London. Using a range of cinematic techniques – sometimes running with the camera while filming in slow-motion – Fox explores the sense of alienation one feels amongst the crowds of tourists in Leicester Square; he juxtaposes footage of a baby being pulled from the womb in a London hospital with the frenetic intensity of the Notting Hill Carnival.

This is a departure from the biopics of artists for which Gerry Fox is best known, and there are some beautiful moments. The camera's compulsive orbit of a snow-covered Peter Pan statue in Kensington Gardens, the artist's frozen breaths eerily audible, comes closest to realising his intention: 'to evoke the spatial dislocation experienced in dreams'.

The films are pleasingly music-free, and the careful use of sound reinforces the oscillation between the various tempos of the city – the tumult of the West End on a Friday



COURTESY OF THE ZABLUDOWITZ COLLECTION

night or the solitude of a snow-covered park. There are moments when the title seems unsuitable, as the camera plays among broken gravestones in a forgotten corner of Nunhead Cemetery, but even here, in the ivy creeping over the cracked monuments, life prevails.

The films raise various issues of morality: a baby crawls with audible determination against a backdrop of anti-war protests outside the houses of parliament; shots of consumers at a food market are set against scenes of appalling waste at a landfill site. But these moments invite a personal

reaction, rather than making any definite judgement – and the work is all the more powerful for it.

Fox talks about the power of film to induce 'a kinesthetic experience' a term used by the artist to describe 'the physiological sensation of movement through space'. The exhibition, however, is not successful in evoking this dream-like state as one is always too aware of the artist's honed technique and cinematic skill to be entirely immersed. Even so, this remains a powerful, accomplished and moving set of films by an artist in love with his subject.