

London living brought to life on the screen

Gerry Fox's film installations are a real visual assault on the senses

LIVING London is the title of a film work by Gerry Fox, the exhibition of which is the main attraction at 176 – a new arts venue in Kentish Town.

Fox uses mostly his own footage shot in London to evoke kinaesthesia – our sense of bodily position and movement. The film installations are visual assaults that carry through with body punches.

The physical impact means you wouldn't want to experience these synchronised multiple-screen installations if you're feeling fragile, especially the one that includes projections on the ceiling and floor.

Two assemblages of footage are given this treatment – of Nunhead Cemetery and of central London by night.

The sensation of not just walking but floating through the overgrown cemetery is ghostly and soothing, making you want to repeat the experience yourself.

This is certainly not true of parts of its companion film. It is shot from what Fox describes as point-of-view perspective, where you seem to be pushing your way through summertime pleasure-seekers in the West End.

A second film installation – this time on two screens alternately – has a similar pairing of frenetic and pleasant locations.

This shows footage shot in the thick of Notting Hill Carnival revellers followed by atmospheric film of misty vistas in Kensington Gardens, including apt "flying" shots of the Peter Pan statue.

Also included in this installation are two remarkable sequences of footage.

One is of the Caesarian birth of Fox's child at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington.



Living London 2008 Nunhead Cemetery (detail) by Gerry Fox.

Another is of a crawling baby possessed of the stamina and curiosity to follow the camera around the grassy space of Parliament Square, with its peace protesters and constantly circling traffic in the background.

The third installation juxtaposes related films on three screens.

In Market & Landfill, a plastic handbag for sale momentarily appears on one screen, mirrored on the others by mounds of discarded plastic bags being shifted by a bulldozer.

Military parades are flanked by anti-war marchers and street scenes in today's East End and archival footage of the 1911 Sidney Street siege.

The latter shows caped policemen struggling to hold back protesters whose flat caps seen from above form a restless human sea.

Gerry Fox studied visual arts at

Harvard and is a documentary filmmaker living in London.

He has won a Bafta award and in recent years made films on contemporary artists for the South Bank Show.

This exhibition is the second at 176 and the first to result from an artist's residency.

It includes a new film work, Camden Walks, on which Fox worked alongside young people from Haverstock School and Camden Detached Youth Project.

In pairs or groups, the friends walk and talk, though about what will remain a mystery to many as the dialogue is hard to decipher.

Even so, it's an interesting record of our times and neighbourhoods, including the open spaces of Primrose Hill and Hampstead Heath.

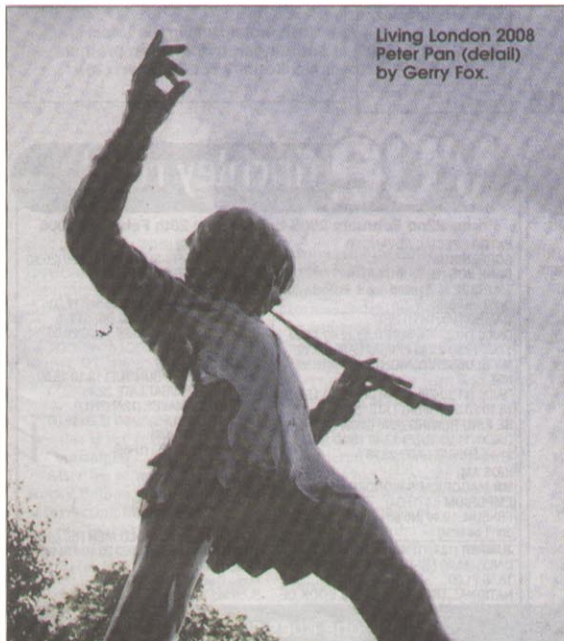
Just how much the passage of time can enrich such a film work can be seen from Michael Landy's Appropriation 2, made in 1990 and included in the selection of exhibits from the Zabłudowicz Collection in Living London.

Landy filmed a greengrocer taking up ever more of a city pavement as he sets out upturned crates for his wares. It's a prosaic scene and passers-by mostly hurry past.

But imagining the contrast between their dress and body language and today's equivalents make this a mesmerising work.

Living London: Gerry Fox is at 176 Prince of Wales Road, Kentish Town, until April 20. Open Thurs & Fri 11am-3pm, Sat & Sun 11am-6pm. Timed admission. Annual membership £5 with many types of concession free.

The Living London events programme includes Stewart Home presenting Mondo Mythopoeisis: Psychogeography After Situationism tonight at 7pm. There is an artist-led walk with Richard Wentworth on Sunday at 2pm. And Gerry Fox is in conversation with Melvyn Bragg on March 5 at 7pm. Book tickets on 020-7428 8940 and www.projectsplace176.com.



Living London 2008 Peter Pan (detail) by Gerry Fox.