

Freddy Dewe Mathews – *Bouvetøya*

28/09/12 – 27/10/12

"I had my hands full of complications which were most valuable as "experience". People have a great opinion of the advantages of the experience. But in this connection, experience always means something disagreeable as opposed to the charm and innocence of illusions. I must say I was losing mine rapidly."

Joseph Conrad, *The Shadow Line*, 1916

Space In Between is delighted to present *Bouvetøya* – a solo show of new work by Freddy Dewe Mathews, and his first with the gallery. The work presented in this exhibition is inspired by the uninhabited volcanic island of Bouvetøya - 54°25'S, 3°21'E - an island that few ships pass near, and a place that is rarely visited. *Bouvetøya* sees the artist explore historical examples of human attempts to impose themselves on this harsh, uninhabited landmass - the most isolated in the world.

Given its location in the South Atlantic Ocean, particular scientific value has been attributed to Bouvetøya enabling it to develop a curious, albeit concise, human history and it is the ambiguity of this human history, which has informed this body of work. It has a habit of deleting the human traces left by its explorers; expedition camps that have been set up there have vanished within a year and no one has ever been able to leave a physical and lasting mark on the island.

It is the 'idea' of man's interaction with this place – the accounts written, photographs taken – which has inspired Dewe Mathews' works: The grey, geometric forms of the cast concrete sculptures suggestive of both natural phenomena and the post-apocalyptic remnants of a past civilisation. Removed from the subject which they are about, these objects invite the viewer to picture - to imagine - the island in an idealised way; acting as vessels for projecting ideas on to; like a set of misinterpreted hieroglyphs or a language which is yet to be discovered.

The lack of a fixed human presence on Bouvetøya, and the artist's human experience of the island, as mediated by the accounts of others, have influenced the geometry of both the sculptures and the wallpaper that surrounds them. Drawn from sacred geometry, they represent the idea of nature without the human image, which in respect of the island's history is particularly relevant. The wallpaper – like the island - is hard to experience as a whole; the repetition of its pattern impossible to see in its entirety; the experience-able elements only alluding to its scope and scale.

Bouvetøya represents a strange and untouched land in a world where few places remain genuinely undiscovered; a place to which a handful of explorers, drawn to the allure of a 'desert island', have ventured. In 1959 two Italians, led by Silvio Zavatti, set out on a somewhat unconventional expedition to Bouvetøya but the account of the expedition – with its imaginative, verbose and elaborate language – has always been in doubt. It is this fantastical narrative, recorded by Dewe Mathews, which is projected throughout the gallery. Zavatti's account injects a human element to *Bouvetøya*, reminding us that the author's agenda is ever present within any 'definitive history' told.

Bouvetøya will continue later in the year with the launch of a publication by Freddy Dewe Mathews.

This body of work has been supported by Arts Council England. The exhibition has been made possible with the help and resources of the Norwegian Polar Institute in Tromsø, The Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge and the Sandefjord Whaling Museum, Denmark.

Bouvetøya runs 28/09/12 – 27/10/12
Open Fridays & Saturdays 12–6pm, or by appointment

There will be an artist in conversation event on 27/10/12 at 2pm

Image credits: K H Johansen, Norsk PolarInstitutt

///

Space In Between & Freddy Dewe Mathews would like to thank:
Ann Kristin Balto, Stella Bottai, Phil Brown, Andrew Byrne, Henry Camilleri, Bobby Krilic, Jasmine Raznahan & Xavier Poultney.

///

Unit 26 Regent Studios
8 Andrews Road
London E8 4QN
www.spaceinbetween.co.uk / info@spaceinbetween.co.uk



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**