

Press Release

Ilona Sagar: Deep Structure

11 Oct – 14 Dec 2019

Preview 10 Oct, 6-8pm

Deep Structure, a newly commissioned film and solo exhibition by artist Ilona Sagar, explores the links between architecture, health and community wellbeing through the lens of Sheffield's Park Hill estate. Troubling the links between buildings, bodies and post-industrial landscapes, the film draws parallels between the unique sprawling structure of the building and the scientifically measured body. Designed in 1961 by architects Jack Lynn and Ivor Smith, the estate is one of the UK's most radical and significant post-war housing projects and a testimonial to an era that revolutionised social and residential housing.

Filmed at Hope Cement Works in the Peak District, The Materials Science and Engineering Department at the University of Sheffield and at the Park Hill estate, *Deep Structure* focuses on material structures, considering the ways in which they are measured and analysed. Hope Cement Works, which opened in 1929 and is now the largest material factory in the UK, becomes a complex monolithic space within the film, representing something in-between industrialised networks and natural systems. Entangling these connections, *Deep Structure* thinks about the factory and the estate as living bodies – machines for health, good and bad – considering the ways bodies and buildings are mapped, archived and translated into data.

Informed by research in Sheffield Archives & Local Studies Library and ongoing conversations with former residents of the estate, *Deep Structure* complicates official narratives around its history with the lived experiences of its inhabitants. The film experiments with the scale of speech, from the bureaucratic and instructional to the emotionally intimate and physical, where voice and sound acts as both a dislocation and a connecting element within the work. The film employs algorithmic and speech recognition processes that are becoming ever more prevalent in our public services to interpret archival sociological data collected from and narrated by original tenants of Park Hill, which has been fed into a computer based linguistic system to create a visual interpretation of the Park Hill archive, mediated through the voices of the residents themselves.

Developed in collaboration with Human Computer Interaction Design at City University, London, The Space Syntax Laboratory at The Bartlett, and the Department of Materials Science and Engineering, University of Sheffield, *Deep Structure* uses scanning, spatial analysis techniques and archival data sets on Park Hill to unpick the ways in which buildings and bodies are surveilled, both through official-bureaucratic structures and shared social experiences. Built on mathematical algorithms, space syntax is a method of analysing spatial configurations. It measures the difficulty to define space between buildings and the social or anti-social encounters that activate buildings, cities and landscapes. The application of algorithmic and data visualisation processes becomes a mode of navigation within the film, and reflects how scientific reasoning is authored and inscribed into both the body and civic systems.

One of the most unusual aspects of Park Hill's design process was the emphasis placed on the residents themselves. The design encouraged social interaction, and uniquely involved tenants within a pioneering consultation throughout the design process and the building's initial use. The Housing Act 1980 marked the start of a seismic shift towards home ownership, introducing caps on local authorities to limit their ability to borrow money to build council houses. Architects, town planners and designers have a powerful influence on our health and self-esteem, as well as ideas around community and society. Interrogating the contested civic ambitions of architecture, *Deep Structure* is a darkly speculative work that examines our uneasy and increasingly precarious relationship to public welfare, housing and wellbeing.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Ilona Sagar lives and works in London. Using a diverse range of media spanning performance, film and sound installation, she has formed a body of work which responds to the social and historical context found in the public and private spaces we inhabit. Sagar's practice is developed in a cross-disciplinary dialogue with a range of art and scientific disciplines including dance, architecture and neurology.

Forthcoming solo commissions include: Serpentine Gallery, London; BBC Sounds; and a residency at Uniarts, Helsinki. Her film *Correspondence O* (2017) won an AHRC Research in Film Award in 2018. Recent projects include: *Living with Buildings*, Wellcome Collection, London (2018/2019); *Self Service* publication and event series, CCA and GOMA, Glasgow as part of Glasgow International (2018); *Correspondence O*, solo exhibition at South London Gallery, London (2017/2018); *GLORIA*, Yinka Shonibare Guest Projects 10 year anniversary, London (2018); HereAfter group show as part of the SPACE HereAfter residency, The White Building, London (2017); solo project at Pump House Gallery, London as part of *The Ground We Tread* (2016).

ABOUT S1 ARTSPACE

Founded in 1995, S1 Artspace is a gallery and studio organisation based in Sheffield that actively supports the production and presentation of new work and ideas.

Our mission is to enable artists to develop new work through support, resources and opportunities to exhibit, and to educate and inspire a new generation of artists. Our aim is to deliver a programme that connects with a broad audience both nationally and internationally through a programme that supports the production, presentation and debate of contemporary art.

Contact

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