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Mlitt Photo & Moving Image

Graduate Degree Show-
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The Disposable Buildings

Video installation

Tower blocks to be demolished on edge of Glasgow



North Lanarkshire Council is to consult residents on ambitious plans that would mean all 48 residential tower blocks in the area being demolished over the next 20 years.

Bradley, Jane. (2017). 'Tower blocks to be demolished on edge of Glasgow'. The Scotsman, [online] p.1-p.3. Available at : <https://www.scotsman.com/regions/glasgow-strathclyde/tower-blocks-to-be-demolished-on-edge-of-glasgow-1-4643986> [Accessed 1. April 2018].

I call 'Disposable buildings' the tower blocks which are quickly and badly built with cheap materials. These buildings are designed to last only 30 or 40 years and as soon as their 'expire date' approaches, they are demolished. The *Disposable Buildings* are then replaced by new buildings as quickly and badly made as the previous ones.

I'm interested in the planned obsolescence of these buildings, which are conceived like all the short term objects that we buy in our consumption society. My video installation questions the absurdity and inhumanity behind the frenetic and constant "regeneration programmes" that occurs in rich cities around the world (there is no consideration given to the ethical and environmental problems caused by this process). I want to show with this project how knocking down homes where hundred of people live to replace them by some more "trendy" buildings (which will be in their turn considered 'out of date' 30 years after), became as banal as throwing away clothes when they become unfashionable.

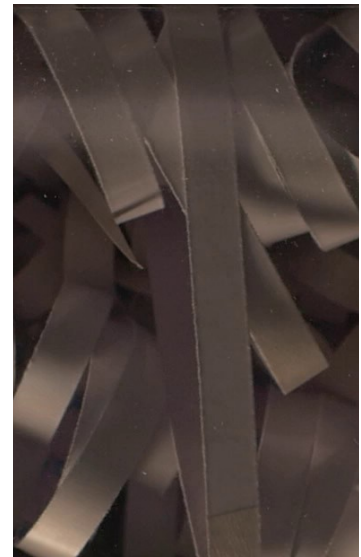
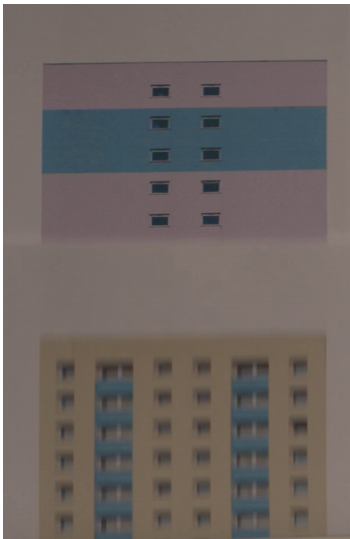
Or how our capitalist society puts at the same level a cellphone and a living space filled with memories, both doomed to be crushed and added to a pile of rubble.



The Disposable buildings (video still)

I am using absurdity and metaphor to denounce this superficial and harmful way of thinking and making.

The Disposable buildings is a triptych of videos playing at the same time: the first screen shows a panoramic view of a modern city (Glasgow) with numerous tower blocks visible, the second screen displays a paper shredder, and, on the last screen, an image of a printer. The tower blocks are extracted from the landscape (cut out of the image from behind) and shredded in the paper shredder. A new building, nearly identical to the one that just been destroyed (apart from a change of colour), comes out of the printer and is put in the hole left by the previous one.



The Disposable buildings (video stills)

The buildings are appearing and disappearing so quickly that you barely have time to get used to the presence of a new building before it is replaced by another one. This neverending 'regeneration' makes you dizzy: things go so fast, that the viewer cannot keep up with the rhythm of the ups and downs, of the creations and demolitions. The repetition and the cyclicity of the actions reflects the nonsense of this process: the same mistakes are reproduced again and again.

The video looks like a video game where you can start all over from scratch as many times as you want and where death has no consequences. The same detachment and insensitivity that the housing associations have when they decide on the life and death of people's houses, as if none of that was real.

The excessive quantity of paper used during the video, endlessly going out of the printer to end up shredded a few minutes later, shows the waste of materials and energy and the pollution caused by this short term way of thinking.

The buildings are shredded one after another until the machine breaks down. The shredded paper are overflowing from the paper shredder's container, creating a big mess. The paper shredder metaphor shows that it is simple to demolish buildings but not easy to get rid of the rubbles: the buildings may have disappeared but the remains will still be there. And these rubbles are only making worse the overflowing quantity of waste that our planet will soon not be able to contain anymore.

The oppressive and continuous sound of the printed buildings going out of the printer and of the paper shredder shredding the buildings accompanies the video, which enhances the sensation of a never-ending mechanical and automated process of construction and destruction.

I want to show with *The Disposable Buildings* the absurdity of our consumption society to make the viewer think about alternatives to destruction and wastes. Indeed, we should make good quality products/constructions which can last for a long time and we should renew, refresh them when we find them "out of date" instead of throwing away or destroying things impulsively.