

ProjecteSD is pleased to present Xavier Ribas' first solo exhibition in the gallery with two new photographic series.

In March 2006 Xavier Ribas travelled to Guatemala to develop a photographic project commissioned by Photo España and supported by FNAC (Fonds National d'Art Contemporain). Two photographic series resulting from this trip make up the exhibition: **Invisible Structures**, presented at Photo España, July 2006, and **Mud**, newly produced and shown at ProjecteSD for the first time.

The idea of the "invisible" and the "hidden" in photographic representation is a subject that consistently runs throughout Ribas' work. In some of his earlier series, *Flowers* (1998-2000), *Sanctuary*, (2002) or *London*, (2002), we are faced with the impossibility of seeing the subject which the image alludes to: only traces, marks appearing. In the artist's own words "photography shows the way things appear, but their meaning and their interpretation is often beyond the appearance of this visible surface".

The images in the series **Invisible Structures** (2006) "show tangled fragments of jungle, with no horizon, discontinuous, indifferent, interchangeable. At first glance, these images make us think of a wild space, natural, undefined, as if without motif. However, this disorganised and entropic space is, in fact, a historical site, the site of a buried city beneath the rainforest ground" (Ribas). The term 'invisible structure' actually comes from Mayan archaeology, and refers to a residential building that has disappeared and whose existence is only evident to the archaeologists through the detritus and remains of domestic life found buried at the site. The real remains of the city are, then, not visible and have to be deciphered by the ground's morphology: mounds, cavities, vegetation... City and landscape overlapped, one on top of the other. As Ribas puts it, "the memory that is represented in these images is not the monument, but a projection, a threshold. A memory that is as yet 'unthought', as if as if the rainforest were not only the direct consequence of the desolation and the crumbling of a civilisation, but also the necessary strategy for the preservation of its fragments: we could say that it hides itself, that it buries itself and that it eludes us".

Contraposed to the exuberance and density of these images, the other photographic series entitled **Mud** (2006) is constructed as a grid of 32 images showing naked, empty ground and desolated landscapes, a place that appears to have been overrun, disrupted, that make us sense the impact of some action, feel some disappearance. These are images of a contemporary Mayan village buried under a mudslide on the night of the 5th of October 2005. Only minimal elements, remains, small fragments are captured: traces of diggings, mounds of mud, small shrines, footprints, new demarcations of former households are the only traces left on the surface of the site.

In both series what we see in the landscape is always a trace of what is already gone, the visible designating what is not there. That which remains beyond representation, which hides behind its visible surfaces, or can only be insinuated, is what interests Ribas. Both works relate to notions explored by Robert Smithson in works as *Yucatan Mirror Displacements* (1969). As in Smithson's work, Ribas's images speak about decay and renewal, chaos and order, nature and culture, time and space, displacement and landmark. Ribas' photographs take us to these sites not from the point of view of the visible and the ordered, but through the "spatial and temporal 'suspension' of its historical materiality" (Ribas).

Xavier Ribas (Barcelona, 1960) studied Social Anthropology at the University of Barcelona and Documentary Photography at the Newport School of Art and Design (Wales). His work has received various awards: FotoPress'95, Photo España'98 and Primavera Fotográfica (2000) and has been shown in The Photographer's Gallery, London (1999 and 2004), Old Museum Arts Centre of Belfast (2000), Biennale d'Art Contemporain de Lyon (2001), CASA, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Salamanca (2002), Foto Colectania, Barcelona (2006) and Photo España (2006). Since 2000 he has been Senior Lecturer at the University of Brighton.

For further documentation and/or interviews with the artist please contact:
Silvia Dauder and Laura Polo at ProjecteSD
Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 11:30 to 20:30 or by appointment