

# *Sphere*

*with texts by*

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PRESENTATION HOUSE GALLERY

Lindsay Seers' 'We saw you coming';  
'20,000 Leagues Under the Sea',  
'Apollo 13' and '2001'

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*Beyond the innumerable resources of science, Verne invented an excellent novelistic device in order to make more vivid this appropriation of the world: to pledge space by means of time, constantly to unite these two categories, to stake them on a single throw of the dice or a single impulse . . .*

— Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*

*Suspended in the void between old and new, past and future, man is projected into time as into something alien that incessantly eludes him and still drags him forward, but without allowing him to find his ground in it.*

— Giorgio Agamben, *The Man without Content*

Borrowing words from a distant text is one way artists and writers register both their admiration for the original and their trust that the appropriation will catalyze new syntheses in the minds of viewers and readers. That this borrowing is on one level metaphorically violent is re-dressed by giving the borrowed words a moment of present-ness. Artist appropriations often purloin the requisite minimum material with little reverence for the original source. Lindsay Seers' work unwinds like a set of quotations, building not only from external references, but in this case quoting herself as well. Seers has that Verne-like ability "to . . . pledge space by means of the time" that Barthes identifies as a "novelistic device"; in *We Saw You Coming* it emerges through the shutter of the lens. The photographs that comprise *We Saw You Coming* are presented as a constructed crystal-ball triptych that demand of the viewer a tracking, sleuth-like ability to dig behind their surface. What if we chose instead to look at the work through the event of the process, one that has no closure and

no particular beginning? If what we are looking at is a (dis)continuous process of quotation/appropriation, then a series of temporal dislocations is also implied. There is a confusion when looking at the images. We do not know where we are, and the question marks of locale as well as meaning shift to confront the status of the image. Rather than working this out — could the rationale of the work be felt through the afterlife of an event? Seers realizes the act of the appropriation as something else again, creating a dissonance that leaves viewers transfixed in the present moment.

Seers is interested in how images made by film and photography can be thought of as visuals that can affect our internal imagery — a sort of free flow that links the external world and the imaginary, fantasy and obsession. Taking scenes from the films *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (Paton, 1916), *Apollo 13* and *2001* that represent a kind of past-present-future that is not only in accord with the lack of temporal fidelity our imaginations have, but also points to technological mimicry — the time-based values implied by the showing of film in a photograph in the first place, and the moving change demonstrated by developments in the technical apparatus itself. There is a sort of abstract push and pull. If one were to draw a diagram there would be a point at which one is held fleetingly by the present. A space emerges that is constructed as the *work* comes into being. This is the creation of an aesthetic space where the breakdown of the transmission of culture between past and future comes temporarily to a halt.

*We Saw you Coming* is the end point of a particular road, one that seems relevant to explore — despite the temptation to leave the work to answer for itself within the realms of the image-world of representation. The narrative goes that in 2002 Lindsay Seers made a work called *Photoscotopus* in response to a particular location, Pirates Castle on Regent's Canal in London. London's canals have, until fairly recently, been a series of dilapidated arteries running through the city, that had an underworld, almost supernatural feel to them. Much of Seers' practice plays with the boundaries of the fantastical and otherworldliness and one can imagine the attraction to the mythological possibilities that Pirates Castle contained. It was here that the underwater scenes from *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* first made their appearance — projected onto a sphere made to the same dimensions as the underwater pod made by the Williamson Brothers,

early specialists in marine photography. They provided the underwater shots filmed from this constructed pod, giving cinema audiences the first underwater footage ever to appear in a feature film. The pod became symbolic, a symbol through which Seers effects a double maneuver. Firstly by training the monocular eye of the camera onto the previous 'disembodied eye' (the space of the previous camera's containment). Secondly, by constructing a sphere to the Williamson dimensions and projecting these underwater scenes from the film on the sphere's surface, Seers takes on nature as 'other' (in this case the sublime presented by the overwhelming nature of the depths of the sea) as a possibility for providing psychological space. This particular act of 'appropriation' is poignant, as Barthes' analysis of Verne noted: "The basic activity of Jules Verne, then, is unquestionably that of appropriation. The image of the ship, so important in his mythology . . . is at a deeper level, the emblem of closure." If Verne's *Nautilus* is an emblem of closure then the footage made of Verne's novel in 1916 and appropriated much later by Seers speaks of an infinitude and a latitude that is more akin to a kind of rupture that feeds back into the possibility of a psychological freeing. Seers has effected a transposal, a literal bringing to the surface. By changing the spectator's physical relationship to the 'image,' the inside out-ness of it becomes analogous to the process and space created by photography itself—and it indicates a desire for embodiment which permeates Seers' practice as a whole.