

DOWN IS UP

A riot of indolence; complex erotica of foundling things; gentle collapses and resurgences spoken in the creole tongue of commodities on the run from their would-be masters. Peter Overton's images of abandoned objects belong in a tradition of the documentation of detritus and material affray running from Atget's pictures of early twentieth-century rag pickers in the zone on the outskirts of Paris, through the work of Czech photographers such as Emila Medková and Alois Nožička exploring waste grounds and marginal sites, and up to more recent investigations of neglected spaces by surrealists in Leeds, Prague, Madrid, Stockholm and elsewhere. Put together, these images begin to present themselves as part of something much larger: stills from an enormous time-lapse experiment in a medium yet to be formalised, akin to the dawning flickers of silent cinema – one that may take generations to complete but that when strung together will eventually show the biology of objects, growing and proliferating like seeds, spawning the knowledge of materials and structures, these sparkling tumours on the way to becoming new organisms. Flotsam on a wave of gentle earth, dream debris on pillows of asphalt, these un-nameable things seem less like discarded possessions than an unclassified growth among the fiddly nowheres formed at the edges or in the blind spots of human activity. The margins of our bodies are sometimes implicated here as well, as if our own extremities pick up the siren hum of this sprouting: the shoes, the lost gloves, the leftovers of relinquished technical operations dropped by distracted hands... Finding, losing, finding again: to capture the teeming life of detritus, of the specimen plantings on the parterre of a gigantic garden the size of a country, is to witness a ferment whose wastethought we glimpse but have yet to interpret.

Krzysztof Fijalkowski