

## THE PARKS SERVICE

### PARKING

THE SQUARE, TALLAGHT  
DUBLIN, IRELAND

The Parks Service is a pseudonymous Dublin-based sound artist whose work over the last few years has been characterized by its wry take on teenage transgression, particularly those aspects involving the exploration of sexuality as it crosses the liminal zone between public and private, channeled through an eerie, ambient soundworld of maritime rhythms, old vinyl recordings, and occasional stark instrumentation. In pieces like *(Your Name Here)*, an audio piece which layers an adult woman's reminiscences of her reckless adolescent couplings over a rich sound atmosphere that entwombs the narratives at the same time as it deterritorializes them, and *5 Badges*, an installation piece physically duplicating a teenage campsite with a tent, a firepit, crushed cans of Bulmers and half-empty pints of cheap Vodka, creating a startling

juxtaposition of inner and outer through its use of sound and space, outside the tent being a dark, rhythmic wash of murmuring, sea sounds, chittering and piccolo, inside the tent being a much more spacious and lively mélange of recorded conversation, harp and percussion, the two held off from each other with clever and careful acoustic padding within the tent, The Parks Service has transformed the shame and wonder of adolescent sexuality into a phenomenology of postmodern identity.

It is no surprise then that his/her new installation, *Parking*, mines the same material to even more striking effect. What is surprising is the venue, and the history behind it. *Parking* is an installation piece using several junked automobiles from the 70s and 80s, arranged somewhat haphazardly around a parking lot. Within each auto, The Parks Service has created a unique soundworld, yet the several pieces hang together via sonic and semantic references and repetitions which offer the frisson of recognition within a

hermeneutics of difference. The installation achieves an entirely superstantial degree of signification however when the listener is made aware of The Parks Service fraught history with the venue: the autos are installed in the north parking lot of The Square, a shopping mall in the working-class south end of Dublin which was not only the first mall in Ireland, but also the location of The Parks Service's first acclaimed work, as part of the artists' collective Grúpat, which was their remarkable 2001 three-hour guerilla intervention within the mall itself, known informally as *Quaring the Square*. *Quaring the Square* ended with the arrests of all the members of Grúpat who were on site, but gave both the collective and its members some much-deserved exposure. For The Parks Service to return now to The Square as a prodigal son not only illuminates the evolution of Grúpat from prankster *enfants terribles* to substantial sound and new media artists, but also speaks volumes of the economic and cultural changes rocking Ireland over the last five

years in its ride on the "Celtic Tiger" boom.

It is this historical-economic context that begins to give *Parking* an even deeper resonance as one listens to it. In a brief email interview, The Parks Service himself said "These pieces aren't just about adolescence, identity, space, physicality, sound, whatever. They're also about a time and a culture. Ireland is changing, Dublin is changing, Tallaght is changing—part of my work is an attempt not at nostalgia but at remembrance, an attempt not to fight the change but to frame it, or to offer a counternarrative. Part of what *Parking* is about is its location, the parking lot at The Square, its history, and what that means to those of from that area." It is rare for a work of contemporary art to manage to address issues formal, emotional, personal, social *and* economic, but in *Parking* The Parks Service succeeds in just that.

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