

Searle, Adrian, *Folkestone Triennial 2011* -
Review, Guardian, 28 06 2011.

Folkestone Triennial 2011 – review

The town is still depressed and depressing, but this show, with 19 new artists' projects and commissions, has a sense of place

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Adrian Searle
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Rug People by Paloma Varga Weisz, one of the works on show at the Folkestone Triennial. Photograph: Thierry Bal

Migration and exile, place and belonging are among the themes of *A Million Miles From Home*, the second Folkestone Triennial. The depressed resort and port is trying hard to reinvent itself. Maybe it needs to find itself first, and this triennial, with 19 new artists' projects and commissions, provides several kinds of focus on the place itself and its place in the world. Folkestone itself seems hugely supportive of the event, curated by Andrea Schlieker for the second time.

Folkestone Triennial 2011

Folkestone

Starts 25 June 2011

Until 25 September 2011

Details:

01303 245799

folkestonetriennial.org.uk

In the National Coastwatch Institution cabin, perched on a cliff above Folkestone, the volunteer guards scan the sea. Mumbai-based collective CAMP recorded the view, the constant traffic plying the Channel, and the volunteers' casual commentary. The result is an almost hour-long film recorded over a year. French church spires break the horizon, seen through a telescope. We follow tankers and canoes, ferries and fishing boats – and there's the archbishop of Canterbury, helping out at an archeological dig along the coast, his hair a white, fluffy windsock in the distance. The artists in Mumbai recorded the observations and anecdotes of the volunteers via broadband. It's a case of the watchers watched, and we watch too, following near-collisions out at sea, and blokes hauling up lobster pots. "Lobsters are giant Jurassic insects," someone says. I'd happily stay all day.

HEW LOCKE

Locke, Hew. Searle, Adrian, *Folkestone Triennial 2011* -
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The P&O ferries go back and forth, also watched by hopeful migrants waiting on the French coast. Living in awful squalor and makeshift encampments, almost within sight of Folkestone, and desperate to find a new life in the UK, they await their chance on the ferries and trucks passing through the Calais security checks. Danish film-maker Nikolaj Bendix Skyum Larsen's *Promised Land*, screened in an abandoned beach cafe, follows the plight of a number of Iranian migrants. It's a story of illegal trafficking, dodgy passports, hope and fantasy, ingenuity and yearning. *Promised Land* makes me will the illegal migrants to get through.

But what will they find if they make it to Folkestone? A horrible monster – part camel, part carp's skeleton, part rotten idea – by Charles Avery, mouldering on the floor of the public library; a shop displaying gorgeous, folkloric village peasant-wear from Kosovo, collected by Erzen Shkololli in his homeland; an overcomplicated and impenetrably dark and confusing installation following a day's schooling in Israel, in a suite of rooms next to Boots the chemist. But Folkestone is still Folkestone, Asda is still vile, and Debenhams as dreary as ever. I know, because I went in search of new trousers there, after floundering in the harbour mud at low tide while looking at the Brazilian boat figureheads mounted on tall posts by artist Tonico Lemos Auad.

The clock above Debenhams entrance has been changed, one of 10 around the town that Scottish artist Ruth Ewan has replaced, to tell French revolutionary time – an unworkable scheme, introduced in 1793, to decimalise the time and ditch the Gregorian calendar. Each day lasted 10 hours, of 100 minutes each. The decimal clock makes you feel out of whack, just as it threw France into confusion until it was abandoned at the end of 1805. It would cause havoc to shipping, birthdays, and assignations on Folkestone's deliciously named Rendezvous Street.

Martin Creed's exhilarating recording of a string quartet, whose ascending notes rise with us in the water-powered Victorian lift taking us from sea level to the grassy clifftop on the Leas, is lovely. Descend and the notes descend with you. On the beach below, a decommissioned 16th-century church bell, suspended on a wire 20 metres above the beach, tolls among the gulls in the huge sky. London-based Norwegian artist AK Dolven has given the bell a new clapper and a new voice. She has done this before, in Oslo. It's the best thing I've seen her Norwegian artist AK Dolven do. The same is true of Hew Locke's motley flotilla of model boats – some of which he built, others he bought on eBay – hanging overhead in the nave in the ancient church above the town. The boats jostle each other in the air, all facing the altar. It has a sense of rightness that I haven't found before in Locke's work.

A sense of place is important in shows like this. The real focus of Cristina Iglesias's *Towards the Sound of Wilderness* is one of Folkestone's Martello towers, built to watch for a Napoleonic invasion that never came. What Iglesias has created is another looking post, an observation platform overhanging a weed-choked moat in which the ivy-covered and hidden Martello tower stands, inhabited only by birds. The point is the magical, hidden place itself, suddenly revealed. Meanwhile, Cornelia Parker's *Folkestone Mermaid*, a naked bronze life-cast of a local resident by the beach, looks out across the Channel, emulating Copenhagen's Little Mermaid. Maybe she dreams of migrating. I just wish she'd go away.