

Third Floor Gallery

Press Release

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Ben Roberts – The Gathering Clouds

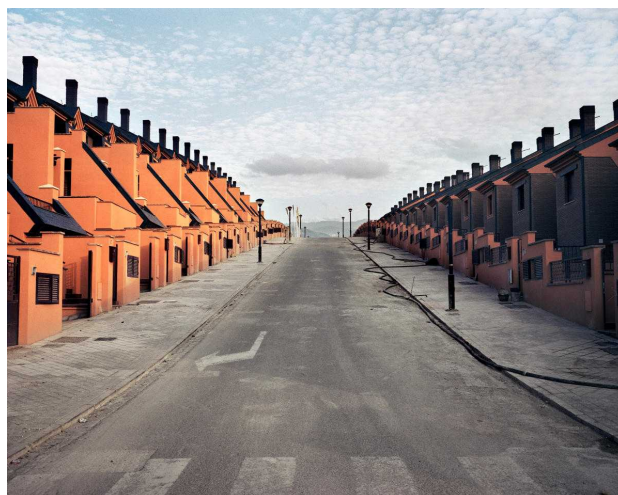
18 June – 24 July 2011

Opening Night Preview: Friday, 17 June, 7pm

When Ben Roberts commenced photographing *The Gathering Clouds* in 2007, Spain was experiencing an expansion of its economy and building industry in a scale previously unheard of. Regarding a visit to Granada, Roberts notes “the city had exploded beyond the confines of its motorway ring road, and new housing developments were appearing on the fields and mountainsides”. A similar picture was developing across the country, from gated communities in Catalonia to the colossal cityscape of Benidorm. This building boom was already unsustainable, with millions of planned homes being built for a waning number of potential buyers, but the economic crisis nailed the collapse of the sector. By 2009 Spain was in the grip of a deep recession, unemployment had shot up to one of the highest levels in Europe, and abandoned housing developments sprinkled the suburban landscape.

The Gathering Clouds is a personal account of the property boom and bust. Instead of methodically approaching the subject, Roberts collected his images through exploratory walks through the urban fringes of towns and cities. The areas to cover and the routes to take were only partially planned with aid of satellite imagery. The result are less literal photographs that guide us through the radical changes experienced by the Spanish society and landscape in the hands of property developers.

Ben Roberts is a British documentary photographer based in the South of England. He is a winner of the Magenta Flash Forward Emerging Photographers 2011 and was selected as one of the 30 New and Emerging Photographers by PDN in 2010. In 2009 *The Gathering Clouds* won the Nikon/BJP Project Assistance Award.



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Thank you to the School of Art, Media and Design of the University of Wales, Newport and Otley Brewing Company for supporting this exhibition.

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