

The Writing On The Wall

An aesthetic exploration of some of Europe's hidden spaces.

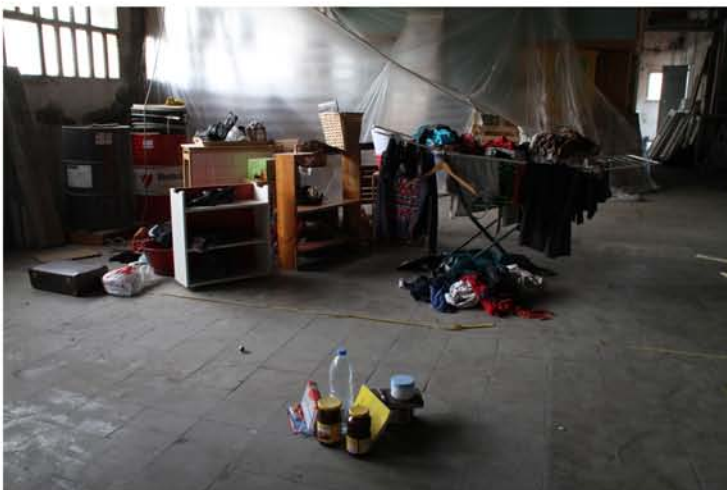
Europe is scattered with empty buildings. Ghost villages left to the ravages of time; disused industrial sites; unsold or un-sellable homes; defunct public institutions. These relics of past times tell a story about the culture that created them, and the changing circumstances which led to their dereliction, but they also contain traces of their lives after abandonment, of the people who passed through them after the gates were shut, of nature's work to reclaim them as her own. They offer a glimpse of some post-apocalyptic future, devoid of humans, but bearing the scars of our existence.



Created in an optimistic past, neglected by a thoughtless present and warning of a derelict future, these buildings whisper truths about our man-made world. Ignored by our busy modern life, they keep their secrets behind bricked up windows.



In Europe since 2008 these modern ruins have become ubiquitous. Following a tradition as old as culture, people across the continent have been reclaiming these monolithic by-products of our wasteful system, using them to explore alternative ways of living. Many of these forgotten spaces are now homes to communities founded on ideals of mutual support and cooperation, rejecting the consumerist model of unsustainable consumption and continuous growth.



Since late 2012, photographer Lisa Furness has been exploring abandoned buildings and squatted communities across Europe. Each of these places tells a story of past mistakes and future possibilities and between them they can help to sketch out an idea of where we are as an international community, as well as where we may be going.

Spain offers an example of our current culture's relationship to land and to the future. Spain's pre-2008 economic boom came from the construction industry which built 1m properties over 2004 and 2005, employing most of a generation. In 2006 local governments received up to 60% of their income from construction. The global financial crises of 2008 led to the collapse of this industry, huge unemployment, mortgage defaults, a banking crisis, and social unrest. La Crisis became the Spanish norm.

Since 2008 hundreds of thousands of Spanish families have been evicted from their homes for nonpayment of mortgages, and empty buildings litter the country telling a sorry tale of greed, corruption and loss. For many, squatting empty properties has become the only option open to them. These actions have built upon a long history of squatting, civil disobedience and anarchist thinking in the country.



This project has a special focus on Spain as well as exploring the ways in which the Spanish struggle for land is mirrored in sites and projects across Europe.



These photographs bring to light the hidden world, both the physical world of bricks and mortar locked behind closed doors, and the invisible hands of money and power that shape these spaces. In exposing what is unseen or forgotten these pictures reveal the realities of contemporary Europe.

We are reminded to read the writing on the wall.

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