

## News release

# New Exhibition 'If the Invader Comes' Taps Into Current Zeitgeist of A Nation In Constant State of Alert

"The current threat level from international terrorism is SEVERE. This means that a terrorist attack is highly likely" <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/counter-terrorism/current-threat-level/>



Jaywick Martello Tower, Essex, from June 11th, 2011

(May 5, 2011) 'If the Invader Comes' is a new film installation by photographer Dan Dubowitz and choreographer Fearghus Ó Conchúir that reflects the powerful psychological impact of being in a state of constant vigilance. The art work responds to the Martello Towers of England's East Coast and to the 'land's end' psyche of their coastal communities, but in doing so it connects to the nation's ongoing state of alert against enemies both seen and unseen. Dubowitz and Ó Conchúir's triptych of lingering and meditative images draws the viewer into the world of the watch-keeper, and evokes his internalization of the pervasive menace of invasion.

Two hundred years on, we may no longer be on the lookout for an enemy fleet but we are still on high alert. Who or what is the threat we wait for? Could it be with us already?

While the Napoleonic enemy was clear when these Martello Towers were built, the threats we face today take different forms. A report commissioned by the Association of British Insurers confirms that the East Coast of England is at risk from rising sea levels. Some of the area's Martello Towers have already been lost to coastal erosion so the threat is serious.

'If the Invader Comes' is the second collaboration by Dubowitz and Ó Conchúir that investigates the relationship between people and place. The film installation will be shown alongside their first joint work, 'Tattered Outlaws of History', a 12 film artwork that imaginatively reconnects the Martello Towers of north County Dublin. Bringing both installations together in a single exhibition, the artists make connections across the boundaries that the towers were designed to protect.

'If the Invader Comes' is commissioned by Commissions East as part of Fleet: Art in the Haven Ports. 'Tattered Outlaws of History' is a Per Cent for Art Commission for Fingal County Council.

**For more information on the project visit:**

[www.iftheinvadercomes.com](http://www.iftheinvadercomes.com) [www.fearghus.net](http://www.fearghus.net) [www.commissionseast.org.uk](http://www.commissionseast.org.uk)

Jaywick Martello Tower:

Summer Opening Hours (April-Sept) Wed-Sun, Bank Holiday Mon 10am – 5pm.

Visit [www.jaywickmartellotower.org](http://www.jaywickmartellotower.org) for more information.

For more media information, images and artist interviews please contact:

Caroline Newson, T:07990 601560 E: [caroline@clcommunications.ca](mailto:caroline@clcommunications.ca)

## **BACKGROUND:**

The major funders are:

Interreg IVA

[www.interreg4a-2mers.eu](http://www.interreg4a-2mers.eu)

Arts Council England East

[www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

[www.gulbenkian.org.uk](http://www.gulbenkian.org.uk)

Essex County Council

[www.essex.gov.uk](http://www.essex.gov.uk)

In 2008 Dubowitz and Ó Conchúir were offered an open brief to make a public artwork that explored the area of Fingal in north County Dublin. Interested in the then rapid economic boom and immigration that led to a seismic shift in Irish identity, they focused on the Martello towers that line the coastal margins of north of Dublin. The towers were built as an early warning system and defence line against a Napoleonic invasion but Napoleon never came and these towers never fired a shot in anger. Since then, the towers have been outsiders, a series of misfits whose place in the psyche of Ireland is a focus of uncertainty.

Following the success of 'Tattered Outlaws of History', Dubowitz and Ó Conchúir were commissioned in 2010 to make a new work developing the ideas explored in 'Tattered Outlaws of History' with a residency at Jaywick Martello Tower, Essex. Using this residency at Jaywick as a base, they embarked on a journey to get into all the east coast's towers, meeting their custodians, getting to know the towers singularly and as a series to better understand their spirit.

The state of the Martello towers of the east coast differ enormously, from sublime ruin at one extreme to a tea room with lamas or elegant homes with commanding views at the other. Dubowitz and Ó Conchúir have, in this new artwork, focused on those derelict towers that are on the cusp of redevelopment.

'If the Invader Comes' takes its title from a World War II poster found in the Aviation Museum in the Martello Tower at St Osyth. The new work comprises a film installation of three screens that centres around the theme of vigilance and control. As the film develops the psyche of the tower emerges in the fragile embodiment of a solitary watcher and his dance with literal and metaphorical shadows. The work depicts vigilance but it also invites the viewer to identify with the watcher and to share his experience.

In this moment of transition between ruin and redevelopment, the towers are in a state of flux and are open to the choreographic intervention that the artists bring. This notion of the towers in motion is counterintuitive, interrogating the assumption that these monolithic structures are fixed and solid. Some of the east coast's towers have already been lost to coastal erosion, and the artists convey a sense of the Martello towers as having become ephemeral repository of the fragile and the temporary.

## **Funders:**

Commissions East is one of the UK's leading public art agencies bringing artists and commissioners together to present visual arts projects in the East of England and elsewhere, changing how and where art can be experienced and capturing its potential to make better places.

Funding for Fleet has been provided by Arts Council England, East, Essex County Council and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Developed and managed by Commissions East, Fleet is part of the Face2Face art programme taking place in Nord-Pas de Calais (France) and Kent, Essex and Suffolk (UK). Face2Face is supported by the EU through the European Development Fund and Interreg IVA 2 Seas Programme'

## Artist Biographies:

**Fearghus O' Conchuir** is an independent choreographer and dance artist. Brought up in Ireland, he completed degrees in English and European Literature at Magdalen College Oxford, before training at London Contemporary Dance School.

He was the first Ireland Fellow on the Clore Leadership Programme and continues to contribute to the programme as a facilitator and speaker. He is a current board member of Project Arts Centre and of Dance Digital.

His current creative preoccupation is the relationship between bodies and buildings in the context of urban regeneration, a preoccupation that has manifested itself in film and in live performance in Europe, the US and China. Recent projects include Dialogue – a collaboration with Chinese dance artist, performed for the Shanghai World Expo and Mo Mhóirchoir Féin – dance film commissioned for RTÉ's Dance on the Box series. In 2011 in addition to working on If the Invader Comes, he is premiering Tabernacle, a new work for the Dublin Dance Festival. Fearghus is part of Project Catalyst, the Associate Artist initiative of Project Arts Centre.

[www.fearghus.net](http://www.fearghus.net)

**Dan Dubowitz** is a British artist based in Italy. Originally trained in architecture at Sheffield University, and after a spell working in and teaching architecture and fine art, his practise broadened to include photography, film, and permanent public artworks with appropriated artifacts and spaces. Dubowitz is known internationally for his work on wastelands and his cultural masterplans for cities undergoing regeneration.

[www.civicworks.net](http://www.civicworks.net)

Recent publications include:

'The Peeps', Manchester University Press, July 2011. Permanent artworks created for East Manchester.

'Fascismo Abbandonato', Dewi Lewis Publishing, January 2010. Photography of the fascist holiday camps that remain abandoned on Italy's coasts.

'Wastelands', Dewi Lewis Publishing, December 2010. World-wide projects exploring wastelands.

## The collaboration:

In a most unlikely meeting between the disciplines of choreography and urban regeneration, Dubowitz and Ó Conchúir began collaborating because they discovered there was an area where their respective practices intersect. Dubowitz is a former architect known worldwide for his investigation of wastelands through photography and his cultural masterplans in regeneration. Ó Conchúir is a choreographer and dancer recognised internationally for innovative contemporary dance that moves out from the theatre and into the public realm. They move in very different worlds. What these two artists stumbled across when they met in 2008 and decided to explore through making artworks together is that their different trajectories had nevertheless brought them both to an artistic practice that investigates the reciprocal relationship between the constructions of place and the constructions of the psyche.



Title graphics from World War II poster found in the St Osyth Martello Tower, Essex Aviation Society and Museum - Point Clear