

# MAGAZINE



National Gallery of Canada Musée des beaux-arts du Canada

## Lynne Marsh

By [Scott Thompson](#) on December 17, 2012



Lynne Marsh working on *The Philharmonie Project*, 2011. Photo: Uta Kogelsberger, courtesy the artist

Lynne Marsh was born in Vancouver in 1969, and now divides her time between Berlin, London and Montreal. Working with sound and video installations, she is interested in the role that architecture plays in creating meaning among those who inhabit the built environment. She explores old structures as remnants of past political, social and cultural environments, and their relationship to contemporary society.

Marsh centres her attention on structures with profound cultural and historical significance. She uses these structures as metaphors for broader social constructs, thus challenging cultural conventions. For example, in her work *Plänterwald*—part of the collection of the National Gallery of Canada—she explores an abandoned amusement park in Berlin as security guards patrol it. Filming these rundown locations with high production values, she positions single characters in

environments originally intended for mass consumption—such as a lone female figure, or a pair of security guards. Her installations thus work as a mediation between the physical space of the structure, and the power of an individual within contemporary political systems.

In addition, the sites are presented as materially removed from the world, highlighting the absence of audiences—as in the decaying amusement park or the empty stadium. The scenes that Marsh depicts are unsettling: places that once accommodated large crowds are now vacant, incomplete, and somehow familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. They are somewhat fictional, yet still very tangible, reminding us of social spaces that have been used in different ways in the past than they are being used now. She challenges audiences to reexamine these spaces and their cultural relevance, past and present. In this way, she highlights decreasing material and economic self-sufficiency, as well as the minimal leisure time and less supportive economies of modern society.

Marsh's directorial methods draw on video games, sports coverage, television broadcasting, and early-twentieth-century cinematography. Using systematic cinematographic techniques such as panning and zooming, she transforms the camera into the subject, and the performance becomes the act of filming. As a result, the relationship between the lens and the viewer's eye lies at the heart of her work.

Likewise, she constructs special environments for viewing her works. For instance, in her piece *Stadium*—an installation set in an empty stadium—she provides old wooden chairs in a cinema-like setting, while the movie is projected on a free-standing screen. As such, Marsh emphasizes architecture as both setting and protagonist, reinforcing the relationship between form and the content of what is being viewed. With these kinds of works, her exploration of architectural remains—playing with past and present—mediates society's fascination with that which is new, and our tendency to leave behind that which has come before us.



Lynne Marsh, *Wheel* (production shot) [2011], C type print, 63 x 78 cm. © Lynne Marsh, courtesy Galerie Donald Browne

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## About the Author

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Scott Thompson is a Carleton University student working toward his B.A. in Art History Honours.