



NEW RELEASE KEHRER VERLAG

Dara McGrath  
***Project Cleansweep***  
*Beyond the Post Military Landscape  
of the United Kingdom*

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**Photographic investigation into the landscapes of chemical and biological weapons in the United Kingdom**

*Project Cleansweep* takes its name from a Ministry of Defence report issued in 2011. The report assessed the risk of residual contamination at sites in the United Kingdom used in the manufacture, storage, and disposal of chemical and biological weapons from World War I to the present day.

*Project Cleansweep* looks beyond the risk assessment to the ways that landscapes are psychologically charged by their history. Examining the sites of the official investigation and many more, including sites used for both chemical and biological weapons activities during the Cold War, *Project Cleansweep* follows traces that lead to military bases and government facilities, grocery stores and holiday parks.

The images take us into the country lanes of Dorset and Devon, the Peak District, the woodlands of Yorkshire and out across the open rolling countryside of the Salisbury Plain, all the way from the coastlines of East Anglia, the West Counties and Wales to the remote Scottish Highlands and the Irish Sea.

Over 4,000 sq kilometres of the landmass was appropriated for military use in the 20th century, marking the influence of military activities upon British landscapes and provoking deeper consideration of their lasting social and environmental impacts. *Project Cleansweep* presents unexpected vistas that challenge conventional understandings of place. This work also reminds us that war is domestic, one that employs thousands of people in production processes akin to activities in other industries.

As we recognise the inheritances of the past, the places pictured here become interstitial; they seem to exist between past and present, public and private, civilian and military. Here, too, the pastoral myths of the bucolic British landscape — of simple na-

ture, a golden past — are disrupted by material realities embedded in the landscape itself. As we contemplate these images our perspectives shift, and yet a different kind of beauty persists.

(This introduction is adapted from *The Mustard Gas in Sherwood Forest*, by Deborah Lilley and Dara McGrath, published by Places Journal, June 2016.)

*The photographs in this book resist such cleansweeping. They snag and scratch the viewing eye. They oblige the mind to stop, look, enquire. Easy answers are not given, but an archive is compiled that rises in reverberation as it grows in length. The organisation of the documents within the book is painstakingly patterned. Echoes start to move between images, across sites.*

— Dr. Robert MacFarlane, University of Cambridge

**Dara McGrath** (b. 1970) is an Irish photographic artist, living in Cork, Ireland. He is the recipient of many awards and has represented Ireland at the 11th Architecture Biennale Venice. Recently he presented *Project Cleansweep* at the United Nations (OPCW) in The Hague.

**Exhibitions**

Town Hall, Buxton, Derbyshire, UK, April 2020

DSTL (Defence Science and Technology Laboratory)

Porton Down, Wiltshire, UK, May 2020

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