



would make the images journalistic), or once they have burnt out (which would make them symbolically and literally ‘aftermath’ work) gives the work its sense of waiting and looking, curiously and nervously, forwards.

Duncan’s bonfire photographs have a repetitiousness to them, and clearly draw some inspiration from the work of Bernd and Hilla Becher. Hesse’s landscapes, in a different way, draw on the Bechers too. And it is part of the archival form to replicate examples which are almost the same; the minor variations are needed in order to complete the archive’s belief in its comprehensiveness, its drive to classify and encapsulate. Donovan Wylie’s *The Maze* (2004) intertwines this archival boredom with the same knowing backward look (really a sideways glance at the present and future) found in Duncan’s work. The repeated images of disused cells and the gradually overgrowing space between the fences and walls in Wylie’s *The Maze* have a hypnotic quality which plays with forgetfulness and remembering.³ In its aesthetic form Wylie’s work then imitates the impulse to forget that the Maze now represents as a symbol

of the worst of the past – while *The Maze*, as an archive, simultaneously and insistently suggests that we should remember and maybe even memorialize the place. Wylie’s *British Watchtowers* (2007), again influenced by the Bechers’ work, watches the signs of the military presence in Northern Ireland disappear. These are photographs not only of the watchtowers but of something that is about to become an empty space, and so they also have us cast a glance to the future and imagine what the space will look like without the watchtowers there – and in this these images also are questions about the future of Northern Ireland and what, literally and metaphorically, it will look like.

Hesse, Duncan and Wylie have produced work which differently coalesces around a nagging conviction that forgetting and myopia are at the centre of the new political dispensation in Northern Ireland. Daniel Jewesbury and Ursula Burke’s *Archive: Lisburn Road* (2004) enters this time of interregnum by looking at a place which has arguably long existed in a social and historical interregnum of its own, separated to some extent from the geography of the rest of Belfast during the Troubles. Their archive of the Lisburn Road is primarily experiential, and renders the supposed class and social difference of the area through a series of barriers (hedges, walls, glass, hoardings) and, less architecturally, through the assumptions which are discernable in the patterns of the claustrophobic bourgeois suburbia which exists off the Lisburn Road.⁴

The archives which Northern Irish photography has produced in recent years maintain their photographic and aesthetic integrity by enclosing the anti-archive inside the archive. Jewesbury and Burke are deliberately unsystematic in their ‘archive’. Eoghan McTigue’s *All Over Again* (2004) collects images of political murals in the process of their repainting. He archives erasure and blankness and thus emptiness, unraveling the urge to totality which the archive constitutionally tends to.⁵ In contrast to, for example, Bill Rolston’s cataloguing of finished murals as evidence of political thought in Northern Ireland, McTigue reveals an uncertain nothingness and, as Aaron Kelly writes about McTigue’s work, a ‘boundless potential’.⁵

The archive wants to be a meaningfully complete repository of knowledge, yet it is often practically a hidden or inaccessible storeroom. In some ways the photographic work discussed here recognizes that the archive’s quietism in hiding away things in a catalogue is a viably *critical*

3 Inertias, stages 1 - 26
From *The Maze* (2004)



4 From *Archive:*
Lisburn Road (2004)



form through which to examine the state of things in Northern Ireland in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Claudio Hills' *Archive Belfast* (2004) makes this point by photographing archives and conveying a Belfast which hides its history away from itself, but which is also being watched obsessively in the present. The photograph then becomes a way of placing objects in the archive and of resurrecting from the archive – such heightened awareness of the possibilities of photography and the archive is wonderfully found in Hills' photograph of the 'Photography Branch of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Photostudio backdrop', an image which knows how implicated photography can be in the closing down of porous meaning which an archive desires, in favour of Linnean systems, but which, in its self-awareness, tries to recover the critical capacities of the photograph at the same time.⁶

Writing about Chilean photographers, and their use of the archive as a photographic form, Charles Merewether notes the archive's capacity to act as a 'site where memory and forgetfulness can face each other'.⁶This