

CEIDRA MOON MURPHY: *GROUNDWORK*

7th February - 23th March 2025

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Ceidra Moon Murphy's research-based practice sets forth the parameters of *Groundwork*, her first exhibition in Germany. She delves deep into a subject or explores unusual places to find an object, a law or a space, which she explores to its limits. Her research is condensed into selected objects, readymades, situations and photographs.

She uses these elements to create experiential and associative spaces that open up the examined contexts to the viewer on a structural and phenomenological level. The arrangement of these elements in the space reveals new connections. The artist employs a minimalist formal language to present complex issues as directly, comprehensively and transparently as possible.

These strategies allow her to aesthetically condense her research and facilitate sensual experiences that go beyond the mere communication of information.

By selecting and synthesising, the artist avoids an information overload that would force us to skim or scan superficially. Instead, her presentation leaves space and time for one's own discoveries in a mode of deep perception.

Groundwork

The title *Groundwork* describes the conceptual framework and overarching theme of Murphy's exhibition. For the artist, groundwork means preparatory or foundational work—the basis for something bigger, such as war. Through her

presentation, she aims to highlight fundamental, often hidden aspects of military industries and warfare that are at once opaque and beyond the public's awareness or knowledge. The title might also refer to the exhibition space itself, which is located below ground and thus hidden from view.

These two conceptual strands come together in the photograph on the exhibition flyer: taken around 1942, it shows a landscape designed by Hollywood production artists, which served to camouflage a group of Lockheed Martin aircraft factories in Burbank, California, from enemy espionage.

Lockheed Martin, the leading defence company globally, continues to provide the groundwork for armed conflicts around the world, through their development of weapon systems.

1 Lesson Plans, 2025

A ring binder folder is presented on an office table, and can be leafed through by visitors. It is a manual containing the lesson plans of a British Army weapons instructor, and teaches the handling and care of certain weapons. The artist acquired it on eBay. The entries are very technical and incomprehensible to outsiders, and sit at a disjunction with the playful, childlike design, which is animated with Microsoft WordArt graphics.

2 Earwitness, 2022–2025

Twelve discarded flight recorders from Lockheed Martin aeroplanes hang from the ceiling on thin wire cables. In a minimalist arrangement of three by four rows, the rectangular devices hover just above the ground in the centre of the room.

The title *Earwitness* alludes to their function as voice recorders. The tapes of the flight recorders contain the last recordings before they were decommissioned. However, this information is not accessible to visitors.

For the artist, the silent flight recorders are metaphors for opaque systems which store but withhold information.

Unclear whether the devices were manufactured for civilian or military aircraft, the black boxes also point to the mutually dependent relationship between the defence industry and the government.

3 *Skunk Works*

The artist has cut open a thirteenth flight recorder and filled it with wax. Wax preserves, but is at the same time fragile. With its ability to appear opaque or transparent depending on the temperature, wax is a metaphor for the artist of how information can be handled: it can be concealed or made accessible.

The inscription *The Skunk Works* identifies this flight recorder as a product of Lockheed's secret and influential development department. *Skunk Works* rose to prominence during the Cold War and the Gulf War by developing state-of-the-art military aircraft. Lockheed Martin remains active in both military and civil aviation.

4 *PIT (S. 31 and 32), 2024–2025*

This piece is taken from an ongoing series of works in which the artist deals with the UK Government's handling of the Freedom of Information Act (FOI). This law was initiated under Tony Blair and passed by the British government in 2000 to make the relationship between the state and the public more porous.

Under the FOI Act, individuals can request information about any topic on which the government might hold records. However, each request is subject to a Public Interest Test (PIT), which assesses whether disclosure is in the public interest or whether there are overriding reasons against it. While there were only three exemptions

justifying the withholding of information when the law was introduced, there are now 41.

Employing the FOI Act herself, the artist applied for the release of response letters to refused FOI requests in a specified period between 2023 and 2024. The artist engaged in 57 correspondences with 19 government departments and ministries over a period of 11 months and has received 745 responses letters in answer to her FOI requests to date.

She has arranged these into vitrines according to the exemption applied to refuse the requests. The size of the pile indicates which exemption is applied more frequently. There are further discrepancies within the piles because each government agency applies the exemptions varyingly.

In this exhibition, one exemplifying vitrine from the *PIT* series is shown. It contains the letters in which the release of information was refused with reference to Section 31 (Law enforcement) and Section 32 (Court Records, etc.). The letters in the pile on the left include, for instance, the rejection of an FOI request for information on the UK Government's investigation into Pegasus spyware.

Initially, the artist was primarily interested in what information was being withheld from the public. However, in the course of her research, her focus shifted to the process by which information is withheld/released. The vitrine illustrates the ways in which the public's 'right to know' is inhibited with dubious arguments and artificial barriers.

The official letters of the denied FOI request provide groundwork for the artist insofar as they embody the authorities' handling of the Freedom of Information Act at the most fundamental level.

Without Echo, 2024

The two photographs show two anechoic test chambers lined with absorbent foam wedges. Anechoic chambers, meaning non-reflective or without echoes, are used to test the sound and signal behaviours from noise and heat generating equipment such as exploding ammunition.

For the artist, these sound-absorbing rooms symbolise enclosed spaces for information. They also provide groundwork knowledge for the weapons developing industry.

6 *Without Echo i*, 2024

This image shows the anechoic chamber at the University of Salford. It is used for university research, by businesses, defence companies, and other government contractors.

7 *Without Echo ii*, 2024

This photograph shows the semi anechoic chamber at BRE's facility north of London in which sound and heat behaviour is tested. It was here that the cladding of Grenfell Tower was tested. The developers later used a variation of the material, which had not been tested, leading to the devastating fatal fire.

5 *Gunshot*, 2025

The small aluminium plate shows the engraved amplitude of the sound of a fired weapon projectile tested in the anechoic chamber of *Without Echo i*. The graph was made especially for the artist by an engineer from that testing lab. It is a material evidence of the absorption of sound in the chamber. Working with aluminium, one of the most frequently used metals in the manufacturing of weapons, the artist highlights the link between these acoustic testing sites and the development of weapons.

Ceitra Moon Murphy lives and works in London. She graduated in 2020 with a Bachelor of Fine Art from the Ruskin School of Art, Oxford University. Recent exhibitions include *Public Interest*, a. SQUIRE, London (2025); *1181½*, Emalin, London (2024); *Buffer*, a. SQUIRE, London (2023); and *Earwitness*, Southbank Centre, London (2022). In 2023, she completed a residency in collaboration with Riwaq, Ramallah, and the Palestinian Museum, Birzeit, West Bank. Her work is held in the collection of KADIST.

GALERIE II

CEIDRA MOON MURPHY, *GROUNDWORK*



① **Lesson Plans, 2025**
Ringordner / Ringbinder
31.4 x 28 x 7 cm

② **Earwitness, 2022–2025**
12 ausranierte Flugschreiber von
Lockheed Martin, Stahlkabel /
12 decommissioned Lockheed Martin
flight recorders, steel cable
Maße variabel

③ **Skunk Works, 2025**
Decommissioned Lockheed Martin
flight recorder, wax /
Ausgedienter Flugschreiber von
Lockheed Martin, Wachs
30 x 12.5 x 19 cm

④ **PIT (S. 31 and 32), 2024–2025**
Gedruckte Dokumente, Vitrine /
Printed documents, vitrine
Abschnitt 31 Strafverfolgung /
Section 31 Law enforcement
Abschnitt 32 Gerichtsakten, usw. /
Section 32 Court records, etc.
15.5 x 56 x 40 cm

⑤ **Gunshot, 2025**
Gravierung auf Aluminium /
Engraving on aluminium
18 x 21.5 cm

⑥ **Without Echo, i, 2024**
Archivpigmentdruck auf
Dibond montiert /
Archival pigment print mounted
on dibond
119.4 x 150 cm

⑦ **Without Echo, ii, 2024**
Archivpigmentdruck auf
Dibond montiert /
Archival pigment print mounted
on dibond
119.4 x 150 cm

⑧ **Minutes, 2025**
Audio-Installation, geloopt /
Audio installation, looped
00:01:16”

Alle Werke mit freundlicher Genehmigung des Künstler/
all work courtesy the artist