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Liam Devlin / Helen Sear: Lure
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As part of the Cardiff International Photography Festival, *Diffusion*, the BayArt Gallery is hosting a solo show by Helen Sear entitled *Lure* (25 May to 21 June, 2013), the opening chosen to coincide with the festival's publishing weekend that also includes a book fair, symposium and other artist-led events. The show *Lure* is essentially a collection of Sear's new work made over the past two years, and marks an incredibly productive period for the artist and given the eclectic range of works that Sear has produced, it is difficult to decide where to begin the exploration of her work. So, at the risk of being obvious I'll begin with the title of the exhibition; 'Lure'. There are two main definitions of this work as a verb, which if we consider art to be 'doing something' seems a reasonable place to start. The first is obvious enough and refers to methods to tempt or attract by the promise of some type of reward. There is a seduction at play, but it is a seduction that also carries the suggestion that all is not what it seems.

All the work on show has been generated from an area in rural Monmouthshire where Sear lives and has situated her studio. While this can be considered a factor that unites the art works, it would be reductive to consider Sear's work as primarily 'about' place, locale or even those complex and conflicting ideas and emotions stirred by the term 'home'. Rather, the work is a manifestation of Sear's attention to her own lived experience to the everyday. The particular place where Sear lives and works provides the material that Sear engages with, that she pays attention to, but it is an attention that is marked by a playful and intelligent irreverence.

The verb 'to lure' is also used in falconry to name the action of the falconer to entice a hawk or falcon from the air which fittingly, is also the title of a short video piece by Sear: *Lure* (2012, 13 mins 38 sec). The footage depicts a disparate group of visitors to *Bwlch Nant yr Arian Forest Centre*, near Abersytwyth, to watch the arrival of Red Kites who are regularly lured to the area with the promise of a free meal. The camera, however, points towards the visitors, with no indication as to whether these iconic birds of prey arrived or not. Instead, the video becomes a tableau vivant of frustrated expectation; the group of people have been drawn indeed lured to this place by a promise of a spectacular view. The orientation of Sear's camera helps us understand the event is a conflation of a particularly modern notion of the rural as a place for

