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Art

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## Simone Nieweg

Goethe-Institut, London

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Jacqui McIntosh  
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Simone Nieweg's landscapes show the type of countryside you often see only fleetingly from a car window - at first glance unspectacular, but on closer inspection revealing a subtle beauty. Nieweg, whose work, *Landscapes*, is on show at the Goethe-Institut, studied at the Düsseldorf Academy of Fine Arts, where she was taught by Bernd Becher during the late 1980s. Like her famous predecessors Ruff, Struth and Gursky, she has brought her own personal slant to the Becher aesthetic.

On show here are three examples of her landscapes. Compositionally, Nieweg places us in the photograph with a viewpoint that leads the eye around the landscape, picking up more detail the longer we look. In *Gemähtes Feld*, a mown pathway travels through a field to the horizon, where trees are planted in a row, wooden structures protecting their bases. These landscapes are devoid of human presence, but everywhere there is evidence of intervention: tractor marks, a road sign in the distance, orderly trees. The technical precision and scale of these colour prints show an imposed order within which nature is quietly rebelling by refusing to be neat and tidy.

This small exhibition forms part of a larger body of work entitled *Grabeland*. Since 1986 Nieweg has photographed the agricultural landscape found on the outskirts of towns and industrial areas in the Ruhr and Lower Rhine. Plots of unused land, leased out for one year, are transformed into richly planted allotments, after which they are ploughed and left unseeded. Nieweg photographs subjects such as gates, fields and allotments. All show individuality, reflecting the personality of their owners: sheds held together with wire and corrugated iron tacked haphazardly to wooden frames; rickety structures, that, despite their impermanence, have been carefully built. Her approach is not dissimilar to the Becher: grouping subjects together like objects, disclosing similarities and differences. Nieweg documents structures before they cease to exist.

*Landscapes* is Nieweg's first UK exhibition. She presents us with a landscape which is unspectacular yet quietly beautiful. For all their apparent objectivity, you can imagine walking through these landscapes and, stopping to look, getting your feet a little muddy in the process.