



My best shot **Simon Roberts** 'The sinister black blob in the sky is a TV camera. It reminds us the whole event is really a stage set'

Throughout the recession, I had been photographing the English landscape, exploring how it fitted with ideas of national character. Then I was asked to be the official photographer of the 2010 general election.

My pitch to the International Olympic Committee was to do something a bit different for the London Games: to stand back, to always have an elevated view, and to gain more of a perspective. I was the only "art photographer" to be granted access. These events are usually recorded close-up: you can spot the sports photographers with their big lenses in this picture.

The logistics were exhausting: I had to get to places that aren't normally available to photographers. As the Games were

heavily controlled, this proved tricky. Tripods were banned for safety reasons - I had to strap my camera on to a spectator's seat. This shot was taken in Greenwich Park, where the equestrian events were held. It captures Marcus Ehning from Germany in the individual jumping: he came 12th overall.

The venue was the ultimate example of London 2012 creating a tableau of the city. Everything in this frame has a certain connotation, from the architectural importance of Queen's House in the centre, to the imperial significance of the Cutty Sark tea clipper in the distance; further away, Canary Wharf symbolises the changing economic fortunes of the city. The print is 2m across, so when it's exhibited, you can see all the other details - such



THE CV

Born: Croydon, 1974.

Studied: Human geography at the University of Sheffield.

Influences: Stephen Shore, Patrick Keiller, Paul Graham, Jem Southam.

High point: "Being the official 2010 general election photographer."

Low point: "Having one of my first published photographs appear in the Daily Mail."

Top tip: "Be an author of your own ideas, not an illustrator of others'."

as the mini versions of Stonehenge, the Magna Carta, Nelson's column and Big Ben decorating each jump. All these elements come together to provide a theatrical presentation of the history of Britain. The image itself looks painterly and unreal, like an extreme digital composition, while overhead there's a sinister black blob: an eye-in-the-sky TV camera reminding us that this whole event is actually a stage set.

As this shot attests, there's no doubt the Olympics were a highly successful advert for Britain, although the question remains as to what their legacy will be. I feel lucky to have experienced them at close hand. Like everybody, I wasn't sure what they would be like - and they were extraordinary.

i Interview by Sarah Phillips. This image is in *Landmark: The Fields of Photography*, at Somerset House, London WC2, until 28 April.