

CIRCA 121

CONTEMPORARY VISUAL CULTURE IN IRELAND
AUTUMN 2007 | €7.50 £5 US\$12 | ISSN 0263-9475





making CHANGES

CONTEMPORARY
CRAFT IN
NORTHERN IRELAND



GATHERED PEBBLES - CARA MURPHY

A major exhibition of contemporary craft in Northern Ireland

Ormeau Baths Gallery
3 - 30 August 2007
www.ormeaubaths.co.uk

Millennium Court Arts Centre
5 September - 13 October 2007
www.millenniumcourt.org





Shanghai
in art



上海艺术博览会
国际当代艺术展



6 to 9
September 2007

THE NEW MATCHPOINT FOR THE ART SCENE COMES FROM THE EAST

The new International Contemporary Art Fair in Asia

Best of Artists Introduction of artists whose visions and discourses are of historic significance, with special projects from Asia.

Best of Discovery Inventory of the creation going on in the rapidly growing Asian art scenes, with special projects by new and upcoming artists.

Best of Galleries

10 Chancery Lane, Hong Kong
Aizpuru, Madrid/Sevilla
Albion, London
Arndt & Partner, Berlin/Zurich/NY
Art Season, Singapore
Aura Gallery, Shanghai
Avanthay Contemporary, Zurich
Baronian Francey, Brussels
Bastien, Brussels
Beijing Art Now, Beijing
Benamou, Paris
Bernier/Eliades, Athens
Bhak, Seoul
Blum, NY
BND, Milano
Bodhi Art, Delhi/NY/Mumbai/Singapore
Brito Cimino, Sao Paolo
Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai
Chi-Wen, Taipei
Chinese Contemporary, Beijing
La Città, Verona
Cobo, Madrid
Cohan, NY
Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing
Contrasts, Shanghai/Beijing
Courtyard, Beijing

CRG, NY
Crousel, Paris
DDM Warehouse, Shanghai
Erben, NY
Eslite, Taipei
Espacio Minimo, Madrid
Faurtschou, Copenhagen/Beijing
Gana Art Center, Seoul
Godin, Paris
Grand Siècle, Taipei
Greve, Cologne/St. Moritz/Paris/Milano
Guerra, Lisbon
Guerrero, Mexico City
Hakgojae, Seoul
Hanart TZ, Hong Kong
Hecey, Brussels
Hussenot, Paris
Hyundai, Seoul
i20, New York
Insam Grita, Vienna
Janssen, Cologne/Berlin
Julie M., Tel Aviv
Kaj Forsblom, Helsinki
Karl-Heinz Meyer, Karlsruhe
Krinzinger, Vienna
Kukje, Seoul
Lambert, Paris/NY
Lang, NY
Langgeng, Jawa Tengah

Gebr. Lehmann, Dresden
Lin & Keng, Taipei
Linder, Basel
Lorenzo Soledad, Madrid
L.A. Lothar Albrecht, Frankfurt/Beijing
Maeght, Paris/Barcelona
Main Trend, Taipei
Marella, Milano/Beijing
Marlborough, NY/London
Mayer, Duesseldorf
Meile, Beijing/Lucerne
MEM, Osaka
Mizuma, Tokyo
Mueller, Zurich
Nagel, Berlin/Cologne
Nanzuka Underground, Tokyo
Nature Morte/ Bose Pacia, New Delhi/New York
Navarra, Paris
Neuhoff, NY
de Noirmont, Paris
Obadia, Paris
Ochs, Berlin/Beijing
Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo
Park Ryu Sook, Seoul
Persano, Torino
PKM, Seoul
Poggiali e Forconi, Firenze
Pestorius, Brisbane
Protetch, NY

PYO, Seoul/Beijing
de Pury & Luxembourg, Zurich
Red Bridge, Shanghai
Roentgenwerke, Tokyo
Sakshi, Mumbai
SCAI the Bathhouse, Tokyo
Schultz, Berlin
von Senger, Zurich
Shanghai Yibo, Shanghai
ShanghART, Shanghai
de Sierra, Madrid
Simoens, Knokke
SKE, Bangalore
SOKA Art Center, Beijing/Tainan
Star Gallery, Beijing
STPI, Singapore
Sun Contemporary, Seoul
Tanit, Munich
Tang Contemporary Art, Beijing/Bangkok
Templon, Paris
Tilton, NY
TS1 Contemporary Art, Beijing
Universal Studios, Beijing
Vallois, Paris
de Villepoix, Paris
Walsh, Chicago
Xin Dong Cheng, Beijing/Paris
Xing Beijing Art Gallery, Beijing
(subject to changes)



Shanghai Exhibition Centre

info@shcontemporary.info

www.shcontemporary.info

 ISSN 0263-9475

circa



Contemporary
visual culture in
Ireland

2

Editor

Peter FitzGerald

Administration

Barbara Knezevic

Advertising/ PR/ Marketing

Jennie McGinn

Board

Graham Gosling (Chair), Tara Byrne, Mark Garry, Georgina Jackson, Darragh Hogan, Isabel Nolan, John Nolan, Hugh Mulholland, Brian Redmond

Contributing editors

Brian Kennedy, Luke Gibbons

Assistants

Laura Buckley, Catherine Barragry, Rachel Simmons

Legal advice

Justin Lennon, JJ Lennon
Solicitors. 01 667 6364
info@jjlennon.com

Designed/produced at
Peter Maybury Studio
www.softsleeper.com

Printed by W & G Baird Ltd,
Belfast

Printed on 115gsm + 250gsm
Arctic the Volume

Subscriptions

For our subscription rates please see bookmark, or visit www.recirca.com where you can subscribe online.

Circa is concerned with visual culture. We welcome comment, proposals and written contributions. Please contact the editor for more details, or consult our website www.recirca.com. Opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the Board. *Circa* is an equal-opportunities employer. Copyright © *Circa* 2007

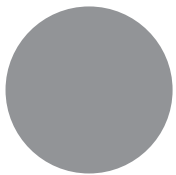
Contacts

Circa
43 / 44 Temple Bar
Dublin 2
Ireland
tel / fax (+353 1) 679 7388
info@recirca.com
www.recirca.com



Editorial 24 | Update 22 | Features 30 | Reviews 72 | Project 115

(front cover)
Kevin Cosgrove
Survey, 2007
oil on canvas
120 x 145 cm
from National College of Art
and Design Degree Show
courtesy the artist





Lisa Fingleton
Anthony Haughey
Seamus McGuinness
Bea McMahon
Susan McWilliam
Tom Molloy
Beth O'Halloran
Niamh O'Malley
Ben Roosevelt

Rigor Mort

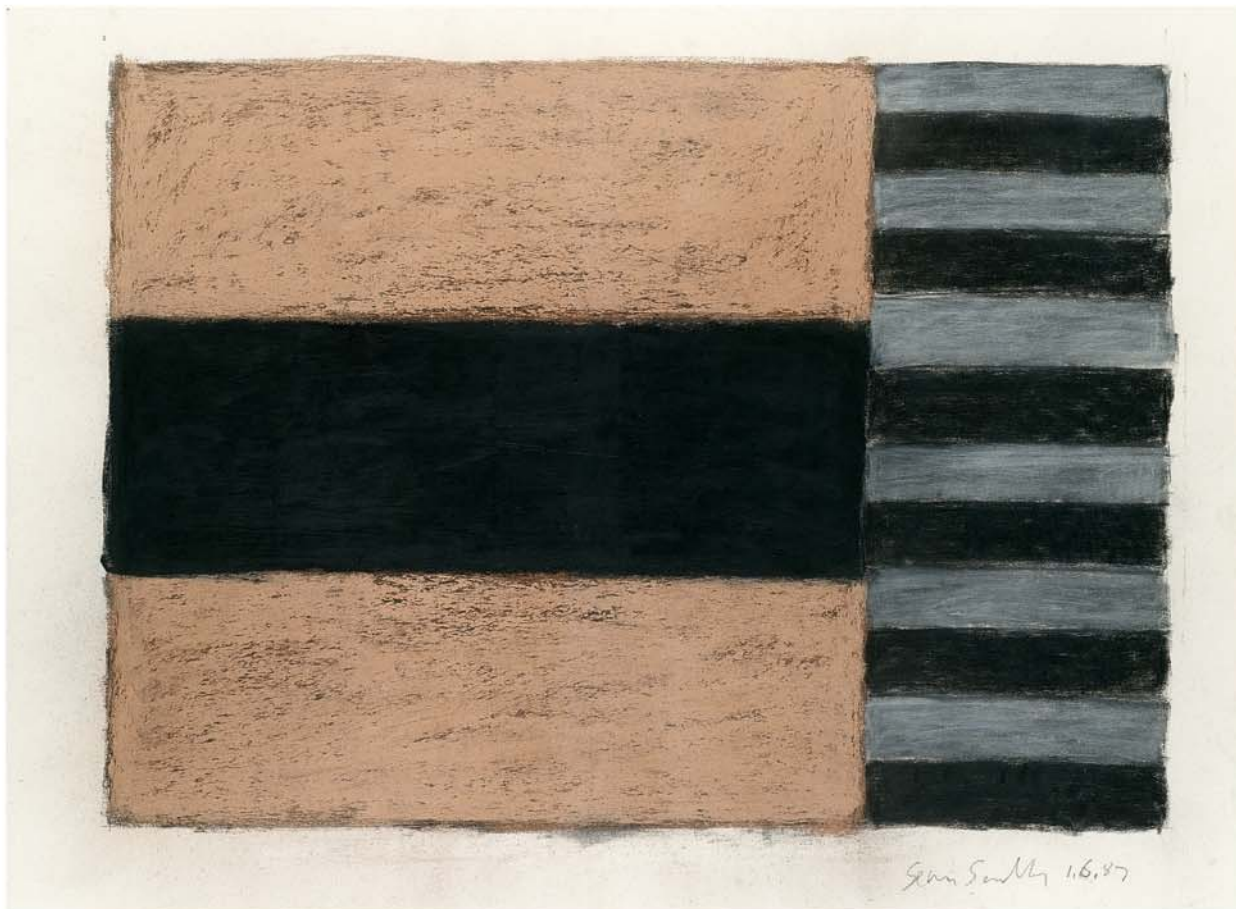
Catalogue launch and exhibition preview
Basement Gallery, Town Hall, Dundalk
Thursday October 4th 2007

Curator: Sally Timmons

Image courtesy: George Eastman House

the arts
council
of chomhairle
ealaíon





Modern and Contemporary Irish Art

AUCTION

LONDON, NEW BOND STREET
30 October 2007

EXHIBITION OPENS

25 October 2007

34-35 New Bond Street
London W1A 2AA

TRAVELLING EXHIBITION

DUBLIN - Royal Hibernian Academy
16 - 17 October 2007

BELFAST - Waterfront Hall
19 - 20 October 2007

ENQUIRIES

LONDON
Frances Christie
Grant Ford
+44 (0)20 7293 5575

DUBLIN

Arabella Bishop
Anne Dillon
+353 (0)1 671 1431

NORTHERN IRELAND

William Montgomery
Amanda Blackmore
+44 (0)28 4278 8668

www.sothebys.com

Sean Scully

Untitled (1.6.87)

Charcoal and pastel

Estimate: £25,000 - 35,000

€36,500 - 51,500

Sotheby's
EST. 1744

CATALOGUES & SUBSCRIPTIONS UK +44 (0)20 7293 6444 WORLDWIDE +1 541 322 4151



Ellen Gallagher, *Watery ecstatic* (2003), Watercolour, pencil, varnish and cut paper on paper, 69.8 x 102.9cm

Ellen Gallagher

Coral Cities

28 September 2007 – 20 January 2008

Dublin City Gallery
The Hugh Lane
Charlemont House
Parnell Square North
Dublin 1

t: + 353 1 2225550
www.hughlane.ie

OPENING HOURS
Tuesday – Thursday 10am–6pm
Friday & Saturday 10am–5pm
Sunday 11am–5pm
Closed Mondays



This exhibition is organised in collaboration with Tate Liverpool and a full colour publication, published by Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane and Tate Liverpool, accompanies the exhibition.

Ongoing

Sean Scully Room
Francis Bacon Studio
Permanent collection
Recent Acquisitions Series 2005–2007

PREVIEW BERLIN

THE EMERGING ART FAIR

28.9. – 1.10.2007

AIRPORT BERLIN TEMPELHOF
HANGAR2
COLUMBIADAMM 10
D – 12101 BERLIN

OPENING RECEPTION: SEPTEMBER 27, 2007 6 P.M. – 10 P.M.
SEPTEMBER 28 – OCTOBER 1, 2007
DAILY 1 P.M. – 8 P.M.

AUSTRIA: DANA CHARKASI, VIENNA. HOHENLOHE, VIENNA. **DENMARK:** LARMGALLERI, VALBY. VI, COPENHAGEN. **FRANCE:** ILKA BREE, BORDEAUX. CHANTIERS BOÎTE NOIRE, MONTPELLIER. **GERMANY:** ADLER, FRANKFURT/NEW YORK. ARTFINDER, HAMBURG. ARTMBASSY, BERLIN. ASPN, LEIPZIG. BAER, DRESDEN. BÜRO FÜR KUNST, DRESDEN. CURATORS WITHOUT BORDERS, BERLIN. DINA4 PROJEKTE, MUNICH. FÖRDERKOJE®, BERLIN. GALERIE5213, BERLIN. DAVIDE GALLO, BERLIN. HARTWICH RÜGEN, SELLIN. JARMUSCHEK UND PARTNER, BERLIN. ANNA KLINKHAMMER, DUSSELDORF. KRAMMIG & PEPPER CONTEMPORARY, BERLIN. KUNSTAGENTEN, BERLIN. KUTTNER SIEBERT, BERLIN. LADA PROJECT, BERLIN. LOOP – RAUM FÜR AKTUELLE KUNST, BERLIN. MARTIN MERTENS, BERLIN. METRO, BERLIN. NICE & FIT, BERLIN. BIRGIT OSTERMEIER, BERLIN. STEFAN RASCHE, MUNSTER. REALACE FINE ARTS, BERLIN. RUZICKA///WEISS, DUSSELDORF. ALEXANDRA SAHEB, BERLIN. MARION SCHARMANN, COLOGNE. SITEGALERIE, DUSSELDORF. TINDERBOX, HAMBURG. UMTRIEB, KIEL. EMMANUEL WALDERDORFF, COLOGNE. **GREAT BRITAIN:** DOMOBAAL, LONDON. ROKEBY, LONDON. KEITH TALENT, LONDON. THE INTERNATIONAL 3, MANCHESTER. **HUNGARY:** IMPEX, BUDAPEST. **ITALY:** KLERKX, MILAN. **NETHERLANDS:** ASCHENBACH & HOFLAND, AMSTERDAM. **SPAIN:** ADN, BARCELONA. MAISTERRAVALBUENA, MADRID. **SWITZERLAND:** ANNEX14, BERN. ARTREPCO, ZURICH. BERNHARD BISCHOFF & PARTNER, BERN. HAAS & FISCHER, ZURICH. RÖMERAPOTHEKE, ZURICH. **USA:** BANK, LOS ANGELES. CHUNG KING PROJECT, LOS ANGELES. PRISKA C. JUSCHKA FINE ART, NEW YORK. LYONS WIER ORTT, NEW YORK. MONIQUEMELOCHE, CHICAGO.

LAST UPDATED: 25.07.07

WWW.PREVIEWBERLIN.DE

INFO@PREVIEWBERLIN.DE

model :: niland
MODEL ARTS AND NILAND GALLERY

Gerard Byrne

28 July - 23 Sept 2007

Andy Warhol: The Factory 1963 - 1968

06 Oct - 22 Dec 2007

Andy Warhol: The Factory: 1963-1968 is a research partner in the Arts Council Touring Experiment. Organised by The Andy Warhol Museum and The Model Arts and Niland Gallery in collaboration with the Lewis Glucksman Gallery and Ikon.

Admission to Galleries is free of charge.

Model Arts and Niland Gallery
The Mall, Sligo
T +353 71 914 1405
F +353 71 914 3694
E info@modelart.ie

Gallery Hours:
Tues – Sat 10:00 am – 5:30 pm
Sun – 11:00 am – 4:00 pm

www.modelart.ie



ART
ISSIMA

14

FEATURING

THE

**THE INTERNATIONAL
FAIR OF
CONTEMPORARY ART
IN TURIN**

FUTURE

9 – 11 NOVEMBER 2007 – LINGOTTO FIERE

www.artissima.it / info@artissima.it

FONDAZIONE TORINOMUSEI ●

Regione Piemonte
Provincia di Torino
Città di Torino

Camera di commercio di Torino
Compagnia di San Paolo
Fondazione CRT

Main Partner
UniCredit Group – UniCredit Private Banking
Partner illycaffè

**MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY
GALLERIES**

A arte studio Invernizzi *Milano* • Martine Aboucaya *Paris* • Aidan *Moscow* • Air de Paris *Paris* • Albion *London* • Aliceday *Bruxelles* • Annex14 *Bern* • Applicat-Prazan *Paris* • Arndt & Partner *Berlin/Zurich* • Art concept *Paris* • Alfonso Artiaco *Napoli* • Baronian-Francey *Bruxelles* • Anne Barrault *Paris* • Guy Bartshi *Genève* • Catherine Bastide *Bruxelles* • Claude Bernard *Paris* • Bernier/Eliades *Athens* • Galleri Bo Bjerggaard *Copenhagen* • Marianne Boesky *New York* • Bortolami *New York* • Isabella Bortolozzi *Berlin* • Buchmann *Lugano/Berlin* • Luis Campana *Köln* • Carlier/Gebauer *Berlin* • Louis Carré & Cie *Paris* • Cent8-Serge le Borgne *Paris* • Cheim & Read *New York* • Chemould Prescott Road *Mumbai* • Chez Valentin *Paris* • ColletPark *Paris* • John Connelly Presents *New York* • Continua *San Gimignano/Beijing* • Paula Cooper *New York* • Cortex Athletico *Bordeaux* • Cosmic *Paris* • CRG Gallery *New York* • Chantal Crousel *Paris* • Christopher Cutts *Toronto* • Thomas Dane *London* • Monica de Cardenas *Milano* • Massimo de Carlo *Milano* • Di Meo *Paris* • Distrito Cudtro *Madrid* • Galerie Ditesheim *Neuchatel* • Dvir *Tel Aviv* • Frank Elbaz *Paris* • Estrany de La Mota *Barcelona* • FA Projects *London* • Dominique Fiat *Paris* • Enrico Fornello *Prato* • Jean Fournier *Paris* • Foxy Production *New York* • Galerie 1900 - 2000 *Paris* • Galerie de Multiples *Paris* • gb agency *Paris* • Frédéric Giroux *Paris* • Laurent Godin *Paris* • James Goodman *New York* • Marian Goodman *Paris/New York* • Karsten Greve *Paris/St Moritz/Köln/Milano* • Marat Guelman *Moscow* • Cristina

Guerra Contemporary Art *Lisboa* • Alain Gutharc *Paris* • Hauser & Wirth *Zürich/London* • Erna Hecey *Bruxelles/Luxembourg* • Henze & Ketterer *Bern* • Eva Hober *Paris* • Hohenlohe *Wien* • Hollybush Gardens *London* • Marwan Hoss *Paris* • Xavier Hufkens *Bruxelles* • I 20 Gallery *New York* • In SITU Fabienne Leclerc *Paris* • Grita Insam *Wien* • Catherine Issert *Saint-Paul* • Rodolphe Janssen *Bruxelles* • Jeanne-Bucher *Paris* • Juliette Jongma *Amsterdam* • Jousse Entreprise *Paris* • Annelly Juda Fine Art *London* • Iris Kadel *Karlsruhe* • KBK *Mexico* • Sean Kelly *New York* • Kewenig *Köln* • Johann König *Berlin* • Krinzinger *Wien* • Jan Krugier & Cie *Genève/New York* • Nicolas Krupp *Basel* • La B.A.N.K *Paris* • La Blanchisserie *Boulogne-Billancourt* • Galerie Lahumiere *Paris* • Yvon Lambert *Paris/New York* • Max Lang *New York* • Layr Wuestenhagen Contemporary *Wien* • Simon Lee *London* • Lelong *Paris/New York/Zurich* • Lisson *London* • Loevenbruck *Pariso Florence* • Loewy *Paris* • Luhring Augustine *New York* • Lumen Travo *Amsterdam* • Luxe *New York* • Maisonneuve *Paris* • Martinethibautdelachâtre *Paris* • Gabrielle Maubrie *Paris* • Hans Mayer *Dusseldorf* • Kamel Mennour *Paris* • Francesca Minini *Milano* • Motive Gallery *Amsterdam* • Nächst St Stephan Rosemarie Schwarzwälder *Wien* • Nature Morte/Bose *Pacia New Delhi* • Galerie Nelson-Freeman *Paris* • Noguerasblanchard *Barcelona* • Marco Noire *Torino* • Jérôme de Noirmont *Paris* • Nosbaum & Reding - Art contemporain *Luxembourg* • Nathalie Obadia *Paris* • Guillermo de Osma *Madrid* • Claudine Papillon *Paris* • Parker's Box *New York* • Françoise Paviot *Paris* • Emmanuel Perrotin *Paris* • Polaris *Paris* • Praz-Delavallade *Paris* • ProjecteSD *Barcelona* • Raster *Warsaw* • Almine Rech *Paris* •

Michel Rein *Paris* • Denise René *Paris* • Ronmandos *Amsterdam* • Thaddaeus Ropac *Paris/Salzburg* • Sonia Rosso *Torino* • Lia Rumma *Napoli/Milano* • Salvador *Paris* • Esther Schipper *Berlin* • Schleicher+Lange *Paris* • Natalie Seroussi *Paris* • Sfeir-Semler *Hamburg/Beyrouth* • Shanghart *Shanghai* • Pietro Sparta *Chagny* • Nils Staerk *Copenhagen* • Diana Stigter *Amsterdam* • Studio La Città *Verona* • Micheline Szwaajcer *Antwerp* • T 293 *Napoli* • Suzanne Tarasieve *Paris* • Daniel Templon *Paris* • The Breeder *Athens* • The Project *New York* • Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman *Innsbruck* • Tornabuoni *Firenze* • Patrice Trigano *Paris* • Tucci Russo *Torre Pellice* • Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois *Paris* • Van de Weghe Fine Art *New York* • Vedovi *Bruxelles* • Aline Vidal *Paris* • Nadja Vilenne *Liège* • Anne de Villepoix *Paris* • Nicola Von Senger *Zurich* • Waddington Galleries *London* • Michael Werner *Köln* • Max Wigram *London* • Jocelyn Wolff *Paris* • Xippas *Paris/Athens* • XL *Moscow* • Hiromi Yoshii *Tokyo* • Zero *Milano* • Zlotowski *Paris* • Martin Van Zomeren *Amsterdam* • Zürcher *Paris* • David Zwirner *New York*

DESIGN

Dansk Moebelkunst *Paris* • Dewindt *Bruxelles* • Downtown *Paris* • Eric Philippe *Paris* • Jousse Entreprise *Paris* • Kreo *Paris* • Seguin *Paris* • Ulrich Fiedler *Cologne* • Yves Macaux *Bruxelles* • Galerie Peyroulet & Cie *Paris*

Index 23/07/07

OCTOBER 18-22, 2007 GRAND PALAIS & LOUVRE PARIS.



Informations
Reed Expositions France
52/54 quai de Dion-Bouton
CS 80001 92806 Puteaux Cedex
France
T +33 (0)1 47 56 64 20
F +33 (0)1 47 56 64 29
E fiac@reedexpo.fr



Blue Wind 2006-07 Oil on Linen Mounted on Panel 81.3 x 101.6 cm (Image Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin NY)

Robert Bordo | 11 October - 17th November 2007

Rubicon Gallery Contemporary Art | www.rubicongallery.ie
10 St Stephens Green Dublin 2 Ireland t +353.1.670 8055

The Stinging Fly



New Writing, New Writers

The Stinging Fly has worked since 1997 to publish and promote the best new Irish and international writing.

Subscribe online: www.stingingfly.org

€20 per year (3 issues) €25 (ex-Ireland)



New Fiction, Poetry, Book Reviews, Essays, Author Interviews

national irish visual arts library

Public Research Library
of 20th Century
Irish Art & Design

National College of Art & Design
100 Thomas Street
Dublin 8
T: 01 636 4347

romanod@ncad.ie
www.ncad.ie/nival

the arts
council
s'chomhairle
ealaíon

nival
NATIONAL IRISH VISUAL ARTS LIBRARY



Corona Cork Film Festival

presents an exhibition

Sog by Patrick Jolley

Triskel Arts Centre
October 14 - 26

the arts
council
s'chomhairle
ealaíon



ifb
IRISH FILM BOARD
BOIRD SCANNÁN NA NÉIRSIANN

triskel

www.corkfilmfest.org

www.kerryfilmfestival.com

OCTOBER 27TH - NOVEMBER 3RD

Kerry
Film
Festival



© Image Paul Carrolotes

IMPORTANT IRISH ART

MONDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2007



Camille Souter ACHILL ROCKS AND REFLECTIONS 1959, estimate €20,000 -€30,000

AUCTION

Monday 17 September 2007 at the RDS Ballsbridge

EXHIBITION

at our galleries September 7-12; at the RDS September 15-17

CATALOGUE

€15 by post or view online at whytes.ie

ENQUIRIES

Jane Eckett or Sarah Gates info@whytes.ie

IRELAND'S PREMIER ART AUCTIONEERS

WHYTE'S
SINCE 1783

38 Molesworth St Dublin 2
01 676 2888 www.whytes.ie

ART TRAIL 2007

28 SEPTEMBER - 7 OCTOBER
SHANDON ~ CORK
www.arttrail.ie

SLOW SPACE FAST PACE

an exhibition of site specific work
curated by Rana Öztürk
and

Talk by **STEPHEN VITIELLO**

CORK DOCKLANDS ~ Seminar & Boat Tour

THEATRE OF TRADE ~ Art Market/Car Boot Sale

STEIM Mobile Touch Exhibition

Installations from **SALON BRUIT** (Berlin)

SHANDON CRAFT CENTRE exhibition of work

selected from open submissions

National Sculpture Factory '07 residents

Performance Art from **BBEYOND**

The QUIET CLUB concert

Exhibitions **SKART Posted 3**

Cork Film Centre **TENSION** / AILBHE / Emerging Artists

TRISKEL / BLACK MARIAH / TIGH FILI exhibitions

OPTICHRONODIN 3 Rooms

Cindy Cummings reflections from Shanghai

OPEN STUDIOS

WORKSHOPS Steim / Salon Bruit / Corringham & Kwi

for more information and to book places on workshops/events:

www.arttrail.ie - 085 7485705 - info@arttrail.ie



Matrixial Eros, Com-compassion and Artworking

One-Day Symposium

30th October 2007

Women's Studies Centre
NUI Galway

Bracha L. Ettinger

Professor Ettinger is an
internationally renowned artist
and contemporary French
psychoanalytical feminist
theorist.



Bracha L. Ettinger, *Woman - Other - Thing No.2*, 1990 - 1993

Griselda Pollock

Professor of the Social and
Critical Histories of Art;
Director of CentreCATH at
Leeds University.



National University of Ireland, Galway
Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh



Helen O'Connell

The Stone The Circle The Rhythm

14 September - 4 October 2007

Talbot Gallery & Studios

51 Talbot Street Dublin 1 tel/fax: 01 8556599
www.talbotgallery.com info@talbotgallery.com



Moon Lute 68cmx 36cm x100cm Portuguese marble

**ROGERCATTERMOLE NORMADEENIHAN
LISAFINGELTON JOHNHOLSTEAD
CONHORGAN KATHLEENODONNELL**

CURATED BY MAURICE GALWAY

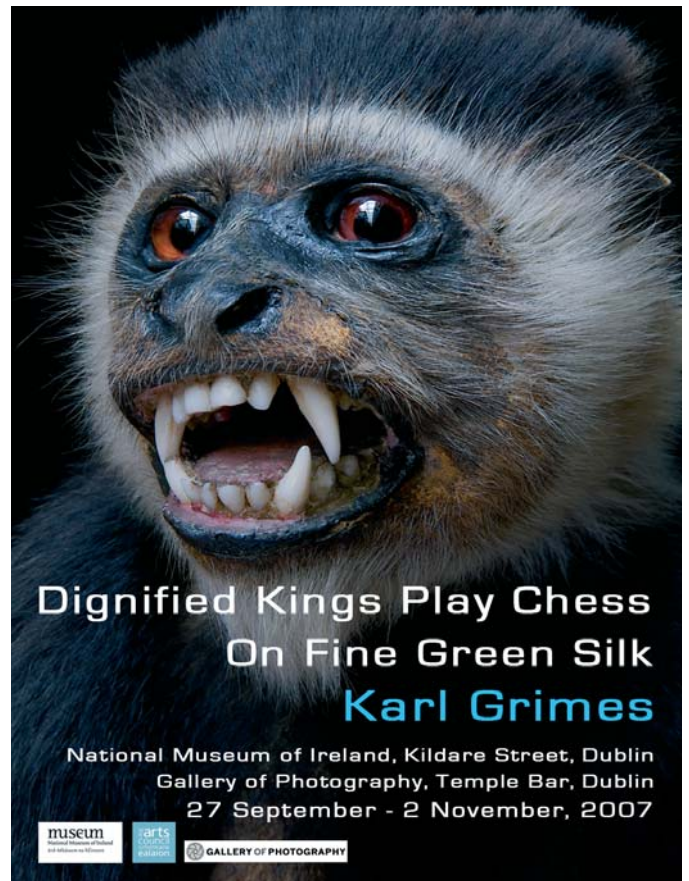


IN PURSUIT 2 2007

SEPTEMBER 5 - OCTOBER 10

CONTACT

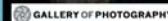
Ciaran Walsh, Visual Art Director
Siamsa Tíre National Folk Theatre and
Arts Centre Town Park
Tralee Co. Kerry
T: 066 7123055 F: 066 7127276
E: siamsagallery@eircom.net



Dignified Kings Play Chess On Fine Green Silk

Karl Grimes

National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin
Gallery of Photography, Temple Bar, Dublin
27 September - 2 November, 2007



Autumn/Winter Programme 2007



Competition Winners Jessica Mason and Peter Little's Horsebox awaiting Improvement From the 'Home Improvement Event'

Belinda Guidi
L'Eclisse

Venue: Shandon, Cork
Date: 28 September - 7 October

Former NSF Artist-in-Residence, Belinda Guidi will develop a large-scale public art intervention in Shandon as part of Art Trail 2007. She will wrap a building with a sentence or phrase (taken from a conversation in the film L'Eclisse) consisting of large-scale letters made from black plastic sheeting - the material used to wrap a building when in process of regenerating/re-structuring it. See also www.arttrail.ie

Holly Asaa

tap into sound for a prime mate
Venue: St. Anne's Church, Shandon, Cork
Date: 5, 6 & 7 October

Developed during her NSF residency earlier this year, Holly Asaa will present an interactive sound piece at the top of St. Anne's Church in Shandon from 5-7th October, as part of Art Trail 2007. The sounds will be recorded from the calls of the gibbons and other monkeys that live on and around the islands in Fota Wildlife Park, east of Cork City Centre. See also www.arttrail.ie

Do you speak art? (or where are you coming from?)
Globalisation and the 'International' Language of Art
Venue: Stack Theatre, Cork School of Music, Union Quay, Cork

Date: Saturday 3 November
10.30am - 5.30pm and 7.00pm (for Salon du Chat)
Cost: €20/€15 (NSF Member)

Today, globalisation affects almost all art practice on some level. This is evident through travel, research, exchange, residencies, economics, institutional relationships, and of course, the phenomenon of international showcase event-culture. This discursive event will explore how culture, and specifically visual art, is being impacted and mediated in the context of globalisation. Issues to be explored include the idea of an 'international style', cultural exchange and diversity v homogenisation, biennial culture and a look at the Irish context.

Speakers include Dr. Brigitte Franzen (curator for skulptur projekte münster 07), Caoimhin Mac Giolla Leith (writer/critic/curator), John Byrne (John Moore University and Static, Liverpool), Lucy Cotter (writer and critic) and Katie Holten (artist). The seminar will be followed by Salon du Chat, a social event involving discussion topics in the form of menus, set up to encourage focussed conversations and exchange. No chit-chat allowed! Presented in conjunction with CIT Cork School of Music & Hochtief.

Sarah Browne
Home Improvement event
Venue: National Sculpture Factory
Date: Thursday 22nd November
Time: 6.00pm

Winners of Sarah Browne's Home Improvement commission competition, Jessica Mason and Peter Little, will present their new home - a renovated horsebox. Their entry was chosen from a shortlist of three videos which were on exhibition earlier this year, in conjunction with the des/IRE conference at the Webworks building, Cork, and online on YouTube.Com (search for 'homeimpork').

NSF & VAI Professional Development Training for Artists see
www.nationalsculpturefactory.com/ff_training.html
for full programme

Films in the Mezz

Films from a Dark Room (dir. Peter Scherkassky) and Undressing Rly Mother (dir. Ken Wardrop)
Introduced by Isabelle Meerstein with special guest Ken Wardrop
Wednesday, 12 September, 7pm

L'Eclisse (dir. Michelangelo Antonioni)
Introduced by Belinda Guidi
Thursday 4 October, 7pm

For more information see
www.nationalsculpturefactory.com/program_current

nationalsculpturefactory

National Sculpture Factory, Albert Road, Cork
T +353 (0)21 431 4353 F +353 (0)21 431 3247
E info@nationalsculpturefactory.com W www.nationalsculpturefactory.com www.corkcaucus.org



POBALSCOIL CHORCA DHUIBHNE

Coimisiún Ealaíona Poiblí

Public Art Commission

Fáiltíonn an Bord Bainistíochta roimh mholtaí do phíosa ealaíona nuálach i gcomhthéacs na Pobalscoile nua thógtha i gCorca Dhuibhne.

BUISÉAD AN TIONSCNAIMH: €40,000

Áirithe anseo tá táille an ealaíontóra, ábhair déanamh na h-oibre. Costais obair suíomh agus a leithéid.

Dáta is déanaí do iarratais iomlán ná 16 Samhain 2007.

The Bord Bainistíochta invites proposals for an innovative artwork in the context of the newly built Community School in An Daingean, Co. Kerry.

PROJECT BUDGET: €40,000

(Artist fee, materials, fabrication and installation costs, etc.)

Submission deadline 16 November 2007.

EOLAS : INFORMATION

Maurice Galway Uas
Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne,
An Daingean, Co. Chiarraí
Ephost: mauricegalway@eircom.net



draíocht



Marcel Van Eeden, from the series, *The Archaeologist, The Travels of Oswald Sollmann, a Cycle of Drawings*, 2006
pencil on paper, 19 x 28 cm

Marcel Van Eeden
The Archaeologist, The Travels of Oswald Sollmann, a Cycle of Drawings.
7 Sep – 3 Nov 2007

Eamon Colman, William Crozier, Martin Finin, Darren Murray & Alison Pilkington
The Colour Fields
9 Nov – 12 Jan 2008

The Art of Botanical Painting
9 Nov – 12 Jan 2008

Artist in Residence
Maggie Madden

Draíocht, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15
Tel 01-885 2610 Fax 01-824 3434
www.draiocht.ie
Open Monday – Saturday, 10am – 6pm



ROYAL HIBERNIAN ACADEMY



Alice Maher, *Double Jigger*, 2007, charcoal on paper, 152.5 x 102 cms., Courtesy of the artist/ Green on Red Gallery, Dublin.

Alice Maher Bestiary

14 September - 28 October, 2007

ADMISSION FREE

RHA Gallagher Gallery, 15 Ely Place, Dublin 2. t: 01 661 2558
www.royalhibernianacademy.ie



In association with
THE IRISH TIMES

Beyond the Country
Perspectives of the land in historic
and contemporary art

26 October - 3 February 2008

GLUCKSMAN OPENING HOURS
Tuesday – Saturday 10 – 5pm
Late night Thursday until 8pm
Sunday 12 – 5pm
Closed Mondays

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
www.glucksman.org
info@glucksman.org
t: +353 21 4901844
f: +353 21 4901823

GLUCKSMAN

Ailéar Lewis Glucksman, Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh, Éire
Lewis Glucksman Gallery, University College Cork, Ireland

Clare County Arts Office presents

Not What You'd Expect

Irish Painting 1919 - 2007



detail from *Better Red Than Dead* Tim Bradford 2007 private collection

An exhibition spanning painting practice in Ireland,
Catalogue essay
by Catherine Marshall

**Courthouse Gallery,
Ennistymon, Co. Clare.**

T: 065 7071630

**3rd - 25th September
2007**

**Tues to Sun
1.00 pm - 6.00 pm**

Thanks to the Arts Council of
Ireland and Limerick City Gallery
of Art for the loan of works
from their collections

Curated by Fiona Woods

For information on gallery talks and artist workshops see
www.clarelibrary.ie/arts.htm

Castle²

**Ardgillan Castle
Balbriggan, Co. Dublin
7-30th September**

DERMOT BROWNE
GAVIN HOGG
CARA THORPE
BRIAN DUGGAN
SUSAN CONNOLLY
JOHN YOUNGE
KELLY RATCHFORD
ROBERT BAKER
PATRICK CASHIN
DECLAN GREANEY
BRIAN WALSH

Open to public: 11AM - 6PM.
Ardgillan Castle: 01-8492212



Leinster
Gallery

Soyoung Chung, Anna Konik, Tobias Sternberg
7 September - 27 October 2007

[C]Artography: Map-making as Artform
12 September - 10 November 2007

The AIB Prize 2006: Linda Quinlan
16 October - 15 December 2007

Crawford Open 2007
30 November 2007 - 9 February 2008

CRAWFORD ART GALLERY
Emmet Place, Cork
t +353 (0)21-4907855

e: crawfordgallery@eircom.net
w: www.crawfordartgallery.com
open: mon-sat 10am-4.45pm
admission free



BUTLER ■ GALLERY



BARRY MCGEE

Continuing until October 21st

YVONNE BUCHHEIM

November 3rd - December 21st

Opening Hours
September 10am - 6pm
Oct - Dec 10.30am - 12.45pm
2 - 5pm

The Castle, Kilkenny, Ireland
tel: + 353 (0)56 7761106
info@butlergallery.com
www.butlergallery.com

VOID

Mairéad McClean

21 August - 21 September

Matt Stokes

2 October - 2 November

Daniel Jewesbury

13 November - 14 December



Patrick Street, Derry BT48 7EL
Tel: +44 (0)28 7130 8080
Opening Hours: Tuesday - Saturday
11.00 - 5.00 Admission Free

West Cork Arts Centre



Cecily Brennan, still from 16mm film, *UNSTRUNG*, 2007

Everywhere is here

Arno Kramer

8 September - 20 October

An exhibition of recent drawings and a site specific work by this Dutch artist. The work will include abstract elements and animals in a flow or waterfall of colour.

Cadere

Cecily Brennan

27 October - 24 November

This exhibition is a series of video works exploring an interest in the precarious balances that exist between the human body and the mind. The title of the exhibition is taken from the Latin *to fall*.

West Cork Arts Centre
North Street, Skibbereen, Co. Cork
Tel: +353 (0)28 22090
Email: westcorkarts@eircom.net
Open: Mon - Sat 10.00am - 6.00pm
www.westcorkartscentre.com



ROYAL HIBERNIAN ACADEMY



Salla Tykkä, Zoo, 2006, 35 mm film still. Courtesy of the artist/ Yvon Lambert Gallery.

Salla Tykkä

Cave Trilogy

Irish premiere of *Zoo*

14 September - 28 October, 2007



ADMISSION FREE

RHA Gallagher Gallery, 15 Ely Place, Dublin 2. t: 01 661 2558
www.royalhibernianacademy.ie

SOLSTICE

Presented in association with Model Arts & Niland Gallery, Sligo and Triskel Arts Centre, Cork and is a research partner in The Arts Council Touring Experiment

Seán McSweeney

Retrospective

Thu 6 Sept - Thu 11 Oct



Shoreline Sligo (Seán McSweeney, 2000), oil on canvas 10 x 14 inches

A research partner in The Arts Council Touring Experiment

Brian Fay

Some Time Now

Fri 19 Oct - Fri 9 Nov



Solstice Arts Centre, Railway Street,
Navan, Co. Meath
Tel: 046 909 2300 Fax: 046 909 2305
Web: www.solsticeartscentre.ie
Email: info@solsticeartscentre.ie



comhairle chontae na mi
meath county council

describe
the perfect
artwork:

call
087 3256451

Projector Collective – 3
www.myspace.com/projectorcollective

FIRESTATION ARTISTS STUDIOS

Residential Studio Available from May 2008

Closing date for application Monday 1st October 2007 @ 4pm. The Fire Station has subsidised residential studios that provide self-contained, secure living and working spaces for professional visual artists. The studios are let for a period of between one year and two years nine months. International artists may apply for shorter periods. The subsidised cost of the studio will be 145 euro per week and this includes rent, utilities, waste disposal, parking, internet access, full use of high end computers and access at subsidised cost to digital equipment including digital still cameras, digital camcorders and mini disc recorder tripods and more.

There is no application form but artists should follow our guidelines as outlined on our website www.firestation.ie or email ciara@firestation.ie or phone: +353 1 8069015

Workshop Programme 2007

For information on our remaining workshops and master classes please visit our website: www.firestation.ie



Cavan Arts Office



Aoife Geary, 2006

Of Miracles and Men: 21st Century Icons
Maria Gkinala
Ramor Theatre, Virginia, Cavan
25th September – 13th October 2007

Alterity
Aideen Barry, Artist in Residence
Cavan County Museum
4th - 24th October 2007

Ualach Dosheachanta
Aoife Geary
Johnston Central Library & Farnham Centre
8th - 28th November 2007

Katarazyna Gajewskwa
Cootehill Library & Arts Centre
6th - 21st December 2007

Cavan Arts Office
Farnham Centre
Cavan
T 049 437 8548
E artsoffice@cavancoco.ie
W www.cavancoco.ie



ÁBHAR agus Meon Materials and Mentalities

An open exhibition of contemporary visual and performing arts exploring the negotiation, mediation and translation of things through the processes of art and archaeology.

6th World Archaeological Congress
University College Dublin - July 2008

Call for Submissions
<http://www.amexhibition.com>



Taispeántas oscailte d'ealaín ar ardáin agus de dhearc-ealaín comhaimseartha ag scrúdú an slí ina ndéanaimid plé, idirghabháil agus aistriú ar rudaí trí ealaín agus seandálaíocht.

An Séú Comhdháil Dhomhanda
Seandálaíochta
An Coláiste Ollscoile Baile Átha Cliath - Iúil 2008

Glaoch ar Aighneachtaí
<http://www.amexhibition.com>



Ábhar agus Meon, 6th World Archaeological Congress,
School of Archaeology, University College Dublin, Dublin 4, Ireland
(@) www.ucd.ie/wac-6 (@) www.amexhibition.com (e) info@amexhibition.com



Instituto Cervantes
The Spanish Cultural Centre in Dublin

Enjoy our culture

Enjoy our language

LEARN SPANISH

Come to Instituto Cervantes
Now in the city centre

Tel: (01) 631-1500 <http://dublin.cervantes.es>

CIRCA: TWO CRITICAL WRITING COMPETITIONS

Calling all (a) undergraduates and (b) transition year/year twelve students! We are looking for new writers who are fascinated by contemporary art and visual culture. What do we want? Either a review of an exhibition, or an essay on any topic relating to contemporary art or visual culture. The winning texts will be published on recirca.com

Details:

- (a) You are resident in the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland
- (b) You have not been published in Circa before, either online or in the magazine
- (c) You are writing about an art exhibition (up to 750 words) or an art- or visual-culture-related topic (up to 2000 words)
- (d) Closing Date: 31 January 2008
- (e) Submissions to editor@recirca.com or to our postal address.
- (f) Please state the course you are following and where.

Circa

43 / 44 Temple Bar
Dublin 2
Ireland
tel (+353 1) 679 7388
editor@recirca.com or admin2@recirca.com
www.recirca.com

AON ÁIT ANSEO ANYWHERE HERE

artists and interlocalism



Oct 29th - Nov 2nd 2007

Sarah Browne
Ben Geoghegan
Katie Holten

www.andrewduggan.org

www.visualartists.ie



Lismore Castle Arts



A collaborative exhibition featuring work from the Devonshire Collection and Rubell Family Collection
26th May - 30th September 2007

Lismore Castle Gardens and Art Gallery open daily: 11.00am – 4.45pm
Admission: €7 adult, €3.50 children. Group rates for groups over 20.
Friends scheme also available.

Lismore Castle Arts is committed to the presentation and promotion of contemporary visual art, providing art lovers from near and far with new, exciting and critically acclaimed exhibitions in the spectacular environment of Lismore Castle, Co. Waterford. For further details about exhibitions and events, or to register for our quarterly e-newsletter please visit www.lismorecastlearts.ie

Lismore Castle Arts, Lismore Castle, Lismore, Co. Waterford
Tel: +00 353 (0)58 54061 / Email: info@lismorecastlearts.ie



ANDREW DUGGAN DISLOCATE

Video Work NYC



The Gresham Metropole Hotel

Thursday 18th October

The Merrion Hotel

Thursday 8th November

www.thetouringexperiment.ie

www.location1.org/andrew-duggan/



Research Partner in the Arts Council's
Touring Experiment.



docklands

november 2007 - july 2008
dublin ireland www.bodycity.org



Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

CALL FOR ARTISTS

Open to Emerging and Established Artists

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust are currently constructing two new patient accommodation units, Killead (a continuing mental illness unit with 24 beds), Donegore (a challenging behaviour unit with 9 beds), and Moyola, a part new build and part refurbishment Day Care building, for people with learning disabilities at Muckamore Abbey Hospital, Co. Antrim.

The Trust recognises an opportunity to incorporate artwork into the buildings and wishes to commission artworks for the units on the theme of 'Transformation'.

Closing date for submissions of interest is 15th October 2007.

Artists may obtain further information by contacting Lorna McGrath, Assistant Project Manager, Muckamore Abbey Hospital, 1 Abbey Road, Muckamore, Antrim. Co. Antrim N. Ireland BT41 4SH. Tel 028 (048 from R.O.I.) 94 463333 Ext 2483.



Richard Gorman, Deux Glis, woodblock on toleagani, 97 x 67 cm



James McCreary, A Question of Balance, mixed media & aquatint, 16 x 18 cm



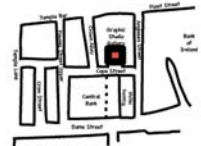
Lars Nyberg, Chicory, drypoint, 18.5 x 12 cm

GRAPHIC STUDIO GALLERY 2007

Kite
Artist: Richard Gorman
6th Sept – 6th Oct 2007

New Works
25th Oct – 24th Nov 2007
Artists: James McCreary and Lars Nyberg

Winter Exhibition
6th Dec 2007 – 5th Jan 2008



GRAPHIC STUDIO GALLERY
THROUGH THE ARCH
OFF COPE STREET
TEMPLE BAR DUBLIN 2

Opening Hours
Mon - Fri: 10 am - 5:30 pm
Sat: 11 am - 5 pm

T: +353 1 679 8021
F: +353 1 679 4575
E: gsg@iol.ie
www.graphicstudiodublin.com



IRISH ART 1947-1974 THE GREAT SOUTHERN ART COLLECTION



SEPT 25 - DEC 21, 2007

Regional Cultural Centre
Cove Hill, Port Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
Open Tues - Sat 11am - 5pm
T: +353 74 9121414

rcc@donegalcoco.ie
www.donegalculture.com



PUBLIC ART PROJECT PHOTOGRAPHER IN RESIDENCE

Oatfield Sweet Factory,
Letterkenny, Co. Donegal

Donegal County Councils Cultural Services Public Art Program welcomes submissions for a major public art project based in Oatfield Sweet Factory, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, funded by the Per Cent for Art arising from the construction of the N56 Mountain Top to Illistrin Road Realignment Project.

Details on www.donegalpublicart.ie
And Terre Duffy, Public Art Manager,
Donegal County Council
terre.duffy@donegalcoco.ie

DEADLINE FOR COMPLETED
APPLICATIONS IS
3RD OCTOBER 2007



²⁴ *Editorial*



I'm pretty sure it was Nancy Reagan, Ronald's wife, who popularised for a time the phrase "Just say no!" It was to be the solution to kids and drugs; I'm not sure it panned out.

There's a sound tradition in art of saying *no!*, not to drugs (specifically) but to aspects of life that artists have taken against. Perhaps the Salon des Refusés was the first major artistic example of no-saying (artists said *non!* to the Salon that said *non!* to them). It usefully illustrates the power of *no!*: the system (capitalism or whatever you like to call it) in the end downed the rejected works with a satisfied gulp, and the rest is art history.

So how do you make a *no!* that isn't just some other person's marketable stance. Think, for example of all the Che Guevarra posters, a fine example of protest turned to money. If he had struck a less photogenic pose, would we still know his name? The 'crisis of protest' is a topic that exercises many artists and art-theorists. In the February 2007 issue of *Art Monthly*, Chris Townsend writes on protest art. The moral bankruptcy of the invasion of Iraq is an immediate goad to artists, but we have little to show for it. And, warns Townsend, we must beware lest our art "aids rather than afflicts those powers we oppose because it offers the illusion of effective free speech and the right to protest."

That is perhaps the ultimate nightmare for the creator of protest art – that that art be somehow turned to the advantage of the perceived oppressor (think Che again, and what a useful merchandising hook his image is). Perhaps aware of the trap of unwittingly playing the oppressor's game, some artists have attempted to dream up rules of their own, to make work which is at right angles to just about everything. There are lots of examples of such art in the current issue of Visual Artists Ireland's *Printed Project*, edited by Kim Levin (no. 7, 2007). There's a humour and a franticness to a lot of the art and artists Levin has gathered, coupled with an apparent earnest desire in most instances to create something that can't readily be commodified, at least for a while.

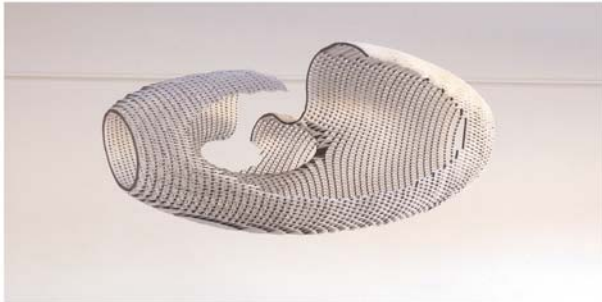
In this issue of *Circa*, Tim Stott looks at the difficulty in art of saying *no!* How do you beat a system in which creativity and flexibility are 'in', and where escape is a commodity? Stott manages to put forward a few potential solutions, if that is the right word. It would be exciting, if possibly very weird, to see them implemented.

The protest theme also finds expression in the works of Rita Duffy and Daniel García, written about here by Vikki Bell. It is unlikely that either artist expected their output to change society greatly, and so their work escapes the delusional levels of no-saying of the (now well defunct) avant garde. But their work is still effective protest, when it blocks the smooth erasure of past suffering. Protest informs Loren Erdrich's article here as well. She writes about Janine Antoni, Jenny Saville and Catherine Opie. The artists have transgressed bodily boundaries – usually their own – exploiting the sense of the monstrous or uncanny to generate their own *no!* within the semiotics of gender.

But all is not negation. We carry an article by Eimear McKeith on the Burren College of Art. Even writing its name, I am aware that the College's staff and founders have gradually naturalised what would on the face of it seem a bizarre or impossible undertaking: the provision of high-standard, third-level art education cheek by jowl with Clare's grykes and clints, weather and gentians. This issue also contains a critical round-up based on this summer's Degree Shows around Ireland. Time, space, availability, not to mention the odd gremlin, mean that many Degree Shows are under- or not represented. For this my apologies. However, what *is* here is a slice of the very exciting new art that is exiting our art colleges.

Read on!

LEITRIM
St. George's Terrace, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim
T. 071 - 96 50 828 E: info@thedock.ie W: www.thedock.ie



Robert Carr, part of the *Discussions in Contemporary Sculpture* curated by Mark Garry.

September 7 - October 12

Discussions in Contemporary Sculpture, curated by Mark Garry.

Featuring Karl Burke, Robert Carr, Charles Matson Lume, Norman Mooney, Paul McKinley, Christophe Neumann, Jenifer Phelan, Martha Quinn, Robin Watkins and Nina Canell.

October 19 - December 1

Adrian Paci 'Apparizione'
Fionna Murray 'A Real Corner of the World'
Yvonne Cullivan 'A Staggering 10 Million'

Ongoing

Robin Whitmore Dream Diary



Wim Wenders's *Land of Plenty*

FILM IRELAND

Taking film seriously
since 1987

www.filmireland.net

JOURNAL OF RECORD

Circa has been in continuous publication for 26 years and is the record of contemporary art in Ireland. Make sure you are included in this record by advertising here!



For details on advertising
please contact Jennie McGinn

Circa
43 / 44 Temple Bar
Dublin 2
Ireland
tel (+353 1) 679 7388
jennie@recirca.com
www.recirca.com/adverts

Dear Editor,

I am writing in relation to the review of *Based on a true story* by Treasa O'Brien in the spring edition of *Circa*. The article had many factual errors, which of course leads to misrepresentation and misinterpretation of both the project as a whole and of the roles of the partners involved. It also means that many interesting aspects arising from a project are left unaddressed.

Public clarification of information was very much tied to the conceptual concerns of the project. A statement laying out all facts and deliberate misinformation pertaining to the seminar on 27 January was posted on the web and e-mailed to all who attended the seminar – including the writer – two days after the seminar. Thus it is difficult to understand the writer's creation of 'false facts'.

I realise that writing about live-art or project-based work is not as straightforward as writing about

other forms of art. It is important for the writer to be adept at discerning issues surrounding live-art and project-based practice, as opposed to object-based work, to avoid superficial reportage of art events/projects.

A reviewer must be au fait with obvious criteria related to the particular artform, even when the artform does not exist within commonly definable boundaries – understanding processes specific to the relevant artform translates into important 'information'. Experience and engagement – further to the above criteria – are necessary factors in reviewing a participatory live-art project. *Based on a true story* was very much an interactive/participatory piece of work. Preceding the seminar, the audience were engaged via e-mail, forums, website and interviews screened on both the website and monitors on UCC campus. Interviewees and seminar speakers became audience as well as participants or, as called in the project, 'players'. The seminar part was very much constructed to draw participation from all, and included the use of a swinging microphone. By omitting this aspect in the review, the writer overlooked an integral part of the overall project. The considerations present or neglected within the process by which the

artwork evolves are also important 'information'. Unfortunately the writer could not arrive at this point as what was reviewed was a limited selection of the overall project and at that, a misfactual account.

The conversation that ensues from a project like *Based on a true story* is very much a part of the life of the project. Yet this conversation is only valid when it is specific to the project that actually happened and not to a limited account of part of the project, distorted by factual error, as was the case in the article in question.

Niamh Lawlor, artist
www.based-on-a-true-story.com

List of errors in Circa review of the project Based on a true story by writer Treasa O'Brien

"...and is part of a wider research project of the artist Niamh Lawlor." This was not a research project but an art project; the research element is but one aspect of it.

"...interviews with experts from various fields (mostly academic), on display in UCC the week of the seminar." The interviews were mostly with others from outside the university, with different backgrounds – purposely so.

"...and other not-as-good-liars such as Robert Slattery..." There was no

one by the name of Robert Slattery involved in the seminar, neither attending nor speaking. I think the writer was referring to Raymond Scannell. Again, all this information was and is available on all material relating to the project.

"... was actually an actress." No. Ema Thompson was not an actress hired for the day. She did pretend to be me, but I purposely did not choose an actress; she is a dancer and choreographer, thus coming from a different art discipline. An interview with her is available under *seminar reactions* on the website confirming these details.

(response overleaf)

C Letters

Dear Editor,

The review was based on the 'seminar' for the most part, as I was asked to review it, particularly, and I treated it as an artwork, a live artwork in a way. The wider practice and process of the artist was not my remit. However, I did put the artwork in context of other similar projects (see page 96, last paragraph). Some specific responses:

- In accordance with the commission given to me, I treated the seminar as an artwork in its own right, which I made explicit when I referred to it as "...an artwork 'using the format of a seminar'". My basic expectation of any artwork is that it can stand alone in a complete manner, but it is also valid to say that this particular artwork is part of Niamh Lawlor's wider research on the subject.
- I did not write that the experts or academics were all from UCC or that they were from the same backgrounds.
- I unintentionally wrote an incorrect name in lieu of

Raymond Scannell – 'Robert Slattery' is the unfortunate result of misreading my own handwriting of notes that I took at the seminar and a correction to this is appropriate.

- Ema Thompson was present to perform as Niamh Lawlor for the day, so as far as I'm concerned she was performing as an actress.

As the reviewer, my interpretation is valid, whether or not one agrees with it, and it is futile for the artist to try to control this interpretation. There is no such phenomenon as 'misinterpretation' by a reviewer – all interpretation, by its meaning, must be subjective.

Treasa O'Brien

C Update

Four artists for north/south initiative

The artists have been chosen for the Curated Visual Arts Award. This is a new initiative of both Arts Councils in Ireland; it involves an invited curator and two venues, one in Northern Ireland, one in the Republic. For this year – hopefully there will be other years – the curator is Mike Nelson, the venues Void, Derry, and the Douglas Hyde, Dublin. Nelson has invited Brendan Earley, Bea MacMahon, Conor McFeely and Factotum to present work.

Clients unnerved by Arts Council decisions

'Regularly Funded Organisations' (RFOs), a new categorisation of some of the clients of The Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon, are those in a favourable position regarding annual funding from the Council: they get to propose three-year plans, and they hear the outcome of their applications well in advance of other organisations. To a considerable extent, they are – or were up until early July – the envy of those other organisations. In early July RFOs were informed of their funding levels for 2008. The almost-universal 3.4% increase caused much consternation. It seems the logjam is upstream, first of all at the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, and further up at the Department of Finance. It seems everything hangs on the forthcoming government budget for 2008, and it has to be hoped that the new Arts minister, Séamus Brennan, has clout at the government negotiating table.

A few winners

- Louise Butler is the winner of the painting prize offered by *Circa* at *Art 2007*. Her name was pulled from the hat by Tom Coughlan, General Manager of the Irish Baroque Orchestra.
- The winner of the *Circa* postcard competition is Krista Leigh Steinke. Our thanks to the almost 400 artist who submitted works, much of it of a very high standard (details at www.recirca.com/artnews/552/postcard.shtml)
- The Irish American Cultural Institute has awarded Dublin-born artist Kathy Prendergast with their O'Malley award, valued at €5,000.
- Gillian Lawler has taken this year's RHA Annual's main monetary prize, the Hennessy Craig Scholarship valued at €12,000.
- Another Dublin-based artist, Sonia Shiel, has won this year's Tony O'Malley Travel Award. The award, linked to Kilkenny's Butler Gallery, is in the amount of €2,600 euro, and is for a specific travel proposal put forward by the artist; Shiel plans a period of study at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.
- In this year's RDS Student Art Awards, the Taylor Art Award of €20,000 was split among Ceri Garfield, Sam Keogh, Clive Moloney and Harriet Tahany. The RC Lewis-Crosby Award for Painting (€3,150) went to Fiona Burke, the Freyer Award (€1,500) to Alissa Kleist, the RDS James White Arts Award (€3,150) to Róisín Morris, the RDS Printmaking Award (€3,150) to Sarah Duffy.

CityArts move to foot-tapping location

CityArts is a visual-arts organisation which seems to float in and out of the awareness of Dublin's art-going public. That liminal status is set to change, as CityArts has acquired a four-storey-over-basement location on Bachelor's Walk, in the heart of the city. The location was formerly the Ha'penny Bridge Gallery antique shop. Next door is the Drum Depot; should keep the rhythm flowing.

Two Circa critical-writing competitions

Calling all (a) undergraduates and (b) transition-year/ year-twelve students! We are looking for new writers who are fascinated by contemporary art and visual culture. We want either a review of an exhibition, or an essay on any topic relating to contemporary art or visual culture. The winning texts will be published on recirca.com Full details are on p21 of this issue.

Subscription discounts

In partnership with those organisations, *Circa* is now able to offer discounted subscriptions to students, members of VAI, Friends of IMMA, and Friends of the RHA. We are hoping to expand the scheme to take in other organisations. Please see our discounted rates on the bookmark with this issue, or online at recirca.com/subscribe/

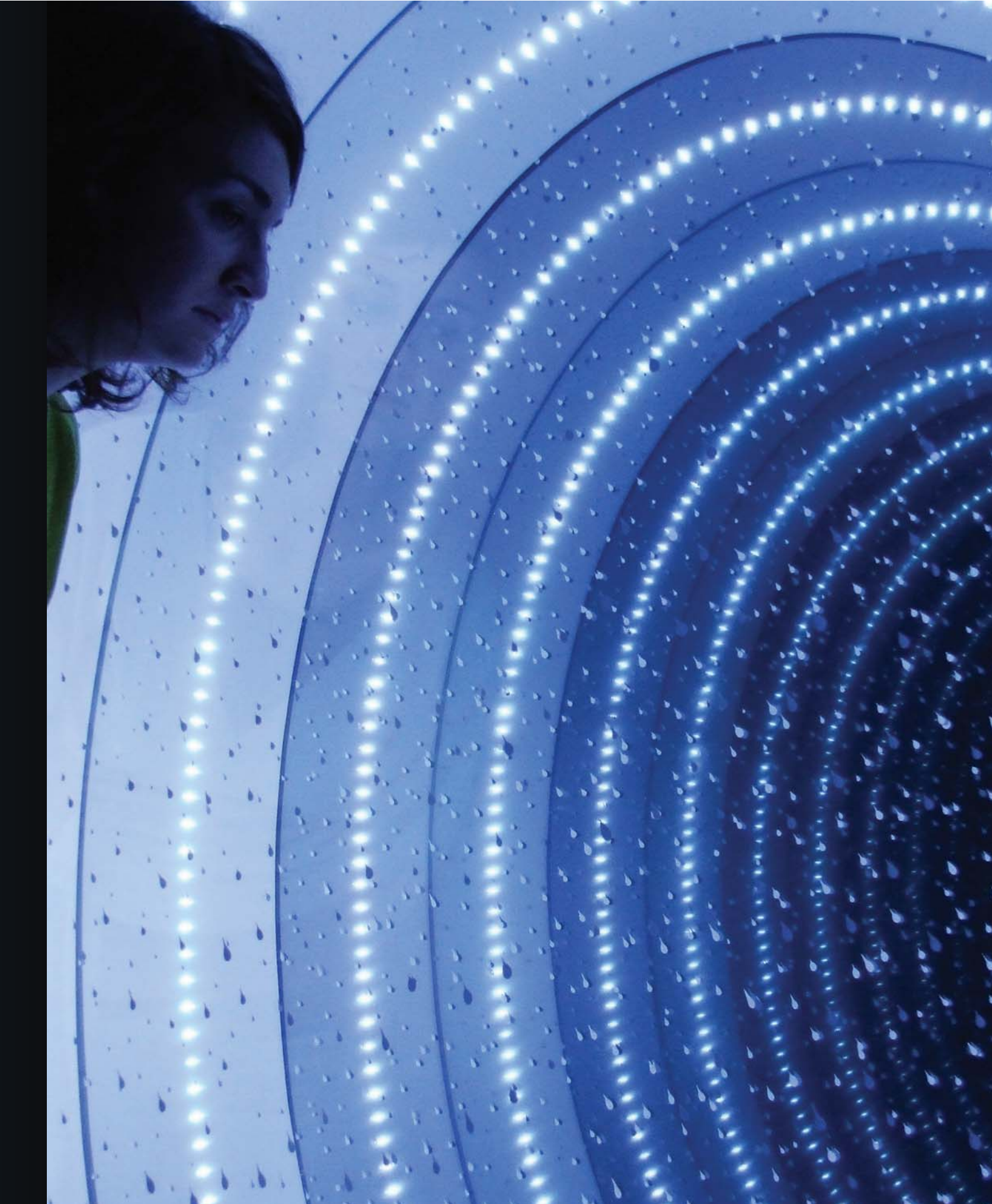
Now on Board

We are delighted to say that Brian Redmond, who has a long history of assisting cultural organisations, has joined the Board of *Circa*.

Degree shows: Critics' choices **32** | *I am a monster: The indefinite and the malleable in contemporary female self-portraiture* **Loren Erdrich 43** |
Not saying no: Perverts, melancholics and Bartleby **Tim Stott 50** |
Paint and politics: Between Argentina and Northern Ireland **Vikki Bell 57** |
To the waters and the wild: The Burren college of art **Eimear McKeith 64** |

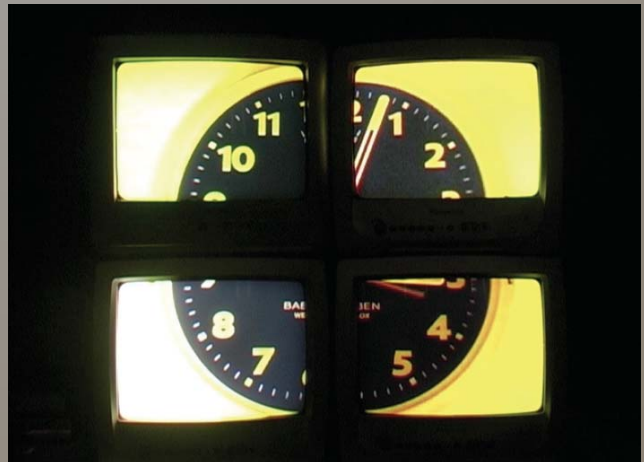
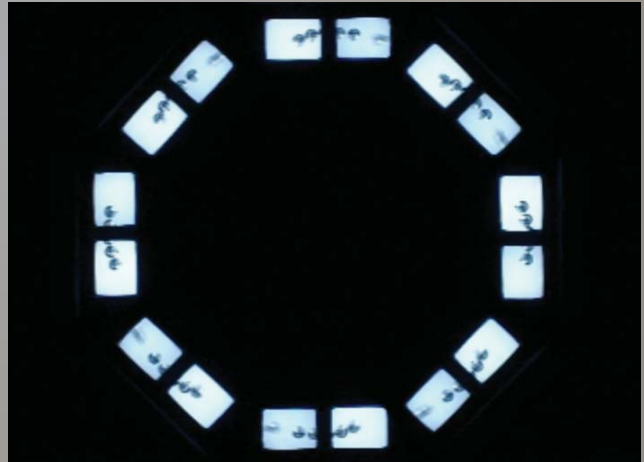
(opposite)
Deirdre McKenna
from MFA exhibition
University of Ulster, 2007
courtesy the artist

C



DEGREE SHOWS: CRITICS' CHOICES

Circa engaged a number of writers to pick their favourites from some of this year's degree shows.



ROBERT FOSTER
CRAWFORD COLLEGE OF
ART AND DESIGN
DEGREE SHOW

The first time I saw Robert Foster's video works, they weren't turned on. However, I was still aesthetically engaged by the arrangement of TV sets piled up on top of one another, turned on their backs and suspended from chains.

When I returned the next day, my leap of faith was rewarded, as I discovered an intelligent playfulness and a sensitivity to the physics of video.

In one installation, a pendulum seemingly swung through three TV sets suspended on a swing-like construction – reminding me of the formalism of Steve's Reich's *Pendulum music* – something seen as regular and repetitive that actually slows down with time until it ebbs to a standstill.

A sense of visual rhythm was also present in a floor projection, where a metal ball set another in motion and these were repeated in a circular formation that echoed the physics of a clock.

In another assemblage, three TVs were used as 3D objects in themselves – one on the ground depicted footage of a bass pedal being pressed by a foot; the waist-level set showed a drumstick on a snare.

To the upper left, a set with screen facing up illustrated a drumstick on cymbals. A stool in front and a pair of headphones invited the viewer to listen to the drum beats that match the video footage, whilst sitting in drummer

position. This pseudo-drumkit was a nice surprise, but in some ways the 'interactivity' was so simulated that it rendered the 'participant' useless/ limbless and the sense of inability to engage with the virtual drum overrode the entertainment aspect – an oblique reference to TV culture and passive engagement.

In the other corner, a diverse range of TV sets from different eras were piled up on top of each other, reminiscent of Douglas Gordon's presentation of selected works in Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona last year. The material portrayed was mundane and self-referential; the visual snow of some TVs was like abstract paintings, others exposed the workings of TVs and timers. Essentially, the technology employed became the subject.

Robert Foster's influences seem to be from minimalist art and music rather than cinema or performative video. The artist uses video as a sculptural material rather than a 2D one. This is especially refreshing in an art college show, where so often video works can be lo-fi narcissistic projects, or documents of performance art, where I'd rather experience the live work. These video works re-establish video as a form worthy of exploration in itself.

Treasa O'Brien

FIONA FULLAM
CONFINEMENT
INSTITUTE OF ART, DESIGN
AND TECHNOLOGY,
DÚN LAOGHAIRE
DEGREE SHOW

Fiona Fullam's constellation of five short films gives plenty to suggest that the old association between confinement and subjugation continue. In the midst of suburban humdrum, a darkly banal correlation between the feminine and the insectile unfolds: both are 'foreign bodies' under observation, sharing a customary invisibility within the domestic scene. But confinement also initiates metamorphosis, as the chrysalis does for the larva.

Fullam digs a hole for herself as though turning mulch. Her internment complete, as if by sleight of hand a sudden bristling array of busyness begins. ("His numerous legs... danced helplessly before his eyes," Kafka writes of Gregor Samsa.) Approaching the creaturely demands a gradual loss of that all-too-human relation to the world, suggesting that creatures might become present in all their strangeness and singularity, without being forced to dance their keep on the human stage.

Restored to visibility, Fullam's creatures almost become subjects. Almost, but not quite, because their strangeness does not diminish the closer one looks (much like ourselves). Deferring the assumption of intimacy, or worse still, identification, allows these films to maintain a potency that might be otherwise resolved in the rich tradition of entomological emblems and allegories. In her proximity to these creatures, Fullam returns only their naked, refracted gaze that has knowledge without acknowledging: such 'inhumanity' makes her films modestly cinematic.

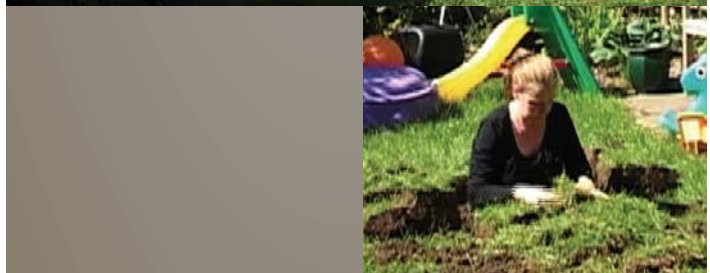
"Zoopoetics means more than according animals a meaning. It means letting animals in on meaning, even allowing the animality of meaning." (Steve Connor) Also, it means allowing the creature to arise from the human, without pathology, pathos or fear, and not without humour. This Fullam does by effecting a rare parity of scale between insects, crustaceans and humans; escaping, just for a moment, the see-saw politics of diminution and enlargement. One might see in Fullam's work traces of an as yet little-imagined ento- or indeed crustaceo-poetics.

Tim Stott is a lecturer at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin, and the Dublin Institute of Technology.

[below]
 Fiona Fullam
from Confinement
 Degree Show, IADT, 2007
 courtesy the artist

[opposite, left]
 Kevin Cosgrove
Survey, 2007
 oil on canvas
 120 x 145 cm
 from National College of Art
 and Design Degree Show
 courtesy the artist

[opposite right]
 Sarah Kenny:
 from National College of Art
 and Design MFA show, 2007



**KEVIN COSGROVE
NATIONAL COLLEGE OF
ART AND DESIGN
DEGREE SHOW**

Amidst energetic display strategies and the various gimmicks of exhibiting, it seemed to be the artists who stripped away these frills who stood out the most at this year's NCAD degree shows. The days when parts of the graduate shows were held at spaces such as the RHA are to be lamented, for while it is always good to snoop around the corridors and studios of Thomas Street, there is something unfinished about the sense it gives to what were, in the majority of instances, excellent presentations. This is unfair to artists whose work merited more than the somewhat limited conditions of display. In parts, of course, the rough-and-ready feel of each space gave an edge to the work, but too often the ad hoc atmosphere limited work that deserves better. Context, of course, is everything – and it will be good to see many of these artists' works in different contexts in the coming months and years.

Print was a particularly strong department, with Nessa D'Arcy and Niamh Dunphy standing out in my mind but, to focus on a single artist, Kevin Cosgrove from the Painting course is well worthy of continuing attention. Cosgrove's subject matter ranges from urban scenes (workshop and workplace interiors, dark streets, cityscapes), to rural settings (scenes of adventure, zzzbravery, man in and against nature). What stands out, alongside the atmosphere each discretely painted world evokes, is the handling of space and of paint. Is there something 'old fashioned', or perhaps more accurately 'unfashionable' in Cosgrove's painted explorations? Perhaps so, but that – to me – is something to applaud. Against current trends for the anti-aesthetic, the uncrafted, the often content-free contemporary work, coming upon the paintings of Kevin Cosgrove made me look forward to a future, fully realised exhibition of his work.

Gemma Tipton



**SARAH KENNY
NATIONAL COLLEGE OF
ART AND DESIGN
MA SHOW**

Further up Thomas Street from NCAD, the Digital Hub is the kind of space we need more of in Dublin. In contrast to the often cramped feeling one experienced in the BA presentations, the exhibition space here is one of those 'found' spaces where contemporary art can breathe and thrive. This end of Thomas Street is continually being targeted by various architectural masterplans, usually including luxury apartments, glossy offices and public plazas; and one can only hope they continue to fail until finally someone realises that slightly decrepit industrial spaces are worth preserving too.

In the large open hall of the Hub, each artist graduating from the MA course constructed their own environment. Projections, installations, floor pieces, and yes, works on paper – all seemed to be equally well served by the space. Commanding my attention was an installation that echoed my own dismay at how this place, this area, this city – this whole country in fact – is changing. Sarah Kenny's work consisted of panels of text, flanking a video work in which a female voice declaimed a catalogue of the things that "fuck her off." By turns funny, angry, resigned, sad, vulnerable, strident, general and particular, there was a raw energy to the work which confronted the viewer with its intensity. These monologues were works in progress, for Kenny died while they were still being created, leaving an edge to the work, perhaps, in the mind of the viewer.

Turning away to explore the other installations, the insistent voice still drew me back. Art can transport you into other worlds, can distract, can uplift, but underpinning my musings here was that sense of hardly suppressed rage from an artist who saw through many of the myths we buy into, myths that may be steadily destroying the city.

Gemma Tipton



ALYSON EDGAR
UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER
DEGREE SHOW

You go and see a degree show, you make your notes, and then some weeks later it's time to write your piece. Well, as you start to hunt for your notes, which by now have somehow migrated to the pile of scrap paper in the kids' playroom, and you begin to try and decipher your notations and try and recall that journey through the studios up and down stairwells and so on, an image begins to re-insinuate itself, to assert itself. Something that has stayed with you. A kind of postcard, a snapshot.

36

Alyson Edgar's body of work tenaciously laid claim to its place in my image memory of the UU Fine Art Degree show. In the University building foyer, her car sits in a corner quite comfortably. Not at all out of place any more. Small cars just get everywhere these days, don't they? We are used to seeing them up on ramps in malls. So it sits there. A little French car, the kind that gets nicked from Belfast carparks and ends up burned out somewhere on the dark sides. Closer inspection reveals the car to be a kind of chronicle, a kind of journal, or sketchpad. Traceries of what has been seen through the window are drawn onto the windows. An exercise in documentation in transcription in translation in illumination. Travel writing, diary. As though the car has a memory and has internalised the images. Well, externalised them, as they are drawn on the windows.

In another space, Edgar documents her expansion of the notion of recording journeys into a collaborative activity. Disposable cameras are arranged in vitrines with the

bundles of images they have taken. These cameras have been sent out to record journeys and they have been sent to document their own journeys. There is something of the blog space about this. The space to which you send your digital images to share them with friends and the world. Wall maps show the point of origin, the journeys and the returns. A kind of expedition, then, the very personal experience of the image impinging on the eye played out on a global scale. Something epic emerges from this highly specific, focused and subjective process.

There is another aspect to this process. Not only is it a drawing to the surface of the photo, or the surface of the window, of the image of remembrance. It is also a means of projecting that image back onto the outside world, of reframing and redrawing the world seen through the image. Pleasingly complex then and pleasingly executed with a fineness of touch and delicacy that seems to just about hold onto the gossamer or fleeting image and fleeting memory. Really rather beautiful.

David Hughes is a writer
who publishes at
www.macwh.net/bridger

Alyson Edgar
[below left]
Archive : 2005-2007

[below right]
installation: car with
drawings, 2007
Warwick Building Foyer

University of Ulster
Degree Show, 2007
courtesy the artist



AIDAN O'SULLIVAN
LIMERICK SCHOOL OF ART
AND DESIGN
DEGREE SHOW

Aidan O'Sullivan's final year painting degree show at Limerick School of Art and Design is loud with the actions of the brute and the echoes of the brutalised. According to O'Sullivan, "the paintings represent the socially deviant potential of painting" and, exercising this potential, he daringly constructs scenarios that fill in some of the implied horrors of fairytale, leaving monsters rampant in the space between the canvas and the viewer.

In *Beauty's sleep*, a flaccid penis droops from the single window of a Rapunzel-style tower (the fate of the maiden and that of any devoted princes waiting patiently below, decidedly miserable) while a light beaming from the upper floor of another Grimm castle in *The Hotel where you raped me* may read as a desperate signal or the radiance of a rhapsodic moment.

The paintings' literary titles, extracts from Vladimir Nabakov's great transgressive novel, *Lolita*, are cleverly married to images, indulging O'Sullivan's excesses and exaggerations.

Collected on one wall, a harem of pale-faced women with big hair-dos and even bigger eyes stare, distracted, from their prisons. Some are cruelly trapped behind rudimentary frames (assembled in haste, lest the subject escape?), others, bound only by the limits of their canvases, recline and pose, the captive queens of another's imagination.

And yet, despite the atrocities, an undertone of almost-innocence, the suggestion of a kind of pubescent discovery of sexuality (that struggle between embarrassed revulsion at the crudeness and stupidity of the physical body and the rapture of the sexual experience), manifest in a comic clumsiness, succeeds in saving the viewer from the truly hideous.

A careful balance of wit and outrage, this thoughtful and mature selection of work marks the end of an academic passage for an exciting and accomplished young artist whom, one suspects (and very much hopes!) we will be seeing a lot more of in future.

Ciara Finnegan is an artist.

Aidan O'Sullivan
The Bird hunter
oil on canvas with wooden frame
Limerick School of Art and
Design Degree Show
courtesy the artist



SARAH O'BRIEN
NATIONAL COLLEGE
OF ART AND DESIGN
MA SHOW

Damp conditions are perfect for the spread of fungi. On our bodies and in our buildings, the war between bacteria and fungi wages; it is a good war, a necessary war as it allows us to flourish in their wake. Sometimes when a fungus or other microbial lifeform takes over, its proliferation is frighteningly beautiful. Spreading across the wall of a dilapidated mansion or creeping across the ceiling of a crumbling whitewashed cow shed: the pinks, the greys, the silky peaches. In the presence of these organisms, one is truly aware of the presence of the 'other'. Their coral brightness is both exotic and familiar; sometimes it is difficult to tear your gaze away. Sarah O'Brien seems to do so only to look to the heavens, her gaze swings from a microbial wonderland to a fantastic infinity as the creeping colours are blasted into orbit. Then come the Star Wars and satellites, interstellar space and dust and other cosmic visions. In so doing, the artist has wrenched our gaze from the fungus above to the cosmic frieze on the walls of her allotment. The battle theme has continued throughout the Digital Hub as the fruits of all of the artist's labours vie for our attentions. In O'Brien's drawings, the splashes and hashes seemed to evoke that rough and tumble; perhaps this is why they spoke to me when I viewed the NCAD graduate show. Or perhaps it was the familiarity of fungi and constellations. A fungus might take over the corner of

a drawing room on Henrietta Street or the base of a great horse-chestnut tree in the Phoenix park (and in this case it could be mushroom-like), mildew may colonise your bathroom cabinet or scatter itself through a dusty blanket in a shed somewhere. At the Digital Hub on Thomas Street, it has been a part of the exhibition.

Sinéad Halkett

38

Sarah O'Brien
The glory and the halo, 2007
site-specific drawing
installation
National College of Art and
Design MFA Show, 2007
courtesy the artist



DEIRDRE MCKENNA
UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER
MFA SHOW

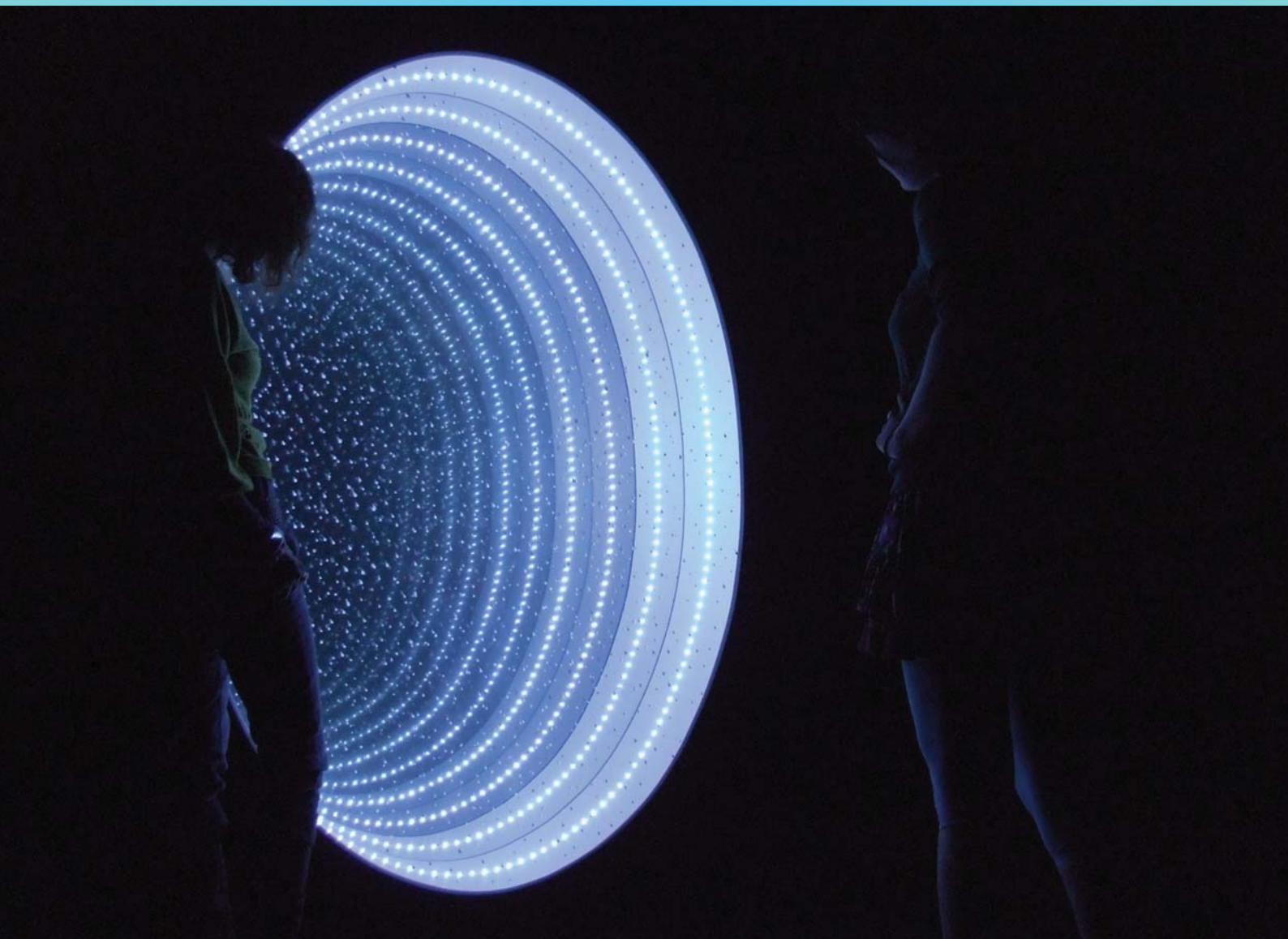
I have selected Deirdre McKenna's installation for its visual power, beauty and integrity. Behind the dark curve of the entrance, a life-size almond shape flickered and changed its centre in response to my repositioning in front of it. We made several dozens of compositions between us. Above my head, on my right, a murmur of silver light in the shape of a bird watched silently over us. Elegance, simplicity, poetry – the words came simultaneously as if rejecting any hierarchy. How was it made, I asked. The artist emailed me: "... I began with wanting to make a painting that felt like some kind of strange poetic landscape stemming from a journey I took to a place called Valentine in Nebraska, USA. I think what you want to know is how I constructed it. The piece is made up of three parts: the back panel is a sheet of mirror (with painted drop forms) that sits flush with the wooden

Slavka Sverakova is a
writer on visual art.

[below]
Deirdre McKenna
from MFA exhibition
University of Ulster, 2007
courtesy the artist

framework. The wooden frame creates the oval shape and houses the LED lights. The front panel is made out of a sheet of glass that has been painted with drop forms. The glass has a sheet of security film stuck to it... The optical illusion will only work if the space outside of the oval is darker... The image of the bird was created out of an old mirrored brooch in the shape of a swallow; what was visible was a reflection of that with the use of a directed LED light."

In the Croatian Pavilion in Venice, 2007, I saw a 'drops' installation by a graphic designer, Ivana Franke. Latency was responding to Carlo Scarpa's architecture and the 1960s New Tendencies. McKenna responds to the hidden order of painterly imagination.



JENNIFER KIDD
DUBLIN INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY
DEGREE SHOW

Susan Thomson is an artist and writer, currently pursuing an MA in Visual Arts Practices at Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology.

[below]
Jennifer Kidd
Untitled, 2007
DVD stills
Dublin Institute of Technology
Degree Show, 2007
courtesy the artist

40

A day at the beach. Two Plasticine girls in identical olive-green dresses, large paper-blue eyes, sharp black eyebrows and black operatic hair buns, big mitten or boxing-glove hands, rock up in their red car. One starts to shed a great many Bluetack tears. They fight. The other hits her over the head with a brick murder weapon which resembles a jam sandwich just as much. Plasticine blood spews out. They fight some more. A burial in the sand takes place, reminiscent of play burials as children, then more shedding of blue tack tears over the grave and a half self-burial. The killing of the sibling rival or the alter-ego or the same-sex lover: the animation alludes to all of these in the merger of identities, like some kind of co-dependent nightmare. As well as this two-screen video, stop-motion animation, the installation features a sand tray covered in Plasticine models of the girls, laying bare the stages of the creation of an animation and also alluding to Jungian sand play or a twisted Zen garden. In one corner lies a pile of broken bodies, in another four rows of the identical girls, this time faceless, soldiers or automatons who have lost their identities. In the rest of the sand tray, different stages of the action are all laid out with numerous Plasticine girls, the scenes acted out spatially this time rather than sequentially. The whole tray is a mind map, with one Plasticine figure not in olive-green but in a red dress, perhaps an attempt to claim an identity different from the other. A teenage beach rewrite of Genet's *The Maids*, the sheer proliferation of the olive-green girls on the sand tray is itself sinister and humorous. In the video, the girls at one point drive off, one with bloodied head, cigarette in mouth, either resurrected or an alternative ending, or tale told by the Unconscious. In the sand tray, there is a mound as if a Plasticine body has been buried, so that even in this depiction of the Unconscious, there is a suggestion of more buried beneath the surface.



SARA O'GORMAN
UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER
DEGREE SHOW

Slavka Sverakova is a
writer on visual art.

[below]
Sara O'Gorman
installation shots
University of Ulster Degree
Show, 2007
courtesy the artist

Three white stud walls framed a rectangular floor with circular shapes inserted. The circles were mid-bass woofer speakers amplifying modified recording of the former ballroom floor as used during the term. My response became quickly positive and empathic until the point I felt slight nausea and discomfort increasing with each short sound. My imagination insisted that the things, the inanimate objects, were in fact alive; the sound became their breathing, sighing, the floor somehow curved towards the middle of the grid of circles, the walls adopted the role of white-coated surveillers. I hesitated to step in on what looked a wobbly floor, between the vertical walls that were ready to close over me. The hesitation between what is real and what is not is one of the conditions for the fantastic.

Sara O'Gorman cites two sources for this work: an essay by Sigmund Freud, 'Das Unheimliche' ('The uncanny') and Antony Vilder's 'The architectural uncanny' (1992). Vilder thinks that the uncanny is "a mental state of projection in which the boundaries of the real and unreal start to wobble." Freud defines uncanny as "that class of

frightening which leads us back to what is known of old and long familiar." On re-reading his essay, I zoomed on his idea of a shared quality between the 'heimlich' and 'unheimlich', the familiar and the uncanny, namely *concealment*.

The fantastic in the concealment forges a double of art practice in the world. The installation conceals the known loss of the aesthetics of ballroom dancing as well as the fear of an unknown degradation of a nuanced sublime art. The two are connected to partition walls familiar from corporate spaces. Claiming identity and authority, the familiar is completely empty.



CHRISTOPHER J CAMPBELL
UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER
MFA SHOW

Christopher J Campbell's video installation, *Desolated myth (end of)*, you could say, is camp. There's a certain excess here, a certain revelling in the outlandish. Cocktails seem to tinkle on the shelves and bars. It's a cross between a beach bar and a film stage. There is a great deal of vivid green paint that suggests chroma-key, where images shot against the green background would then have the background colour taken out and another image substituted. One of the tricks of the trade that engineers simulacra, but simulacra of things that never existed in that combination.

42

Much of this installation is populated by models and toys and small boxes. Little spotlights illuminate. There are two frames here. There is the outer frame which incorporates the entire range of stuff, and there is the implied frame which is what the camera will focus on, the mise en scène. Two brackets then. There are trailing wires and half-painted props, but we know that when they are framed in the camera lens they will seem complete,

David Hughes is a writer
who publishes at
www.macwh.net/bridger

[below]
Christopher J Campbell
Desolated myth (end of), 2007
video installation
University of Ulster MFA Show
courtesy the artist

perfect, finished. There is a strange coexistence of scale here. There are the model-scaled objects, props and toys, and there are the human-scaled areas that contain them. The green paint is ubiquitous, suggesting the presence of the maker, the director, and of course we are cast in the space. We are viewed by those behind us, we cast those beside us.

A complicated space then, and a space that tells us something about the POV of the maker. The implied director is down there manipulating the micro for the benefit of the implied lens and it arranges the studio space for us to choreograph ourselves. We can see the entire process; even the elements hidden on film are visible to us. There is a kind of determination behind it all. A kind of wisdom. A kind of knowledge. A kind of paranoia. A deconstruction of stage, of scene, of the apparently perfect and finished. A deconstruction of the process of the cinematic lie. The rhetoric of the cinematic sign.



I AM A MONSTER: THE INDEFINITE AND THE MALLEABLE IN CONTEMPORARY FEMALE SELF-PORTRAITURE



Janine Antoni
Saddle, 2000
full raw hide
cast of artist's body
66.04 X 83.82 X 200.66 cm
courtesy the artist and Lühring
Augustine, New York

Undeniably there exists a certain fascination with the monstrous in contemporary self-portraiture. Contemporary artists, such as Janine Antoni, Jenny Saville and Catherine Opie, explore issues of selfhood from a vantage point immersed in postmodern theories of fragmentation and discourse. The willingness of these artists to employ imagery of the grotesque has resulted in a new order of self-portraiture seemingly at ease with imagery typically considered both disheartening and frightening.

As I will argue, there is a direct connection between the realm of the monstrous and the visual language of the indefinite. It is my belief that by specifically using such language, much of contemporary self-portraiture seeks to expose the West's reliance on clearly defined boundaries for the maintenance of order. Thus by producing images that are independent of life's widely accepted categorical divisions, artists may refuse the confinement and restraint that normally results from demarcations of difference.

At the outset it is necessary to investigate the contemporary relationship between the physical body, identity and the self. Treatment of the body/ self dilemma in the postmodern era has necessitated a dramatic shift away from the domination of seventeenth century thinker Descartes. According to Descartes, a self was a certainty, comprised of rational thought and entirely distinct from the body and the body's sensations. Thinkers of the twentieth century, however, have proposed a subjectivity in which subject and object are no longer completely divorced from each other. Theorists such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida have insisted, "The concept of a fictional unitary Cartesian/Enlightenment self should be replaced by a notion of the self as fragmented, unstable, decentred and constructed by discourse."¹ The self, in this view, is at the mercy of language and the social discourses of politics, religion, family, education, etc.

Foucault was one of the first to recognize the importance of discourse in the formation of the accepted truths of human nature. In *The Order of things* he notes the fickle nature of fact, claiming that "both truth and the human subject that knows truth are not unchanging givens but are systematic differential productions within a network of power relations."² Thus meaning is proposed to be conditional, both knowingly and unknowingly manipulated to make human behavior both more understandable and more controllable to those in relationships of power.

The work of psychoanalyst Lacan is often sourced to theorize a subjectivity contingent on discourse. Lacan conceived of a subject as "not self-knowing and self-constituting, but rather the result of processes that construct it through language and through relationships to others and the Other."³ As Lacan notes, "What determines me, at the most profound level, in the visible, is the gaze

from the outside."⁴ This theory is apparent in Derrida's own recognition of the self as generated by the individual's perception of the difference between her/himself and others within a particular system, and thus never fixed or determined but forever shifting.⁵

What has the advent of postmodernism done then to the contemporary relationship of the self to the body? The Cartesian notion of the body as a shell for the self has not relinquished its hold easily. Christine Battersby, in her contribution to *The Journal of philosophy of the visual arts* titled 'Her body/ her boundaries: gender and the metaphysics of containment', discusses the still prevalent tendency to compare the body with a container. She cites Mark Johnson's *The Body in the mind*: "Our encounter with containment and boundedness is one of the most pervasive features of our bodily experience. We are intimately aware of our bodies as three-dimensional containers into which we put certain things (food, water, air) and out of which other things emerge (food and water wastes, air, blood, etc)."⁶ According to Johnson, the universal experience of embodiment shapes the imagination, so that while cultural differences superficially affect the way meaning is encoded and transformed, the core schemata of the imagination remain the same for all.

Similarly, George Lakoff in *Women, fire and dangerous things* assumes universal recognition of the concept: "everything is either inside a container or outside of it." For example: one wakes *out* of a deep sleep, one looks *in* the mirror to see their face staring *out*, objects come *into* and go *out* of sight, etc. Thus according to Lakoff, our grasp of the law of Boolean logic – of 'P or not P' – is grounded on our experience of being embodied selves. One's ability to categorize relies on the human experience of embodiment.⁷

Yet feminist theorists and artists have long found container imagery inadequate, seeking more appropriate images to describe the ways in which they inhabit their bodies. Battersby recalls Luce Irigaray's belief that "identities based on spatial containment, substances and atoms belong to *masculine* imagery, and what is missing from our culture is an alternative tradition of thinking identity that is based on fluidity and flow."⁸ As Marsha Meskimmon states in *The Art of reflection*, "Masculinist knowledge systems, or epistemologies, have operated through strict binarism... Thus we understand 'ourselves' in opposition to marginalised 'others'.⁹ The focus on binarism has left no room for the symbolization of a self existing via *interpenetration* with otherness, thus hampering the development of models of identity that would treat the indefinite and the transitive in their own right.

And yet, as Battersby notes, the privilege given to solidity and fixity in the West is no longer a certainty. Mathematician Henri Poincaré's work at the turn of the twentieth century has led to scientific models conceiving of matter not as homogenous, but as containing an infinite number of singularities understood to emerge under certain, specific conditions.¹⁰ In these models, forms are understood not as fixed things, but as temporary stopping points within an infinite flow of possibilities.

We may note then a clear parallel between Elisabeth Grosz's definition of the body and this new mathematics. According to Grosz in *Space, time and perversion: essays on the politics of the bodies*, the body itself is nothing but "organically, biologically 'incomplete'; it is indeterminate, amorphous, a series of uncoordinated potentialities that require social triggering, ordering, and long-term administration."¹¹ Thus, the boundaries of the body may be thought of as event-horizons, in which one form (self) meets its potentiality for transforming itself into another form or forms (the not-self).

Yet historically in the West there exists an undeniable propensity to treat areas of ambiguity and the indefinite with fear. In *No go the bogeyman*, Marina Warner identifies a link between the domain of the monstrous and that of the undefined. Warner notes that it was not until the fourth century that the notion of bodily integrity in the afterlife entered into Christian doctrine; only after this point did the notion of a unique and embodied identity for each human being become central to Christian ideas of personhood. We may therefore better understand the cannibalism practised by the creatures of Satan's hell as the "preferred and potent metaphor for the obliteration of the self that is the fate of sinners... the damned are trapped in a perpetual cycle of metamorphosis without closure."¹²

In addition, consider Mary Douglas' *Purity and filth* and her study of the functional role of both purity and filth within an orderly society. Douglas draws a parallel between 'filth' and 'ambiguity', as both are seen to run counter to order. In accord with Douglas' work, Julia Kristeva notes in *Powers of horror* that filth is regarded as a danger only where lines of structure are clearly defined. It is not a lack of cleanliness that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, and order and what does not respect borders, positions, and rules.¹³ Thus Kristeva's notion of the abject resides specifically in the in-between, the ambiguous, and the composite.

Yet, as women's bodies are innately transformative, ie menstrual discharge, the ability to bear another life within their own body, and the capability to change shape during pregnancy, many theorists have sought more constructive means of addressing this inherent capacity

for metamorphosis. Elaine Graham, Betti Marenko, and Donna Haraway have begun looking at grotesques, monsters and hybrids as the framework for identities understood in terms of partiality and patterns of flow. The potential of these forms lies distinctly in their boundaries; they constitute a threat to the existing system precisely as their shapes continually mutate. In this manner the monstrous and grotesque may be extolled for the very reasons they are treated with trepidation and disgust.

JANINE ANTONI

It is not a question of being of attaining a definite status as a thing, a permanent fixture, nor of clinging to, having an identity, but of moving, changing, being swept beyond one singular position into a multiplicity of flows
Elizabeth Grosz¹⁴

Sigmund Freud used the term *uncanny* to describe a particular category of aesthetic or life experience that produced anxiety by "leading back to what is known of old and long familiar."¹⁵ In her book *Over her dead body: death, femininity and the aesthetic*, Elizabeth Bronfen, summarizing Freud, notes that the source of uncanny experiences lies in the "compulsion to repeat, to re-present, double, supplement; in the establishment or re-establishment of similarity; and in a return to the familiar that has been repressed." Thus the uncanny is present in "situations of undecidability, where fixed frames or margins are set in motion...where the question whether something is animate (alive) or inanimate (dead), whether something is real or imagined, unique, original or a repetition, a copy, cannot be decided."¹⁶

As Anne Raine notes in her essay *Embodied geographies: subjectivity and materiality in the work of Ana Mendieta*, the 'double', a figure either identical or somehow interchangeable with the self, produces a particularly unsettling example of the uncanny as it involves a blurring of the boundaries between self and other. Furthermore, the double necessarily establishes a split or gap between the double and the self, undermining any attempt to see the self as whole and intact in the double image. Thus the feeling of uncanniness stems from the recognition that these doubles are somehow both the extreme opposite of oneself and yet the same as oneself.¹⁷

To make *Saddle* in 2000, Antoni took a fresh cow rawhide and draped it over a fibreglass figure cast from herself on hands and knees. After the rawhide hardened and shrunk, Antoni removed the cast leaving only its impression in the hide. Raine's essay on Ana Mendieta may again be of use here to understand the power of this piece. Raine writes that a work's sense of uncanniness may result from the "ambivalent interplay between establishment/ unsettling of boundaries and presence/ absence of the body."¹⁸

By freely acknowledging her integration with the animal, Antoni reduces both the metaphoric and physical space between the two disparate elements. Indeed as Nancy Princenthal writes in 'Janine Antoni: mother's milk', *Saddle* brings together a range of apparent oppositions: privacy and exposure, protection and abuse, internal experience and its external register, and animation and mortality.¹⁹ Adding to this list the distinction between animal and human, *Saddle* may thus be viewed as a hybrid on many levels. Noting again Kristeva's definition of the abject, it is Antoni's lack of respect for borders and clear distinctions that makes *Saddle* monstrous. Slipping easily from one aspect to the other, she is able to root herself firmly in opposing forces, calling into question the impenetrability of each category.

CATHERINE OPIE

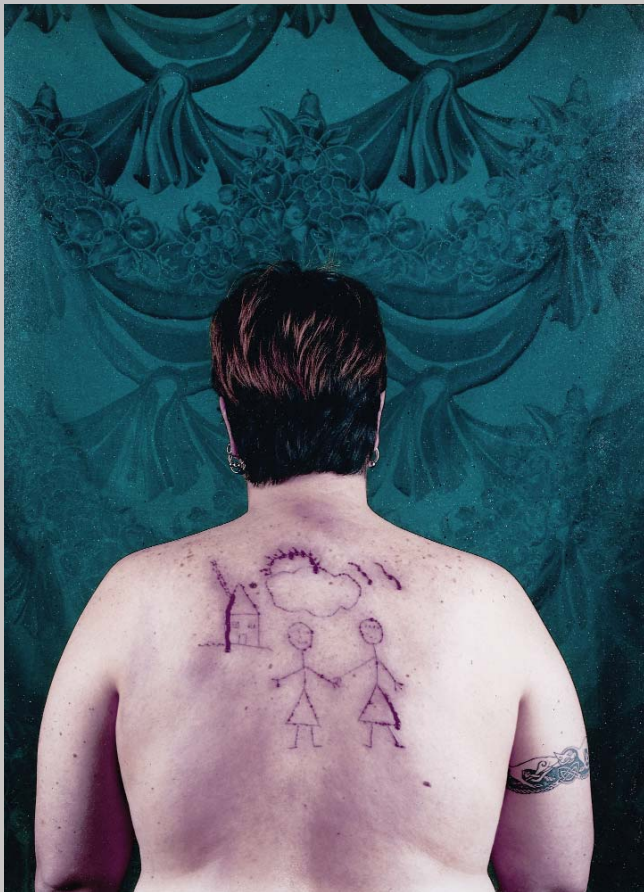
In a chaos of shifting impressions, each of us constructs a stable world in which objects have recognizable shapes, are located in depth and have permanence. In perceiving we are building, taking some cues, rejecting others. The most acceptable cues are those that fit most easily into the pattern that is being built up. Ambiguous ones tend to be treated as if they harmonized with the rest of the pattern. Discordant ones tend to be rejected. It gives us confidence the more consistent experience is with the past, the more confidence we can have in our assumptions. Mary Douglas²⁰

Catherine Opie is one of the many artists of today working from a stance that defies existing categories. In *Self portrait/ cutting*, she presents herself shirtless with her back to the camera. A stick-figure drawing of two women holding hands in a bucolic setting has been freshly cut into her back. In *Self portrait/ pervert*, she presents herself, in a leather hood, with twenty-eight eighteen-gauge needles in her arms and the word 'pervert' etched in elegant script into her bare chest.

By seeing the body as both a symbol of society and as a miniature theatre where threats to the social structure are performed, food, excrement and sexual activities become keys to transgressive symbolic systems because they traverse the external boundaries of the body. As Douglas writes, "We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolize its specially vulnerable points. Matter issuing from them is marginal stuff of the most obvious kind. Spittle, blood, milk, urine, faeces or tears simply by issuing forth have traversed the boundary of the body."²¹

According to Kristeva, it is no surprise then that the body's border between inside and outside remains heavily policed, precisely because it is ambiguous, indeterminate. The disgust felt at bodily excretions is an example of a typical response to borderline elements. Perhaps this is why pictures of Opie having voluntarily drawn her own blood and punctured her own skin, many times over, are met with such a mixture of horror and fascination.

Betti Marenko, in her article 'A self made freak: hybridizations and bodies in transition', says, "The monstrous body condenses in its own features the unspeakable face of the abject, the prime terror of the other," thus being the body against which a culture comes to define its own criteria of normality.²² Yet malleable bodies, carved, pierced or modified, offer "an extremely resilient surface that bounces back every attempt to be forced into a classification, to be pigeon holed within a pre-fixed taxonomy, to be constricted in the cage of binary logic."²³ It is in this light that Opie's work asks us to re-evaluate our perceptions of difference, and our tolerance towards its expression. She emphasizes the existence of alternative choices in order to investigate the structures and truths of a society.



[above left]
Catherine Opie
Self Portrait/ Cutting, 1993
chromogenic color print
100.65 x 76.04 cm
courtesy Whitney Museum of
American Art, purchase with
funds from the Photography
Committee 94.64/ Gladstone
Gallery

[above right]
Jenny Saville and Glen Luchford
Closed contact #10, 1997
C-print mounted in plexiglass
243.8 x 182.9 x 15.2 cm
courtesy Gagosian Gallery

JENNY SAVILLE

The peculiarity of the organic monster is that s/he is both same and other. The monster is neither a total stranger or completely familiar; s/he exists in an in-between zone.

Rosa Braidotti²⁴

The human or animal body is the subject of this art, and indeed it is its carnality, its cumbersome physical presence. It is a body exhibited without containment an abstract body that confuses its own wounds, dipping into its own blood to draw a picture on the borderlines. It is a figure in a state of decomposition which, fading in and out, reads a story in precarious balance between the lifelikeness of the subject and the acid corrosiveness of the pictorial language.

Danilo Eccher²⁵

In Jenny Saville's paintings, massive figures seem to fight against the confines of the canvas. Though the majority of Saville's paintings contain figures based on her own image, they have more in common with Cindy Sherman's body of work than with traditional self-portraits. Still, as she is an artist that utilizes her own image to explore notions of excess, it is difficult to separate Saville from her works of art.

Calling upon the writing of Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian literary theorist, Marsha Meskimmon notes the link between the concept of excess and the carnivalesque body. To Bakhtin, "carnival represented the space in which sharp boundaries between bodies could be less fixed or even removed...Identities normally fixed by social rules could be temporarily dislodged...The critical notion in carnival is the excessive body, the body which surpasses strict limitation. These are multiple, mass bodies, bodies not defined clearly as 'individual' or even as separate and whole."²⁶

In many ways, Saville's bodies are carnivalesque bodies. See, for example, *Hyphen*, which portrays the heads of two young girls. The heads appear melded, as if sprouting from the same set of shoulders. The figures inhabit a space in which they are not amenable: they fight against their confinement and erupt out of and within the space.

Part of the power of Saville's images, as Simon Schama notes, "is the retained intimacy of inside/ outside, whether it's actually genitalia or extruded, beaten up, pulpy faces. There's always the sense of exposed interior."²⁷ Collecting images of surgeries and damaged, bruised physiques, Saville has come to understand the boundary of the body

as both damageable and adjustable. She uses paint as if it is flesh, sculpting it as if she is a surgeon; the flesh-coloured paint she applies is distinctly bound to the physical half-inch thickness of actual flesh encompassing the body.

In the sixteen photos of the *Closed contact* series (created in conjunction with photographer Glen Luchford), Saville is seen from beneath lying naked on a glass table. As Meskimmon notes, "this technical device makes Saville's body press and distort against the glass in such a way as to blur the expected borders around the body of a female nude. Her body appears much larger and as though it overflows the frame."²⁸ In the photographs, Saville is practically unrecognizable; her skin appears pliable and grotesque. Physical clues such as nipples and belly buttons appear, yet they appear in the wrong places. Once again the viewer faces the uncanny, the body is simultaneously foreign and completely recognizable.

If tales of the grotesque and the aberrant invoke an ideal of normal practice and expected categories, then the paintings of Jenny Saville force us to question the designations of beauty in relationship to the grotesque. As society readily defines its norm, the reversal or rejection of prescribed roles is treated with fear. Saville's images of the monstrous may be seen as a mirror reflecting deep assumed attitudes and cultural conventions.

Order implies restriction; from all possible materials, a limited selection has been made and from all possible relations a limited set has been used. So disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realized in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite. This is why, though we seek to create order, we do not simply condemn disorder. We recognize that it is destructive to existing patterns; also that it has potentiality. It symbolizes both danger and power.

Mary Douglas²⁹

As I have discussed throughout this article, the relationship between contemporary self-portraiture and realm of the monstrous is determined by Western society's relationship to the malleable and the indefinite. The connection appears as follows: if the post-modern self feels a kinship to the malleable and the indefinite, and if the malleable and the indefinite are considered characteristic of the grotesque and the monstrous, then the postmodern self may easily, and understandably, feel a kinship with the grotesque and monstrous.

Repercussions of this shift towards a self considered both composite and variable are visible across many disciplines, present in women but by no means restricted to one segment of the population. This article has specifically looked at the manner in which contemporary female artists have addressed the body/ self dilemma. The inadequacy of existent imagery has forced these artists into the realm of the monstrous, seeking imagery of the composite and the malleable. The result has been a new order of self-portraiture that expresses itself with imagery normally considered negative, gruesome, and filthy.

Yet despite their use of grotesque and monstrous imagery, I believe work by these artists begins not as a negative but as a positive manifestation of the self. Such self-portraiture remains rooted in the desire to come to terms with a self that refuses to heed existing cultural and physical boundaries. By readily employing the language of the indefinite, it is able to call into question the strict regulation of categories and boundaries in Western culture. This self-portraiture asks for identity to be determined not solely by difference and division but by interpenetration and intersection as well.

Loren Erdrich is an American artist working predominantly in drawing and fibres; she received her Master of Fine Arts degree in 2007 from Burren College of Art in County Clare; her work may be viewed at www.okloren.com

- 1 Gen Doy, *Picturing the self*, London and New York: IB Tauris & Co Ltd, 2005, p 2
- 2 Michel Foucault, *The Order of things* (1970), as discussed in E Graham, *Representations of the post/ human: monsters, aliens, and others in popular culture*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, pp 41 – 42
- 3 Jacques Lacan, *The Four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis* (1994), as discussed in Doy, op cit, p 44
- 4 Doy, op cit, p 44
- 5 See Marike Finlay de Monchy's essay 'Post-modernizing psychoanalysis/ psychoanalyzing post-modernity before emancipation re-ontologizing the subject in discourse', www.focusing.org/apm_papers/finlay.html, 01 April 2006.
- 6 Mark Johnson, *The Body in the mind* (1987), as quoted in Christine Battersby, 'Her body/ her boundaries: gender and the metaphysics of containment' in *Journal of philosophy and visual arts: the body*, 1993, p 31
- 7 Ibid, p 31. See *Women, fire and dangerous things* (1987) by George Lakoff. Lakoff and Johnson worked together on *Metaphors we live by*, University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- 8 Christine Battersby, 'Her body/ her boundaries: gender and the metaphysics of containment' in *Journal of philosophy and visual arts: the body*, 1993, p 34
- 9 Marsha Meskimmon, *The Art of reflection: women artists' self-portraiture in the twentieth century*, London: Scarlet Press, 1996, p 105
- 10 Battersby, op cit, p 35
- 11 Elizabeth Grosz, 'Bodies – cities', in *Space, time and perversion, essays on the politics of the bodies*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, p 104
- 12 Marina Warner, *No go the bageyman*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998, p 101
- 13 Julia Kristeva, *Powers of horror: an essay on abjection*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1982, p 4. Kristeva's theorization of the abject is rooted in the philosophical and psychoanalytical. See Y Bois and R Krauss, *Formless: a user's guide*, New York: Zone Books, 1997, p 237. "The *Powers of horror* now turned to a model articulated around the arrested passage from subject to object... the abject would thus be this intermediary position – neither subject or object – for which the psychiatric term 'borderline' would prove to be extremely useful."
- 14 Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, time and perversion*, as quoted in B Marenko, 'The Self made freak: hybridizations and bodies in transition' in ed David Wood, *Body probe: torture garden 2*, Creation Books, 1999, p 112
- 15 Sigmund Freud, 'The 'uncanny'' [Das Unheimliche] (1919). From *Standard edition*, Vol. XVII, trans. James Strachey, London: Hogarth Press, 1955, p 220
- 16 Elizabeth Bronfren, *Over her dead body: death, femininity and the aesthetic*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992, p 113
- 17 Anne Raine, 'Embodied geographies: subjectivity and materiality in the work of Ana Mendieta' in ed G Pollock, *Generations and geographies in the visual arts*, p 241. Though Raine's essay refers specifically to the work of Mendieta, I have found the essay particularly useful in her discussion of uncanniness in terms of the 'double' and the 'multiple'.
- 18 Ibid, p 240
- 19 Nancy Princenthal, 'Janine Antoni: mothers milk', *Art in America*, No. 9, September 2001, pp 124 – 129
- 20 Mary Douglas, *Purity and danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo*, London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966, p 45
- 21 Ibid, p 150
- 22 Betti Marenko, 'The Self made freak: hybridizations and bodies in transition' in ed David Wood, *Body probe: torture garden 2*, Creation Books, 1999, p 110
- 23 Ibid, p 114
- 24 Elaine Graham, *Representations of the post/ human: monsters, aliens, and others in popular culture*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p 54
- 25 *Jenny Saville*, Milan: Mondadori Electa Spa, 2005, p 30
- 26 M Meskimmon, op cit, p 122
- 27 Simon Schama, 'Interview with Jenny Saville' in *Jenny Saville*, Milan: Mondadori Electa Spa, 2005, p 125
- 28 M Meskimmon, op cit, p 124
- 29 M Douglas, op cit, 117

50 NOT SAYING NO: PERVERTS,
MELANCHOLICS AND BARTLEBY



Paola Pivi
Untitled (ostriches), 2003
photographic print, dibond
121 x 157.5 cm
courtesy Galerie Emmanuel
Perrotin

It is a familiar story, but one that bears repeating. The possibilities for saying *no* are not what they used to be. Indeed, just as the Cabaret Voltaire had to move to the other, more respectable side of the River Limmat in search of a suitably affronted audience, negation or refusal must forever seek out a proper enemy so that it might be received for the crisis it claims to be. However, it seems the enemy increasingly anticipates and internalises attacks upon it: it outshines its detractors in cynically debunking its own claims, and its axioms are either renewed as they encounter extraneous negation or, if this is lacking or inadequate, negation is generated internally as a prompt to further research and development. Calls for organised anarchy and workplace insurrection declare a corporate avant-gardism that grossly outperforms that of the art world.¹ Eccentricity, nonconformity and the vicissitudes of creativity are no longer anathema to the steady accumulation of profit. They are, in fact, essential to it.²

Far from the final victory of discipline over disorder, this is rather the convergence at a basic level of disorder with pragmatic, nonspecific exchange mechanisms. The immanent and global axiomatic of decoded flows that is capitalism can easily tolerate, indeed thrive upon, a differentiated and polymorphic playing field of codings, decodings, recodings, and so on, because capitalism – as a set of axioms, or ‘primary statements’, operative simultaneously across various domains – exceeds the specific, local codes through which it is realised and through which it accrues meaning.³ To counter attempts to monopolise disorder with further disorder, or with *critical* decodings, would be quite wrongheaded as, whatever their interests might be, there is a direct confluence of dynamics between these counter-practices and destabilised corporate structures which have themselves long

ceased to be bastions of organisational propriety and homogeneity that might be troubled by a topsy-turvy world.⁴

Refusals that give their enemy an authoritative and coherent figure consolidate the capacity of the most radical conformists to play the outlaw, by reproducing what could not be authorised unless their various ritual transgressions presupposed it: the presence of authority.⁵ The axiomatic is to some degree always open, never conclusive before the event that puts it to work. But to persist in the “heroic pathos of negation,”⁶ and thus to maintain the most intimate solidarity with a hegemony of consent in the process of countering it, is inadvertently to direct this openness towards a further conjugation of the axiomatic.

PERVERTS

Thus the story goes, but when creativity itself becomes the watchword both of current economic adventures and pedagogical experiments in regeneration there is no question that something must be done.

In an economy of ideas, creativity displaces productivity as the generator of maximal profits, for the simple reason that a good idea “grows in value the more it is used. It offers not diminishing returns, but *increasing returns*.”⁷ ‘Everyone is creative’: this is the slogan of the culturepreneur, who identifies creativity as a human faculty and therefore a prime renewable resource. Thus naturalised, creativity is given currency as the great leveller and the essential means of developing the full potential of an individual. Creativity means creating oneself, investing oneself into a chain of value in which the diversity, openness, opportunism and efficacy of one’s endeavours will be merited and through which they will accumulate meaning.

Is it then possible to cheat with creativity, perverting its playful combinatory skills, diminishing its resourcefulness? Can creative destruction itself be *outplayed*? For the capacity to ‘outplay’, we might look to the relatively unexplored figure of the pervert, who, in cheating, does not step across or beyond (*tr?nsgrid?*) but goes the wrong way (*pervertere*). Her pleasures do not derive from a perpetual game of cat and mouse with perceived limitations and the promise of hitherto unavailable ecstasies to be had in their contravention. That game is one of dislocation, of displacement and fixation, that one need never be wholly ‘in’ to play, which is to say that one can be either a believer, a dupe, or a rebel – one plays all the same. “The ‘rule’ of such a game is that one is always ‘out of bounds’ [*hors-jeu*], always in violation of the determined and determinable rules; and what is more, that the very determination of these rules implies their violation.”⁸ Such a rule of ambivalence, a rule that ensures transgression is, so to speak, built in, energises a game through which both desire and the axiomatic come into play.

Instead, the pervert takes her pleasure in the giddiness and horror to emerge from what might be called, rather crudely, the nonlinear dynamics of play. Whereas certain assumptions and approximations can be made about the behaviour of linear systems, allowing for results to be accumulated and calculated in advance, and for proportions to be distributed accordingly, this is not the case with nonlinear systems, the disproportionate and excessive behaviour of which is nigh-impossible to predict. Such volatile changes in intensity are vital components of nonlinear play sequences, yet are neither sequential nor synthesisable. In relation to the agonistics of *exemplarity* and *redundancy* through which creativity develops, this nonlinearity makes certain elements of play roguish. There are ways in which creative productivity might capitalise upon the accelerated processes of dislocation brought about by these rogue elements, which is to say, there are ways in which they might become exemplary. But the pervert takes these elements and, being in no hurry to reinstate or even reinvent the game by synthesising these elements back into the game, towards a horizon of diminishing possibility and increasing returns, suspends them. The pervert returns nothing but vacancy, silence, indifference. Her cheating consists precisely of this arresting neutrality. Such is the work of Paola Pivi.

Martin Herbert describes Pivi's work thus:

Comprehending [art's] contemporary role as something like an experiential playground and a marshalling of thrumming, colliding forces rather than a codifying system, [Pivi] sets intensities in play and then steps back, trusting the cultural cargo her subjects carry to keep meaningfulness at bay.⁹

But once intensities are in play, can such faith in the vehicular capabilities of subjects be sustained? Herbert resists the 'ludic free-fall' to which Pivi's work might lead, and instead uses her work to prop up various allegorical readings: for example, her use of white as a signifier, however distant, of spurious racial superiority in various states of collapse. But an alligator whitened by immersion in whipped cream: does this really stand as a figure for the decline of white power? White is also a signifier of neutrality, after all: one cannot corral the duplicities of allegory any more than one can constrain an alligator with whipped cream. One can lead both astray, however, muffle them and leave them stranded, if only for a moment.

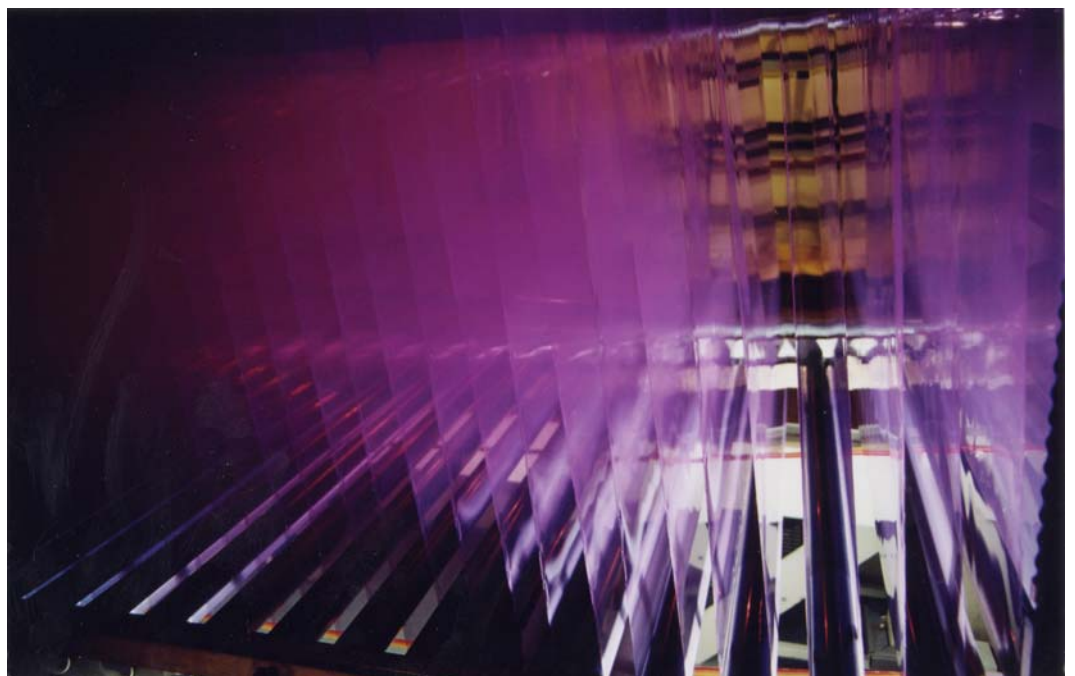
After eloquently writing of the "abyssal bliss" that might be encountered in Pivi's wordless art, Herbert worries about the possibility of escapism, as though this might suggest indifference, a flight from responsibility in the "context of social divisiveness and intolerance." But perhaps such indifference is engaged *because of* its uncompromising neutrality; perhaps opponents are the ones making promises together.

Before taking the figures of neutrality and perversion further – because both have so far been silent; but one cannot simply oppose silence to noisy discourse, one must also outplay silence, one must have a course, a formula – before then, we might consider another response that more than ever jars with the enthusiasms of creative productivity, a response that is not averse to meaningfulness, but rather courts it, yearning for the nourishment of loss. It is particular to those born under the sign of Saturn.



[above]
Paola Pivi
Ffffffffffffffffff three, 2006
photographic print,
aluminium, plexiglass, wood
188 x 254 cm
edition 5+2AP
photo Hugo Glendinning
courtesy Galerie Emmanuel
Perrotin

[below]
Tacita Dean
Kodak, 2006
16mm colour, optical sound
60 mins
courtesy the artist, Frith
Street Gallery, London and
Marian Goodman Gallery,
New York and Paris



MELANCHOLICS

The tragic sensibility claims *its* refusal to be the last. Unlike the ludic indifference of the rather mercurial pervert, the melancholic withdraws from devaluation with a heavy heart. But accompanying the withdrawal to an inner sanctum of personal enthusiasms is “an entwined, intensified earthly gaze, seeking an odd consolation in the contemplation of the most creaturely, mortal, and decayed fragments of the world of things.”¹⁰ Hence, those of a saturnine temperament are slow, clumsy and stubborn. Acedia does not travel well. But the refusal to let go of value in the face of the volatilisation of things, and the search for the horizons of being when such things are said to have exploded at the speed of light, are just two characteristics of a more general disdain for equivalence and the direct, continuous transmissions that follow from its levelling effects: the melancholic prefers to stub her toe against the world’s gradients. It is the inhumanity of the melancholic’s refusal that carries all the weight, her lack of faith in humans being the occasion for her loyalty to creatures and materials. Self-creation, although necessary, offers few solutions, because she encounters misfortune not as an inner inertia but as an exterior, almost systemic, immutability. Her “tenacious self-absorption”¹¹ drags her far deeper into the dead weight of things than those of other temperaments, but she does this only to bring things back to the surface of meaning.

For the melancholic the inspirations of mother earth dawn from the night of contemplation like treasures from the interior of the earth.¹²

Melancholy is a base and ignoble humour, the black bile that causes it “akin to the centre of the earth.” It also “corresponds to the highest of planets,”¹³ Saturn, protector of a superior intellectual power that, whilst contemplating ruin, finds an occasional combination of fragments illuminated by dawning light.

The long night of contemplation and the dawning light are figures that feature in the work of that arch-melancholic Tacita Dean. Refracted through the golden light of evening that emanates from so much of her imagery is the brighter shade of morning, which in the midst of their very redundancy and meaninglessness makes the “elements of the creaturely ... radiate with an individual shimmer, a light that directs them toward the redemptive wholeness of the end of history.”¹⁴ Whatever one might think of such eschatological tales, the proximity of despair and anticipation gives this light its density, compounded by observation unhurried to the point of *ennui*, which refuses to vanish into the present. The melancholic leads an arrogant present astray by rediscovering hope in the obsolete, as though it were an index of futures other than those presently available.

Sensitive to the constitutive inability of humans to grasp their own historical presuppositions, the melancholic wanders in the past and delays before the present. Such dithering jars, because the dawning light enters the present and does not loan it out against a future that has already happened.

Like the melancholic, the pervert loiters; like the pervert, the melancholic is radiant in her impotence. Beyond this, they diverge.

BARTLEBY

Finally, then, we encounter Bartleby, a man without references and without further conjugation; a saintly pervert, of sorts.

Bartleby begins as a copyist. At the outset, his employer and narrator remarks upon his pallid and forlorn look, hoping that such a blank sheet will provide the base material from which an ideal employee might be fashioned and, in particular, that “a man of so singularly sedate an aspect”¹⁵ will have an equalising effect upon the peculiar meridional turns of the other two clerks, Nippers and Turkey. In short, Bartleby is to be employed as a figure of exemplary neutrality and diligence, albeit unwittingly.

Bartleby is indeed diligent, working by day and night, silently and mechanically. One day, however, when asked to examine his own copy, Bartleby states mildly and firmly that he “would prefer not to.” As the story unfolds, this becomes Bartleby’s formula, an enigmatic response to what is expected of him that cannot be reduced to simple refusal or noncompliance because it remains without reference. Bartleby never prefers something else to what is offered him, he does not propose this or that alternative; he simply *prefers not to*. Likewise, he does not *refuse* to copy; that is to say, he does not refuse to literally reproduce the letter of the Law (*doxa*), or to carry out the roles and responsibilities bound by this law, or even the orthodox positional agonistics presupposed by the situation in which he finds himself. Rather, his formula passively annihilates the legitimacy of the Law, bringing about its dereliction, because it makes such an extraordinary demand upon the Law’s generosity: namely, that the Law persist even as a dead letter. For instance, when Bartleby prefers not to leave the attorney’s office, he remains present without being represented, belongs without being accounted for in any way. He remains a blank sheet, but, paradoxically, one that prefers not to write anything other than its own blankness.

Certainly [Bartleby's formula] is grammatically correct, syntactically correct, but its abrupt termination, NOT TO, which leaves what it rejects undetermined, confers upon it the character of a radical, a kind of limit-function. Its repetition and its insistence render it all the more unusual, entirely so. Murmured in a soft, flat, and patient voice, it attains to the irremissible, by forming an inarticulate block, a single breath. In all these respects, it has the same force, the same role as an agrammatical formula.¹⁶

Bartleby leaves others tongue-tied, exhausting their words and propositions. He sends the attorney into a state of vertiginous confusion, without himself remaining silent. But although he speaks, Bartleby leaves nothing to say: the anxious attempts of the attorney to understand and respond in some significant way to Bartleby, to engage him in a battle of wills, even his attempt to come to terms with Bartleby by narrating their encounter, only disguise this fact. He cannot be bargained with, threatened, or managed. He leaves nothing in place of what his formula takes away, because no performance of the formula is an exercise of will. Bartleby is not a nihilist, he does not will nothing. Rather, we have the growth of "a nothingness of the will." He is one of those "angels or saintly hypochondriacs, almost stupid, creatures of innocence and purity, stricken with a constitutional weakness but also with a strange beauty. Petrified by nature, they prefer... no will at all."¹⁷

Petrified. But Bartleby's stony indifference keeps him light. Because he never prefers one thing or another, he does not exhaust his preference *not to be*, so that his potential does not collapse into an exercise of the will but remains suspended in "the luminous spiral of the possible."¹⁸ And so Bartleby lingers, neither quite here nor there, buoyed up by no more than being-able (which is also not-being-able). Such is the ethics of this logic of preference: in a world where potential is constantly actualised and agonised over, and impotence is discarded, to remain capable of one's own impotence, is an act of freedom, for better or worse.

[The] only ethical experience (which, as such, cannot be a task or a subjective decision) is the experience of being (one's own) potentiality, of being (one's own) possibility – exposing, that is, in every form one's own amorphousness and in every act one's own inactuality.¹⁹

Whatever ability we might have to act is always already an ability not to; whatever potency our acts might have is always already impotency. For Agamben, because every act is a rejection of innumerable other possibilities, ethics consists in impotence passing fully into an act. If this were not the case, those traces of what *could have been* would disappear from the present, and whatever-might-yet-become would become only current potential made actual, and further slip towards the inevitable.

This summarises the ethics of Bartleby's formula. Morality, however, balks at impotence, considering it a fault to be rectified. When Bartleby finally "lives without dining," morality would address his preference as pathological and act accordingly. But things are trickier than that.

[It] may happen that I feel no hunger for the world, but the world will force me to love it, to eat it, to enter into intercourse with it.²⁰

Faced with the arrogance that leaves nothing left un-desired and that leaves no possible satisfaction unaccounted for, the anorexic responds: "in this plenitude you leave me nothing else than nothing to desire."²¹ By renouncing not appetite so much as the possibility of its satisfaction, she keeps her desire intact as one that may or may not be acted upon; a desire turned back upon itself, perverted, and thereby enclosed, uncommunicative.

"If potentiality is defined in this way, as *potential not to*, it is thus a kind of existence of nonBeing, the presence of an absence, *the possession of a privation*."²³ Is the anorexic's ideal possession no more than her own privation? And does she not provide the face of this privation? What colour would potentiality have if not that of the shadows of their sunken skin? Does their contemptuous boredom not display the potentiality *not-to-act*? Anorexia, which is no more nor less than a loss of appetite in front of life, has been called an "experiment in living" sustained, like Bartleby, by some paramount consideration that can only be guessed at.²⁴ Perhaps this is the case, but only insofar as it is at the same time an experiment in not-living. Beyond their look of defiance, which represents only immorality, their faces betray a potentiality not yet fully formulated; they are a possible, if scandalous, form of perverse neutrality. As Bartleby's employer knew only too well, the giddiness and horror of it is infectious.

- 1 Jackson, Matthew J., 'Managing the avant-garde', *New left review* 32, March – April 2005
- 2 See Franks, Thomas, 'Why Johnny can't dissent', *Commodify your dissent: salvos from the baffler*, edited by T Frank and M Weiland, New York: Norton, 1997; and *The Conquest of cool: business culture, counter culture, and the rise of hip consumerism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- 3 See Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix, *Thousand plateaus*, translated by B Massumi, London: Continuum, 1988, p 453ff
- 4 See Peters, Tom, *Thriving on chaos: handbook for a management revolution*, New York, 1987
- 5 Bartelson, Jens, 'The Conditions of criticism', 2004, wiki.d-a-s-h.org/node/94 A full catalogue of critical naughtiness cannot be attempted here. The excessive expenditures of Paul McCarthy and the studied buffoonery of Marizio Cattelan are only the most famous examples. Closer to home, the story of now-dissolved London group BANK is instructive. See Jennifer Thatcher's interview with former BANK member Simon Bedwell in *The Future* 1, 2004.
- 6 Agamben, Giorgio, 'Bartleby, or On contingency', in *Potentialities: collected essays in philosophy*, edited and translated, with an introduction by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999, p 256
- 7 Florida, Richard, *The Rise of the creative class*, New York: Basic Books, 2002, p 36
- 8 Weber, Samuel, 'Afterword: literature – just making it', in Lyotard, Jean-François and Thébaud, Jean-Loup, *Just gaming*, translated by Wlad Godzich, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, p 109
- 9 Herbert, Martin, 'Tales of the unexpected', *Frieze* 106, April 2007, pp 108-9
- 10 Pinsky, Max, 'Trauerspiel and melancholy subjectivity', from *Melancholy dialectics: Walter Benjamin and the play of mourning*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993; reprinted in *Walter Benjamin: critical evaluations in cultural theory, vol. II: Modernity*, edited by Peter Osborne, Oxon: Routledge, 2005, p 72
- 11 Benjamin, Walter, *Origin of German tragic drama*, translated by John Osborne, London: New Left Books, 1977, p 157
- 12 Ibid, p 153
- 13 Ficino, *De vita triplici*, quoted in Pinsky, op. cit., p 80
- 14 Pinsky, op cit, p 86
- 15 Melville, Herman, 'Bartleby, the scrivener', in *Billy Budd, sailor and other stories*, London: Penguin, 1967, p 66
- 16 Deleuze, Gilles, 'Bartleby, or: the formula', in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, translated by D.W. Smith and M A Greco, London: Verso, 1998, p 68
- 17 Ibid, pp 79-80
- 18 Agamben, 'Bartleby...', p 257
- 19 Agamben, Giorgio, *The Coming community*, translated by Michael Hardt, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p 44
- 20 Barthes, Roland, *The Neutral*, translated by Rosalind E Krauss and Dennis Hollier, New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, p 153
- 21 Letter from psychoanalyst Jacques Ribette to Barthes, quoted in Barthes, op cit, p 153
- 22 I am indebted to Ciara Moore for her research into these twins.
- 23 Dillon, Brian, review of Agamben's *Potentialities*, in *SubStance*, volume 30, issue 94/ 95, 2001, p 255
- 24 Phillips, Adam, 'On eating, and preferring not to', in *Promises, Promises: essays on literature and psychoanalysis*, London: Faber, 2000

Tim Stott is a lecturer at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin, and the Dublin Institute of Technology.

L A Raeven
*Wild zone 1*²²
 2001
 video installation
 courtesy Ellen de Bruijne
 Projects





[above]
Rita Duffy
Emerging from the shamrock
1991, triptych, oil on canvas,
183 x 305 cm
courtesy the artist

PAINT AND POLITICS: BETWEEN ARGENTINA AND NORTHERN IRELAND

In March 2007, the organisation Visiting Arts funded a visit of Argentinean artist Daniel García (b 1958) to Northern Ireland to meet with Belfast-born painter Rita Duffy (b 1959). Both had been respondents in my research into the role of contemporary art in relation to judicial processes in societies emerging from violence,¹ and I had seen a connection between them and their works – not only because they are of the same generation, and because their recent paintings often share certain formal qualities, but also because I sensed that they shared somewhat similar attitudes to questions of artistic response and responsibility.

In Rita Duffy's studio in Belfast, the two artists talk about how their respective socio-political contexts have informed their work. Surrounded by paintings heading for Duffy's exhibition in Portadown, in which the theme of justice is uppermost – with wigs and other apparel of barristers and judges rendered strange through their isolation on canvas – Duffy explains how it was impossible for her not to respond to the Troubles in her art. While she is aware of the difficulties of producing work that becomes 'illustrative', she has made many works over the past decades that respond to her socio-political context in varied formats. "Belfast is definitely a city of absolutes," she says, "and art is actually a great way of creating a third space, and a little bit of confusion." From her early works on, Duffy has returned to the peculiarities of religious and political affiliation, often through autobiographical scenes and encounters. Her paintings and drawings reveal the influences of Otto Dix and, more so, Paula Rego as, playing with scale and forms, they convey the dreamlike quality of emerging into adulthood in a society violently crumbling along faultlines. Duffy gives us a sense of the fears of a child growing up surrounded by unfathomable adult aggression and warnings of unpredictable terrors, as well as the angry frustrations of the adult who witnesses the reproduction of violent hostilities within her own generation.

Reviewing some of these early works with Duffy, García points out one that he particularly admires. A charcoal drawing from 1989 depicts two adult men fixing their eyes on each other, one of each of their hands clenched in anger, and the other restraining their young sons or possibly grandsons, who mimic their role models as they spit out their anger across a narrow street where the buildings lean in toward each other and the church is glimpsed surveying the antagonism from the end of the street. García admires Duffy's ability to convey the intimacy of aggression and passion in a scene where the lines of identical houses quietly attest to what is shared, leaning in toward the actors, conveying, he remarks, "all the claustrophobic suffocation of those days." The church is fully part of the landscape, but is not innocent; its teachings and its personnel are fully part of these events.

Argentina's history, too, has known the claustrophobia of living in a society with unchecked violence, where no authorities could be trusted. While the military dictatorship of 1976 – 83 was different from the conflict in Northern Ireland in many significant ways, the human costs – of losing kin in unknown circumstances, of disappeared bodies, of state complicity – are repeated. As an artist, comments García, one exists within these stories, and although they may not be the narrative substance of what one paints, their power and their visual dimensions enter one's work. In his paintings, Argentina's stories and motifs

enter at certain points, but intermingle there with those that have arisen for him in more personal ways. In his large painted canvases of dentures, for example, the experience of illness in his family intermingles with reflections on the remnants of a life, with philosophical questions about mortality and memory; but they cannot but also connect with the horrors of the dictatorship when 30,000 people were 'disappeared'. Speaking of these paintings, García comments:

Teeth, together with fingerprints, are the most individual parts, as no two identical sets of teeth exist; teeth are a perfectly valid means to identify a person. They will only correspond to one person. On the other hand, teeth are also 'memento mori', they remind us that we are mortal, reminding us of death and the passing of time. And because they are also a memory of someone who is no longer there, for me they are a metaphor of the 'desaparecidos'. Almost as a way for them to speak. For the majority those teeth I titled [the painting] with a number from 1 to 30,000.

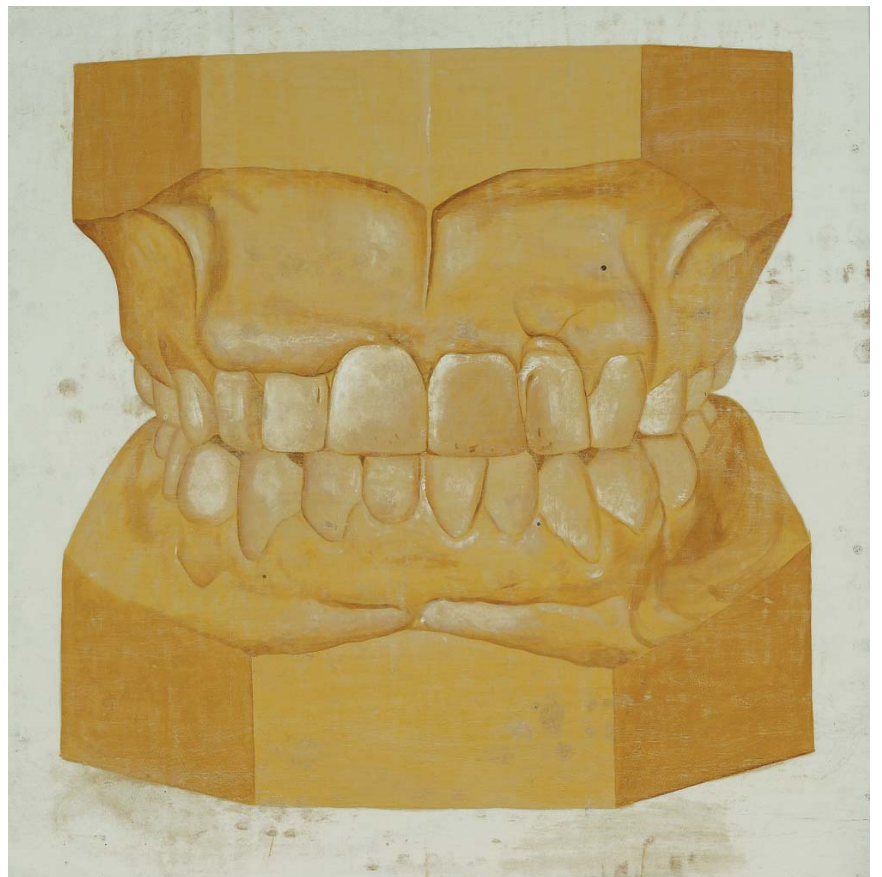
When artworks travel from a society such as Argentina, or Northern Ireland for that matter, there is a danger that the history of violence overdetermines the way they are received and understood. This danger has to be weighed against the sense of opportunity there might be for an artist to make important comment. García explains this with reference to one of his paintings from the late 1990s.

Una cuva severa (1997) shows a head completely covered with a white cloth against a blood-red background. He says of this painting, "I took this [to the *Venice Biennale* 1997] as part of a series that was inspired formally by paintings of the Renaissance, and also by pictures of primitive flamenco. They were each of women's heads with scarves on – sometimes with the faces completely covered up." García is interested in how a painter must conjure and contain the powerful spectres summoned by the images he or she creates. These images represented the Virgin Mary, García explains, someone in the process of mourning, that is to say a mother who had lost her son, but had no body to mourn. As such they also evoked other mothers who had also lost their children during the so-called 'Dirty War'. At the time of the *Venice Biennale*, President Menem's pardons for the military for their parts in the dictatorship were still in place, and García's evocation of the headscarves worn by the mothers of Plaza de Mayo was deliberate: "I was interested in taking to Venice, that year, the images that people associated with the mothers from the Plaza de Mayo because it was the year that Carlos Menem pardoned the military. As it was an official representation, I wished to show a discordant voice, to show that not everyone in Argentina agreed with him."



[above]
Daniel García
Una cura severa, 1997
acrylic on canvas, 150 x 150 cm
courtesy the artist

[below]
Daniel García
213, 2003
acrylic on wood panel
160 x 160 cm
courtesy the artist



The pardons of the military were ostensibly given in the name of 'reconciliation'; but the situation was later reversed not least due to the outrage felt among the general population who pushed for this impunity to be lifted and for formal processes of justice to begin. Justice is of course difficult, procedurally but also conceptually. One of its etymological senses is that of a *fitting* response to something, and it is in the sense that the pardons were *unfitting* to the enormity of the crimes, that a call to justice was sustained in Argentina. There is nothing straightforward about the idea that art might participate in sustaining such a call to justice. But in Argentina there is now a long history of artists' resistance and involvement in protest, as there is a history of 'activists' using visual imagery as part of their protests. The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo are only the best-known example of protests using visual motifs that come to bespeak the pain and outrage of ordinary people whose lives have been torn asunder by actions that go unpunished. Originally, the mothers wore babies' nappies on their heads; these became the white cloth headscarves that the women adopted. Courageously, they protested by walking in a circle in front of the Casa Rosada, demanding the whereabouts and return of their missing children, a protest that reached out through the international media to publicise the disappearances.

In Rita Duffy's studio I point out to Daniel García the painting that I had, on first viewing, mistakenly taken to be of a headscarf of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo. Instead, its model was a barrister's collar, and as such forms part of Rita Duffy's recent exhibition which is, in some ways, a meditation on justice processes. The high-court wig that Duffy paints is empty, but the history of judiciary in Northern Ireland has of course been controversial, ntangled as it has been with the difficulties of establishing appropriate and workable procedures for justice amidst the Troubles. The controversial 'Diplock' courts, for example, that were established in 1972 as a response to terrorist activities in Northern Ireland, and that allow jury-less trials, are only this year being replaced as part of security normalisation, with jury trials once again becoming the norm.² These were controversial, not only because of perceived institutional bias within the judiciary, but also because they were part of a process of criminalisation that refused the political status sought by those committing these acts of violence.³

But while Duffy will let you into the 'secret' that the barrister's apparel we see here is loaned by the barrister who in 1995 challenged the necessity for intending QCs to take an oath to serve the Queen,⁴ this fact is nowhere apparent in the artwork itself, or in the titles thereof. In and of itself, the artwork cannot speak this history, or verbally join debates about the process of transition. But it 'speaks' to these themes as it must, mutely, obliquely.

Duffy calls this exhibition *Cuchulain comforted*, the title of W.B. Yeat's poem about the Celtic warrior who, according to legend, wrapped himself in cloth as his enemies approached so that they would not know that he was mortally wounded. As they came close his sword fell and cut off the hand of his foes, and in return his own hand was severed. Cuchulain remains an ambiguous figure, celebrated in republicanism but also as the hound of Ulster, a hero who defended the province against invasion from the South, a defence associated with loyalism. So while *Cloth* became the simple title of the publication that Duffy produced along with poet Paul Muldoon (2007),⁵ the political ambiguities of the mythical figure of Cuchulain and his continued evocation in Ireland add to the more straightforward suggestion that there are highly ambiguous comforts in being bound. Cloth can comfort but also bind one too tightly, it can cover in order to protect but also to hide, to heal but also to deceive. Moreover, in Northern Ireland – where cloth has historically been a key industry, with linen production a source of survival especially for the Catholic community, whose men were kept out of ship-building industries – it is of course also readily associated with rituals not only of the legal profession but of the church, that is, with the rituals of the 'men of the cloth'. And which cloth one waves, or seeks comfort within, is precisely, if crudely, the history of politics in Northern Ireland. These, as well as the maternal rituals of domestic pride, of laundry and tablecloths, which seek to maintain order even within disorder, are evoked by Duffy's paintings from the *Cuchulain comforted* exhibition.

As with much of Duffy's earlier work, we are returned to the experience of everyday existence within a society in which the need to enact rituals to confer identity and stability has been both a comfort and a conservative mimesis that sustains communities united by past and potential acts of violence. The continuities of cultural practices – from the 'ancient rules' of vaulted professions to the domestic traditions of 'good housekeeping' – are joined by the more philosophical questions – what do we wrap ourselves in, for comfort or in order to survive? What thereby becomes folded in, that cannot then be aired? These are given a political force by their exhibition alongside those paintings that point to specific bodies lost to 'the Troubles'. This is clear as soon as we realise that the painting of the parka jacket that floats hauntingly in space and that is entitled *Relic* is a painting of Mairéad Farrell's jacket.⁶ Or, one may allow the handkerchief to evoke Father Daly's handkerchief-waving amidst the mayhem of Bloody Sunday 1972.



[above left]
Rita Duffy
Scarf, 2006
oil and pigment on linen
90 x 90 cm
courtesy the artist



[above right]
Rita Duffy
Relic, 2001,
oil on linen, 183 x 122 cm
collection of AIB
courtesy the artist

[below]
Rita Duffy,
Veil, 2002
six doors from Armagh Women's
Prison, 100 blown-glass
teardrops, salt
courtesy Wolverhampton Art
Gallery



The two legalistic arenas evoked here – the European Court of Human Rights and the judicial Inquiries into ‘Bloody Sunday’ (the Widgery Inquiry and the Saville Inquiry)⁷ – are two significant mechanisms for ‘dealing with the past’ that have been employed in Northern Ireland (Bell, 2003).⁸ In each of these fora, issues of state violence are discussed in different terms,⁹ but the fact of being heard, of appealing to a mechanism that can supercede the state, while not a wholly satisfactory form of seeking transitional justice or redress, offers people a formalised and public space in which to present their version of events. If no justice is necessarily delivered, something other than the ‘official account’ has been laid down for those in the future to witness.

Without that formality, there is a sense in which art can also be understood as a site at which people reflect upon the relationship between the ‘is’ and the ‘ought’, whether we understand the art as a form of participation in events or as more modest ‘witnessing’. Speaking of her several paintings of white handkerchiefs for the *Cuchulain comforted* exhibition, Duffy explains that a friend who had given witness at the Saville Inquiry had told her that Father Daly’s handkerchief still existed: “It became quite an iconic image in my head, this little triangle of white. There’s something so simple and so poetic and so ordinary about a handkerchief.” Duffy connects this with her on-going meditations on icebergs – “many sensible people,” she laughs, support her project to tow an iceberg into Belfast harbour, where its huge presence might speak to the physicality of fears as well as the possibilities of those same melting away – as well as with other works, such as the glass tears of *Veil*. “We use a handkerchief to wipe our tears, to collect and hold our tears.”

Duffy’s hexagonal installation piece, *Veil* (2002), is composed of six prison doors from the women’s prison in Armagh. When one looks through the doors, one sees hundreds of glass tears suspended against a brilliant red background; a magical, beautiful sight that reminds one of the needless blood spilt and tears shed, as well as the menstrual blood smeared on the prison walls when the women’s dirty protests at the State’s denial of their status as political prisoners took place. This work now belongs to the Wolverhampton Art Gallery, where it is currently being shown alongside the work by Conrad Atkinson (b 1940-), which caused so much controversy in Belfast in 1978. That work – *Silver liberties: a souvenir for a wonderful anniversary year* – incorporates on one panel newspaper photographs of those killed by British soldiers on Bloody Sunday 1972, a painting of a cartoon of a British soldier copied from some graffiti Atkinson saw on his visit to Belfast on the second, and pro-Loyalist images from the streets of Belfast on a third; a fourth panel shows images of a man alleged to have been beaten by police for being an IRA suspect. Duffy recalls being part of the

student protest demonstrations when porters at the Ulster Museum refused to hang the work and members of its Board of Directors resigned in protest. She links that attitude to the general sense of disengagement that pervaded art schools in Northern Ireland in the late 1970s and early 1980s, where ‘local’ politics were not deemed appropriate for visual representation as ‘art’ that took its steer instead from the artistic movements in London or New York. On the day that the second hunger striker died, one art lecturer had asked Duffy why people were wearing black armbands. “I went away feeling genuinely stunned that someone could live in Belfast and be totally unaware of what was going on!”

In Atkinson’s work he incorporated photographs of a banner that had been carried on Bloody Sunday and that had then been used as a stretcher to carry the injured. The banner reads ‘Derry Civil Rights Association’, its centre blood-stained and filthy. Again, we are returned to the ways in which canvas *carries*: the banner conveys messages – the big bold letters designed for circulation in mass-media reportage, and the stretcher carries first injured bodies, then the trace of them having lain there. But what is it that the artwork can be said to carry? For Garcia, it can carry memories but also, more importantly perhaps, it can carry something else into the future: the potential to be re-read, re-interpreted, re-understood.

Garcia has used the format of stretchers, work of which he says, “It was as if some of the stretchers had at some time been improvised by flags or material, let us say, which had fallen into disuse and which were now being used in an emergency. And then these stretchers were presented as works of art a second time round.” These works responded to hasty declarations about the end of things – such as history, as in debates about ‘the end of history’ or of socialism:

I wanted to speak about the fact that there was no end to the history. That history continued, that the fight had not finished, that it was all still alive it was just injured. So I worked on the canvas of the stretchers. All had traces left of having been used, showing that they had been used to transport the injured, and also images coming from different types of moments of ideological fights, from the Spanish civil war, from the Russian revolution, from ‘Peronismo’, among others.

So although paintings can 'hold' memories, preserve images in their substance and by virtue of their preservation, García is also interested in how paintings, unlike photographs, mark the movement of time. For him, they do so both in the sense of physically showing signs of the creative process (the putting on of paint and the scraping and removal of it) but also by virtue of the life they have after they are 'finished': "That is to say for me the painting doesn't stop when it is finished but it carries on living and it carries on suffering all the transformations during time."

For both artists, and despite Duffy's increasing interest in three-dimensional works, there is a deep loyalty to painting. In Argentina, García notes, another 'end of' saga has unfolded in which curators and commentators suggest that there is only one way to be a contemporary artist: to leave behind the paintbrush for some other media. "This reminds me of the IMF and World Bank notions of a 'unique way' and other talk of single economic or political solutions that our country and the whole of the underdeveloped world has suffered historically and continues to suffer." García prefers to paint. He writes to me from Rosario: "for me, choosing paintings, and choosing to paint different subjects and different styles is a way to say that there always are many ways to do things. You don't need to do what those in Power want you to do."

Daniel García,
from *Camilla*, 1990
230 x 60 cm
acrylic and oil on canvas
with wooden structure
courtesy the artist



- 1 Generously funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.
- 2 *Report of the Commission to consider legal procedures to deal with terrorist activities in Northern Ireland* (Chairman: Lord Diplock); presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, December 1972; Cmnd. 5185 London: HMSO, 1972
- 3 The refusal of political status and privileges led to the hunger strikes of 1981.
- 4 The Bar Council of Northern Ireland advocated an alternative neutral declaration in June, 1997, although it was not until June 2000 that the British Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine ordered that intending QCs will simply have to promise to "well and truly serve all whom I may lawfully be called upon to serve in the office of one of Her Majesty's Counsel."
- 5 Rita Duffy and Paul Muldoon, *Cloth* (with an essay by Vikki Bell), Portadown, Millennium Court Arts Centre, 2007; see the review of the exhibition and book by David Hughes in *Circa* 120, summer 2007, pp 102 – 103.
- 6 Mairéad Farrell was a member of the PIRA. She was shot dead by British SAS in Gibraltar in 1988, while she and her two male companions, according to eye witnesses, were surrendering. In 1995 the European Court of Human Rights found that the British Government had contravened Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the 'right to life'. Duffy came across the jacket in the newly opened 'Irish Republican History Museum', Conway Mill, Belfast, where *inter alia* women who had been imprisoned in Armagh have gathered an archive of their experiences. The jacket, Duffy recalls, was being venerated like a religious relic.
- 7 The Widgery and Saville Inquiries were judicial inquiries established under the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) 1921 Act, the latter established in January 1998 in order to re-examine the events of that day.
- 8 Christine Bell, 'Dealing with the past in Northern Ireland', *Fordham international law journal*, Vol 26:4, 2003, pp 1095 – 1147
- 9 In the first in relation to the European Convention on Human Rights, and in the second in relation to a perceived need to address a 'definite matter of public importance.' The public inquiry is in the UK public law tradition, but in its second instance here it was arguably close to the truth and reconciliation commissions in other parts of the world, including, unusually, international judges (Hegarty, 2003).

Rita Duffy (b 1959) lives and works in Belfast.

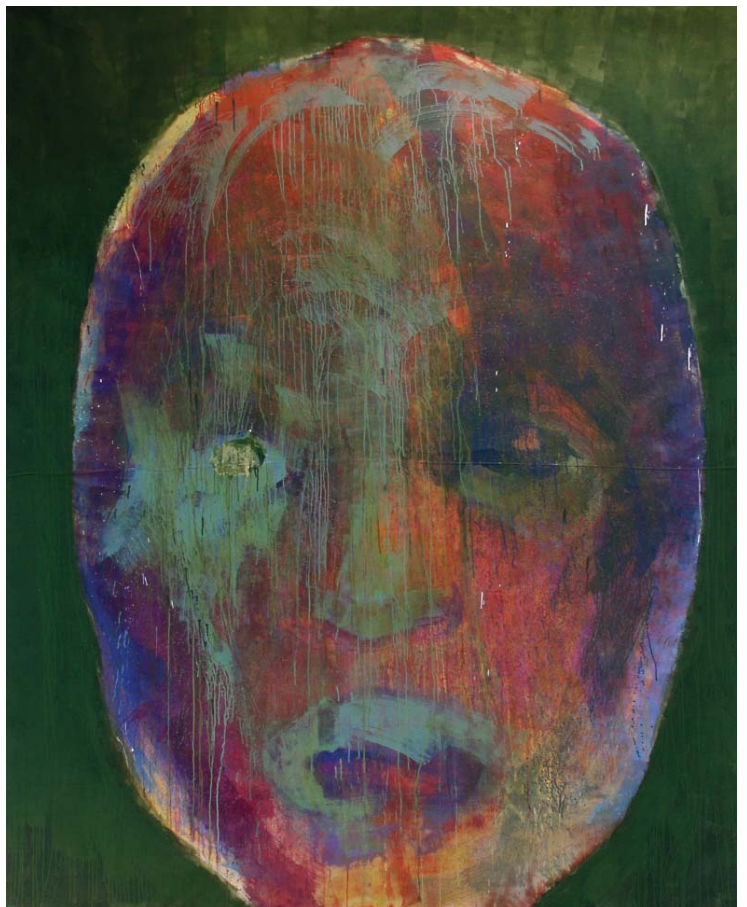
Daniel García (b 1958) was born in Rosario, Argentina. He emerged in the 1980s and has exhibited in many sole and joint exhibitions in Argentina, United States, Spain and Cuba.

Vikki Bell is Reader in Sociology at Goldsmiths College, University of London, where she convenes the MA in Critical and Creative Analysis. Her latest book is *Culture and performance: the challenge of ethics, politics and feminist theory*, Berg, 2007. Currently she is working on aesthetics and politics in the context of transitional justice, focusing on Northern Ireland and Argentina, funded by the AHRC.

[below left]
Jim Ricks
Imperial War Museum, 2007
collage
photo Martina Cleary
courtesy Burren College of Art

[below right]
Jackie Knight
Echo, 2007
Latex on canvas
3.5 x 3 m
photo Martina Cleary
courtesy Burren College of Art

64
TO THE WATERS
AND THE WILD:
THE BURREN COLLEGE
OF ART



Two signs caught my eye as I entered the village of Ballyvaughan on a sunny June day. The first, an ordinary street sign announcing that I had arrived in Ballyvaughan, I viewed with a touch of relief – I hadn't taken a wrong turn along the winding rural roads after all, and I was finally nearing my journey's end. But as I drew closer into the centre of the village, a second sign caught my eye – a simple wooden placard placed arbitrarily on a grassy verge, which read, in bright green caps, "HUG A STRANGER." I couldn't help smiling, and somehow it made me feel welcome in this remote place on the west coast, where I was a stranger to everyone.

I later discovered that the second sign was the remnants of the Burren College of Art's Masters of Fine Art (MFA) degree show, *Even odd*. Its presence says much about the existence of the college itself in this wild, empty part of Co Clare: how the unexpected presence of a third-level art college somehow fits in, interacts with its surroundings, adds something different and unexpected to the area, and engages on a deeper level with a local community that relies heavily on the passing tourist trade. As the artist who created the work, Dante Cozzi, says in his statement, "the relationship between us. and the world. unity... duality... separation. between myself and others. between ourselves and the natural world. between ourselves and all we see as the other – even our own self. I see these themes of connection as being basic and vital issues to our world, and to our existence as humans within it."¹

As a phenomenon, the Burren College of Art is worth examining. It is slowly but surely, quietly but determinedly, putting it itself on the map as a place that offers an alternative model of art education. A small institution with big ambitions, it proclaims that its aim is to be "the greatest little art school in the world."² And since the instigation of the MFA programme in 2003, the seriousness of its vision is becoming increasingly apparent.

Now thirteen years in existence, the college is still very much evolving, developing and establishing its role and identity. As US artist John Baldessari said on visiting the school, "What a place for an art school... what possibilities!"³ Those possibilities continue to be explored. Indeed, the school sees itself as existing within the tradition of experimental art education, according to the dean, Prof Timothy Emlyn Jones. As he says, "It seems like a crazy thing to do – to build an art school in what people think is a wilderness – and that's the best reason for doing it."

But until recently, and perhaps still to a certain degree, there have been some misconceptions within Ireland about the college. Because of its location in the Burren, it has been easy to dismiss it simply as a school of 'landscape painting'. It has also been thought of, in the words of college president Mary Hawkes-Greene, as a place aimed solely at "rich American kids." And because it is private and fee-paying, it has often been perceived as elitist and inaccessible. Such perceptions, while to a certain degree understandable, mask a truth that is far more complex, and a lot more interesting.

The Burren College of Art comprises a small, compact campus on the grounds of the sixteenth-century Newtown Castle. Located on the far side of Ballyvaughan, it is reached via a long, narrow gravel path off a winding country road. Its backdrop is a bare, stony outcrop of land, while from the other perspective a panorama of the Clare countryside stretches out into the distance. The sense of isolation, the silence, the remoteness, is palpable. You realise just how small the college is when you see that the 'campus' consists mainly of one group of unobtrusive buildings clustered around a single courtyard – comprising the lecture theatre, library, canteen, seminar rooms, darkroom, art supplies shop, sculpture studio and, of course, the studios themselves. The most recent additions to the campus are the new, purpose-built studios for the MFA students and an impressively large, naturally lit exhibition space. What strikes one most, though, is the generous size of the studios. Evidently, studio work is central to the college's ethos.

The college was established in 1993 by the late Michael Greene and his wife Mary Hawkes-Greene. According to Mary Hawkes-Greene, it was her husband's idea to set up an art college. "To put a centre of education here, that's what his vision was, and from the very outset his vision was clear that it was to be third level, have accredited degrees and be international," she says. Crucially in this regard, Greene was a local Ballyvaughan man, whose family had been in the area for generations and ran Hyland's Hotel. There, over the years, he had encountered many artists and writers who came to experience the Burren landscape. And so, when the couple purchased the then crumbling Newtown Castle and its adjoining house, outhouses and land, the idea of an art college came to Greene, who was eager to establish something that would benefit the local community while also fitting in with the history and culture of the Burren which, as Hawkes-Greene notes, has for centuries been a seat of learning, from a Brehon law school to a centre for bardic learning and a place of monastic reflection.

An advisory council of professionals from the worlds of art and education was established, and the first president, Eugene Wicks, was appointed. Michael Healy architects were selected to design and construct the college complex and the castle was restored in time for the opening in 1994.

While the college is private and receives no State funding, Hawkes-Greene is keen to emphasise that, unlike most private educational establishments, it is a not-for-profit charitable trust. However, this meant that the college would have to rely on student fees and donations. When the college was being established, Irish students did pay fees to attend university, but in the very year that the college opened, fees were abolished for undergraduates. "We opened in 1994, but it couldn't have been worse timing. We had wanted to enrol Irish students from day one, but suddenly we were charging fees, which at the time were going to be comparable with what the other colleges had been charging."

During feasibility studies, however, the college had spotted an opportunity for development. "We had seen that there was a gap in the market for American students who generally spend their junior year abroad for a semester. There weren't many art colleges in the English-speaking world where they could do that, so we discovered that there was enough of a market there to give us a good foundation," says Hawkes-Greene.

Catering for US students on the study-abroad programme became the college's focus for the first ten years of its existence, along with a two-year FETAC (NCEA) diploma aimed at undergraduate Irish students. "We decided the way we were going was to have American students come in their junior year – that would be the bread and butter of the place," recalls Hawkes-Greene. "And then we would try and set up an undergraduate degree as well."

However, this concentration on the study-abroad programme meant the school became somewhat disconnected from the Irish art world. During this time, it built up a strong relationship with many US universities, becoming a member of the US Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design (AICAD). But, as Jones notes, it soon became better known internationally than in Ireland.

As time went on, it became apparent that trying to establish a full undergraduate degree was not suitable for the character and ethos of the school, and it would be difficult for a college of such a small scale to have the wide range of facilities needed for an undergraduate programme. Consequently, the focus turned to developing a graduate programme. "Over the years it became clear that the experience here was much more suited to more

advanced students who had the maturity to appreciate and work in this kind of environment," says Hawkes-Greene. "We realised that this was not a place for people coming straight out of secondary school. We didn't have what they needed, which is a huge range of subjects and lots of diversion. It's not that kind of experience."

Thus the MFA was developed, a two-year programme accredited by the National University of Ireland, Galway, and associated with the Royal College of Art (RCA) in London and School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). While the college's links with these accredited, prestigious institutions are extremely important for developing its local and international status, they also mean it can maintain its independence and small scale. The first intake of MFA students took place in 2003, with the first graduations in 2005. "I think getting the Masters programme has really opened up to me what the place is good for and the level at which it works best," says Hawkes-Greene.

"The Burren College of Art experience is not for everyone. But then, are you everyone?," the college's website asks.⁴ And, certainly, the experience it offers is suited to a particular type of student. "It's for someone who's looking for something different, an alternative to mainstream education – individualists, people who have an independent frame of mind, who can work quite independently," says Jones. The aim of the MFA, then, is to provide an intense, two-year course in a remote location, "free from urban distraction," which enables the student to focus completely on the development of their practice.

The course takes a three-pronged approach, with modules on studio research, professional skills, and historical and critical analysis, thus seeking to equip students with the skills to become practising, professional artists on graduation. Its structure is centred on several key attributes of the college: its rural location, intimate size and lack of bureaucracy; its focus on studio work, independent study and interdisciplinary methods; its favourable student-teacher ratio and the increased one-to-one tuition this entails; and its all-important external links, visiting speakers and trips abroad.

The Burren location is at the very core of the college's ethos, structures and philosophy. But, as Hawkes-Greene notes: "We're always careful to make sure this place isn't seen as a school of landscape painting. The landscape is simply a context that helps people develop their ideas, but it is a very special place and that's one of the things that is really coming out in the work of the students. They're not painting the landscape, they're not representing it, but it affects them."

Gini Tevendale
Prelude, 2007
digital image
photo Martina Cleary
courtesy Burren College of Art



The fact that the MFA students spend two years there, rather than a couple of weeks or just one semester, is crucial. The time and space this affords them is seen as a key aspect of the course. However, it can also be a very intense, isolating experience – removed from the comfort zone of friends and family, unable to escape into the throngs of the city and cooped up for long periods of time with the same, small number of people, can be difficult for students (curiously, several people I spoke to at the college compared it with *Big Brother...*). When I visited, the stunning summer weather made the place seem idyllic – quite different to what it must be like during the cold, dark evenings in the depths of winter. “Students who stay here for two years have time to engage with the area, and they need to be mature enough to be able to cope with a very insular experience,” says Hawkes-Greene. “But that’s what it’s meant to be for; it’s for those who want that intense focus on their work, and it means they do look inside themselves.”

To counterbalance this isolation, the college has worked hard to build up links with the world outside. “Our location is the Burren but our context is the international art world – it has to be at that level,” says Jones. “We are very well networked; we are remote but not isolated.” Each week, a visiting lecturer from Ireland or abroad visits the college to give a talk on their work, as well as a group critique or presentation. The list of past participants is formidable, ranging from faculty members from the RCA and SAIC, to Irish and international artists and curators. Previous speakers have included Candida Alvarez, Ian Breakwell, Richard Demarco, Sir Christopher Frayling, Richard Long, Dorothy Cross, Rita Duffy and Mike Fitzpatrick, among others.

While this outward-looking approach is crucial, the resident faculty is also, obviously, of prime importance. It is a small, but select group of practising artists: Jones himself, who has been dean since 2002; performance artist Áine Phillips, who is the head of sculpture; Tom Molloy, head of painting; and the latest arrival, photography lecturer Martina Cleary, a multi-media artist who has recently returned to Ireland after several years in Finland. With the college’s small scale and flexible structure, students get to know their lecturers very well, receive a great deal of one-to-one attention, and benefit from 30 contact hours a week. The aim of this is to create an intimate, community atmosphere, which is student-friendly and focused on the individual, in contrast to the more anonymous, bureaucratic experience of larger, State-run institutions.

The college is not without its downsides, though. The facilities, for example, while decent, are limited. The focus is purely on Fine Art – painting, drawing, photography, performance and sculpture – but there are

no provisions for design or craftwork. Nor are there proper printmaking facilities or plans to develop them, which could be seen as a disadvantage for many students. And although there are computer facilities, these could be improved – indeed, the college is hoping to expand its digital facilities and develop more of a focus on film and video. Considering the scale of the college, such limitations are of course understandable. But in addition to this, the isolated location means it can be difficult – and expensive – to source and transport materials a student may need for a particular project.

However, in the eyes of the college, this lack of facilities and materials can be turned to the students’ advantage. They are encouraged to consider other options – to be creative with the resources, both internal and external, that are available to them. “They have to rely on themselves, they are forced to look inwards and draw on their own resources... they develop an independence, a resourcefulness, while they are here – an ability to think for themselves,” says Hawkes-Greene.

What the college offers instead of a wide range of facilities are exceptional studio spaces, to which students have 24/7 access. This suits the conceptual, interdisciplinary, process-based nature of the MFA, which is essentially ideas-based rather than skills-based. “We advocate an interdisciplinary approach, which doesn’t mean we require people to work with more than one medium. Interdisciplinarity is a way of thinking – we want someone to have a mindset where everything is possible. They’re not just trying to become, say, good photographers, because that’s a very conventional approach and they would never go beyond the conventions of photography,” says Jones. “It comes down to focusing on your rationale. And for me that is the idea of art as a process of inquiry.”

The MFA is still in its infancy, so the proof of its worth will be revealed over time, in the quality of the graduates that it produces. “I want the work to speak for itself, and let that be what puts the right message out about us. That’s what it’s about at the end of the day – the proof will be in the art that’s produced and what it is that makes the students graduating from here different,” says Hawkes-Greene. With only three classes graduating so far, it is difficult to determine just yet how the course has benefitted students. But in the local Galway scene, for example, their presence is certainly being felt. MFA students have been involved in G126 since it was established in 2005, and they exhibit frequently with them – most recently in August with an exhibition of 2007 graduates Loren Erdrich, Meaghan Schwelm, Marie Connole and Paul Timoney. Several have also participated in *Tulca*, and their names often crop up in exhibitions in the city. But while the core of the Burren College ‘experience’ is its remote location,



the disadvantage of this – in addition to a general lack of awareness about the MFA – meant that this year's graduate show, *Even odd*, was rather poorly attended by professionals from the wider art world.

As the course becomes more established, it should receive more interest from suitable students from a wider range of backgrounds and practices. In 2005, there were seven graduates; in 2006 there were only three; this year, eleven students graduated. At present it receives about twice as many applications as there are places. "I'd like to get to the stage where we had a greater range of applications so that you can really have the type of student who is suited to here," says Hawkes-Greene.

70

With its desired aim to be the "greatest little art school in the world," the Burren College of Art is keen not to expand much further in terms of scale, but is eager to maintain its focus on being an artist-led institution unburdened by bureaucratic layers. "It's a very pure model of education," Hawkes-Greene insists. "We're just offering an alternative to mainstream." At the moment, there are 50 – 60 students at any one time, and the aim would be to rise to no more than 100 students. According to Jones, "Education in many countries has become a mass industry and that's based on very good principles of social inclusion, but it's also based on business principles of low unit cost and fast throughput. It's an industrial model. This is an educational model!" The college, however, is keen to emphasise that it is not acting in opposition to State-run institutions, but simply complements them by offering suitable students an alternative learning environment.

Jones has in the past been involved in experimental art education, having been one of the organisers of the 1968 sit-in at Hornsey College of Art and been involved in the Free International University and with Joseph Beuys. He says the college has been compared with Black Mountain College in North Carolina, and several others mention this on my visit. The comparison is slightly misleading, though. There are a number of similarities between the Burren College of Art and Black Mountain, but there are also crucial differences. Black Mountain, which existed from 1933 to 1957, pioneered an alternative, progressive educational model and became a powerhouse of creative energy, with the likes of Josef Albers and John Cage teaching there. Both it and the Burren are situated in a remote location, both espoused a process-based, ideas-led, interdisciplinary approach to art making, and both featured an intense community atmosphere. However, the courses at Black Mountain were not accredited, and the existence was more commune-like than at the Burren, where institutional structures and links to the world outside are crucial.⁵

While the study-abroad groups continue to attend the college, the FETAC course has been discontinued. A one-year Post-Baccalaureate certificate⁶ has since been established instead, which offers a bridging course between undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and is aimed at those who are either not quite ready for, or not interested in, undertaking a full graduate degree. Like the MFA, though, it focuses on building a studio-based practice. In addition, the college offers summer schools, workshops in various art forms and a studio residency scheme, while also hosting an annual conference on the Burren and the Burren Law School. In particular, it is hoping to build on its exhibition programme, which currently features several student exhibitions and a *Burren annual* exhibition organised by an invited curator. Previous guest curators have included Kevin Kavanagh and Jon Bewley of Locus +, while Michael Dempsey is curating this year's show. The college has also been involved in an interesting art criticism project in association with SAIC and UCC. Entitled *The Art seminar* and edited by James Elkins, it involves the publication of a series of roundtable talks and critical assessments of these talks on theoretical issues in contemporary art such as 'Is Art History global?', 'The state of art criticism' and 'Landscape theory'.⁷

However, the focus of the college remains the courses themselves, according to Hawkes-Greene. Rather than grow in size, she would like the college to build on what it has already – to improve current facilities, increase external links and ensure a more international student body. Interestingly, the college is also working on developing a PhD in studio practice, which would be available to full-time and part-time students.

The college's ultimate aim is both radical and ambitious: according to Jones, they would like to offer free education for all students, along the lines of Cooper Union in New York. "That everybody studies free – that would be the ideal... but that would be a very long-term aspiration, that would be a dream."

In the meantime, fees are still an issue. While the college has stepped up fundraising efforts since the MFA began, fees remain a key source of income. The cost of the MFA programme is €16,800 per year, while the Post-Bac is €15,800. Perhaps for this reason, the majority of the MFA students are still from the US, where there is a federal loan system and where private university education is the norm rather than the exception. However, according to Hawkes-Greene, "We try not to exclude anybody who is talented and suited to this experience."

There are two scholarship schemes: the Michael Greene Memorial Scholarship Fund, which provides means-tested part-scholarships for MFA and Post-Bac students up to €5,000 a year; and the President's Fund of €11,500 per year for Irish and EU MFA and Post-Bac students who demonstrate "exceptional ability." There is also an MFA scholarship of €14,000 offered by Clare County Council and an NUIG postgraduate fellowship of up to €7,000. Many Irish and EU students attending the college, therefore, have their fees subsidised, with the remainder often paid for through the State grant system. Thus, a number of Irish students who have participated in the MFA have had their entire fees paid for them.

The Burren College of Art is a unique experiment in art education, based in a unique rural landscape. While it has some distance to go before truly establishing itself as an alternative centre for learning, it is certainly on track to do just that. The initiative and vision it takes to establish a private art college with such high ambitions and serious intent is certainly commendable, and the developments in recent years have been steadily proving the cynics – and there were plenty of them – wrong. "I would hope by now that we will be seen for what we are doing, which is stemming from a very pure motivation. It's not trying to make money from bringing in American students, and every penny that is made here is ploughed back into the facilities," says Hawkes-Greene. "You only get people on board in a place like this who are really motivated and interested, and you need people to come here because they want to and they're looking for something different in life, so I would hope by now that we are recognised in

Ireland as just having an interesting alternative model of art education that's there for the right student."

Visiting the college during summer, when the studios were bare and the students were absent, I still picked up a sense of the palpable energy in this tiny community of artists, living and working together in an outpost on the west coast. Integrated with the people of Ballyvaughan and adapted to the rhythm of the countryside, the staff and students of the Burren College of Art have, in effect, become part of the local landscape. As I left the village behind me on my long journey back to the frenzied urban life of Dublin, I couldn't help reflecting - am I everyone?

- 1 Dante Cozzi, extract from statement, *Even odd* MFA degree-show brochure. The exhibition took place from 14 to 27 April, 2007, at the Burren College of Art.
- 2 Mary Hawkes-Greene, 'A Message from the President', the Burren College of Art prospectus.
- 3 Quoted in the Burren College of Art prospectus.
- 4 See www.burrencollege.ie
- 5 For further details, see www.blackmountaincollege.org
- 6 Students who complete this programme are awarded a Higher Diploma in Fine Art by NUIG. The first intake of students was in 2006/7. The 'baccalaureate' referred to here is a third-level - usually BA - degree, rather than a secondary-level baccalauréat.
- 7 For further details, see www.imagehistory.org

Eimear McKeith
writes on visual art for
the *Sunday Tribune*

previous spread
[above]
Brian Kelly
Sex & Death, 2006
gloss paint on plywood
photo Martina Cleary
courtesy Burren College of Art

[below]
Loren Endrich
installation of drawings
2007
photo Martina Cleary
courtesy Burren College of Art

Belfast *The Birth exchange project* **Slavka Sverakova 86** | **Cork** Colin Crotty / Megan Eustace / Sibyl Montague **Treasa O'Brien 97** | **Derry** Cathy Wilkes **Pádraig Timoney 88** | **Dublin** *Follow the light* **Eimear McKeith 74** | Art 2007 **Gemma Tipton 77** | *The Important thing is that tomorrow is not the same as yesterday* **Chris Fite-Wassilak 80** | **Galway** *Vivienne Dick: The True centre is always new* **Michaële Cutaya 90** | *Eilís Murphy: Work of the devil* / Ciara Healy: *Stories of displacement* **Katherine Waugh 100** | **Kilkenny** Frances Hegarty and Andrew Stones: *Tactically yours* **Brian Hand 110** | **Limerick** *The Colour of surprise* **Karen Normoyle-Haugh 112** | **Portadown** *Nick Stewart: no-one's not from everywhere* **David Hughes 94** | **Venice** *Willie Doherty / Gerard Byrne* **Judith Wilkinson 103** | *Cinema spaces and structures at the 52nd Venice Biennale* **Maeve Connolly 106** | **Waterford** *Titled/untitled* **Gemma Tipton 83** | **(Magazine)** *Sarah Browne: Sweet futures* **Charlotte Bonham-Carter 92** |

C

Cathy Wilkes
Non Verbal (Version)
(detail), 2007
photo Paola Bernadelli
courtesy Void



Follow the light

Follow the light, 2007
installation shot, with
Rhona Byrne
Rainbow, 2006
Lamda print mounted on dibond,
46 x 29 cm
and
Aoife Desmond
*Wardian case with Lemon
Geranium*
glass and wood box with lemon
geranium
38h x 61w x 38d
courtesy Stone Gallery



Follow the light was a group exhibition curated by artist Beth O'Halloran. She is herself represented by the Stone Gallery, and the exhibition seems to continue a strategy by the gallery to give artists an opportunity to curate – it followed on immediately from a group show curated by another gallery artist, Hugh McCarthy. As with that exhibition, O'Halloran's choice of theme and selection of artists reflects her own artistic practice, although in an oblique, open-ended way.

Her own paintings – delicate, understated reflections on atmospheric effects in nature – would sit easily among the works included in *Follow the light*. The exhibition featured work in a range of media, including painting, drawing, photography and installation, by four diverse artists – Rhona Byrne, Aoife Desmond, Frances Jung and Charles Matson Lume – who all address the element of light in some way.

Light, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is “the natural agent that stimulates sight and makes things visible.” Light is thus a force which acts upon us and enables us to see. As John Berger wrote: “It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world.”

The artists in *Follow the light* draw our attention to the act of seeing. Thus the works reflect back upon the viewer, as if holding a mirror up to our ways of seeing. The term “follow the light,” a rather clichéd phrase in its usual usage, also summons up associations with religious dedication and the search for spiritual illumination. This exhibition, by heightening our awareness of our role as spectators, encourages us to engage in a different form of enlightenment. In an accompanying essay, O'Halloran states that she has been informed by the writings of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who wrote about the phenomenal in

visual art, and who argued that the essential partiality of our view of things – the fact that they can only be seen in a certain perspective and at a certain moment in time – does not diminish their reality, but establishes it. As O'Halloran quotes Martin Heidegger, it “should make manifest what is hidden in ordinary, everyday experience, which is an interconnected system of equipment, social roles and purposes”. In *Follow the light*, each artist uses material from, reflects upon, or changes our perception of “ordinary, everyday experience.”

Indeed, O'Halloran positions the exhibition within the context of a phenomenological approach to contemporary art practice, citing such practitioners as Olafur Eliasson, Robert Irwin, James Turrell and Wolfgang Laib, each of whom, she says, “hold[s] interactivity, experientiality, and the activation of the spectator as central to their work.”

The exhibition was sparsely hung, with many of the works, in particular those of Lume and Desmond, happened upon, easily overlooked or ephemeral. One of Desmond's works – a chalk drawing of a chickweed plant on the gallery's exterior – was created for the opening night, but was soon washed away by rain. Another wall drawing by Desmond, *Buddlia*, this time on the gallery's interior, was near the ceiling, making the delicate rendering of the plant easy to miss. Lume's *wish (for Gustaf Sobin)*, on the gallery's glass door, was literally invisible until you breathed on it to reveal the shape of a heart – just as a child creates finger drawings on windows sparkling with condensation. Likewise, through the use of traditionally ‘off-limit’ spaces such as the stairs and basement, the exhibition became a journey of exploration and discovery.

In the work of Aoife Desmond, light acts as an invisible but tangible force that has a physical effect on

her work and essentially determines its appearance. The centrepiece, *Wardian case with lemon geranium* quite literally follows the light – it is a real plant placed on the floor, its leaves protruding from the wood-framed glass box in which it is encased. As a plant, it changes over time and so, as with the chalk drawing, any experience of it is transitory, ephemeral and ever-changing. Accompanying this was a series of delicate, spare drawings of geraniums and the aforementioned wall drawings. Each piece interacts with each other and with the space itself, together suggesting an absent human presence – the artist's observation of, interaction with and transformation of nature. There is in her work a taut balance between control and chaos, order and chance, interior and exterior, the tame and the wild.

Light is also a crucial element in the work of Lume – it is the principal medium for the transformation of the quotidian and the revelation of beauty in the ordinary. Everyday, mass-produced and often tacky found objects are transformed by a simple spotlight into something new, unexpected and beautiful. *Eclipse (for Sarah)*, at the bottom of the gallery's cramped, utilitarian stairs, comprises two glow-in-the-dark icicle decorations, which have been glued to the wall at oblique angles. A spotlight shines onto a round mirror on the floor, which bounces the light up onto the wall and illuminates the two objects. Their shadows join to form the shape of a heart on the wall behind. *Eclipse* is an appropriate title, as the position of the viewer is crucial – if you stand in the way of the spotlight, the objects revert to their original state as simple, kitsch ornaments. As Lume has said of his work, “The shadows have power to say something more than their objects.”

Eimear McKeith writes on
visual art for the *Sunday
Tribune*

[above]
Rhona Byrne
Rainbow, 2006
Lamda print mounted on dibond
46 x 29 cm

[below]
Charles Matson
Lumeclipse (for Sarah), 2003
glow-in-the-dark icicle
ornament, mirror
variable size
courtesy Stone Gallery

76



Lume's most ambitious piece in the exhibition was the site-specific installation, *the first sky is inside you II (for Beth O'Halloran)*. Situated in the basement, it comprised a large scattering of tiny round mirrors on the floor. With several spotlights trained on these mirrors, they threw reflections on to the ceiling above to form an off-focus, luminescent cloud.

Three photographs by Rhona Byrne were included in the exhibition, each of which capture the fleeting effects of light on our environment. Each image features a different form of light within urban surroundings. *Rainbow* depicts a looming grey city sky transformed by the ephemeral arc of a rainbow. *Streetlamp* is almost entirely black but for a single lamp extending into the frame from below: the man-made, functional, electric light becomes a delicate glowing orb, surrounded by a perfectly circular rainbow of colour. In the third image there is also a street light, but it has not actually been lit – rather it forms a black, cruciform-shaped silhouette against a darkening sky.

There is an intimate, contemplative character to this exhibition; it manages to be tender yet unsentimental. Each of Lume's works, for example, is dedicated to a friend, relation or his wife. Similarly, alongside Byrne's photographs, there is a fourth photograph, *Northern lights Howth Head*, which also captures the changing effects of light on our surroundings, this time the rare phenomenon of the aurora borealis over Dublin. This photograph, however, was actually taken by Rhona Byrne's late father, Dermott Byrne, and its presence, in the context of her works, is a touching, poignant commemoration.

Follow the light reflects a commendable strategy by the Stone Gallery to host challenging curated exhibitions within a commercial-gallery context. A relative newcomer on the Dublin art scene, the Stone Gallery has in

the past year stepped up its game in terms of its exhibition programme and curatorial strategy, moving from a focus on two-dimensional work to including new media and less obviously 'commercial' pieces. For a young gallery in a difficult market, this is a brave move. Perhaps the only pity is that the gallery's admirable curatorial ambitions have stretched beyond the building in which it is housed – while using the basement as an additional space adds to its potential and, in the context of this exhibition, was used cleverly and creatively, it is still primarily a storage space. Frances Jung's two paintings of chandeliers in particular suffered from this – *Boudoir* was placed in an awkward position above the reception desk in the main space, while *Chandelier* was shown in the basement. Lacking natural light, *Chandelier* gleamed under a spotlight like a hidden jewel, but it also seemed lost in among the stored artworks and unused furniture. It could be argued that, as O'Halloran writes, this was part of the exhibition's strategy to "implore the viewer to encounter a space perhaps once considered too incidental to have meaning." So while it is appropriate in a way – the glittering chandelier of the painting, with all its connotations of luxury and extravagant display, is left in a dark basement corner, thus underscoring its ephemerality and emptiness – in the end, it simply does not do the artwork justice.

Overall, however, it cannot but be argued that *Follow the light* was an impressively ambitious, thought-provoking and moving exhibition – in essence, it was a revelatory experience for the viewer, in more ways than one.

If Basel and Miami can do it, why can't we? Apart from the obvious candidates, like Frieze (London) and Armory (New York), ArtBasel (in both its locations) proves that successful art fairs don't necessarily have to be situated at the epicentre of the commercial contemporary art world. What they do have to do though is attract both high-quality galleries, and enough serious art collectors to make each party find the trip worthwhile. This is not simply a one-follows-the-other process, and the most successful art fairs have a programme of ancillary events – from special exhibitions, late-night openings at city galleries and institutions, talks and discussions, to receptions, gala dinners and parties. Armory Director Katelijne de Backer considers that “there are about 200 collectors – if it's even that many – who seem to spend their life going to fairs, and everyone is chasing after them. It's a little difficult because half of them want sexy galas and the other half hate that whole circus.”¹ Not just a case of luring collectors, galleries and curators in with promises of excess, however: there is a purpose to the galas and parties as they offer colleagues the chance to get together, be introduced to different artists, tour exhibitions, and find ways of working together.

ART 2007

John Kindness
*Arnolfini Portrait #1 (after
Jan van Eyck)*, 2007
enamel and oil on MDF panel
40 x 30 cm
courtesy Hillsboro Fine Art



In addition to the networking opportunities (and if a gallery is making contacts, so too are their artists), art fairs are increasingly becoming the places in which the contemporary art world does its mercantile business. Overheard conversations at art fairs from Rotterdam to Miami to Berlin suggest that for some galleries they are overtaking the regular exhibitions programme for sales volume; so whatever one thinks of them, they cannot be ignored. A look at www.artfairsinternational.com shows just how many of the things there are, and the sales figures at the top end (Armory, Frieze, Basel) are in the tens of millions. All of which means that it has been long past time for Ireland to enter the fray. Irish galleries have had a track record of exhibiting at international fairs: Kerlin has been a long-standing regular participant; Rubicon too; while Kevin Kavanagh, Green on Red and Mother's Tankstation are also among the galleries that have made the financial and time commitments necessary to bring the work of their artists abroad (as well as passing the rigorous selection process that the top-end fairs apply).

Art 2007, which took place at the RDS as an adjunct to the larger Interior Design 2007, exceeded expectations in many areas, while it missed opportunities in others. It's possible that my relatively low expectations were somewhat unfair, although they were based on the experience of *Art Ireland*, now in its eighth year at the RDS. It is probably fair to say that *Art Ireland* is to *Art 2007* as the railings of St Stephen's Green are to IMMA. Having said that, both *Art Ireland* and the railings of St Stephen's Green are also highly successful in terms of sales. *Art Ireland* has spawned sister shows – the Galway Art Fair and the Cork Art Fair; they are just presenting art at a different level, an issue that raised questions of context and value at *Art 2007* as well.

Participation at *Art 2007* was by invitation only, and included most of Ireland's major contemporary private galleries (a notable non-participant being the Fenton Gallery). In comparison to other international art fairs, the layout was good and the booth sizes generous. Expertise from seasoned art-fair exhibitors meant that partition heights had been increased, which added to the strong overall general impression. Galleries that 'knew their stuff' also insisted on having 'offices' built into their booths – where a great deal of unexhibited pieces are usually stored, and sold, throughout a fair. It takes a different set of skills to hang a booth at an art fair than it does to do the layout in a gallery (whatever the architecture of that gallery may be). There's a process of editing that needs to go on, and a need to create an impact that doesn't detract from quieter works that are on display. Some strong booths were from Stone Gallery, Mother's Tankstation, Rubicon, Kevin Kavanagh and Kerlin. Four Gallery opted to show the work of a single artist, Anna Barham, a strategy that encouraged and required time and contemplation in an environment that didn't necessarily support too much of either.

The questions of context and value came in some interesting juxtapositions with *Art 2007*'s larger neighbour, Interior Design 2007. Just as I cannot quite understand how a sofa can come to cost €10,000, for some of the visitors to the Interiors Fair, who happened to wander into the 'art part', the question was reversed. How could that canvas cost *that* much? Putting your finger on exactly what the difference is between some craft and art is tricky; is it a question of volume; of the unique object versus the design that can be repeated? The presence of Stoney Road Press, who specialise in limited-edition prints by contemporary artists at *Art 2007*, would argue otherwise. There is also the nebulous question of

quality. Kilkenny's Hazel Williams Gallery had a rather weak solo show by Louise Butler at *Art 2007*, but a little internet research shows that Hazel Williams Gallery were also at Interior Design 2007 under the name of Art to Order. Given the fact that both events were organised by the same people (Louis O'Sullivan and Helen Mason), this duplication seems rather odd. Also at Interior Design 2007, Just Suzanne Wall Art offered a flock-wallpaper diptych for £70stg and, glass of wine in hand on the opening night, I did wonder whether, with sufficient levels of irony and presentation, a couple of thousand might not have been added to the price were it at *Art 2007* next door.

In this, its inaugural year, exhibitors at *Art 2007* were not charged for their booths, although charges were made (quite reasonably) for extra panels, lights and so on. While nothing has been finalised, Mason plans to meet with the participating galleries to discuss staging the event next year, when it will be, she says, "on a commercial basis." It will still be by invitation, she confirms, and there are plans to 'grow' the event to include an international aspect. Without a programme of adjacent events, however, it is unclear how many galleries from outside Ireland will be prepared to take the financial risk in coming (shipping and insurance ratcheting up costs); and major collectors, rather than 'casual buyers', are unlikely to come. While de Backer estimates 200 'serious' art-fair collectors in the world, some gallerists here put the number of 'significant' collectors of contemporary art in this country at about nine. Therefore a successful fair in Ireland will have to attract collectors from beyond our shores.

All art fairs are different in the details. Armory publishes sales figures (€60 million approx this year), Basel does not (although the value of the fair, were it to be sold, has been estimated, by Bloomberg, at \$500 million [€364 million]). *Art 2007* did not collate sales figures, although Mason says they were “very good.” Anecdotally, participating galleries did report extremely strong sales. Marketing of the event had not been strong, however. I got my information about it directly from some of the participating galleries, rather than from the fair itself, and there were no ancillary events. Some of the galleries reported that most of their sales were to existing clients, many of whom also bought from other galleries. The chance to see so much art in one place at one time expedited decision-making, and sales were indeed brisk. Brand new clients – a cross-over from the Interiors fair – were less numerous, however, although some people will, of course, be both art and design buyers.

So while the general lack of promotion meant that some galleries brought their own collectors and others benefited from that, the overall impression to be taken from *Art 2007* is of a country with a rich private contemporary sector, and a group of dedicated gallerists, working exceptionally hard on behalf of the artists they represent. It also demonstrated that there is a strong market for contemporary art at this level – a fact not lost on the organisers of another ‘sister’ of Art Ireland, which is run by Maria McMenamin at Eriva Ltd. The Dublin Art Fair, which will take place in September 2008, promises “a premier international event. Sixty selected galleries will exhibit the very

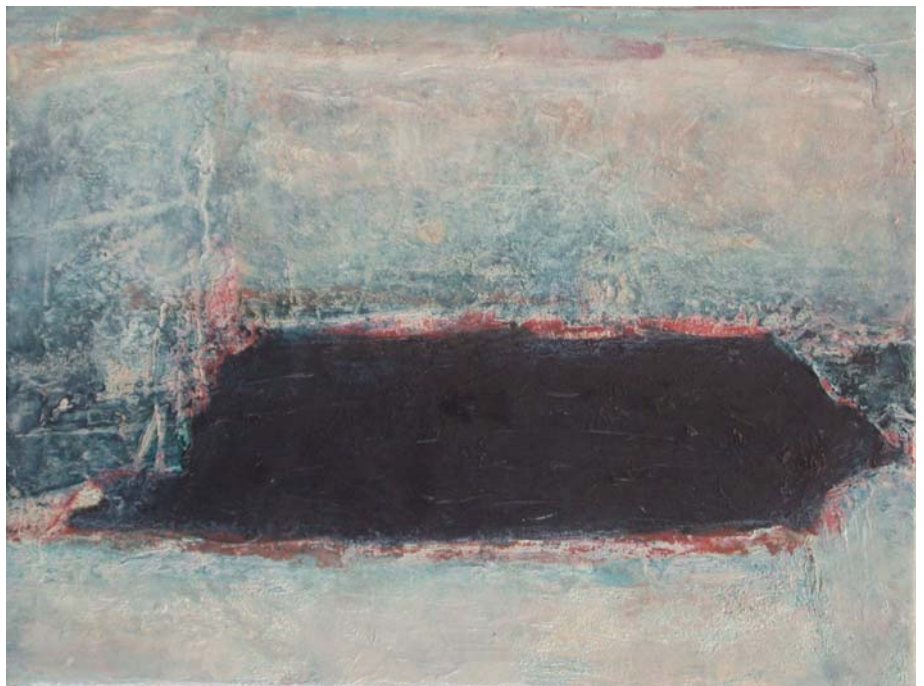
best new work from Irish and international artists.” Participating galleries will be selected by “a steering committee made up of gallery owners and directors [which] will vet all applications.”² This kind of transition isn’t actually new: Helen Allen went from bringing Will Ramsay’s Affordable Art Fair from London to New York in 2002 to directing PULSE, the highly regarded cutting-edge fair that now runs parallel to Armory New York, ArtBasel Miami and Frieze London. So can we attract enough high-level galleries *and* collectors-prepared-to-spend to Dublin not once, but twice, each year? Sam Keller, the man credited with making Basel the largest art fair in the world, gave this advice to his successors, when he stepped down from the role of Director earlier this year: “Change continuously with the art world... Listen to the galleries who have what it takes to make an art fair.”³ Unless the Dublin fairs are curated and highly selective of exhibitors, and unless they listen to the galleries who know what they’re doing, they won’t make the grade internationally. I think we *can* do it here, but it’s up to the organisers. Both sets of them.

Exhibiting galleries:
Cross Gallery, Fenderesky Gallery, Four, Green on Red Gallery, Hazel Williams Gallery, Hillsboro Fine Art, Jorgensen Fine Art, Kerlin Gallery, Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, Mother’s Tankstation, Paul Kane Gallery, Peppercannister Gallery, Solomon Gallery, Stone Gallery, Stoney Road Press, Rubicon Gallery, Taylor Gallery, and The Third Space


- 1 Quoted in Louisa Buck and J Greer, *Owning art: the contemporary art collector’s handbook*, Cultureshock, London, 2006, p 136
- 2 Information online at www.thedublinartfair.com
- 3 Interviewed by Linda Sandler online at www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601088&sid=a3L0DUg8f55I&refer=muse

Gemma Tipton is a writer and critic on art and architecture based in Dublin.

Gwen O’Dowd
Cladach 38, 2004
 oil on canvas
 30 x 40 cm
 courtesy Hillsboro Fine Art



80 The Important thing
is that tomorrow
is not the same as
yesterday



David Beattie
Das Lichtquant (Light quantum)
(detail), 2007
lightbulb, solar panel,
portable radio, speaker,
copper piping, funnel
courtesy Pallas Contemporary
Projects

The room is breathing. A light blinks on, illuminating the entire space, followed shortly after by the sound of exhaling air being emitted from a red funnel at the end of a trail of copper piping. The light extinguishes, the sound ceases. The process repeats, an alluring audiovisual rhythm being created by what looks like a home-made science experiment. The phenomenon of David

Beattie's *Das Lichtquant* (2007) sets a tone for the three works comprising the show as a sort of small, spacious, lo-fi science-fiction laboratory, a testing ground exploring presence and experience working towards the modest proposition of time travel.

The rhetorical mouthful of *The Important thing is that tomorrow is not the same as yesterday* takes its curatorial impulse from the writings of American architectural critic and self-styled urban planner Lewis Mumford. Mumford's writings from the '20s to the '60s dealt largely with the social impacts of urbanisation, calling for a more humanistic use of our growing technological resources and criticising the emphasis on production and profit under the guise of progress. Curator Gavin Murphy cites a section of Mumford's *Technics and civilization* (1934), in which he traces the development of the clock from the Middle Ages to being the defining invention of the Industrial Revolution, in turn contributing toward the anxiety of being 'out of date' and the arbitrary updating of products. Murphy is quick to cast this as a take on the word 'contemporary', claiming the work by David Beattie, Gillian Kane, and Paul McAree gathered in the exhibition as an "antidote to a *contemporary* that is a ceaseless *becoming*, and which is increasingly becoming the vital realm of contemporary art practice." It seems, then, that we are not simply presented with the 'poison' of the contemporary as an ongoing, relative present moment, but also as the label that has come to be inherited as an art-historical adjective following 'modern' and 'postmodern'.

The works themselves, however, both understate and exceed these constructs with a fragile immediacy that doesn't hold any apprehensions of appearing dated. They instead show an awareness of their own material placement in time, using that to perform different forms of inti-

mate re-encounters. The fraction between the light and sound in Beattie's *Lichtquant*, for example, becomes more pronounced as you follow the trail from the light bulb, as it shines onto a solar panel beneath. A set of wires lead beneath a red stand cupping a hard, bright-blue plastic sphere, the copper pipe starting from its apex. Once close enough, the simulated breathing sound is recognisable as a short burst of static, a portable radio briefly sounding with the power provided by each pulse of the naked bulb. The work derives its title from Einstein's original term for what we now know as photons, and whose development of the concept led to most modern electronics.

Lichtquant provides a simple exposition of this, but its cartoon-like contraption that mediates between the linked elements is self-evident – it calls more attention to our own sensory experience. Its ongoing, offset rhythm attests to the presence of technology in our lives, while emphasizing the primacy of perception by dislocating the activation of the bulb into two experiential events.

Gillian Kane's mural *March 23, 2007* (2007) stretches along the wall, depicting a scene from Dublin's Dodder river. A photo-based image in its awkward detail, the piece is done in life size with quick pencil strokes, positing the gallery floor as the waterside walkway. A duck dips its head serenely into the water, though within this fake pastoral scene the surrounding banks are covered with an undifferentiated tangle of foliage and rubbish, where bottles, boxes and wires weave and confuse with grass and ferns. The title assumedly marks the date the original photo was taken, setting out a growing distance between its inception and every encounter with the fading work. A temporary monument to this seemingly innocuous setting, its elegiac re-enactment of the photo resounds with the viewer's corresponding stroll.

The far end of the gallery hall is cut off by a plywood barrier. Squeezing by, it boundaries off a small room, its facing side covered with a collage of over twenty photos, creating an intimate sort of planning space somewhere between a photographer's studio and a war room. This is, as Paul McAree asserts, *My wall* (2007). In one image, a decrepit boat sits landlocked on a marsh, other sailboats coasting by on the open water in the far distance. Typed in white in the centre of the image is the sentence, "Fuck the pain away." The images, largely of the Irish countryside, each contain a superimposed phrase derived from songs by bands such as Sonic Youth, the Jesus and Mark Chain, Sisters of Mercy, and Peaches. McAree uses a formal juxtaposition of image and text to create a set of mini-narratives that are humorous, evocative, and temporally unstable.

Each suggests a moment in which the relationship between the song and the picture beneath could be of concurrent experience, memory, or a forceful association of two unrelated times, wavering between shallowly emblematic and deeply personal.

The artists in *The Important thing is...* do more than simply represent the 'today' implied by the title of the exhibition. Their take on the 'contemporary' is personal rather than social, creating simulated displacements of our own experience of the present, unfettered by trend. The works also share an undertone of ecological concerns, touching on energy supply, pollution, and the unchecked expansion Mumford attempted to address over fifty years ago, tracing a tomorrow that most certainly will not be the same.

Chris Fite-Wassilak is a writer and a curator based in London.



[below]

The Important thing is that tomorrow is not the same as yesterday, 2007
installation shot
courtesy Pallas Contemporary Projects

Titled/untitled

The idea of a collection is seductive, and when buying individual works of art slips over into 'becoming a collector', the art itself starts to be seen in a different light. Sometimes being part of a particular collection enhances perceptions of a work, sometimes it squeezes it into a contextual shape that doesn't quite fit. The same can be said of curation. This issue is increasingly urgent to address, given the rise of the influence both of curators and of a breed of 'super collector' whose tastes are coming to shape what is seen in our institutional spaces, as well as in individual exhibitions. Psychologically a collection becomes an extension of personality, and a way to create something that will 'live on'; testament to the collector's taste and, yes, influence. *Titled/untitled* is an exhibition that explores two collections, one over four hundred years old, the other just forty-two. The 'Titled' part is the Devonshire Collection, amassed by the Dukes of Devonshire from the sixteenth century onwards; while 'untitled' relates to the Rubell Family Collection, which has been put together since the 1960s. For this exhibition, the Devonshires have selected works from the Rubell Collection, and vice versa; and the choice of works is as telling in many ways as the collections themselves.

Artur Zmijewski
Singing Lesson 2
2003
installation view
and DVD still
courtesy Lismore Arts



Based in Miami, the Rubell Family have a massive collection of contemporary art, which is shown in a series of changing exhibitions at a 45,000-square-foot converted warehouse, as well as in a series of touring exhibitions and loans. Don and Mera Rubell began collecting when they married and, through Don's brother, the late Steve Rubell (who owned the Studio 54 club in New York) were part of a social scene that included Andy Warhol and Truman Capote. It was Don and Mera who introduced Keith Haring and Jean Michel Basquiat to Warhol. Looking over the Devonshire Collection, the Rubells elected to select portraiture, and, with the exception of a few photographs, they have chosen historical works. There is a Gainsborough, a Van Dyck, a Reynolds. Evidently what captivated them was a sense of history; the idea of tracing a family line, of knowing exactly who your ancestors have been throughout history, and of arriving at your own sense of identity by that means. With the exception of the Gainsborough (a portrait of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, painted 1785–88), however, the Rubells' selection is more remarkable for its focus on lineage than for the particular quality of individual works. To a viewer who has traipsed around English stately

homes and many of the Irish great houses (and been disappointed in the mis-match of reproductions and imported wall-fillers at places such as Castletown House), what comes across is a solid selection of family portraits from a family with an exceptionally strong attachment to history. That this history should be so fascinating to collectors who can only fantasise about a 400-year legacy for their own collection is what is most relevant.

Whether it is through the pragmatics of expediency, or a deliberate curatorial choice, the Devonshires' selection from the Rubell Collection, on the other hand, is solely comprised of video (or more aptly, DVD) works. These have been installed in the stables of a dilapidated yard to the rear of the gallery. While a sense of connection with the works in the gallery itself feels strained, this is the best part of the exhibition. DVD is a medium with which many galleries and museums still struggle. The moment of the heavy black curtain, drawn aside to let you stumble into darkness, often creates the opposite of intimacy, and many subtleties can be lost. This kind of display best suits the overblown bombast of Bill Viola, or the large and glossy productions of

James Coleman. Meanwhile, the multiple-screens-each-with-headphones option that galleries adopt when there is more than one work and only a single space is less than ideal also. At Lismore, the conceit of showing old work in the new space, and new work in the older spaces of the stables may seem contrived, but in fact it works perfectly. The sense of discovery in the stable yard makes each piece an exciting find. The context also lends a particular timelessness to what you are seeing, so, for once, the sense of technology does not come between the experience of what is being viewed and the viewer.

Highlights here are Gregor Schneider's eerily creepy *Nacht-Video Haus ur, Rheydt, Oktober 1996* (1996), where claustrophobia steals up, and the atmosphere thickens until, disorientated, you emerge, thankfully, into daylight. Ezra Johnson's *What visions burn* (2006) is an animation-by-painting art-theft road movie that both entertains and stays with you for its implications long after. And while Dara Friedman's *Revolution* (2003) is a quirky one-liner, and Anri Sala's *Promises* (2001) is somewhat irritating (non-English-speaking participants are urged to repeat the



Gregor Schneider
*Nacht-Video Haus ur,
Rheydt, Oktober 1996*
1996
installation view
courtesy Lismore Arts

phrase “no one puts a price on my head and lives”), it was Artur Zmijewski’s *Singing lesson 2* (2003) that brought me back for a second and third viewing. Here, a choir of deaf children are singing in a cathedral. The sound is discordant, cacophonous and initially you have the uncomfortable sense of joining in some sort of voyeuristic exploitation, making fun of the disabled... you wonder whether to leave. And then in a moment so small you might even miss it, one of the singers smiles, and you realise that they are absolutely loving what they are doing; that singing is as much about expressively letting go as it is about making the ‘right’ sounds; and that being in a choir is about the camaraderie of a group, joining with a common creative goal. A sense of joy grows to one of elation, and as the group are congratulated by the conductor, and hug and kiss one another, you realise that your own prejudices, though protective in intent, were still, nonetheless, prejudices.

Lismore Castle Arts itself is an interesting project. Housed in a wing of Lismore Castle, a neo-gothic romance of a building on the banks of the Blackwater, the gallery is a continuation of the Devonshire’s long involvement with the arts, both through collecting and through patronage. There is already a sculpture garden in the grounds, including works by Eilis O’Connell, Antony Gormley, and a recent David Nash (a smaller version of which is in the Royal Academy’s current Summer Exhibition in London). Showing just one exhibition per year (this is the third year) means there has been a relatively slow start. The first exhibition, *Individual fields*, presented solid, but rather safe, choices; while last year’s venture, site specific and other work by Richard Long, was more exciting. It takes a certain amount of clout to become a significant collector; clout to obtain the works you want, and

clout to make the works you have ‘matter’. The Rubells have an extremely strong sense of the role they have in the contemporary art world, and what their collection can do. As yet (and, possibly, thankfully) we have no Charles Saatchi, Francois Pinault, Eli Broad or Don and Mera Rubell-type collectors here, but this also means we lack the ‘third voice’ in an art world that includes the necessarily commercial focus of our private galleries, and the agenda of publicly funded spaces and projects. This is a role that Lismore Castle Arts is well placed to play, and it can add another strand to what is presently a rather two-sided conversation. *Titled/ untitled* sees them step further into this role, and it will be worth watching future plans unfold.

Gemma Tipton is a writer and critic on art and architecture based in Dublin.

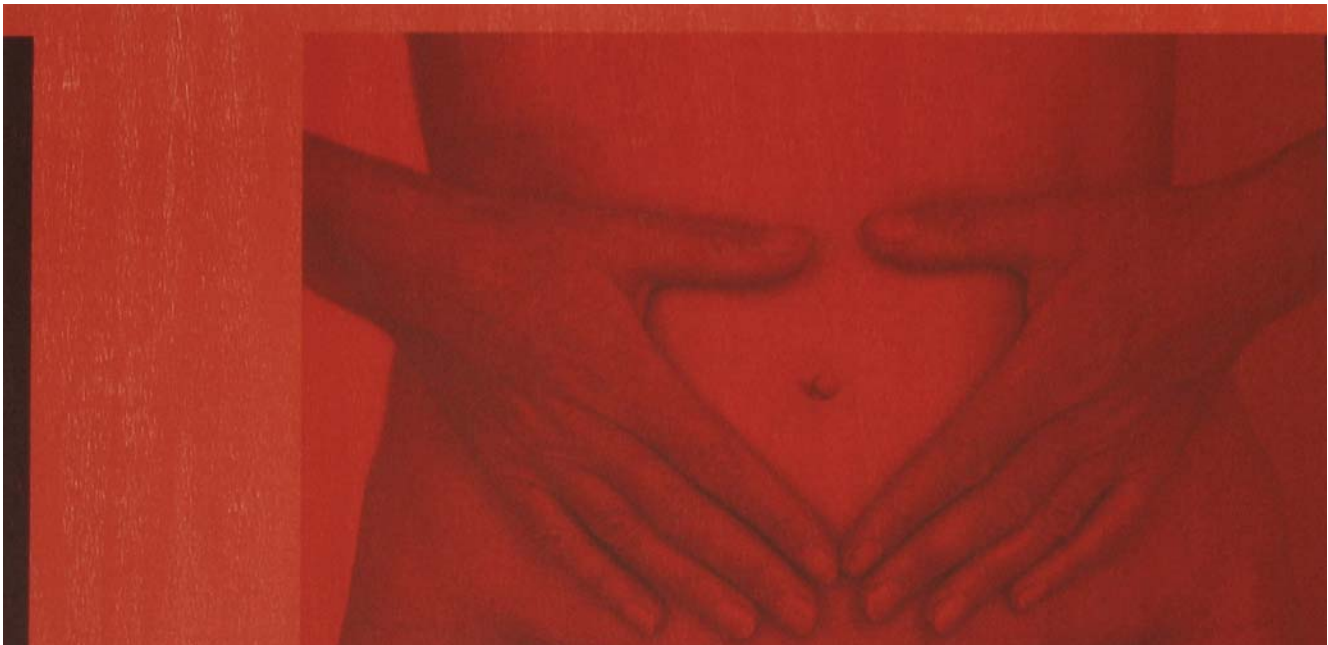
Sir Anthony van Dyck
*Portrait of Elizabeth,
Countess of Burlington*
c.1639
courtesy Lismore Arts



86 THE BIRTH EXCHANGE
PROJECT

- 1 Press release
- 2 This assumption is so widespread that I despair. Even the current *Venice Biennale* (hailed by some younger reviewers as the best so far) had some tacit visual work on display, letting the majority be a loud story-telling, illustrated (I use this term deliberately) by video images, in the dark.
- 3 www.sciam.com, June 2007
- 4 I included his work from another exhibition here to highlight one of the problems with the Taylor-Hunsinger curatorship: no male artists.
- 5 The Head of School of nursing at the Queen's University selected the work for the First Prize.

Ingrid Ledent
Untitled, 2006
courtesy the artist



The mixed-media collage *7FF* (2007) by Tjibbe Hooghiemstra at the Fendereski Gallery (until 6 July) subscribes completely to visual force without relying on or working against a tradition and without demonstrating a theory. The work stands in full confidence in the power of mute poetry. Less rare, in Belfast, is art in service of something daily, social, political or ideological or all at once. Art that lives by its instrumental value and depends on narrative.

Two such exhibitions were displayed across the road from each other. At Belfast Exposed a systematic survey, *Photographic exhibition – British watchtowers* (25 May – 27 July) by Donovan Wylie, recorded from a military helicopter a surveillance system, before it was demolished between 2003 and 2007. Karen Downey observed that his photographs afford the visitor “the privileged panoramic views once enjoyed only from the watchtowers.”¹ Not quite: the towers are inside the view more often than not. And, yes – they document a view.

The Paragon Studios housed an exhibition curated by Sylvia Taylor and Pat Hunsinger for the Mid America Print Council, Athens, Ohio, in September 2006. They asked women printmakers “to reveal their most authentic experiences related to birth.” How and when is or is not an experience related to birth “most authentic”? Why should “revealing” be a prescribed mode for art dealing with any experience? For example, Grünewald painted the crucified Christ (1517) without experiencing a crucifixion – instead, he harvested his imagination and creative force. Shackled with an essentially flawed curatorial brief, the twenty-nine artists faced an expectation of a story at hand – a narrative as validation of the visual art.²

I watched another female visitor focusing with undiluted joy on one image – a supreme visual treat: Therry Rudin’s *Coracle*, a vivacious oval of a boat/ egg/ womb anchored on the white ground with energetic

black charcoal marks. The syncopated definition allowed the ground to be the softness inside the shape. The image of caring and protecting.

Ingrid Ledent’s *Untitled* red image of half a torso, the pregnant abdomen, conjured up an image of a heart – a shape related to the position of both hands, palms down, around the belly button; gentle pride and happiness both softly soaked in expectation and the safety of well-being. To cut a torso by a frame, to cut hands from arms, could have led to gruesomeness; however, the vertical red rectangle is modulated, so that it effortlessly evokes the softness of a curtain or a garment. It is an image of worship.

Sharon Kelly’s *Lines of longing* belong to the series of her drawings and videos she has been making over more than a decade on the subject of memory and loss. Her description of the genesis of the image reveals its independence from any known, remembered, story: “As I began making the image onto the copper plate – the image of newborn’s clothing, a remnant from the early life of one of my children – the light fell in such a way that my own reflection was obscuring the marks.” She traced her portrait onto the plate. Another chance-like visual suggestion cropped up: rays issued from the garment that “fell like a waterfall onto the image of my own head.”

The definition of authenticity centres either on ‘according with the facts’ and/ or on the way an individual (the Self) acts and changes in response to external forces and influences. Moreover, commonplace curiosity as to how responses are remembered exercises contemporary science too. Neuroscience has recently developed³ novel experiments to find the basic mechanism the brain uses to draw vital information from experience before turning it into a memory. One of the conclusions confirms that it is a matter of the co-ordinated activity of a large population of neurons. The same

studies indicate that the neuronal population involved in encoding *memories* also extracts *concepts* that transform experience into knowledge and ideas. These are neural ‘cliques’, subsets of neural populations that respond to a select event similarly. They work collectively as a robust coding unit.

Amongst the concepts Kelly presents in this plate is that of the growth of the image not from a given (known) story but from the interrelation between remembering and creativity. The rays became a robust encoding of the reversed sorrow and resolution. This work differs in composition and emotional charge from Kelly’s contemporaneous drawings, *Blue lips and earring* and *Bluebell necklace*. Its ‘terribilità’ prevents the freedom of elegant placement and happiness that creative force affords the other two.

The deep sorrows of loss are only marginally softened by numerous new, temporary connections. A supreme case is Tony Hill’s⁴ composition of 70 dandelions exhibited at the Naughton Gallery’s exhibition *Heal* (9 May – 16 June).⁵ Connected to his personal loss, the artist’s choice of the plant works similarly to those neural cliques. Dandelions have medicinal and antioxidant properties, they are beneficial to the garden eco-system and connect to time, the yearly renewal, the spring, rebirth, birth. Their botanical name, ‘taraxacum’, is a reference to remedy (‘akos’) of disorder (‘taraxos’).

Authenticity appears then as a revelatory state for the unique Self being embedded in the world. Transformed into a work of visual art, on my sample, it benefits from a distance from the verbal. Those who align their creativity in this way enhance the not very large number of contemporary artists who trust visual force.

Slavka Sverakova is a
writer on art.

88 *Cathy Wilkes*



I was trying to understand what Cathy Wilkes' work had to do with giving me a tear in the eye and a smile on the lips, two cracks at the eternal – maybe it'd been the summer-temperature synapse-speedup and I'm feeling all flows, and so stops too, the reactions happening quicker and the uptakes more satisfying, the echoes deeper and the aftertastes more developed, everything that might impinge too far on wellbeing seeming just that little less itself as if a-tremble...and the good feeling of just being somewhere different hadn't worn off yet.

The two-room exhibition, curated by Damien Duffy, offered a video projection of short duration: the solidly titled loop *I will miss you and will anoint your body with essential oils*, 2007 – a tender uptake and laying down of a cherished body, a pendular rocking that cradles and leaves by, in a bathing light; the signature of light echoing in the display space too, washing over, through the spectrum, implied covering and clothing.

In Gallery One, a version of the work *Non Verbal*, now in variation for a couple of years, featured two shop-window mannekins based on the adult female. In a double-galaxy dialogue with each other and the space, a helix of characteristic information flow threaded around them. One with a painting's face, like a small washbasin; weight of the sinkstand in contrast with the (imaginary) lightness of the empty pushchair; the other's crash helmet a nod to the skull, and the wheels, more circulars and mergers; plastics, oils, glasses, jars, bowls of wilted salad and broken glass blades, fish or pains each set by.

Time's tables: here was a setup of aesthetics that had very little to do with prompting an investigation into itself as an intellectual treasure hunt whose reward would be affirmation or conjunction. It had more to do

with the cerebral being at peace with the artworks, and the senses themselves confused by the clarity – that struggle of the creative response when the mind and indeed spirit already knows 'It's enough', called upon like that, involuntary emissions from emotive locations.

Wilkes' ability to arrange certain things, to make them up glamorously, can seem like a kind of automatic writing with objects, movement, colour, but may be arrived at through different, more deliberate methods – that of meditation on states, or 'plain thoughts', steady and precise, maybe cyclical and slowish, or then again to have objects around the place (mental or physical) until familiar enough, that they become the subconscious foil or flash for something suddenly correspondant, enchanted, or charmed into it. The agglomeration and placement reminds me of an originary 'notebook' notation, like Da Vinci's intensely studied separate elements making his painted combinations, and down in the galleries there was something of those Rocky caverns, humble plants, annunciations or adorations, attention to details drawn from the actual, contrasting the meticulously considered with the famously meditative method of stain-staring, all laid out on the new science made to measure, the new combinatory aegis. I'm not sure which is more advised here, if necessarily considering a method of approach, when the results are so convincing of a whole means of ordering the universe around a single/ multiple sensorium, a huge work of the imagination, with a lot of wit, and trepidation.

Wilkes catches close the tools of her time, the new old things, the up-to-date versions; in the life and progression of things maybe make a mark, a point, say 'I came in here and went out there'; things being neutral, measure time anyway in the

objects that there were, the necessities and their design, and their looks. A finding of objects not only metaphoric but also vehicular, with all that same neutral fascination as have tools – a new baby stroller, new telly, new tights; then clarity, touch and interaction acting on these objects as a dimmer to their everyday sense. Restaging methods of adornment and accoutrement, the bounded precincts of display itself, a type of great shop window implied, where a glance, just like that, gathers the whole instantly, inside and out, before breaking it down into presences and offers, glamour and distance, sorrow and fact. You could be content just to consider the whole range of glass and its expressive and polished uses as structure, container, vessel, weighty mannekins' anchor, shelf, the same glass becoming more itself when it's shard and blade, bowl pain, broken glass, mentioning multiplicity versus the undifferentiated, chip from the flow, and it has become visible, its transparency the least thing about it, it holds the eye on the surface; that great continuous sheet is not present, there is not there as a first principle. Dismantling, by present harmonics, any certainty that there is such a thing as the continuum, larger than any given gathered, of these things, the immediate without the eternal.

Pádraig Timoney is an artist.

[opposite]
Cathy Wilkes
Non Verbal (Version), 2007
installation view
photo Paola Bernadelli
courtesy Void

90
VIVIENNE
DICK:
THE
TRUE
CENTRE
IS
ALWAYS
NEW



“My ambition is to choreograph images and sounds that breathe.”¹

Vivienne Dick

In Fergus Daly’s documentary *Experimental conversations*, French film theorist Nicole Brenez characterises experimental cinema as operating “an ongoing return to sensory intuition,” as well as being “the field of investigation of the very modalities of our apprehension.”² These definitions take on particular resonance for the viewer of Vivienne Dick’s latest video installation, *The True centre is always new*.

The film presents itself as a two-screen video projected on two opposite walls simultaneously. It is composed of a series of ‘moments’ shot over the last couple of years in Galway, Donegal, Queensland, Wellington and New York.

Each fragment resembles the memory of a particular sensory experience; a moment isolated from a continuum. We see in turn: the outback going by a bus window in Australia, the waves crashing at Salthill’s promenade, a nighttime tropical storm seen through a screened window, a palm-reading in the flickering light of a campfire in Donegal, the ambiguous messages of the multiple neon signs of Time Square around midnight, the goose-bumps on the thighs of a woman in red skirt in New Zealand, and a full moon in a forest somewhere.

These moments are intercut with varying lengths of black screen, at times long enough to leave the viewer uncertain whether the film is over or not. This uncertainty brings back to the spectator an awareness of his own presence in the gallery; a type of tension Dick is interested to explore.

Reflecting the structure of the projection on two facing walls, the

film play on a number of oppositions. There are the multiple locations which, from Ireland to New Zealand, span the two hemispheres. This is echoed by a juxtaposition of daytime and nighttime shots in the diptych. This construction suggests that the space in which the audience is situated is somehow the fluctuating centre of the title.

The film is also composed of two distinct types of shot. Developing an approach begun with *Excluded by the nature of things*, 2002, Dick uses long-held still shots, often in close-up, where little happens. Here the shot of the storm or of a hand in the sand are held long enough for the viewer to absorb the details and textures, inducing a meditative approach to the image. In her essay on *Excluded*, Maeve Connolly commented: “Dick shifts attention away from vision and toward other senses (smell, touch, hearing) through close-up images of gorse, bracken and cattle and sounds of driving rain on the lens and the windowpanes.”³

The second type of shot used, for example, in the scenes at the campfire or in Time Square, is a fluid movement made with a hand-held camera, reminiscent of Dick’s early films. The effect is that of an immersion in the action, with the presence behind the camera hovering between looking on and partaking in the scene.

This particular approach to filming has informed Dick’s relationship to medium in which she favours practicality over a specific aesthetics. From her beginnings with Super 8 to her present use of mini DV, what attracts her is the relative inconspicuousness of the camera: “You can catch things with a small camera that you could never catch with all the big camera equipments. You are more part of the group and people don’t pay so much attention to it. So you can get

a type of footage that’s very relaxed and very unpretentious.”⁴

Projected alternately with *The True centre is always new* in G126 was *She had her gun all ready*, Dick’s best-known film, shot in New York in 1978. The presence of the two films invited some reflections on Dick’s practice over the years. Her use of alternative venues, for instance: Dick has always been interested in showing her work in a variety of venues, such as Rock clubs, pubs or gallery spaces, as well as more conventionally at film festivals, thereby reflecting her desire to bridge the gap between the worlds of filmmaking and the visual arts.

In addition to her film practice, Vivienne Dick teaches film production in GMIT. Interestingly, she points to the difficulty of teaching the rules of conventional filmmaking to her students whilst making them discover experimental cinema, the ongoing aim of which is to break away from established rules to invent new relationships with sensation.

- 1 www.luxonline.org.uk/artists/vivienne_dick
- 2 Nicole Brenez in *Experimental conversations*, a film by Fergus Daly, 2006
- 3 Maeve Connolly, ‘*Excluded by the nature of things?* Irish cinema and artist’s film’, *Circa* 106, Winter 2003, pp 33 – 39 (see www.recirca.com/backissues/c106/excluded.shtml) p 7 of 11)
- 4 Conversation with Vivienne Dick, Galway, 12 June 2007

Michaële Cutaya is an artist based in Galway, currently researching a postgraduate thesis on film and places at Galway Mayo Institute of Technology.

[opposite]
Vivienne Dick
The True centre is always new
2007, film stills
courtesy of the artist

SARAH BROWNE: SWEET FUTURES



Sweet futures is a project by Sarah Browne that takes the form of a magazine “in honour of the end of Ireland’s national sugar industry.” The project is commissioned by Visualise Carlow and curated by Ciarán Walsh. It exists in an edition of one thousand, but can also be downloaded from the *Sweet futures* website.

The magazine itself is a difficult one to locate. The title is written into an undulating pink banner that spans the top of an image of a lie-low worthy beach, which consumes most of the front cover. Inside, and next to the words ‘Editor’s Letter’, there is a cutout photograph of a lady (presumably Browne) with her arms akimbo. As an object of design, the magazine could be mistaken for the sort of publication that deals with halitosis, or flossing, and is given away for free at the dentist. While this slightly nauseating high-gloss format might be employed as a means of critiquing some of the systems of commercialization, industrialization, and globalization that Browne addresses throughout the magazine, it is distracting to the intimate nature of the stories inside.

The content of the magazine is divided into two segments: ‘Home’ and ‘Away’. The ‘Home’ section of the magazine is dedicated to an investigation of Ireland’s sugar industry – and the effects of its demise – while the ‘Away’ section looks at different countries around the world who have experienced seismic economic shifts with the changing nature of the sugar industry. The ‘Home’ section of the magazine is by far the more engaging aspect of the project and best represents the year of research that went into Browne’s creation of the publication.

Within the ‘Home’ section, and from varying vantage points, Browne tells the story of the sugar industry in Carlow – where this project

originates. The magazine is richest when the methodology is simplest; for instance, when she asks local people what they think of the development on the site of the old sugar factory, or when she invites a former employee of Irish Sugar to describe his experiences of the sugar company’s ‘utility housing societies’, or when she interviews residents about their memories of an old sweet shop in Carlow. In these moments, Browne acts out what has become an increasingly prominent trend in contemporary art: the retelling, and often refashioning, of histories, whether latent, waylaid, or simply unwritten. Browne’s interest in, and approach to, the Irish sugar industry is reminiscent of Tacita Dean’s propensity for re-inscribing meanings onto derelict, defunct, and outdated spaces. Dean’s video *Kodak*, 2006, for instance, is a slow, almost eulogizing meander through the last factory in Europe to produce black-and-white film for standard 16 mm cameras. Like Dean, Browne plays upon the potential for nostalgia in the resurrection of bygone thoughts and technologies. However, while Dean works in sepia hues and slow pans, Browne’s unlikely medium of choice for *Sweet futures* is flashy and notoriously ephemeral.

In ‘Away’, Browne delves into everything from the sugar industry in Mauritius to ‘The Economics of Happiness’. In this section, links between stories are tenuous and the writing lacks the intimacy and rigor that characterizes the stories in the ‘Home’ section of the magazine. Even interviews with locals, such as “Carlovian globetrotter Kathryn Thomas” are detached and difficult to relate to the overall concept.

While artists have often been engaged in the process of making books, there are few artistic precedents for *Sweet futures*. The format of the project raises a number of questions about the roles

of those involved in its production. With Browne naming herself artist and editor of the project, the question that naturally arises is, what actually makes this magazine a work of art? And, furthermore, how does this matter of nomenclature affect our reading of *Sweet futures*? The immediate answer is that Browne’s art object – a pseudo-marketable, high-glossy magazine – is able to address a subject that almost certainly does not hold commercial appeal, and thus circumnavigates the profit-driven economy of high-glossy magazine production. However, throughout the publication, Browne’s brazen exploration of the periodical as a medium remains at odds with the analytical and at times, deeply moving, content of the magazine.

The compilation, analysis, and presentation of research by artists offers a valuable perspective on issues once delegated only to ethnographers, anthropologists, and musicologists. Browne’s project is an example of the kind of role that artists can play in reinterpreting, archiving, and rewriting waylaid social and economic histories, and it is for this reason that *Sweet futures* is one to hang onto when the gossip magazines go out with the trash.

Charlotte Bonham-Carter is a freelance art critic, and an assistant curator at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin.

[opposite]
Sarah Browne
Sweet futures, 2007
from distribution event at
Fairgreen Shopping Centre,
Carlow, 16 and 17 April 2007
photo Liam Campbell
courtesy the artist

NICK STEWART: *NO-ONE'S NOT FROM EVERYWHERE*



you can never know
the thing because it
was never yours to
begin with by the
time you came along
that thing was gone

Graffito extracted from
*no-one's not from
everywhere* and stencilled
onto a boarded-up doorway
in Portadown

I remember Nick came to our flat in Mapperley Park. Magdala Road. Nottingham. The one above Mrs Shaw and Fiona Wright. When Mrs Shaw was found dead behind her front door and Fiona moved out they renovated the downstairs and a young computer programmer who worked in Belgium took over Mrs Shaw's flat and Fiona's flat became a brothel; no-one lived there, they came during the day. I took the art deco ceramic basket that Mrs Shaw had outside her door. Well, she wouldn't be needing it now, would she? Marlow and her daughter lived upstairs from us. Marlow cycled her exercise bike late into the night. It wasn't until they left unexpectedly and we wandered around amongst the rubbish they'd left upstairs that we understood what had been making those noises late into the night. I still keep my videos in the laundry boxes we lifted from there and all our clothes horses came from there.

I remember Nick came to our flat then. I picked him up at the station. He'd written for us when I edited

Hybrid, he'd interviewed Bill Viola in Vienna, I think. So here was Nick interviewing again. I think Nick likes to talk to people. I think Nick is a conversationalist. I think Nick is interested in people's stories, in their anecdotes. Susan was staying with us so he was able to interview (it was an interview, it was pretty formal, as I recall, I made tea and biscuits for them) both Susan and Shirley on the same day. It was the time when Susan was making those little blue beanie movies and one day I moved the galvanised garden shed shelves into a corner of our sitting room and severed the extension cable and almost killed myself. The puff of smoke was caught on Susan's DV camera, as I recall.

This was before Mercer was born, I think. It must have been, which makes this project of Nick's something like seven years long. Mercer's seventh birthday is on Sunday but we're not having the party until Monday so that all his friends can come. Shirley is very upset because Mercer's special friend, Patrick, who lives across the Close, is away to Cork to stay with his cousins on Monday and can't come to the party. His house has a For Sale sign outside it and we really hope they don't sell. That they stay in the Close. They are such nice people. Patrick is such a nice friend for Mercer. They do sleep-overs and everything.

The room I write in is called our Magdala room. It has so much of the stuff in it that we collected and unearthed and bought for a few quid from Adams Antiques up in Sherwood. I have three glass cabinets here. They are my way-markers. In our sitting room we have the Sheffield cabinet. A huge art deco sideboard we bought together in Sheffield before Shirley came down to Nottingham and we moved in together to the flat in Mapperley.

I went to see the Nick Stewart exhibition in Portadown on Monday.

I went after my group therapy session. I had been very angry at the session and I wasn't in the best of moods. But I had to go then because *Circa* was waiting for my copy. I was right up against the deadline.

I went into the video installation. Some very simple 360-degree shots of bridges, underpasses, dreary riversides, scrubland, wastelands. Graffiti on walls and doors and gates and metal and brick. Steadying up to scan stencilled text. Closeup to reveal the text. But a brief, too brief closeup so that we get a glimpse, a notion, a hint. Something almost not seen. Something almost invisible clarifying for an instant and then gone again. Like we were walking past and caught it in our peripheral vision. What was that I just saw? Was that part of the graffiti? Was it a kind of advert? Sort of consistent but also, not sure why, inconsistent too. Alien. Uncanny. Belonging and not belonging at once.

Production values not too high. Camera a bit shaky. A bit vérité, a bit fly on the wall, a bit scuzzy. Is this the work? Well, no, this is really just a rough documentation of the pieces of stencilled text that Stewart insinuated into sites across Portadown. Sites that might be almost invisible in themselves, sites which might almost be no-go areas to the good citizens of Portadown. Sites which were perhaps some of those 'contested spaces' that formed the conceptual basis for Millennium Court's last two big shows.

I am given the book, the project is really the book, *no-one's not from everywhere*, A project by Nick Stewart. The graffiti interventions are of short snippets of text extracted from the book, the video piece documentation of that temporary public artwork, made even more temporary by the use of water soluble paint. Soon all trace of Stewart's intervention will have passed.

Over a number of years Stewart recorded interviews (conversations) with some 50 Irish artists. You won't be surprised to see the names Hegarty, Carson, Cullen, Irvine, Kelly, Napier, O'Beirn, O'Kelly, Stitt and Tallentire amongst them. He wanted to know about their experience of place and how that influenced the person they had become (and the artist they had become, too). Fragments of text from those recordings have been transcribed and now appear as unattributed fragments in the book. They are interspersed with photos taken by Stewart over a ten year period during his journeys between Belfast and London.

The book is good. It is sweet in places and charming. It is philosophical and analytic. It gives a very strong sense of people located in a global and European community rather than a zip code micro-community. There is a strong sense of people living in the present of their politics and art and community, not predominantly in their past. There is great balance in the book. It is a book of people going home (whether to their current homes, wherever they might be, or 'back home' to Ireland), it is a book of people being inside and outside communities. You might read the book within many different frames. I came out of it thinking that the texts show us positions where sexuality, art, the media, language, politics, inclusion and exclusion are all operants in the making of self. Very elegantly this book raises all the obvious questions and in effect says there are no easy answers, There are no stereotypes. Each person's experience is different.

Fergal, the curator, offers to take me to see one of the sites. It is just down the road, he promises, about three minutes away. We set off. Fergal tells me how contested a space Portadown was in his youth. If you were from Lurgan you might

not come into Portadown and you'd certainly not be in town after dark. The murder triangle was a dangerous place to be. Home, where you belonged, but your right to be there strongly contested.

We get to the house. It is in the process of renovation. The plywood barrier from the front door has been crowbarred off, tearing it into three. The pieces are lying there next to the open door with Nick's text still just about readable on them. I take some photos, ask Fergal to carry my book for me and I heft one of the pieces of ply away with me. It's now in my garage. I am thinking of having it framed. It is huge and heavy. It's not often you go to review an exhibition and get a piece of the art to take away with you. Its not every day you pick up an original Nick Stewart.

The residual anger from my therapy session quickly dispels. It is delightful. What a hoot, what a wheeze. I love the idea that the temporary interventions are not only being eroded by the elements, they are being eroded by renovation and regeneration. And there is a certain circularity and return in the picking up of a piece of precious rubbish at the site of renovation. Making something new and personal from someone else's junk. The past is not passing away, bits of it get hung onto. Bits of it become part of your current lived reality. The past is regenerated.

As we walk up the street a drunk and his dog stop and watch. The old bloke seems to recognise me and stops me. We talk for a moment or two about his dog and about the big hunk of ply and the fucking weather. Art, emerging from conversation, returning to conversation.

David Hughes is a writer who publishes at www.macwh.net/bridger

The book *no-one's not from everywhere* is distributed in Ireland by Millennium Court Arts Centre, and by the artist outside of Ireland.

Colin Crotty Megan Eustace Sibyl Montague



The most obvious connection between the three artists in this exhibition was that they presented traditional 2D figurative work of painting and drawing. However, the main affinity these artists shared, for me, was the tentativeness with which they approached the figure – they are disappearing, afraid to be seen, they are being erased and simultaneously being overdrawn, one figure hiding the last. The figures are ephemeral – like the artists, and eventually their work – aware of the fragility of human existence. Each artist draws fragments from a 'real life' source – Sibyl Montague works from recorded video stills, Colin Crotty tries to recreate memories, and Megan Eustace draws directly from (human) life.

Megan Eustace
Falling between
conté on paper
75 x 55 cm
courtesy Fenton Gallery

Eustace exposes her process through drawing on top of previous drawings. A sense of time is inherent where the life model (or the artist) has moved position slightly, creating a ghost of a drawing overlaid by the next. By revealing her activity, she reveals the artist's hand; the sense of mapping and mark-making shows her understanding of drawing. Her skilfulness as a draughtsperson is apparent, and at times, these drawings are reminiscent of Egon Schiele and Nick Miller in their expression of the human form. However, as each one repeats the same trick, they become more self-conscious, and I would prefer to see her employ this method to build up a portrait series or themed set, rather than leaving these studies as finished works.

The varicose-pink-red crayon Eustace uses links with the strong use of reds in Sibyl Montague's stained washes. The paintings are small in scale and have a lightness of touch and translucency to them while, at the same time, echoing the permanence of seeping blood and wine stains. She also leaves some of her process uncovered; for example in *Problem & thief I* and *Problem & thief II* she leaves the traces of the grid that she must have used to enlarge the image from a newspaper or found source. Similar to Eustace, we are left with a residue that remains visible in the finished piece. Process also defines the video piece *Progress through error*: it is ambiguous as to whether it is the same page that is being worked on and photographed as she proceeds or if there are different studies of the same pose being filmed. The result is an animation of what seems to be the same drawing/ painting changing through time. It looks like he may be masturbating at first glance, but on closer observation, it seems that his genital area has been left white/ empty, and the skin was concentrated upon, worked over and over so that the movement of paint became the focus. As the figure floats in

video time, the mouth and face become darker and he seems to suck his thumb – there is an attempt at narrative here and a sense of failure of narrative, emphasised by the related series of watercolours of figures floating on the page in (no) space. One or two have a hint of a domestic interior, depicting something lonely, stooping, crawling to be a male figure. The empty Modigliani eyesockets further articulate a sense of alienation that intensifies these works.

The works are based on video freeze-frames and personal photos, so their disparate execution suits their origin as derivatives or fragments of something more whole. This might be an apt metaphor for this whole exhibition, albeit unintentional.

Colin Crotty also deals in fragments in the form of memories. His winterish, muted palette evokes a sense of nostalgia, along with the comforting melancholy of the blues and greys of Irish skies. Subjects include an old schoolhouse interior, men with disappearing (or are they appearing?) stairs, women in a kitchen, a rural scene with men looking into a sky from a cliff edge (evocatively titled *Enemies and friends*). In each scene, there are ghostly figures dissolving and emerging simultaneously; caught in that moment of remembrance/ memory, the narrative is growing and receding, much like memory and imagination do to life.

There is a still-life atmosphere to the paintings, even though there are figurative humans in each. However, the figures seem ephemeral, sometimes barely there and other times solid and thick with a sense of age – this sense of perception is Crotty's signature in these works, even though he has a heavier hand than Montague, and at times the paintings are overworked. Also noteworthy is his ability to conjure up details in the images by suggestion eg floral patterns in the

women's clothes, even though his imagery and narrative are dissolving and vague. These paintings would probably appeal to an older generation's experience of loss and nostalgia, and I am worried that they verge towards commodity art,¹ rather than pushing any boundaries.

Overall, the artworks here were understated and quiet and were more like studies for more major works. I was underwhelmed but would look forward to more ambitious work, perhaps using some of the methodology explored here. Although it is always interesting to see the artists' process, I would also like to see where this process is going. The main reason for the domestic scale of these works seems to be for their 'hangability', ie their saleability to the SSIA investor.² The art market is not a new phenomenon, but I am not convinced that art buyers or so-called art lovers are what art needs to progress – while the purchase of art provides an income/ living for the artist, the fetishised 'original' artwork and its price (aka 'value' in the art world) perpetuate a sense of elitism and genius rather than engagement and critical reflection.

For me, art is a verb not an object, a state of being rather than a possession. I am worried about the generally accepted notion of the trickle-down effect, that is, if there is a buying public, then that interest can be fostered into becoming a public engaged with art.³ As I see it, the opposite happens – the commodification of art as a status object and/ or economic investment is actually its downfall, as this kind of thinking *devalues* art, reducing it to a commercial transaction where very often it is the buyer, often called the art lover, who dictates the subject matter by approving through buying. Ownership/ consumerism of art as a commodity is never going to further understanding and engagement with art, if art 'loving' equates only to possession.

1 *commodity art*. art targeting specific buyers; art that is not purely an expression of the artist's ideas, but is tailored in its subject matter and style to appeal to a specific commercial market

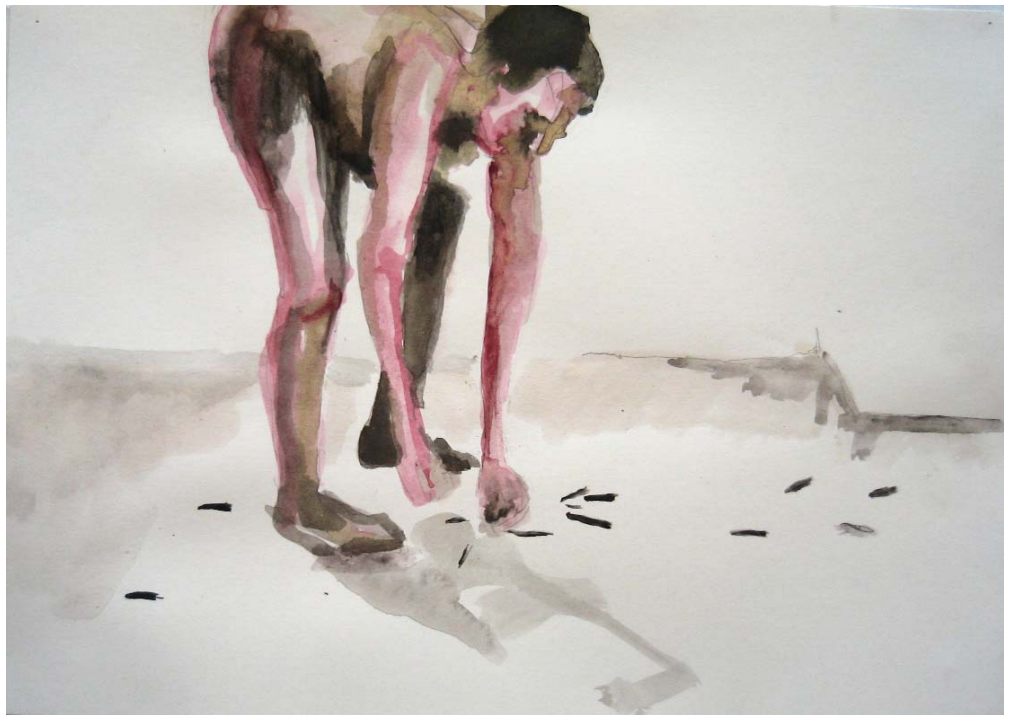
2 Both Colin Crotty and Megan Eustace were tipped as ways of investing your SSIA money in an article in *The Sunday Business Post*, October 15, 2006, by Louise McBride.

3 "... a public which buys contemporary art is a public engaging with art, on whatever level. How that engagement is developed is the next question for all of us." excerpt from *Circa 95*, Spring 2001, pp 54 – 55, by Gemma Tipton



[above]
Colin Crotty
Enemies and friends
oil on linen
40 x 50cm
courtesy Fenton Gallery

[above]
Sybil Montague
Untitled
ink and graphite on paper
20.5 x 29cm
courtesy Fenton Gallery



EILÍS MURPHY:
WORK OF THE DEVIL
CIARA HEALY:
STORIES OF DISPLACEMENT

100



Ciara Healy
Multiple belongings
installation shot
courtesy Galway Arts Centre

In the Mexican Catholic celebration of Christmas, the piñata is traditionally shaped like a seven-pointed star representing the devil and the seven deadly sins. Beating the piñata whilst blindfolded (alluding to 'blind' faith) releases 'blessings' from the ostensibly 'evil' form.

Eilís Murphy's large paper-devil installation at Galway Arts Centre (*The Devil's claw mark*), standing upright and backlit to produce an exaggerated Nosferatu-like shadow on the wall, in some ways resembles a piñata and refers also to the appropriation of pagan horned gods by present-day religious discourses on evil. Rather than explore the 'banalisation' of evil following the Hannah Arendt/ Susan Sontag model, Murphy focuses on the ridiculousness of personifying such a concept through the 'devil' figure, exposing the techniques of fear-mongering metaphorically through her central installation's showing how an innocuous and insubstantial paper devil becomes transformed into an ominous and threatening shadow.

The devil we know in western culture is a politically charged one, even if he is losing his potency in theological circles (the Vatican recently declared that "hell" was not a "place" as such but a "state of total lovelessness"). Minus a home, the devil himself is now at risk of being 'disappeared'. The recent BBC series *The Power of nightmares* exposed the extent to which neo-conservative philosophers and economists in America have exploited vocabularies such as 'the axis of evil' explicitly as a means of social control. Before the current demonisation of Muslim culture, early Christians reinvented the horned nature gods in an attempt to

demonise Jews. Murphy's humorous depiction of the devil in her collages in the exhibition, as a playful teasing figure taunting cartoonish nuns under giant mushrooms, or engaged in mundane acts of domestic mischievousness, is an attempt to mock the absurdity of dualistic philosophies which require a tangible figure of evil. Her devil's form is taken from images found in medieval woodcuts, and her strategy is one of introducing this art-historical devil to the inanities of modern life.

There is also a sense in which the platitude 'the devil makes work for idle hands' is addressed by her work: an awareness that art is often dismissed as a form of idleness. Tim Hodgkinson's recent book, *The Virtue of idleness*, investigated the history of why idleness was demonised and celebrates the extraordinary work produced by masters of the decadent life, such as Marcel Proust and J K Huysmans (in his *Against nature*). Devilish idlers remain a threat in that they do not consume enough or produce enough to facilitate the smooth flows of capitalism.

Murphy's work places a previously iconic figure into a world of playful imaginings, and it is noteworthy that, unlike in the North last year when *The Vacuum* found itself under threat for publishing an issue on the devil and art, any sign of religious zealotry in Galway seemed absent.

The second exhibition at GAC was entitled *Stories of displacement* by artist Ciara Healy.

When Michel Foucault wrote *The Order of things* in 1966 – his philosophical analysis of systems of knowledge and classification – he claimed his inspiration came from a passage in Borges which created such a rupture in his thought he had to reassess fundamental concepts about knowledge he had taken for granted. The passage was from an

ancient Chinese encyclopedia in which it was written that animals could be subdivided according to a number of seemingly bizarre categories, including "those who have just broken the water pitcher" and "those that from a long way off look like flies." It struck Foucault what a wondrous exotic taxonomy this was, but more so how impossible it would be for this taxonomy to exist in Western thought. The point being – Natural History is itself based on conditions relating to the relationship between *things* and *language*.

Natural History has a complex relationship with the act of naming and ideas of representation. Yet today we have added a new element to the role of taxonomy: taxonomy as a kind of memorial to what we feel we are losing; a sort of 'Noah's Ark' Survivalist Taxonomy. If we name it, it might not disappear. Clouds, Birds, Flowers: Naming as Salvation.

In this sense there is perhaps an unintentional poignancy to Healy's many hand-knitted yet unoccupied bird's cloaks/ coats of arms displayed in bell jars (*Multiple belongings*). The normally cold, clinical nature of scientific analysis is displaced through the use of a medium – knitting – usually suggestive of domesticity and affection. Intimacy infiltrates methodology.

Yet unlike the work of Annette Messenger, who in her work *The Boarders at rest* also knitted outfits for birds, with an emphasis on gender and collections, Healy utilizes the discourse of Taxonomy and nineteenth-century texts on classification, both Natural and Ethnographic, to explore ideas relating to the migratory flows of contemporary society – the movements which disrupt our normal systems of understanding of nationality and subjectivity. What happens when one system of knowledge trespasses on another?

Using a double-exposure photograph of her family, taken with her grandfather's faulty camera, which situates them in a ghostly 'unhomely' space between their house and a ferry, she establishes the conditions for her project. From Walter Benjamin and Charles Baudelaire to Gilles Deleuze, Jean-Luc Godard and experimental filmmaker Stan Brakhage, the concept of the 'in-between' which this photo represents is a fundamental one in contemporary culture. Overlaid images create an 'interspace', a slippage of reality, a gap through which a different conception of memory and time erupts. The house and the ferry pull in opposite directions – stability and permanency versus transience and mobility. The photo conjures up a liminal zone, a zone between boundaries, between dreams and reality, but also for Healy the liminality of beings: of migratory people. She is preoccupied with ideas relating to what Freud would have called the uncanny, becoming the 'unhomely' in Heidegger, 'displacement' in Derrida and the 'simulacrum' in Baudrillard.

She cuts up nineteenth-century maps and turns them into birds, and makes butterflies out of nineteenth-century drawings taken from ethnographic studies. Her butterflies suggest transience, delicate migrations and also the 'butterfly effect' of chaos theory.

Theodore Adorno once said: "Estrangement from the world is a work of Art." Healy's displacements are attempts at discursive

estrangements in art. Her interest in postcolonial identities and hybridity fuel her interventions in what Irit Rogoff in *Museum culture: histories, discourses, spectacles* calls the "strategies of historical display which make the museum the funerary site of uncomfortable or inconvenient historical narratives."

Yet there is a danger of succumbing to fastidiousness in the explication of her ideas, in the sheer decorative attractiveness of the formal compositions of her collages which ultimately might serve to neutralize the thrust of her visual argument. The difficulty with both her handsomely produced book, *Butterflies*, accompanying the exhibition, and her collages is that they could be accused of veering towards 'commodity fetishism', whereas the installation *Multiple belongings* and her *Intertwined identities (native, hybrid, migrant)* water-colours manage to maintain a conceptual integrity which avoids this artistic quagmire.

Katherine Waugh is a writer based in Galway.

Eilís Murphy
The Devil's Claw Mark
courtesy Galway Arts Centre



WILLIE DOHERTY
GERARD BYRNE

Gerard Byrne
from 1984 and beyond
2005 – 2007
black-and-white photograph
courtesy Ireland at Venice



Confirming many of Gavin Murphy's dispirited predictions in *Circa's* Summer issue, the shortcomings of this year's *Venice Biennale* have already been well documented by the art press. Ex-MoMA curator Robert Storr's bewildering exhibition premise, *Think with the senses – feel with the mind, art in the present tense*, is a conceptual frame spread so wide as to be able to include virtually any model of art practice, in any medium from any time period. Confronted by artists as disparate as Valie Export, Malick Sidibe and Elsworth Kelly, viewers struggle to make connections amidst such unlikely groupings. In addition to the marked lack of curatorial coherence present at both the Arsenale and Italian pavilion, the inclusion of the Cornice Art Fair (a full-blown commercial enterprise) left the 52nd *Venice Biennale* feeling more like Frieze Art Fair than the innovative art event on which its reputation is founded.

Operating with an assured awareness of this potentially tricky territory, the Republic of Ireland's representative, Gerard Byrne, managed to negotiate the complex dynamics of the Biennale setting with intelligence and wit. Showing a new film entitled **ZAN-*T185 r.1: (Interview) v.1, no.4 – v.2, no.6, 19 (1969 – Feb.1972); Andy Warhol's (Interview) v.2, no. 21 – v.3, no.9, 2007*, commissioned by Mike Fitzpatrick for Ireland at Venice, a new photographic work, and several other key pieces such as *1984 and beyond, 2005–07, Homme à femmes, 2004, and A Country road. A tree. Evening., 2005 – 2007*, Byrne occupied the airy upper floor of the Istituto Provinciale per L'Infanzia.

Situated a stones throw from the Grand Canal and Saint Mark's Square, these beautiful buildings were home to Northern Ireland's pavilion in 2005. This year they house both the Republic of Ireland

and Northern Ireland, and the selection of Willie Doherty by third space curator Hugh Mulholland creates an interesting dialogue with the works of Byrne.

Far from being arbitrary selections, Gavin Murphy in his article characterizes both artists as inhabiting a particular position in relation to the forces of publicity and spectacle at work in the *Biennale*. As artists who have garnered international attention and prestigious gallery representation, Byrne and Doherty are poised to challenge the Biennale's outmoded demands for a display of Irishness. Yet Murphy also signals the dangers of participating in a generalized and mobile field of production that too easily accommodates the transaction demands of the art industry.

Do Byrne and Doherty then face the unappealing choice of either retreating to the confines of their respective nationalisms or being unwitting accomplices to the commercialism of a *Biennale* turned art fair? In his essay 'The Story teller: notes on the work of Gerard Byrne', the art critic George Baker proposes a more optimistic role for the engaged image-maker. Baker claims that contemporary artists have the capacity to rekindle the avant-garde critical aspirations of Bertolt Brecht or Walter Benjamin. Central to Baker's hopefulness is the conviction that some artists have taken up Brecht's challenge to develop a new realism, one capable of confronting an age of floating capital. Against the false choice of either a nostalgic return to a pre-spectacle age when images really meant something, or an acquiescence to market forces, Baker suggests a third option exists. It rests on the recognition that the abstract is in fact a necessary tool for considering social relations that are themselves increasingly beyond the grasp of conventional realism. He highlights a Brecht quote that

Byrne himself incorporates into his work: "...less than ever does the mere reflection of reality reveal anything about reality. A photograph of the Krupp works or AEG tells us next to nothing about these institutions." Contemporary artists, those that take on the challenge, are in the position, according to Baker, to cultivate new revelatory powers of the image.

An example of this strategy, Byrne's work has long been committed to an examination of the theatricality of capitalist production and media forms. In his **ZAN-*T185...*, appearing for the first time in Venice, Byrne again deploys his method of using actors to reconstruct a textual source. Derived in this case from early editions of Andy Warhol's *Interview* magazine, the interviews profile the lives of young performers who are believed to be on the brink of celebrity. Showing them in candid situations, warming up or discussing intimate details of their careers, the piece exposes the mechanics of fame production and the blurry line between performance and sincerity in this supposedly documentary media form.

The strength of Byrne's work lies not in a straightforward exposure of artifice, but in a recognition that the substance of the real very often incorporates the workings of fiction. His three-channel video installation entitled *1984 and beyond* is based on a round-table discussion from a 1963 issue of *Playboy* magazine featuring twelve of the world's most eminent science-fiction writers, Arthur C Clark and Rod Serling amongst them. The authors' speculations on scientific and technological developments reveal how their dreams for the future are heavily conditioned by the Cold War and industrial circumstances from which they emerge. Byrne generates a glimpse of reality exposed through a fictional image of the future.

While not as explicitly tied to these theoretical touchstones, Willie Doherty exhibits a similar ability to produce images that are both alluring and critically engaged. Showing three video works in Venice, *Closure*, 2005, *Passage*, 2006, and the newly commissioned *Ghost story*, 2007, Doherty provides a space for quiet reflection with his poignant examinations of life in Northern Ireland.

Ghost story, 2007, is a deft demonstration of how the political and the mythical entwine themselves within collective cultural memory. Taking the viewer down an anonymous tree-lined path, Doherty's camera pans slowly through the dense foliage as it searches for signs of life. The viewer who observes the passing scenery from the seat of an imaginary car is informed that these forests are populated by wraiths. When spotted, these curious creatures signal the imminent death of those that encounter them or one of their close

friends or relatives. Comparing these mythical apparitions with the unnerving experience of viewing images of the recently deceased published by the media, Doherty highlights the absurdity of such widespread and unnecessary violence. The spectral presences which haunt Doherty's images serve to remind us that the complex history of his homeland continually evades the exacting eye of history and spills out into the lore of its people.

While overall the *Venice Biennale* is less than inspiring, the national contributions of the Republic and Northern Ireland (and a few other pavilions) help restore some faith in the art-exhibition format. Both Byrne and Doherty confirm that Baker's optimism and the aesthetic and critical role he assigns for contemporary art are not only possible, but more necessary than ever.

Judith Wilkinson is an independent curator and PhD candidate at Goldsmiths College.

Willie Doherty
Ghost story, 2007
duration: 12 minutes looped
installation: one 16:9 video projector, one DVD player, one stereo amplifier, two speakers, on DVD (colour, sound)
projected to a size of 1.3m x 2.3m onto wall of self-enclosed space
courtesy Northern Ireland at Venice



CINEMA SPACES AND
STRUCTURES AT THE 52ND
106 VENICE BIENNALE



While previous instalments of the *Venice Biennale* have been marked by novelty and visual spectacle, this year's international selection, curated by Robert Storr, is characterised by a relatively measured tone. The Arsenale, in particular, closely resembles a museum show in its mix of new and familiar works and emphasis on a number of core themes, including political conflict, economic exploitation and unequal power relations. Documentary photography features prominently, most often in the form of a series of colour images, such as those presented by Gabriele Basilico, Elaine Tedesco and Tomoko Yoneda. The series form also recurs in the installation of Yang Fudong's epic five-part film, *Seven intellectuals in bamboo forest* (2003 – 2007), a work that employs metaphor and allegory to explore social and economic transformation. Each part is projected in a separate space, suggesting a parallel between the experience of the Arsenale and the progress of the Intellectuals through the Bamboo Forest.

Melik Ohanian's video installation *September 11, 1973 _ Santiago, Chile* (2007), is also epic in scope, combining footage from present day Santiago with commentary from *The Battle of Chile Part 2*, a feature-length documentary made by Patricio Guzman during the overthrow of the Allende government in 1973. Sound and image are separated, so that the commentary emanates from speakers opposite the main screen, beside a monitor displaying subtitles from Guzman's film, foregrounding the construction of history within both original and remake. Zoran Naskovski's *War frames* (1999 – 2000), one of the few web projects at Venice, is also concerned with the representation of conflict but it directs attention towards the language of television through the assemblage of footage broadcast on Yugoslav TV during the NATO bombing in 1999. This focus

on the construction of archives persists within the Italian Pavilion, most obviously in Emily Jacir's *Material for a film* (2006). This collection of photographs, texts and clippings centres on the life and work of writer Wael Zuaiter, mistakenly targeted by Israeli intelligence in the aftermath of the 1972 Munich massacre and, more recently, misrepresented in Spielberg's *Munich*. Although it documents past events, Jacir's project is explicitly oriented towards the future, inviting speculation on the possible form that her film might take.

Mario García Torres' exploration of the archive, entitled *What happens in Halifax stays in Halifax (in 36 slides)* (2004 – 2006) is characterised by a whimsical emphasis on absence rather than excess. He stages and documents a reunion of a group of art students who may (or may not) have created a conceptual work while at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in 1969. García Torres is ostensibly engaged in a process of discovery but as the absent work was conceived in the form of a shared idea never to be documented, its precise form can only ever be imagined. It is possible to identify interesting points of connection between these diverse archival projects and Gerard Byrne's investigation of the 1960s and '70s but the international selection offers only a glimpse of complex practices, withholding the kind of in-depth exploration found in the Irish pavilion (and discussed elsewhere in this issue).

Two films by Steve McQueen are presented in the Italian pavilion and the longer work, *Gravesend* (2007), centres on the mining and processing of coltan, a mineral used in the production of mobile phones. This choice of subject matter might suggest a continuation of the concern with documentary evident

elsewhere at Venice, but the treatment of sound signals a departure from the conventions of realism, confirmed by the inclusion of an ambiguous animation sequence evoking images of cables, or perhaps a winding river. The film closes with an evocation of cinematic and literary narrative, in the form of a sunset in the port of Gravesend, the starting point for Joseph Conrad's *Heart of darkness*.¹ Joshua Mosley's use of animation is equally ambiguous, but by combining sculpture with the moving image he directs attention towards the relationship between physical and virtual processes of representation. His film *dread* (2007) stages a mysterious encounter between the philosophers Pascal and Rousseau and various creatures drawn from Muybridge's proto-cinematic experiments, including a dog named 'Dread'. The installation also includes bronze casts of these various characters, made from models that have been digitally scanned and animated onscreen.

Processes of translation between the physical and the virtual are also explored in two installations by Thomas Demand, entitled *Grotto* (2006) and *Yellowcake* (2007), at Fondazione Prada on Isolo San Giorgio. The earlier work marks a departure from the artist's usual practice in that it features both a completed photographic work, depicting a 'grotto', and the component elements used in the research and production process. These include a vast collection of postcards, drawings and film clips as well as the physical construction itself, complete with atmospheric lighting. This onslaught of source material stands in stark contrast to *Yellowcake*, which sets out to represent, in typically laborious fashion, the interior of the Embassy of the Republic of Niger in Rome.



Aernout Mik
Training ground, 2007
 video still, two-channel video
 installation
 courtesy carlier | gebauer,
 Berlin and The Project,
 New York

This is the site from which papers documenting sales of concentrated uranium ('yellowcake') to Iraq were supposedly stolen, later to be recovered and used as evidence to support the US invasion. Significantly, the *Yellowcake* images are based upon a visit to the actual site rather than archival sources, because photographs of the crime scene could not be found.

While *Grotto* is among the more elaborate creations on show at Venice this year, it is paralleled by various ambitious architectural constructions, most notably the wooden cinema designed by Tobias Putrih and installed on Isolo San Servolo as part of the Slovenian representation. The screening programme for this space includes retrospectives by the Slovenian group OHO and the British filmmaker John Smith and various works exploring the relationship between film and architecture (by Rosa Barba and Ursula Mayer among others). But in many respects the structure itself is the main attraction, surrounded by trees and ornamental wooden curtains that are ceremoniously opened and closed by ushers during intervals. This fascination with the space of cinema recurs across a range of national

representations, most obviously Andreas Fogarasi's *Culture and leisure* (2007) in the Hungarian pavilion. Consisting of eight video works, this project documents the remnants of social and cultural institutions developed under the Communist regime. Each video is projected into a large box on legs, faced by a bench of similar construction and, as with Putrih's cinema, the design (and specifically the acoustic properties) of these structures invites a kind of collectivity that is relatively rare within the realm of moving image installation. Similar themes are explored in work of Nomedas and Gediminas Urbonas at the Lithuanian pavilion, through reference to an array of cultural spaces, extending from the Villa Lituania in Rome to the Lietuva Cinema in Vilnius.

A more explicitly personal response to the space of cinema can be found in *It's a dream* (2007) by Tsai Ming-Liang, in the Taiwanese pavilion. This film, which unfolds within a darkened movie theatre, is framed as a dream about the protagonist's mother, suggesting an exploration of the scenarios of narrative identification conceptualised by psychoanalytic theorists during the 1960s and '70s. The film is projected within a

facsimile of the onscreen world, so that visitors must take their place within the same red leather seating occupied by characters in the dream. Elsewhere, within the Estonian pavilion, Marko Maetamm also employs the moving image to investigate familial relationships and forbidden desires. But his video work, *No title* (2006), is devoid of images and instead consists of a projected text that spells out an unthinkable, but darkly comic, solution to the conflict between artistic ambition and the duties of husband and father. Images rather than text dominate in Haris Epaminonda's video installation in the Cyprus pavilion, oriented towards a mobile rather than seated viewer. Here, sound is used to direct attention between three projections that combine appropriations from popular culture (promoting femininity and domesticity) with elements of original footage. Resisting interpretation, these sequences evoke half-remembered scenes from the films of Hitchcock, or perhaps Powell and Pressburger, as well as subsequent re-workings of this imagery within the realms of art and advertising.

Rosalind Nashashibi's 16mm film, *Bachelor machines Part 1* (2007), part of the collateral exhibition from Scotland, is also concerned with the dynamics of observation and voyeurism. The narrative charts the journey of an Italian cargo ship called the *Gran Bretagna* and seems to progress methodically through 25 sequences. These are identified onscreen as 'scenes', and depict fragments of the exterior, the surrounding sea and various un-translated interactions between the crew.

Very little is revealed about life on board, however, as attention gradually shifts towards the relationship between filmmaker and subject and, ultimately, the practice of representation itself. This focus on voyeurism is sharpened in *Citizens and subjects*, Aernout Mik's presentation in the Dutch pavilion, consisting of three linked video installations. While one video (entitled *Convergencies*) is composed of found footage documenting law-enforcement techniques, the others (*Mock up* and *Training ground*) depict fictional training exercises involving the

detention and management of suspects. The movements of the participants are uncertain, however, suggesting improvisation or re-enactment and recalling strategies employed by Peter Watkins as well as aspects of 'reality television'. Visitors to the pavilion are invited to observe these scenarios from a distance but are denied the darkness of a cinematic installation. Instead, they remain visible to each other as they move around the brightly lit building, the interior of which has been redesigned to resemble a series of institutional waiting areas. Although *Citizens and subjects* is clearly concerned with the architecture of spectatorship, it provides a counterpoint to the various cinematic constructions already highlighted. In place of the utopian collectivity that is sometimes associated with cinema, Mik proposes a model of reception that is characterised by fragmentation and disorientation, staging an experimental scenario in which the investigation of power relations seems to extend beyond the screen and into the space of exhibition itself.

1 There are interesting connections between McQueen's film and Katharine Ainger's article 'The scramble for Africa', in *New internationalist* Issue 367, May 2004, which focuses on coltan and also references *Heart of darkness*. See newint.org/features/2004/05/01/keynote/

Maeve Connolly lectures on film, animation and visual culture at the Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dún Laoghaire.

Andreas Fogarasi
Venice installation view
2007
photo Bert de Leenheer
courtesy Hungary at Venice



110 FRANCES HEGARTY
AND ANDREW STONES:
TACTICALLY YOURS



When a rock is lifted the earth is lighter and the hand that bears it heavier.¹

There was an ominous and serious atmosphere to this exhibition. There were numerous monitors in the basement spaces, their content the repetitive throwing of a stone in a forest by actors (the two artists), one after the other as in a competition. The image of stone throwers in a fire break of a commercial forest would seem to offer Hegarty and Stones an ambiguous iconic and cinematic/televsual image. The insistence of the image in three of the gallery's spaces left the viewer in no doubt as to its significance for the artists who wanted to focus on their personal and collaborative partnership. The female actor (Hegarty), dressed in dark clothes, throws with her left arm; the male actor (Stones), also in dark gear with a hat, throws with his right. The length/ ordnance of the throw is beyond the focus or detail of the camera and monitors and the source of the ready supply of stones is not revealed. All distinguishing information about the location is hidden. The intense, layered audio in each gallery hints at passing traffic, so one can speculate that both actors are not lost. The opportunity for a psychoanalytical narrative following a kind of Victor Burgin approach are not taken up, although the formalism of the display in the spaces reminded me of his work. There could have been a language play on the name of Andrew Stones. The muteness of the image, the excessive neatness, the foreshortening of the frame and the frontality of the arrangement to each space (almost like altars) seemed to suggest some religious echoes, as in 'he who is without sin etc'. But the reference seems a bit faint.

A stronger interpretative link comes from the specific location of the Butler in the theatrical presence of Kilkenny Castle; it suggests that *Tactically yours* aims to contemplate

rebellion and insurrection, of making an assault. Stone-throwing is an apprenticeship position in many a freedom fighter's biography. Collaboration in the context of a castle in Ireland speaks of informing and betrayal, and tactical loyalty is what court life was/ is all about. The artists are placing themselves in a forest to throw stones along an axis; it's a safe place for a rebellion that is collected and presented as CCTV/ formal art installation. The monitors' brands are neatly taped over, and the steel stands and black DVD players with neatly coiled cables are all spotless and sterile. The pristine display is overshadowed by the Castle environment; the summer audience would have a large number of tourist visitors and this, I believe, is acknowledged in the ambiguity between cultural and military manoeuvres in the forest actions.

The final space at the Butler presented a colour video projection of rapid drawings on paper by enlarged right-handed male and left-handed female hands. Thirty-two charcoal drawings appear in the frame, completed simultaneously as in an accelerated game of hangman or noughts and crosses. There is a distinct aggression in this work, accentuated by the staccato tick-tack sound of the charcoal sticks hitting off the page. Why this piece is so fast is hard to discern. Occasionally, the charcoal stick falls or the paper tears, and this adds to a sense of improvisation in the hit-and-miss battlelines that are in contrast to the more formal forest work. There is a compelling interactive quality to the work, as scattered marks, curlicues and dashes are scribbled over or underlined. Is the viewer's role to adopt a graphologist's approach and assign value to the gender battle or referee who started a scribble and who stopped first? *Tactically yours* obviously signals something quite personal between

these collaborating people at a specific stage of their partnership; a critical weakness can sometimes occur in this scenario in that those immersed within the collaborative relationship presume that a viewer will be automatically responsive to such reflexivity. *Tactically yours* avoids this pitfall, in my opinion, because it strains to address the viewer openly as a co-conspirator, if that's not too much of a paradox. The drawing video follows a trajectory from a concern with representation or identity to one of social interaction or a social demonstration that anyone couple could try. Hegarty and Stones have created at least six large collaborative pieces over the past decade; a critical research project might investigate how these works can be periodised and related to other collaborative practices in these islands.

Do you see how an act is not like a rock that one picks up and throws and its hits and misses, and that's the end of it.²

¹ Ursula K Le Guin, *Earthsea trilogy*, Penguin, London, 1979, p 361

² Ibid, p 361

Brian Hand is an artist and Programme Leader of the BA (hons) in Fine Art at the Wexford Campus of IT Carlow.

Frances Hegarty and Andrew Stones
Tactically yours, 2007
installation view
© / courtesy the artists

112 THE COLOUR OF SURPRISE



[opposite]
Jeanette Hillig
Wall painting, 2007
mixed media
site-specific installation
photo Matt Gidney
courtesy Limerick City Gallery
of Art

If the recent exhibition at Limerick City Gallery is anything to go by, then surprise is resplendently colourful. Keeping in mind our increasingly desensitised culture that conforms to Quentin Bell's belief that "there is no form of pictorial eccentricity which can provoke or even astonish the critics,"¹ generating surprise is no easy feat. And indeed, the individual works by the three artists featured in this exhibition initially seem more colourful than surprising. However, the primary preoccupation is not with colour; rather intense colour is the result of looking at immediate surroundings through various media.

Michele Horrigan's DVD installations explore landscapes and environment both exotic and local. *Cotorra* is a four-minute study showing Argentinean parrots picking at ripe figs. The soundtrack provides emotional depth to some of the more aesthetic shots, while the shaky camerawork and out-of-focus shots give a rawness and home-documentary feel to the piece. However, it is Horrigan's second installation, combining a twenty-minute DVD of investigative research, a still photograph and a six-minute DVD, that is more stimulating. The twenty-minute DVD, which reads like extracts from news

headlines and bulletins, provides the information which shapes and forms the rest of the work. Investigating the debate surrounding the mysterious health problems afflicting livestock in the artist's hometown of Askeaton in Limerick, this work touches a nerve that is close to home. Factories, electricity power stations and the Aughinish Alumina plant come under fire for polluting the local environment and livestock. Acid rain, sulphur emissions as well as heightened levels of aluminium in the soil are cited as some of the effects of the contamination. The weighty debate is fully visualised by the DVD, *Nature obscured by factory*, and by the still photograph, *Factory obscured by fog*. The works display exactly what the titles suggest, but more importantly they expose the dull, grey, ashen landscape choked by industry. Both *Nature obscured by factory* and *Factory obscured by fog* are reminiscent of the post-industrial-revolution, impressionistic cityscapes in fog by Monet. In light of this installation *Cotorra* takes on a new meaning, highlighting how the landscape should work in harmony with industrial development. The indigenous flora and fauna exist relatively harmoniously with the hard concrete buildings of economic growth and industrial expansion seen in the background. The vibrant greens and reds of *Cotorra* wonderfully contrast with the insipid greys of *Nature obscured by factory*.

The natural, vibrant scenery in Horrigan's *Cotorra* provides a contrast to the artificial colours of the remainder of the exhibition. Melanie O'Rourke's paintings investigate the excesses of our throw-away consumer culture. Artificial flowers, refuse sacks of discarded toys, bicycles and prams dumped on the side of the street attest to the current affluence of our society in the main. These cheaply produced consumer items are rendered useless and worthless. O'Rourke's use of industrial

materials, high-gloss paint and collage on aluminium, sufficiently reflect her subject matter. Flat blocks of colour are offset by meticulously and delicately detailed brushwork. O'Rourke's coupling of high gloss paint with areas of raw metal signals a return to her earlier works, which were similarly concerned with consumer culture. O'Rourke's use of aluminium is interesting in respect of Horrigan's *Nature obscured by factory*; it becomes even more apt as embodying cold industry and waste. Yet despite this, O'Rourke's images of discarded items and unwanted excess retain a sense of assured beauty. The subject matter should appal our moral conscience; instead the brightly coloured assortments appeal to our consumer greed and, like children in a candy store, we delight in the artificial colours and visual, saccharine intoxication.

Jeanette Hillig's sculptures, paintings and installations work on a similar basis to that of O'Rourke's works. Using found objects, such as common household products, empty containers and general junk, in combination with paint and plaster, Hillig moulds material relationships. Imagine the marrying of Robert Rauschenberg's use of found objects and paint with Jeff Koons' use of gaudy, mass-produced objects, and you will arrive at something that resembles Hillig's work. Hillig's installations and sculptures are fascinating and playful, cleverly using the reflective surfaces of glass and mirrors to further enhance the visual spectacle. The deceptively titled *Wall painting* installation invades the gallery wall, floor and even the surrounding space. *Wall painting* conveys the performative energy of creation, as brightly coloured paint drips from the wall onto the floor and down a sheet of glass. And like the famed Jackson Pollock drip paintings, the strength of the work lies in the energy of the artist and the vigorous spontaneity contained within. Like O'Rourke's

paintings, Hillig's mixed-media works comment on superfluous consumerism and highlight the artificially coloured, plastic-wrapped society in which we exist. Hillig's other sculptural structures utilise mass-produced items such as buckets, empty cartons, rubber gloves and lightbulbs in a way that dislocates them from their original semiotic meaning. Removed from their normal function, these objects then become appreciated for their shape, colour, texture and material, in tactile sculptural arrangements that provide a visual feast.

The Colour of surprise embodies more of a subtle, creeping surprise that slowly reveals and unveils itself, as opposed to the kind of superficial shock tactics recognised by Bell and employed by the Brit Art brigade during the nineties. The works featured in this exhibition display the potentially destructive forces of unchecked industrial expansion and the fixation on consumerism. The works of Hillig and O'Rourke explore the contradictory relationship between, on the one hand, repellent and disturbing consumer habits and material greed and, on the other, the collective aesthetic beauty of these mass-produced objects. It is finally through Horrigan's installation that this exhibition unravels as one that calls upon a social and environmental consciousness, and that is perhaps the most surprising outcome of all.



1 Quentin Bell, 'The fine arts', in *The Crisis in the humanities*, ed. J H Plumb, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964

Melanie O'Rourke
One man's rubbish, 2007
mixed media on aluminium
160 x 120 cm
photo Matt Gidney
courtesy Limerick City Gallery
of Art

Karen Normoyle-Haugh is an art historian and visual-arts writer.

[following pages]
Bright edge/dark edge (a)
Gathering bright edges (a)
Gathering light (d)
Gathering light (f)
Gathering dark edges (a)

GATHERED LIGHT:

115

This series of photos started as a simple way of playing with light and surface.

I use thick translucent paper to shape transitions between light and dark. The paper takes the light quite dramatically and when crumpled and moulded gives form to the movement from light to dark – much like swirling cloth has been used in many baroque paintings. I move the paper around, photographing the differing light along its edges. And individual shots are then merged into a single image.

The crumpled paper provides an arena for light's presence and absence. And the multiple layering of observations is an attempt to trace the activity of the light in its continual reshaping and rescattering by the movement of the paper.

The images encourage a subtle viewing. Diptychs and triptychs of images related to each other encourage a tracing of lines, marks and edges across the photos. We can follow how the increased layering of observation across a set of images evokes forms and textures.

In these photos, the earliest in this project, I am looking for points where several shots build up to something dynamic and reverberating; where the light has gathered to its illuminating and transformative best.

Tony McAteer, 2007













Steel 2007. Sawdust, stoneblust, hardboard, plywood, paper, acrylic, screws, glue. 74 x 24 x 10cms

St. Thomas' Legacy
October 11
Green On Red Gallery
T. +353.1.6713414
E. info@greenonredgallery.com

Paul Mosse
November 10 2007
26-28 Lombard St. East D. 2
F. +353.1.6727117
W. www.greenonredgallery.com



Miroslaw Balka: Tristes Tropiques

14 November 2007 – 27 January 2008

Irish Museum of Modern Art, Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, Dublin 8

