

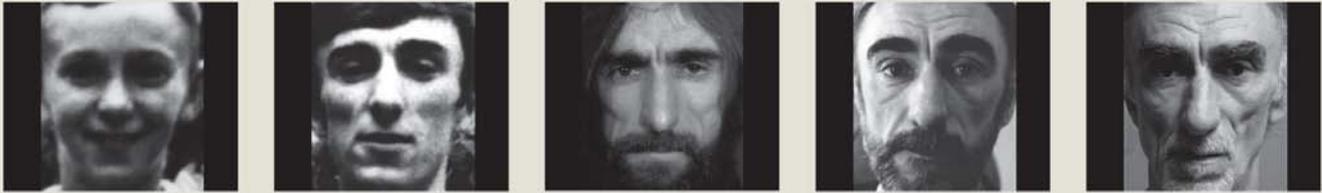
CIRCA 125

CONTEMPORARY VISUAL CULTURE IN IRELAND
AUTUMN 2008 | €7.50 £5 US\$12 | ISSN 0263-9475



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Contemporary
visual culture in
Ireland

2

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(front cover)
Ben Craig
degree-show installation
2008
courtesy the artist



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Patricia Burns : oil paintings "new paintings"

July 12th to September 13th
Landscape 08

-Dennis Mc Nulty : *the migrant / landscape* - video installation based on works by John Mc Gahern

-Patricia Burns : *new paintings* - oil paintings "complex and haunting"

-John Gerrard : *Smoke tree III* - virtual sculpture, designed to disintegrate over time

-Robin Whitmore : *drawings from moving trains* - ink drawings on till roll, of half glimpsed landscape (5cm x 600cm)

September 19th to October 11th
Commodity Form

Colin Darke : *The Capital Paintings*
series of 480 oil paintings of a broad range of seemingly random items

David Mabb : *Rhythm 69*
70 paintings made from a perplexing array of references, influenced by the work of William Morris, "seemingly random items"

Admission is free to all exhibitions in the galleries. Open Monday-Saturday 10am-6pm, Sunday 2pm-6pm

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Admission Free / Open 7 days





Public Art Commissions in Armagh City

Armagh City and District Council have embarked on a major urban regeneration scheme to transform 11 streets in Armagh City Centre. An associated Public Art Project aims to integrate innovative public art into the overall scheme. These projects will act as a catalyst for the beginning of a new and exciting creative period for Armagh City, inviting artists to engage with the rich history, unique architecture and the promising future of this inspirational City.

Opportunities for artists/design teams include:

- (1) **Tender** (ref: 120809) - inviting artists to submit detailed design proposals for 'infrastructural art' including miniature street sculptures and wall art
- (2) **Expressions of Interest** (ref: 130809) - from which artists will be selected to prepare detailed design proposals for individual commissions, including an iconic 'Centre Piece' sculpture at the heart of the City

Location: Armagh City, Northern Ireland

Closing Date: 6 October 2008

Total Project Budget: £275,000

Project Brief and associated documents can be downloaded from 25 August 2008 at www.armagh.gov.uk/tenders.php

Closing Date for receipt of completed tenders and expressions of interest in hard copy format is no later than **12 noon on 6 October 2008.**

John Briggs,
Clerk and Chief Executive

**Inspiring
Armagh.**



Inspiring Improvements

for a better Armagh



Untitled, mirror & wood, In Situ - Templebar Studios, 2008

Spaces Karl Burke

Karl Burke was the winner of the 2007 Emerging Visual Artist Award, a initiative supported and funded between Wexford County Council, Wexford Arts Centre and the Arts Council Ireland to recognise and support the development of committed emerging visual artists. The annual award scheme supports the successful recipient with a bursary for the creation of a new body of work to be presented in a solo exhibition at Wexford Arts Centre.

8th - 30th November 2008

Cornmarket, Wexford
info@wexfordartscentre.ie
Tel: +353 (0)53 912 3764
www.wexfordartscentre.ie

Gallery hours: Mon - Sat 10am - 6pm



BOOKISH When books become art

Curated by Matt Packer

2 July - 26 October 2008

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Sunday 12 – 5pm
Closed Mondays

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
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Public Arena: a project for Tallaght stadium by Bik Van der Pol

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DAILY 1 P.M. – 8 P.M.

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nationalsculpturefactory

Temporary Projects

19 September – 10 October 2008

Cork docklands area

ÍÑIGO MANGLANO-OVALLE, SEAMUS NOLAN,
SORCHA O'BRIEN & ELI CAAMANO

Launch night: Fri 19 Sept 6pm, in Port of Cork (boardroom), as part of Cork's inaugural Culture night.

SEMINAR 20 SEPT – THE EXPECTATION OF SPECTACLE IN PUBLIC ART - with Jon Bewley (Locus+), Caoimhin Corrigan, Aisling Prior and Daniel Jewesbury. 2-6pm.

AUTUMN / WINTER LECTURES

Upcoming lectures by Irit Rogoff (8 October), Ciara Moore (29 October), Yael Bartana (19 November), and Romuald Hazoum (9 December). Bookings: elma@nationalsculpturefactory.com

For more information see: www.nationalsculpturefactory.com or contact programme manager Treasa O'Brien at: treasa@nationalsculpturefactory.com or PH 021 4314353

This project is a winner of Cork City Council's Arts Office Project scheme. NSF Commissions is also grateful to The Docklands Directorate, The Port of Cork, Arup Engineering, and William O'Brien Plant Hire.



Illustration: Íñigo Manglano-Ovalle

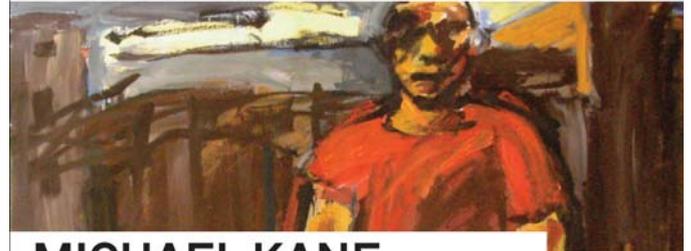


SOL
STICE



TOM MOLLOY Subplot

Thurs 4th Sept—Sat 4th Oct, 2008



MICHAEL KANE

Thurs 16th Oct—Sat 22nd Nov, 2008

Solstice Arts Centre

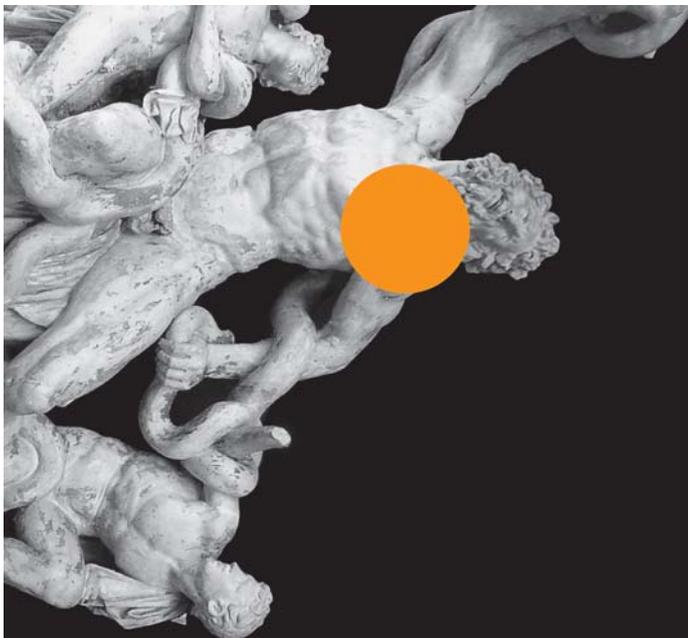
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Ireland

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The 31st Claremorris Open Exhibition (COE)



claremorris open exhibition

Open Submission Exhibition of Irish and Contemporary Art

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Claremorris, County Mayo

www.coearts.org

info@coearts.org

0876680107

'Brilliant Failures' Siobhan Tattan



Preview: 5 Nov 6pm
Exhibition Dates: 6 Nov - 20 Dec 2008
Colour Catalogue available with essay by Nicky Coutts



triskel arts centre
Tobin Street, Cork.
(021) 4272022
www.triskelartscentre.ie
Tues - Sat : 10 - 5pm



BORDER BOOK

In 2007 Nick Stewart published *no-one's not from everywhere*, (reviewed, *Circa*, Autumn 2007), based on recorded conversations about place and memory, with a wide selection of Irish artists.

For his new project, *Border Book*, a similar methodology will record the experience of everyday life in and around the border.

Submissions can be short or long, serious or humorous, personal or otherwise. The experience of, or memories and stories about, the border should be the focus of all submissions.

All submissions will be guaranteed anonymity if included in the final publication.

Individuals are invited to submit material in strictest confidence:

Email:
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or

Mail:
PO Box 63443
London
SE1P 5FH

www.nickstewart.org.uk

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Partenaire Officiel :



STATE STREET



Image: 'Organism', silver vessel by Junko Mori, 2005
Photograph by Clarissa Bruce

TREASURES of TODAY

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www.museum.ie

museum

National Museum of Ireland
Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann

Decorative Arts & History



ENNISKILLEN VISUAL ARTS OPEN

The 2008 Visual Arts Open Exhibition consists of 15 exhibitors showcasing their work in many of Enniskillen's Town Centre Commercial and Education Venues. The Visual Arts Open Exhibition runs during the Arts Festival from the 26th Sept – 5th October 08 all venues will be open to the public during the entire duration of the festival.

Visual Arts Open

Helen Blake - HBG
 Bernie Masterson - Portora drawing room
 Kathy Graham - Horseshoe Bar
 Martin Bardell - Ardhowen
 Andy Parsons - Forum
 Talie Mau - Café Merlot
 Maeve Collins - HBG
 Lucia Barnes - Hospital
 Lucy Foley - Portora
 Derek Fitzpatrick - HBG
 Gloria Casey - Library
 Majella Clancy - Russell and Donnelly's
 Chris Summerfield and Sian O'Keefe - Jubilee Courtyard at Portora
 Isabelle Gaborit - Franco's
 Louise Barr - HBG

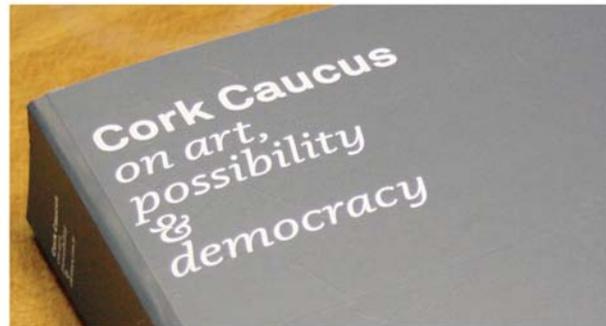
enniskillenartsfestival.com

Image shown by Lucia Barnes

ENNISKILLEN ARTS FESTIVAL



Further details are available from the Arts Office at 028-6632-5050



A MAJOR NEW PUBLICATION COMMISSIONED BY THE **nationalsculpturefactory**

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 Visual Editors: Dobz O'Brien & Can Altay
 Keynote lectures by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Chantal Mouffe.

RRP: €20 (bookshops and galleries)
 Direct from NSF: €15 (non-member)
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www.corkcaucus.org
www.nationalsculpturefactory.com

Supported by the European Cultural Foundation, American Center Foundation, Mondriaan Stichting, and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.




draíocht

Geraldine O'Neill, Birdhouse, 2008, oil on canvas, 40.5 x 35.5cm

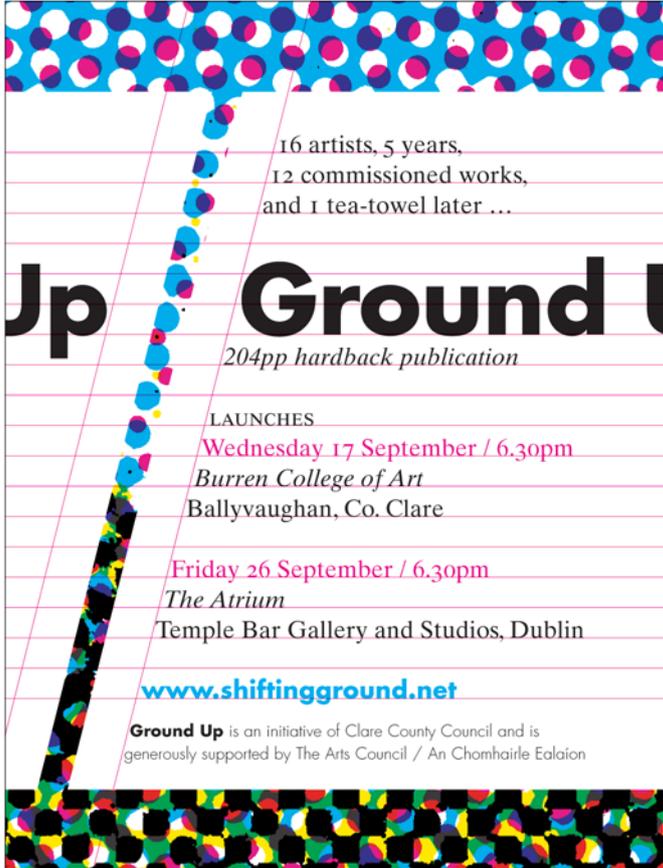
Geraldine O'Neill

Luan an tSléibhe
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 12 commissioned works,
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Ground Up

204pp hardback publication

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Wednesday 17 September / 6.30pm
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 Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare

Friday 26 September / 6.30pm
 The Atrium
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Ground Up is an initiative of Clare County Council and is generously supported by The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon



Martin Gale, *A Fire in the Land*

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www.royalhibernianacademy.ie



For you, only you : A project by Sonia Boyce

A collaborative project between visual artist Sonia Boyce, early music consort Alamire, and contemporary sound artist Mikhail Karikis

Panel discussion / Friday 31 October
Sonia Boyce, Mikhail Karikis and David Skinner

Film Installation / Sligo town, 1 – 16 November
Venue details see www.modelart.ie

Live performances /
Alamire with Mikhail Karikis
Sat 1 Nov 3pm Sligo Abbey
Sat 1 Nov 8pm Markree Castle
Sun 2 Nov 2pm Temple House

For you, only you is presented by **model ::offsite '08**;
an innovative programme of visual and music works in new and
unusual spaces which is being programmed by the Model
during their temporary closure to facilitate a major redevelopment.
For full venue and programme details see www.modelart.ie



model :: offsite '08

For you, only you: A project by Sonia Boyce is organised by the Ruskin School of Drawing & Fine Art, University of Oxford in partnership with the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill on Sea, Locust+, Newcastle upon Tyne, Milton Keynes Gallery and The Model Arts and Niland Gallery with the support of Arts Council England and Magdalen College, Oxford.



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SHANE CULLEN, DURER AND THE GALLOWGLASS, ANTWERP, 1521

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2008

[A REGENERATE PROJECT]



SHANE CULLEN, DURER AND THE GALLOWGLASS, ANTWERP 1521, (DETAIL), 2008, PHOTO BY BREDA FLYNN, 2008

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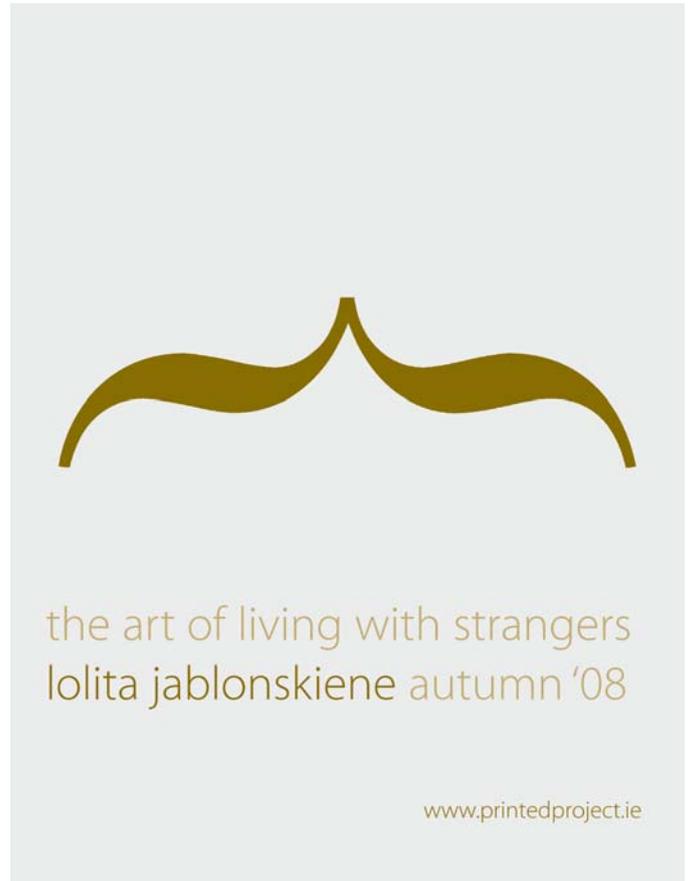
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Foras na Gaeilge

Dublin City Gallery
The Hugh Lane

other men's flowers

To 5 October 2008

**Julian Opie: Walking on
O'Connell Street**

To 8 November 2008

Permanent Collection

Hugh Lane 100 Years

To 31 December 2008

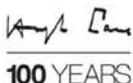
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Sean Scully Gallery

> Fergus Martin
16 October 2008 –
11 January 2009

> The Golden Bough
Garrett Phelan:
Radio Tombs and
Interruption
30 October 2008 –
1 February 2009

> Now's The Time
6 November 2008 –
8 February 2009



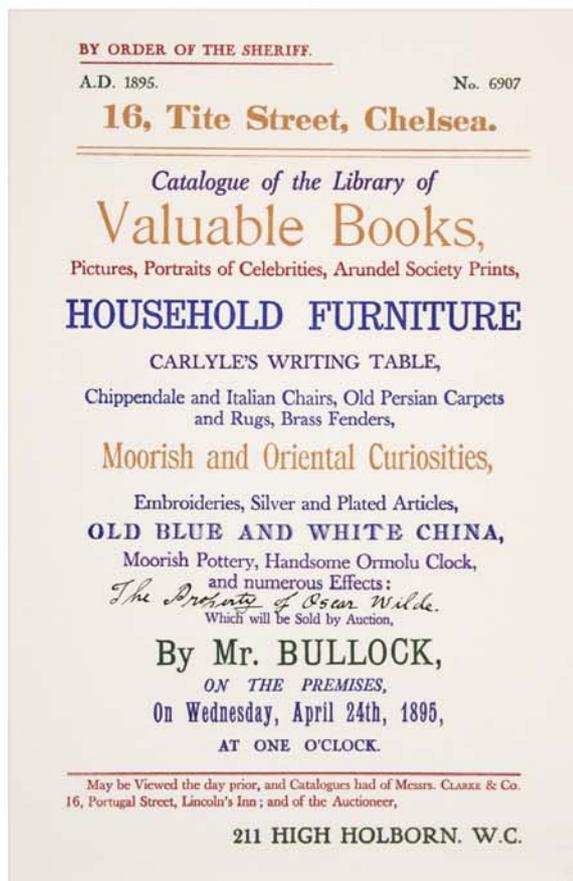
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Parnell Square North
Dublin 1

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www.hughlane.ie

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Ulla von Brandenburg
Janaina Tschäpe

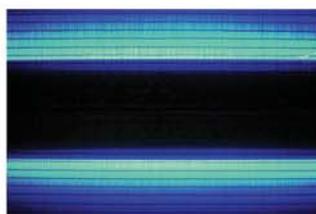
David McDermott & Peter McGough
The Property of Oscar Wilde, 2008
€1,000



Francesco Clemente
Celtic Self-Portrait, 2003
€1,500



Dorothy Cross
Rugby Ball, 2005
€300



Juan Uslé
Bocanegra Köln, 2004
€850



Miroslaw Balka
B, 2007
€500

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Culture night 2008

Circa video screening



Circa screens the selected videos from the open submission

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The Selected artists are:

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FILM IRELAND



OUT NOW!

The September/October issue of *Film Ireland* is guest edited by **Michael Dwyer**, Film Correspondent of *The Irish Times*. This issue follows the filmmaking process from start to finish and includes an exclusive interview with Robert Redford and articles written by Sir Alan Parker, Damien O'Donnell, John Boyne, Alan Moloney, John Carney and Tara Brady.

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WEST CORK ARTS CENTRE



Image: Diana Copperwhite, *Replay*, watercolour on paper, 57 x 77 cm, 2008. Image courtesy Kevin Kavanagh Gallery

My Space and I

6 September - 18 October

Selected works from the University College Cork Collection in collaboration with the Glucksman Gallery and UCC.

Domestic Goddess

Thursday 18 September at Seats Restaurant on Market Street, Skibbereen

A unique gourmet experience with artists Stephen Brandes, Mick O'Shea and Irene Murphy in association with WCAC as part of the Taste of West Cork Food Festival held annually in Skibbereen. www.skibbereen.ie for further information.

Eclipse of a title

Diana Copperwhite

25 October - 19 November

Exhibition of new work by the winner of the 2007 AIB Award for Artists of Promise nominated by West Cork Arts Centre. A publication will accompany this exhibition.

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email: info@westcorkartscentre.com Open: Mon - Sat 10:00 am - 6:00 pm



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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 2009
- (e) Submissions to editor@recirca.com or to our postal address.
- (f) Please state the course you are following and where.

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Symmetry

Black Church Print Studio Open Submission Exhibition

Call for submissions

Curated by Rhona Byrne & Oran Day

Symmetry, Open to Irish & International artists

Exhibition brief & application procedure available to download from www.print.ie

Submission deadline: 17 November 2008

Exhibition Venue: Original Print Gallery, 4 Temple Bar, Dublin 2
Dates: 12 February - 7 March 2009



Black Church
print studio

4 Temple Bar
Dublin 2
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126



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Highlanes Gallery

Precious Things:

a selection of contemporary painting

26 September - 14 November 2007



Ansel Krut, *Stupid Mouth*, oil on canvas, 2004, 56 x 41 cm. Courtesy: Ansel Krut and David Bell



Ansel Krut, *Stupid Mouth*, oil on canvas, 2004, 56 x 41 cm. Courtesy: Ansel Krut and David Bell

Keira Bennett, Simon Bill, Varda Caivano, Michael Crowther, Adam Dant, Will Daniels, Jeffrey Dennis, Geraint Evans, Paul Housley, Ansel Krut, Marta Marcé, Hannah Maybank, Zoë Mendelson, Mali Morris, Sara McKillop, Julian Perry, John Stratton, Joshua Thomson, Will Turner.

Curated by Graham Crowley

Highlanes Gallery, St Laurence Street, Drogheda, Co. Louth
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Project just financed by the European Union

INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

IMMA International Symposium

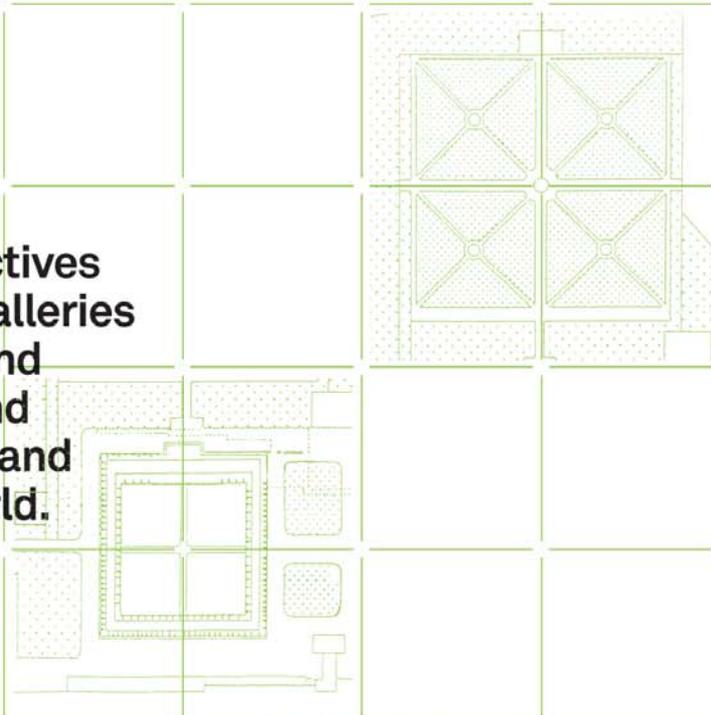
Museum21 Institution Idea Practice

12—13
November
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Áras
Nua-
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na
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Symposium speakers confirmed at date of going to print

Sophie Byrne: Assistant Curator; Talks and Lectures; Education and Community Programmes; IMMA

ART FORUM BERLIN

DESIRE

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Curated by Ruairí Ó Cuív and Clíodhna Shaffrey

October – November 2008

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Editorial



Art college. Do you leave it, or does it leave you? The final weeks in art college can be very fraught, as the struggle is on to get the work into a form ready for the assessors and the world at large to observe and judge. And then one day, shortly after, it all stops. You were inside, now you're outside.

To draw out this whole process a little, for some, I am delighted that we are again hosting a 'critics' choice' from the degree shows. This is a series of short texts in which selected writers have themselves chosen one artist from a bachelors- or masters-level Fine Art course. This is someone whose work particularly took their interest; in general, the word is, the standard is high and, as can be seen in the pages here, the output diverse and stimulating.

I do have misgivings that we were not able to cover all degree-level shows, or to give fair weight to the different colleges. Reasons are various, but it certainly doesn't help if a college provides no information about when its degree show is on. There is particularly small coverage of degree-show work in Northern Ireland; again, reasons are various, but one is worth mentioning because it is puzzling: there is only *one* college, the University of Ulster, Belfast Campus, offering Fine Art at degree level; in the Republic there are at least nine.

But back to this particular artist presented in the opening paragraph, as he or she steps beyond the art-college doors for the last time. Perhaps heighten the drama by having a bitter wind blast down the street, bouncing an empty can along the gutter (this is Ireland in June, after all). Art students occupy multiple and contradictory positions in the social hierarchy. There is a fair bit of the outsider about them, as they produce work regarded with varying levels of suspicion by the rest of society. And contrast "Hi, Dad, I'd like you to meet my boyfriend John, he's just graduated from law school!" with "...he's just finished art college." Artists tend to welcome the freedom to think and act differently that comes with being a bit on the fringes, but for most there is still the comfort of knowing the lingo of the middle classes and of being able to 'reinsert' with relative ease. Not proper outsiders, so, at least not at the level explored by artist Brian Maguire. Maguire brings us prisoners, psychiatric patients, favela-dwellers, any and all who are in danger of existing, 'passing through', without apparent consequence. Maguire's commitment to the marginalised is certainly not common. What is very unusual, however, is twofold: the incisive, arresting, unapologetic visual language that demands the viewer's attention; and the way his work has found its way into the highest reaches of the fine-art establishment in Ireland. In this issue we carry an interview with Maguire by Cian Traynor; it's hard not to be struck by the simplicity and honesty of Maguire's message.

"... down the street, bouncing an empty can..." (see above). Think cityscape. We inhabit cities, for the most part, and they inhabit us. To take one trivial example: outside the Circa office window, in the middle of Dublin's Temple Bar, buskers murder the lyrics of Johnny Cash's *Sunday morning coming down* – the source of the empty can – in what seems like a daily, ritual sacrifice. It's an 'outsider' song, to judge by the lyrics, regurgitated in Temple Bar in a way that possibly comforts the passing visitor in his or her temporary outsider status, or at least creates a moment of unmelodious but otherwise harmless complicity.

Cities get into our headspace in a million ways, bad buskers being just an obvious example. Artists often try to pin down the where, when and how of the city's effects. Sometimes the city itself, in its official form, encourages such artistic exploration, sometimes it seems to thwart it, and sometimes it does both simultaneously. Taking as her starting point one recent artistic intervention, *bodycity*, Gemma Tipton looks in her article in this issue at various city/ art dialogues.

Also often battling their outsider status are those whom various artistic interventions seek to re-enfranchise, to give a voice to – there are very many forms of art in the community that seek to involve disadvantaged people, and very many other ways in which artists seek to help those who are marginalised. And then along come the Olympics and, it seems, much of this artistic work may cease – at least, this may very well be the case in Northern Ireland (NI), as the the London Olympics of 2012 siphon cash, especially Lottery money, out of the 'good cause' sectors of UK society. As Justin McKeown argues in his article in this issue, now is not a good time to be taking money out of community-, cross-community- and disadvantage-related arts activity in NI, not when people in NI are trying to establish an identity away from the shadow of violence. Yet, it seems, this is just what is going to happen. I've mentioned above that NI seems peculiarly underresourced when it comes to Fine Art courses. It is well known that NI is greatly disadvantaged when it comes to central-government funding of the arts. And now, apparently, someone is about to fire a javelin though what funding remains; doesn't seem fair.

On a happier note, Patrick Ireland is dead. Northern Ireland is again the reason, but the context is considerably better. In this issue, Declan Long interprets an unusual interment.

What else? Much – enjoy!

Sir,

We wish to respond to a review written by John Kelly that appeared on pages 90 – 91 of *Circa* 124, summer 2008.¹ Kelly wrote about a photographic and text artwork made by Sean Lynch, which is now exhibited on the façade of the National Sculpture Factory in Cork. The purpose of this response is to correct and clarify a series of factually incorrect, disingenuous and misleading points contained within the review. Indicative of Kelly's approach, he begins his review by mistitling the artwork in question, calling it "*Joseph Beuys (still a discussion)*," rather than its actual title, *Beuys (still a discussion)*.

In the first paragraph, Kelly quotes a report from an advertising agency in Australia. In the layout and format adopted, this quote is *placed directly over* the words "The new piece [ie, *Beuys (still a discussion)*] consists of a photographic billboard on the front of the NSF with an accompanying text." With Kelly's structure, a casual reader might mistakenly read the advertising quote as part of the artwork's text. A correlation between the artwork and advertising is then tediously developed throughout the review, suggesting that the work, because of its public location and similarity to a billboard, is an advert for the NSF and Sean Lynch. Kelly continues this argument, leaving behind the context and content of the artwork he purports to review, using factual inaccuracies to reinforce his agenda.

In a very brief description of the artwork, Kelly paraphrases its text; "it tells us that a mysterious person saved white chalk dust from a Joseph Beuys lecture at the Crawford Art Gallery in 1974." At no point in the artwork's text was a 'mysterious person' mentioned.² While it is the reviewer's prerogative to deduct that this particular situation might be mysterious, what is problematic here is an assumption that Kelly then makes. He uses his own paraphrasing as the actual content of the artwork in his argument, continuing to ask "... why fabricate a

story around an historical fact and then make the image ambiguous?" Here, Kelly's observational abilities are not capable enough to notice that the image is not ambiguous; it is actually very clearly explained by the text piece below if he wanted to read and quote it correctly.

Kelly then continues to write that the NSF made posters and postcards of the artwork. This is typical of a situation that Kelly imagines; "art and artists reduced to gimmicky advertisements for contemporary-art [sic] organisations." No posters were actually made. Postcards were made on behalf of and requested by the artist as an integral part of the commission, to further disseminate the content of the artwork. However, Kelly's assertion that the postcards were somehow part of an attempt to brand the work or showcase the NSF (rather than the artist) is a deliberate misunderstanding of the intention behind the work. The postcards, funded through the core commission budget (rather than any advertising budget), were very much part of the artwork and part of its communication. Any reflected promotion of NSF is irrelevant and tangential. This does not negate NSF's stated intention behind the commission: "to provide a prominent platform for an artist, as well as drawing attention to the work of the NSF." It needs to be borne in mind that the

NSF exists to support artist's work and its visibility is vital to this, both in relation to public understanding and support of art and artists. If Kelly wants to know the means of promotion adopted here, the artwork was specifically promoted by the NSF's newsletter and brochure for spring – summer 2008, by electronic mailout, by an artist's talk (which Kelly attended), and by an advertisement in *Circa* magazine.

Compounding this mistaken assertion, Kelly fails to deal with the artwork under discussion and confuses the reader, twice referring to an 'idea' which was exhibited at the Lewis Glucksman Gallery in 2007 as a continuing part of the artwork *Beuys (still a discussion)*. What exactly is this idea? Its context and subject matter is not mentioned in Kelly's text.³ While we presume he is aware of Joseph Beuys' trip to Limerick, Dublin and Cork in September 1974, at no point is such information disclosed in his review, despite its clear contextual relevance to the artwork he should be reviewing. Instead, Kelly uses his misreading and negation of the situation as leverage to claim that all involved parties are only concerned with buying into the Beuys name. This is another incorrect assumption.

A final contradiction is present in Kelly's review. Earlier in the prose he writes, "My first reaction to the pile of white powder was that the NSF was selling cocaine." Despite the subversion that such an idea might imply, Kelly later contradicts himself by concluding that "Neither the NSF nor the artist have changed or subverted the function of the medium that delivers Lynch's photograph, nor have they changed its context." Firstly, the medium here is art, not advertising. Secondly, would Kelly's own suggestion of a state-funded organization selling cocaine not be enough subversion for him?

It is a great disappointment that Kelly has wasted column inches with an ill-thought approach. A carefully considered review on the artwork itself might have been valuable. *Beuys (still a discussion)* will remain in situ on the façade on the NSF until the end of 2008. Perhaps Kelly will have ample time to give it a second look.

Sean Lynch
Tara Byrne

- 1 This follows two other articles by the same author, referring to NSF activity, that appear on the *Circa* website.
- 2 For clarity, the artwork's text must be quoted: "A small mound of chalkdust was located in Cork in recent months. Originally, this dust fell from a blackboard used by Joseph Beuys in his lecture at the Crawford Municipal Art Gallery, on September 26 1974. A local clergyman erased Beuys' notes and drawings afterwards. A young man in the audience then collected the chalkdust off the floor, and put it in his pocket. The next day's Cork Examiner summarized the ideas discussed that evening, 'Beuys shows man as an essential creative being in a state of evolution. He searches for a means of restoring this sense of creativity in all spheres of life.'"
- 3 For the record, the artwork referred to as an 'idea' by Kelly consisted of a large appropriated photograph, wall panels, printouts of e-mails, a reconstruction of Beuys' 1974 sculpture *Irish energies* displayed in a vitrine, and the original signage of the Carnegie Free Library and Museum, Limerick. In its content the artwork specifically dealt with recollections of Beuys' time in Limerick City, on 25 September 1974.

Dear Editor,
Sean and Tara state that, "At no point in the artwork's text was a 'mysterious person,' mentioned." But they footnote this with the text that mentions this person - "A young man in the audience then collected the chalkdust off the floor, and put it in his pocket." When quizzed during his NSF talk, Sean could not divulge this man's identity and the text does not reveal it either. He remains a mysterious person from the '70s, who collects dust.

Sean and Tara state, "No posters were actually made." The NSF brochure folded out to reveal a large reproduction of the work on one side. The image had text over it promoting the NSF.

They quote me as saying, "My first reaction to the pile of white powder was that the NSF was selling cocaine." I used 'advertising', not 'selling'.

They also state, "... Kelly's observational abilities are not capable

enough to notice that the image is not ambiguous..." If I understand their stance correctly, no secondary reading of Sean's image is permissible. However, if you use the Google 'Images' function and type in the word 'cocaine', the results will show a number of photographs that look like small mounds of white chalk!

To be fair, they do get two things right: in the title I incorrectly added the name Joseph to Beuys. I apologise for this mistake. They also state that "...because of its public location and similarity to a billboard..." I correlated the work with advertising. They are correct and I stand by my review.

Regards
John Kelly

Circa and Culture Night

Culture Night is back, specifically on 19 September. That's when a load of arts venues in Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick will remain open until 11 pm, and all sorts of special activities will take place. Circa is delighted to be participating this time round, thanks to Temple Bar Gallery and Studios, to artist and Four Gallery director Lee Welch, and to all those who submitted videos to our Culture Night video competition. Those whose video works have been selected by Welch are Candice Jacobs, Serge Le Squer, Emily Candela, Gabriela Vainsencher (two pieces), Sergio Cruz, Tony Burhouse, Claudia Mateus, Andrew Sims, Angel Bellaran, Dave Griffiths, Barry W Hughes and Funda Ozgunaydin. Please join us on 19 September in the Atrium of TBG&S to see the outcome.

People for Venice

Susan MacWilliam has been chosen as the artist to represent Northern Ireland at the 2009 *Venice Biennale*. Karen Downey, Exhibitions Director at Belfast Exposed Photography, will curate the solo show. MacWilliam is best known for her ambiguous take on paranormal and parapsychological phenomena.

Meanwhile, Sarah Browne and Gareth Kennedy have been selected by Commissioner Caoimhín Corrigan to be the Republic's artists at the same gig. Browne and Kennedy's project in *Circa* 120, summer 2007, gives a flavour of how they often reconfigure aspects of common culture in their practice.

They're back: two Circa critical-writing competitions

Following the success of last year's competitions, calling again 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 p 22 of this issue.

Directors

Darragh Hogan and Tara Byrne have left the Board of Circa. Our sincere thanks to them for all their valuable contributions to the magazine.

New portrait competitions

Davy, "Ireland's leading provider of stockbroking, wealth management and financial advisory services," has launched a portrait competition, the *Davy Portrait Awards*. The prize is an extremely healthy €12,600/ £10,000 if you hit the jackpot, with further prizes as well. One important caveat: only traditional, nondigital media accepted. Initial selection is by open submission, but the deadline passed this 29 August. The judging panel is prestigious: Rita Duffy, president of the Royal Ulster Academy, Stephen McKenna, president of the Royal Hibernian Academy, and Gemma Tipton, "international art critic and writer" who often graces the pages of *Circa*, this issue being no exception. There will be exhibitions of the selected works at the Naughton Gallery, Belfast, in November and at Farmleigh House, Dublin, in early 2009.

Portraiture is clearly in favour, as there is also a new *Photographic Portrait Prize*. This one is in conjunction with the *Irish arts review* and the Royal Hibernian Academy – in fact, you submit your portrait photo as you would any other artwork to the RHA Annual Exhibition. That exhibition is in November, but the closing date for submissions is 5 September. Could be worth it: there's €6,000 on offer for the winner.

Errata

In the last issue, we incorrectly stated that Brendan Jamison's *JCB BUCKET* series show was at the Old Museum Arts Centre; in fact it was at Queen Street Studios; many apologies.

Gremlins also munched at parts of Jessica Foley's *ev²a* review. A correct version is now online, at recirca.com/backissues/c124/eva.shtml. The transcript of the audio file on which the review is based is also available there.

New director for Model

Séamus Kealy is to be the new Director of the Model:Niland Gallery in Sligo. He leaves his post as Curator of the Blackwood Gallery, University of Toronto, has an impressive list of curated shows under his belt, and apparently is also handy with a paintbrush. He lived in Sligo as a child. Meanwhile, the Model's previous Director, Sarah Glennie, takes over as head of the Irish Film Institute in Dublin.

More dosh

The Taylor Art Award, Ireland's highest no-strings-attached award in the visual arts, has been scooped at the RDS Student Art Awards this year by Robert Manson. Manson, a graduate of IADT Dún Laoghaire, pockets a cool €20,000. Gerry Davis (LSAD) took the Lewis Crosby Award, Justin Larkin (NCAD) the Freyer Award, Sharanne Lone (Carlow IT) the James White Award, Leila Pedersen (NCAD) the Printmaking Award, Ruth Medjber (DIT) the Henry Higgins Travelling Scholarship, and Susan O'Brien (NCAD) the Peter O'Kane Award.

The Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon has also been shelling out. A lot of artists have reason to be pleased with the Council's Bursary decisions this year, perhaps most notably Tom Molloy and Margaret O'Brien, each of whom get €35,000 over three years.

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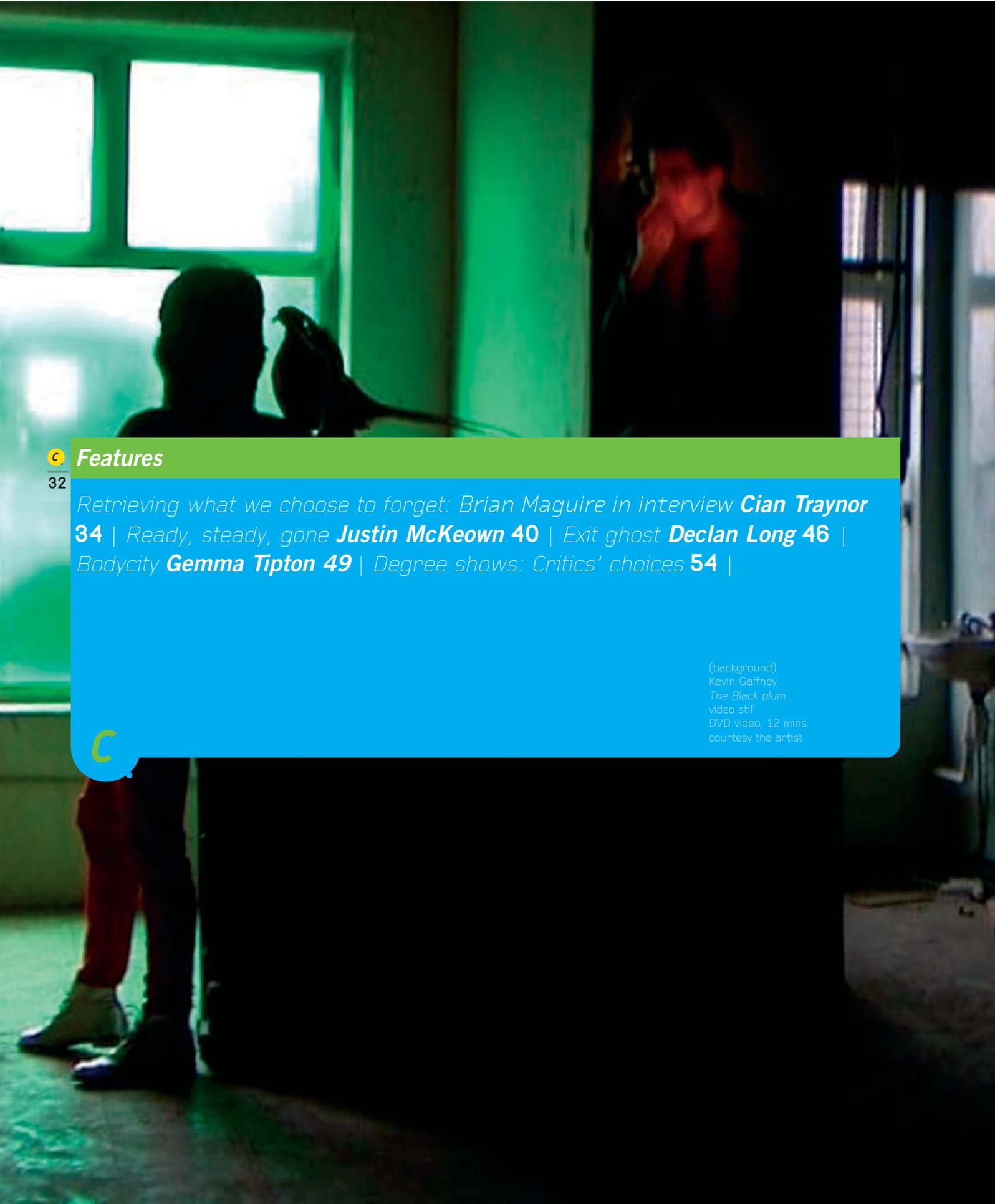
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C *Features*

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(background)
Kevin Gaffney
The Black plum
video still
DVD video, 12 mins
courtesy the artist

C



Retrieving what we choose to forget *Brian Maguire in interview*



[opposite]
Brian Maguire
Chair, 2007
acrylic on canvas
60 x 60 cm
courtesy Kerlin Gallery

Brian Maguire's paintings have never been suited to passive consumption. Drawn to figures wounded, alienated and vulnerable, the body of his work has always proved provocative if not altogether unsettling. Consistently attempting to counteract a process of erasure from society, Maguire is conscious of the 'trap' that people often get caught in for reasons beyond their own control.

It's this fascination with the human condition that has inspired various collaborative projects, culminating in exhibitions across Europe, Asia and the Americas. His work as artist-in-residence in prisons throughout Ireland and North America effectively sought to re-humanise his subjects; his time working in the impoverished communities of Brazil juxtaposed the faces of children and criminals in an air of inevitability; and his involvement with Derry's Gransha hospital questioned public perception of mental illness by highlighting patient individuality and empowerment.

Yet it was Maguire's collaborative project with Galway's Fairgreen homeless shelter that epitomises his engaging and deeply personal approach. The project was driven by the notion that those who had passed away while living on the streets had not only been relegated to the margins of society, but had seemingly left no trace behind them at all. Undertaking an extended period of research, Maguire sought out anyone who could provide recollections or photographs of certain figures, gradually developing a sense of the person before committing their memory to canvas and honouring their right to be remembered.

By capturing an existential character rarely found in portraiture, Maguire has a way of unearthing qualities in his subjects that narrow the gulf between viewer and subject. When political reality invades personal life, the ideological issue becomes an individual one, challenging the viewer to question what is deemed conventionally acceptable. These works act as the raised voice of one person's subjective truth, examining the balance of power with a damning ferocity.

Maguire's paintings are traditionally guided by an apparent primal energy, the paint smeared roughly as if to apply pressure on the message behind the image. While still retaining the multiple depths that have characterised his previous output, the artist's recent exhibition at the Kerlin

Gallery, *Hidden islands: notes from the war on the poor*, reveals a clarity and sophistication that suggest a style still evolving. His most successful show to date, it brings together a range of topics under an impressively cohesive socio-political commentary and is considered by many to be a significant breakthrough for an artist widely regarded as an informed and compassionate observer of human rights issues. Here, in a rare interview, Maguire speaks candidly about the long-term commitment of his work and the ideas that inspired his latest collection.

What attracts you to working with people on the margins of society?

I remember saying that art comes from the spirit of revenge. Sometimes it's from the spirit of love, but mostly revenge. What attracts me is the unfairness of the whole fuckin' thing and the necessity to make a gesture. Just a gesture in counterpoint to it.

Does that gesture attempt to reclaim dignity on behalf of the subject?

It may do so, certainly. Normally what I have done, like my work with prisoners before, is to show that they have a social identity; that they are citizens too. With the work that I've done in institutions, I received feedback from the families of patients who were touched by the simple recognition of humanity there. One woman in particular broke down at an exhibition which dealt with mental patients in Derry. She felt that this was the first time she had seen her people honoured. To me, that is retrospective justification...which I would not have had at the time. There would have been grumbles of exploitation, the argument being that if they're mental patients, they can't give permission. But when they died, their families were thrilled to have a portrait. There was no enquiry into who gave permission. Each of the subjects had stood into their photo with absolute pride. No one can tell me they weren't sane enough to do that. People have different levels of illness like they have different levels of consciousness, so to brand everyone the same is actually quite discriminatory. Some of the patients, while disabled, could decide their participation because the whole thing was voluntary from the start. That's what the whole thing was about.

You have a few paintings in the exhibition that are based on photographs. Is that a new way of working for you?

I've always worked with photos. In fact I spend most of my life hunting photographs, sorting through newspapers for historical images. When you paint, you edit. You're changing it. So the image is where you start. The difference with an iconic image is that it's already there and in a sense is being reinterpreted, so the audience is bringing a context to it which otherwise wouldn't happen. It creates an expectation.

When you say you're editing, what are you adding?

Desire and fear distort the way we see things. It's what you leave out that counts. The viewer completes the work on their own. For example, there was an investiture of the Queen taken at eighteen and what I saw was institutional violence: all these old men around her draped in theatrical costumes, putting clothes on her that are supposed to carry power...essentially interfering with a young person. Now that's a completely different way of reading that. I read it as a form of child abuse, so I painted it that way. I emphasised the figures as ogres, the darkness in their black cloaks, then painted her in yellow so she was slight, tiny...like a bird. That's painting a historical image and distorting it through what I see in it.

If the viewer is to complete the picture in the way that you say, does that mean that your role is to raise questions?

Well when I look at that picture, I have the sense of a very young person being surrounded by older people. I must have experienced that in my own life, of being quite powerless and being surrounded. I remember seeing drawings in Portlaoise Prison of men being surrounded by police in their interrogations which reminded me of a similar construct to the investiture. But they weren't benevolent discussions, I can tell you! So what I'm saying is that I had some understanding – correct or incorrect – about relationships which this picture awoke in me. I paint the picture. You come in and look at it. If you have had a similar experience, the picture will speak to that experience and enlighten it. And that's how it works. That's how all art works. The medium tells us what we already know.

So for those who aren't familiar with the stories behind some of the pictures at the exhibition, such as *Nairobi – 28/01/07*, can it still speak to them?

You would need to know that there was an eviction... You're turning me into my own critic, which I don't like (laughs). But we'll go along with it and see where it goes. There are two Nairobi paintings: a huge one and then a tiny, gentle one of a guy asleep. It was a horrendous eviction. Bulldozers were driven at midnight into a tiny little shanty town of fifty families. With the children asleep in

their beds, they whipped those houses down, set them on fire and disconnected the electricity. Can you imagine if your house was built of tin and a bulldozer went through it? They succeeded in stopping them for a number of hours. They had tried it legally, taking the case to the high court of Kenya and fighting for the right to live there. The case was only being heard when the bulldozers went in and the place was eventually destroyed. All that was left was a big mound of earth and sheets of metal, glistening. And that's essentially what I painted. The richness of the earth just contrasted so much with the galvanised metal. It stays the one glistening colour because it doesn't rust under rain. That contradiction took over the painting to a large extent and imbued it with a unique kind of energy to itself. The title of the painting refers to the date and time of the eviction. And if you take that date and go through the BBC broadcasts for that day, you'll find the report. So maybe the painting will keep that story alive a little longer.

You have a very idiosyncratic way of capturing people, there's almost a metaphysical quality to your portraits. What do you look for in faces?

I try and catch what I think the person is about. It's intuitive. You never know what it'll be. Overall the context in which a portrait is made is very important to me. The act itself is based on a certain value of the individual as traditionally only people of value have their portrait taken, so it's harnessing that. In a way that was the same with the homeless people. Those paintings were about complete respect for whoever I was drawing.

If there's a good reason to do it, you get enough fuel from that to carry it through. The more you understand them, the more you can overcome technical difficulties. I'm just surprised how easy it is to paint people I know.

You wouldn't have known the figure in *Kick boxer*, so how did your impression of him form?

No, I wouldn't have known him but I had good reason to do him. I was sucked into this warren of little shops in Cameroon, asking permission for photographs and no one wanted to be in one except this man. He was the one man in the market where the consensus was that he had to be photographed. He was their hero, this champion kick boxer. He was also an African man living in Africa and that was enough power to make me work from the photo. It's funny, I remember being lost in the painting and it became really important to me. He was very quiet, very proud. I'm not saying his face was damaged, but you knew he'd been through something. I remember his pride, his presence. And that sticks out when you've walked into this market and you're the only white man for a long distance. Sometimes when you see a person on the street and they just look at you, a consciousness is exchanged. It has an impact.

Brian Maguire
Memorial for Crumlin youth,
2007
acrylic on canvas
46 x 38 cm
courtesy Kenlin Gallery



Directly beside that painting was *Memorial for Crumlin youth, a face that's bleached out. It's almost like a ghost or an inverted face...*

It's lovely what you say because that was my intention. He's a man who wreaked immense damage on himself and indeed the others that came across him. But he never lived. I don't wish to go into the details publicly, but all I can say is that when I was as at the funeral, I spoke to someone who held a similar view, and there was a solidarity there, a sense that there was another human being in the world with the same notion as myself and that kept him in my consciousness. So when you say it's like a ghost, that's what I was looking for. That's the effect I wanted. He was never really here. Because I think he lived as a ghost, he never really did the things we all take for granted in our lives: to get to grow up, to have families, to have careers, to have achievements, to have failures, to have life... to be remembered by people when you go.

This act of remembering seems to be a unifying theme behind your recent exhibition; were you conscious of that when you're putting it together?

The notion behind the exhibition began when I started work last year. I've always had an interest in how some people are invisible and things get forgotten. I think the first picture in the show came from when I was driving through Brooklyn and I noticed this very fit red-haired man strapped to a chair on the side of the road. He was left there, sitting immobile at midday, with no sign of police anywhere. So he was obviously invisible to the people who were supposed to be minding him. It got me thinking about other things that had been utterly visible to me yet had seemingly disappeared from collective memory. One of those was when the Iraqi war began and the weapons of mass destruction were nowhere to be found. The main purpose – which is always like a subsidiary purpose, really – of the invasion was to bring democracy. And we were led to believe that this was the generosity of the American government in sending their troops in. Nowhere in the English-speaking world were the ghosts of Patrice Lumumba or Salvador Allende quoted. They appeared in the French press, but not in the English-speaking press. Democracy had already existed in the Congo and Chile, and American presidents were instrumental in giving instructions in how that democracy was to be destroyed and their leaders executed in both of those countries. Now, many years after the events, the ambassadors that were there at the time have gone on record describing those experiences. So in the same way that prisoner became invisible, so too did these men. The purpose of the exhibition is essentially to make visible that which has become invisible – that's the thread running through it.

The title is as honest as I could get. The 'hidden islands' refer to the stand-alone sections, usually two or three paintings in each section, such as the two presidents at either end of the gallery, and similarly the two Nairobi paintings. The subheading is 'notes on the war on the poor' – most of these incidences are about poor people who have been kept poor for a variety of reasons. Now, you may ask: how does the portrait of a black man become a note on the war on the poor? Well it's there because the life expectancy in central Africa is 41. The life expectancy of you or me, based solely on where we're born, is 82. Now if that's not a war on the poor, I don't know what is.

How does *St. Patrick's Dublin* fit into this theme?

That one is about the fact that all these regiments that fought in the British Army were made up of Irish people – the second and third sons of tenant farmers. We've always had the anti-conscription ballads and I sung them myself. But it was Irishmen that went into these regiments and surely we ought to remember them. I know because of the politics in 1916 and 1922 that it became really difficult to acknowledge Irish participation in the British Army and the very abuse that their colonial wars conducted, but this is our heritage too. So it baffles me to be greeted with amazement upon entering the Cathedral in Christchurch to go and see those banners. The man at the gate said: "what? Are you from around here?" In that sense the banners are secret, they're hidden. They've been perceived as anti-republican but that struggle is over now. It should all be in the past. To wipe out the memory of those regiments is, again, an attack on the poor.

Traditionally your work is known for anger and injustice. Is there room for optimism?

I honestly think the doing of them is optimistic. I wouldn't make a show like this if I didn't have a sense of grievance, a sense of structure in an inequitable way. So to actually stand up and do what's required is optimistic. The work itself may expose something but the doing itself is enough. I'm not decorating people's houses.

The one that sticks out the most in the exhibition is *Chair*, because I can't tie it to anything...

I did get some advice to leave it out but forgot (laughs). It's a lovely contradiction. The chair is my own but it's also a symbol of bourgeois power. It's a kind of an everyman's throne. In one way it represents what you can achieve if you operate the system: equality. But nobody's sitting in the chair, so I used it as a triptych with Allende and Lumumba where the chair represents the faceless people who ordered these men killed. These are the thoughts I have. It's been criticised, interestingly enough, because it's so beautiful. It's too flawless to be a Maguire. But that was the thinking behind it.

This collection seems to be a lot more accessible than your older work. Have you been aware of that at all?

Yeah, you know accessibility must have something to do with clarity and I think I am clearer as I get older.

Funnily enough, I remember a woman standing in front of a painting in Athens complaining: "But I understand it!" She felt that art should be inaccessible and that if she understood it, it was no good. It was actually offensive to her. I don't share her view (laughs). In my own experience, I've been able to travel Europe and look at pictures, which was a real education. To this day, I remember seeing Edvard Munch's *Jealousy* and understanding it completely. My connection with this painting that was 100 years old made me feel like I was not alone in the world. This man and I shared something: the experience of jealousy. I had the proof in front of me. He didn't know me, I didn't know him, but I realised another man had lived with the same feeling that I had and that meant that I wasn't alone. That's what the whole thing is about, actually. It's about not being alone...and that's enough to carry on.

Brian Maguire
In police custody Brooklyn, 2007
acrylic on canvas
courtesy Kerlin Gallery



Brian Maguire's painting *Tommy Smith/ Peter Norman, Mexico from Hidden islands: notes from the war on the poor will represent Ireland at the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. A catalogue of the artist's work will be published later this year.*

Cian Traynor is a freelance writer and subeditor who has contributed to a range of publications including *The Times Educational Supplement*, *The Irish Independent*, *Film International*, *State*, *Foggy Notions*, *The Event Guide*, *Beat Happening* and *Connected*.

Brian Maguire
Dr. Salvador Allende 9/11/72, 2007
acrylic on canvas
162 x 154 cm
courtesy Kerlin Gallery



Ready, steady,

gone



In 2001 I had the epiphany that just as the twentieth century demanded new forms of art, so too does the twenty-first century demand new forms of leisure. To this end I proposed SPART: the ultimate hybridisation of sport and art and therefore the most evolved form of leisure on the planet. My neo-avant-gardist rhetoric aside, what interests me as an artist is exploring radical approaches to creating and structuring social relationships. Within this I am very interested in the latent potential of expanded forms of game-play as strategies for configuring/ exploring social relationships. What fascinates me about both sport and art is their latent potential to configure social dynamics in ways in which even the most adept exponents of statecraft might struggle to achieve.

While hard-nosed Westminster government bureaucrats may not be too enthused by my concept of SPART, they are definitely beginning to seize upon the potential of sport and art as a tool to shape UK society. Nowhere is this better personified than in their desire to host the 2012 Olympic Games in London. In this regard, it is with deep dismay that I note Westminster's decision to fund this event with Lottery money that should have been destined for art, sport, community and heritage organisations around Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The actual projected loss to these organisations is £1.085 billion, although some sources have estimated the cost to be much higher, at around £2.034 billion.

[opposite]
Justin McKeown
*'tonight the city lies before us
but we are beside ourselves
with boredom'* (SPART slogan)
courtesy the author

Britain's bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games began with a parliamentary debate in January 2003. On 15 May 2003 the Secretary of State, Tessa Jowell, formally announced governmental support for London's Olympic bid. London was now in the running against nine other cities, which after assessment by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), was reduced to five in May 2004. From 16 to 19 May 2004 the IOC paid a visit to London, inspecting its potential to host the Games. On 6 June the IOC released its reports on the various cities and praised the British bid for "its high quality, while highlighting the legacy the Games would leave in the city of London."¹ On 6 July 2006 the president of the IOC, Jacques Rogges, announced London as the winner of the bid, Paris coming in as runner-up.

London celebrated. Indeed London had every reason to party because it had just won the opportunity to host the most major international sporting event on the planet. Not only would this mean that the eyes of the world were on it for the period of the Games, it would also mean a great influx of tourism and all the economic benefits that this brings. While it is obvious why London would be so pleased, it is slightly harder to understand why we in provincial Ulster – in 'the sticks' – should celebrate such an event, especially since none of the Games are thus far scheduled to take place here. Yet we still have to foot a substantial portion of the bill to pay for the whole thing. What effect will the London Olympics have on us, and more importantly, what effect is the cost of hosting the Games going to have on those working in the arts and cultural sector in Northern Ireland?

Perhaps the best place to start in trying to answer this question is to look at the economic impact of the Games on Northern Ireland. As mentioned earlier, estimates of this have varied. Indeed estimates vary greatly depending on how wide a framework one is thinking within. If one is thinking explicitly about direct losses to money made available through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI), then the most common estimates discussed set the direct financial loss at £4.5 – £4.74 million. ACNI

itself estimates the loss at £4.74 million spread out over four years (2008 – 2012). This represents a loss of over £1,000,000 per year.

However, if one is thinking within the much wider framework of culture in Northern Ireland, of which the arts is only a section, then the losses may be considerably more. One estimate that is significantly higher than those provided purely on the basis of the provision of art has been made by Neil Irwin of the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA). In a recent article published 10 March this year Irwin estimates the overall loss to good causes in Northern Ireland – arts included – at around £80,000,000.² I would urge interested parties to read Irwin's article in full. One of the most interesting aspects of Irwin's analysis – the thing that makes his estimate of loss much higher than those found elsewhere – is the loss incurred by 'cannibalisation'.³ In economic and marketing terms, 'cannibalisation' refers to the reduction of the volume of sales of a particular product when its manufacturing company introduces a competing product to the marketplace. For example, Coca Cola also produce Diet Coke. Therefore some of the initial profits that would have been raised through the sale of Coke are eaten into by the sale of Diet Coke. Irwin raises the issue of cannibalisation, highlighting the fact that the Westminster government plans to run a series of National Lottery games in 2012 for the dedicated purpose of raising money to fund the London Olympics. These dedicated Lottery games will eat into the lottery-game market, and as none of the profits from these games will go to National Lottery good-cause schemes, the government manages to stealthily cream off money that would otherwise be destined for good causes.

Drawing on statistics provided by Camelot, Irwin estimates the losses incurred to the National Lottery good-causes fund as a result of cannibalisation at around "£575,000,000."⁴ To this he also adds another £34,000,000 as a result of Lottery money being used to fund the specially established Legacy Trust. The Legacy Trust is an independent trust set up to "support a wide range of innovative cultural and sporting activities for all, which celebrate the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and which will leave a lasting legacy in communities throughout the United Kingdom."⁵ Of the money going to the Legacy Trust, £5,000,000 of it would have been destined for division among Arts Council bodies in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Therefore, taking all this into consideration, Irwin concludes that "the overall loss to good causes because of the Olympics could be as much (or more) as £2.034 billion made up of £1,085m (Good Causes) + £340m (Sports Distributors) + £575m (Cannibalisation) + £34m Legacy Trust. £80,000,000 of which would have been destined for Northern Ireland."⁶

Irwin's figure of £80,000,000 is significantly higher than the £4.75 million that has been directly cut from the ACNI budget. Indeed, Irwin's calculations seem alarming. Yet, how alarming they actually are may depend on who you are and what aspect of the arts and cultural sector you're involved in. If, for example, you're a painter selling your wares through Gormley's Gallery on the Upper Lisburn Road, then you mightn't be just as worried by Irwin's projections as someone working as a community artist in North Belfast. Yet in saying that, the reality of the situation should already be apparent to most: for art is not produced in a vacuum and to think such a thing would be equivalent to thinking that economic fluctuations do not alter the dynamics of society, of which culture is a reflexive materialisation. The Northern Irish cultural eco-system is volatile, and if money disappears that is supporting the development of grassroots cultural initiatives then we will more than likely notice other changes in our wider society as a result of this.

Perhaps, to err on the side of pessimism, it might be worth bracing ourselves; for as anyone who has kept an eye to economics will know, when Britain goes down with a three-day cold Northern Ireland ends up in bed with the flu. Indeed these financial cuts, considered within a much wider picture of Northern Ireland's cultural development, couldn't come at a worse time: as a society we are only now entering into some form of cultural re-think and regeneration in the wake of the Good Friday agreement. Now more than ever we need cold hard cash to fund not only the development of projects that encourage cross-community dialogue, but also projects and events that enable us to re-define what it means to be Northern Irish. Therefore, in the long term, these cuts will not only create feelings of disfranchisement among the professionals working in the arts and cultural sector, but potentially also within the communities who benefit from their services.

That said, the Westminster government does keep rattling on in their promotional material for the Games about the benefits the event will have for the UK as a whole. As well we all know, the difference between Great Britain and the UK is the six little troubled counties of Northern Ireland. So what is Westminster offering us as UK citizens? On the government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport website – one of the sites that the government is promoting the Games through – there is no direct discussion of the impact of the Games on Northern Ireland. So in order to answer the above question we have to look into their UK-wide plans. Regarding their vision for the UK for the 2012 Olympic Games, the British government has stated:

We are committed to delivering not only the best Olympic Games and Paralympic Games ever, but also environmentally, socially and economically sustainable Games, leaving a lasting legacy for the Olympic Park site, the Lower Lea Valley and the UK as a whole.⁷

Essentially what the government is saying is that the Olympics will be of economic benefit to the whole of the United Kingdom. Therefore by extension of this logic we in Northern Ireland should profit from the Games, not only socially and economically but also through some form of lasting legacy. If we were to take this at face value we might think that it all sounds quite promising but then again, it's the same kind of rhetoric from the same people that gave us the Millennium Dome.

Putting my ever-creeping cynicism to one side for a moment, it is only fair that I give proper examination to what exactly Westminster is offering us in the long term in exchange for our immediate losses. On the UK-wide section of the same website the government makes a similar statement to the one quoted previous. They then go on to expand on some of the business opportunities available. These are varied and include everything from catering to construction. What may stunt the economic benefits of these opportunities reaching us in the province is the fact that as yet none of the Games have been scheduled to take place in Northern Ireland. Therefore, while it is possible that some businesses in Northern Ireland may reap some benefits through winning contracts to do work in Great Britain, we will not benefit from any of the other aspects of the Games that we might if Northern Ireland

actually hosted an event, such as increased foot-flow through the shops of our towns and cities and all the economic benefits that come with this. Hence – promises notwithstanding – it's hard to understand how these promises of benefits and legacy will actually come to fruition in Northern Ireland. Perhaps a better legacy for us in Northern Ireland would have been the maintenance of the continued economic support from the Lottery that was bolstering the development of cultural programmes in Northern Ireland, which is something we need to plug the vacuum left by the cessation of violence.

In looking for some more information that might dispel my now evident pessimism, I found myself on the Northern Ireland section of the 2012 Olympic Games website. This section of this particular website contained a statement from Northern Ireland's Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL). Here they expressed their vision for the 2012 Olympic Games:



We will use the 2012 Games to get young people into sport at both a domestic and international level, with the ultimate aim of winning medals at the Games.

We want to create better facilities to help athletes, leaving a legacy for the future. And we want to go beyond sport, to benefit the people of our nation economically and socially.⁸

Also on the site there are statements proposing the development of new facilities etc, to aid in the growth of our young athletes. However, given Irwin's previous calculations, are any of these ideals realistic? Surely DCAL needs money to train young people in sport and to build facilities? I couldn't find any projected budgets on the website, so I can only assume – given that they are a government department – that there is money to back up their posturing.

One aspect of the Westminster government's plans for the Olympics, one that I have not so far discussed, is the cultural Olympiad. The government have stated their aim for the cultural Olympiad to be as follows:

The 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games are not just about sport. They will offer a unique opportunity for the British people to engage with and participate in a major cultural celebration... From the closing ceremony of the Beijing 2008 Games, the UK will commence its "Cultural Olympiad", a developing, four-year period of cultural activity designed to celebrate the Olympic spirit throughout the UK. It will inspire people around the country to participate in a range of cultural activities, which will reflect and celebrate the diverse communities which make up London and the UK.⁹

In Northern Ireland the Arts Council have engaged Deloitte to run a Northern Ireland-wide consultation programme. The initial phase of this consultation took the form of a series of consultation days around Northern Ireland, tabled as “BIG IDEAS workshops.”¹⁰ These took place at the end of April in Antrim, Belfast, Newry, Lisburn, Derry, Coleraine, Ballymena, Enniskillen and Cookstown. The intention of these workshops was to provide communities with an opportunity to contribute their views and ideas to the planning of the Northern Irish Olympiad. This at least is a positive sign, since a clear effort is being made to communicate with people all over Northern Ireland and not just in Belfast and Derry.

When I contacted Deloitte they informed me that the consultation process had now ended and they had passed their results on to DCAL. I have been in contact with DCAL requesting information regarding the findings of the Deloitte consultation and asking about their plans for Northern Ireland's cultural Olympiad. Although their representatives were quite friendly on the phone they have not, at the time of writing this article, replied to my request for detailed information regarding the Olympiad. However, my attention has been drawn to the very recent publication of the results of Deloitte's research¹¹ on ACNI's web site. In reading it I am immediately struck by several factors.

The first and perhaps the most significant is the low number of people in attendance at the 'Big Ideas' consultation events. All in all, a total of one hundred and fifteen people attend the nine consultation workshops held around the province. For those not aware of the demographics that's approximately 0.007% of the Northern Irish population. Even by Northern Irish standards, this turn out seems poor. Page twenty-nine of the report suggests that one of the reasons for low attendance might be that arts and cultural organisations in Northern Ireland had heard that there was no funding for projects available through the cultural Olympiad. They may not have believed it worth their while to attend.

So what about funding? The report states on page 29 that there is no money available for projects through the Cultural Olympiad. However, it does suggest three possible sources of funding: sponsorship (presumably by local industry), Inspire Mark and the National Lottery.¹² Given that the British Chamber of Commerce (BCC) has recently warned that the UK is at very “serious risk of a recession,”¹³ and considering how much Northern Ireland tends to be affected by such things, Northern Irish arts organisations might find themselves hard pressed over the next four years to find adequate sponsorship from local industry for Cultural Olympiad projects. With that in mind, it is important to consider the other two options seriously.

The second option suggested, the 'Inspire Mark', is something that many will not have heard of. The first thing to clear up is that Inspire Mark is not a pot of funding money. Rather, the Inspire Mark is essentially a mark of quality awarded to projects that are inspired by and support the 2012 Games. It is hard to imagine how this could be considered a potential source of funding, especially since “the scheme is predominantly for projects which have entirely non-commercial funding.”¹⁴ To double check my facts, I contacted Northern Ireland's Cultural Programmer for the 2012 Games, Pat Wilson based at DCAL. Wilson confirmed for me that Inspire Mark is not a funding pot. I also asked, given that the Inspire Mark is awarded in support of noncommercial projects, if it would be possible to use it once it had been awarded as leverage to procure sponsorship from local industry. Wilson informed me that this would be unlikely as using the mark in this way might conflict with sponsorship deals already made for the Olympics. This seems like a bit of a grey area. And even if it were possible to use the Inspire Mark in such a way, one would be using it as a mark of quality to reassure potential sponsors in the local community; the pending recession makes the procurement of sponsorship from such sources seem quite unlikely.

The final source of money named, the National Lottery fund, is really a nonstarter given its depletion to fund the hosting of the 2012 Olympics. That is of course unless there is some unknown factor that the government is not making us aware of? However, given my research, I doubt this very much. I think what we are looking at is the harsh reality of when statesmen's dreams of prowess collide with economic realities and the little man gets crushed in between: for what is apparent is that there is only so much money to go around, and if money is being taken from the Lottery to fund the Olympics then there is not going to be enough money to fund the provision of events for the Cultural Olympiad. Unless of course the government expect us to labour on these projects for free?

Organisations need developmental money to do things, and a lot of this developmental money has been “raided in order to boost the Exchequer”¹⁵ – as former Tory Prime Minister Sir John Major put it – so as to fund the London 2012 Olympics.

Funding issues aside, the events proposed in the report as the fruit of the 'Big Ideas' consultations and therefore as the projects for Northern Ireland Cultural Olympiad make me feel a deep sense of dismay. For the most part, the events themselves do not stand out: there is nothing particularly Northern Irish about them. In terms of the Cultural Olympiad, arts organisations should be asking themselves on behalf of our culture: do the things we are proposing actually contribute anything to our own sense of ourselves? Do they present to the world's media eye

anything unique, particular and/ or exciting about our culture here in Northern Ireland? The answer – for the most part – is ‘no’. The question therefore is, what is the point in realising them? Surely doing nothing would be better than adding one more thing to the image of ourselves as a parochial province.

But a couple of the projects did seem genuinely interesting. For example ‘Big Idea Nine’ proposes the highlighting of Northern Ireland’s boxing tradition. What is especially interesting about this is the reference to the travelling community’s bare-knuckle boxing tradition and also to Northern Irish actors who have boxed in the past. Another project that grabbed my eye was ‘Big Idea Eight’, which proposed the reactivation of outdoor swimming pools that are no longer in use in Northern Ireland. However, by and large, most of the proposals lack the presence of anything particularly Northern Irish.

In terms of the development of business, culture, sport and art, what we in Northern Ireland desperately need as a society in order to get on our feet in the international arena – Olympiad or no Olympiad – is the re-imagining of our conflicted selves. Key to this is the nurturing of grass-roots culture and the steady growth of an economy that can self-support a local cultural economy. Yet the Lottery money that would have gone to supporting these developments has been usurped in order to fund the 2012 Olympics. At the heart of the problems facing us because of this is a tension between day-to-day culture in Northern Ireland, which is currently only getting back on its feet, and a spectacular cultural façade that Westminster wants to create so as to sell the UK to the world, using the Olympic Games as a platform. When asked about the decision to pull the money out of Northern Ireland, former Culture Minister Edwin Poots remarked that the decision to pull this money was taken at Westminster level and that it was “not something that we can do anything about.”¹⁶

So it seems again – Stormont or no Stormont – we are at the whim of those in Westminster. Why is it that we always seem to be playing the poor relation of Great Britain? If anyone doubts this assertion, then all they need do is look at the spending per capita on provision for the arts. In 2007/ 08 The Arts Council of England allotted £8.17 per capita for spending on the arts, the Arts Council of Wales spent £9.60 and the Republic of Ireland’s Arts Council spent £14.42. This is all in contrast with Northern Ireland’s allotment of £6.04.

For Tony Blair, bringing peace to Northern Ireland was as much an act of legacy-building as it was an act of statesmanship. It would seem that now that we have the semblance of peace in the North, inasmuch as people have stopped shooting each other, Westminster now feel

it’s time to move on to the next big project. Further, it seems that they’ve done this without a serious thought to what these funding cuts might mean to the development of culture here in Northern Ireland, at a time in which the development of culture is in dire need of bolstering.

One would think that somewhere along the line somebody in Northern Ireland would get it together enough to mount a viable campaign of protest about funding cuts to Northern Ireland caused by the Olympics: for while there have been protests in London regarding the cuts, there has been no mark-worthy protest in Northern Ireland, and it seems like we are set to benefit least from the whole thing.

- 1 www.culture.gov.uk/3434.aspx, site visited 28 May 2008
- 2 www.nicva.org/index.cfm/section/news/key/05mar2008olympiccsts; site visited 28 May 2008
- 3 *ibid*
- 4 *ibid*
- 5 www.legacytrustuk.org/about; site visited 28 May 2008
- 6 www.nicva.org/index.cfm/section/news/key/05mar2008olympiccsts; site visited 28 May 2008
- 7 www.culture.gov.uk/3432.aspx; site visited 28 May 2008
- 8 www.london2012.com/about/the-people-delivering-the-games/the-nations-and-regions-group/northern-ireland.php; site visited 27 May 2008
- 9 www.culture.gov.uk/3430.aspx; site visited 29 May 2008
- 10 www.artscouncil-ni.org/news/2008/new11042008b.htm, visited 29 May 2008
- 11 The full document can be down loaded at www.artscouncil-ni.org/subpages/strategyandpolicies.htm#Olympiad_
- 12 On these sources of funding were suggested by the consultees – it is not entirely clear which occurred.
- 13 www.itv.com/News/Articles/Serious-UK-recession-warning-707291712.html; site visited 8 July 2008
- 14 64.233.183.104/search?q=cache:PXyj18wu4xMJ:www.london2012.com/plans/culture/naw-to-2012/getting-involved.php+Inspire+Mark+Northern+Ireland&hl=en&ct=clink&cd=2&gl=uk&client=firefox-a; site visited 8 July 2008
- 15 news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4628492.stm; site visited 30 May 2008
- 16 news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/6951887.stm

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[previous spread]
Shoot the rabbit, Winter Games event, Ormeau Park, Belfast.
 Meabh McDonnell as the rabbit, while Sinéad Bhreathnach-Cashell hunts her with a paintball gun.
 courtesy the author

Exit ghost



On the evening of 20 May 2008 – just over a decade since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in Belfast – a select but substantial crowd gathered at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin to attend a solemnly theatrical ‘Troubles’ funeral. This strange simulation of ritual mourning involved the laying to rest of a persona rather than a person: the celebrated and influential Irish-American artist Brian O’Doherty having chosen, in the context of profound political progress in the North, to publically proclaim the passing away of his once-contentious, ideologically explicit alter ego Patrick Ireland, a conceptual identity pressured into existence by the appalling force of historical reality, the name taken by the artist as an act of desperate, meagre protest against the savage killing of thirteen innocents by British soldiers on the open streets of Derry on Sunday, 30 January, 1972.

The story of ‘Patrick Ireland’ – the story of a steadfastly assertive pseudonym that is a story borne out of a wish that the deeper, darker story at its source might be heard each time this bluntly patriotic name appears – was valuably set out by IMMA prior to the ultimate ceremonial interment in a modest, muted exhibition of relevant images, texts and artefacts. Featured here were crucial documentary records of the original, symbolically forceful, name-change performance at Project Arts Centre in 1972 – during which the artist, masked into anonymity, had his supine body heavily painted with, and so personally obliterated by, overlapping tides of Ireland’s turbulent orange and green. There were fragments too from the critical and public fall-out of these dramatic events, some evidence of wider acknowledgement of O’Doherty/ Ireland’s personality-split captured in a small selection of intriguing archival cuttings (including two entries in *Who’s who?*: one for O’Doherty and one for his ‘younger’, and more propagandistically radical, substitute self). Here also, in the serene space of the Gordon Lambert Galleries, a basic effigy of the now ‘late’ Patrick Ireland was presented in a plain, pine coffin – the face of the feigned corpse given grim exactitude in a death mask cast by the respected American artist Charles Simonds directly from O’Doherty’s august septuagenarian features. The mask had an undoubtedly ambiguous morbidity – and an uncertain, unsettled ‘meaning’. This was an obviously charged symbolic representation of death, problematically heroic in its aesthetic and political overtones, that simultaneously bore faint traces of stoic life: the essential tensions of a patiently held pose being surely evident in the taut stillness of the caught expression. If, as Marina Warner notes, death masks have conventionally derived “their potency from their contact with the actual deceased, with his or her flesh” – these culturally resonant objects being “the nearest remnant[s] that can be preserved of a body before its disintegration or embalming”¹ – then the status or significance of this odd indexical record of an *imagined* identity, a mask made in mourning for an ‘idea’ but formed

from the vital features of a living artist, is certainly difficult to determine. In one sense, this pale, plaster sculpture has an inevitably and admirably unresolved ‘character’ suited to an exhibition and event concerned with marking endings and forging new beginnings – properly prompting, through its dual life/ death connotations, contemplation of survival as well as traumatic loss – but it is also dispiritingly suggestive of an atavistic, martyr-centred political rhetoric and is an overtly self-aggrandizing addition to these proceedings when further viewed, as it must be, within the wider contemporary Irish context of confusion, caution and anxiety about commemoration and lasting reconciliation.

At the time appointed for the final burial of Patrick Ireland, the unadorned casket was closed and hoisted onto the shoulders of six black-clad local artists (Robert Ballagh, Fergus Byrne, Jeanette Doyle, Brian Duggan, Brendan Earley, Joe Stanley) who had agreed to perform the role of pallbearers at this “celebration of peace in Northern Ireland” (I hesitate here to describe these guest artists as ‘volunteers’). A short, dignified procession then brought the assembled mourners from the relative intimacy of the gallery space (taking us beyond the white cube, as it were) to the wide-open arena of the designated grave-site: a patch of well cared for, unconsecrated, grassy ground perched above the Museum’s elegantly manicured formal gardens. In this splendid setting – with the cultivated orderliness of the garden’s symmetrical avenues providing a calm immediate backdrop, and the extending, intensifying jumble of the city’s restless margins completing an expansive, variegated *mise en scène* – friends and family members stepped forward to honour the thirty-six year commitment made by O’Doherty, paying a long-delayed and concluding tribute to ‘Patrick Ireland’ now that the once-required political conditions were believed to have been met (the artist had resolved not to use his birth name “until such time as the British Military presence is removed from Northern Ireland and all citizens are granted their civil rights”). Several fitting, hopeful poems, in several languages, were read with tender authority: reflections not only on death and the agonies of the solitary artist, but also on moral duty and on the place and potential of art in testing times. No doubt by careful design, a mood of quietly respectful conviviality was maintained for a time, until the artist Alanna O’Kelly approached the microphone to begin a long, heart-wrenching keening, her surging cries instantly cutting through the relaxed decorum of the occasion. It was an extraordinary, truly unsettling sound: the amplified voice rising, roaring, hoarsening, quietening, repeatedly building in anguished strength again and again and then – unexpectedly – returning in the form of uncontrollable, insistent echoes as the electrically empowered screams were bounced back by the brash new building developments at the borders of IMMA’s land.

O'Doherty was right to later praise O'Kelly's performance as "nearly frightening, very primal." But we might also stress how in the tensions and accidents of these harrowing moments (with the dominant architecture of another recently invented 'Ireland' exerting an unplanned influence, for instance) the structured theatricality of the mock-funeral was unmistakably opened up to other possibilities, to a significant level of unpredictability. During the ebb and flow of O'Kelly's remarkable keening, the focus assuredly shifted from adulatory concentration on O'Doherty's own struggle or achievement, towards a much more abstract, far-reaching and inclusive process of lamentation: the mighty sounds and silences of these few atmospheric minutes making possible a heightened awareness of one's own sensory relationship to this environment, and of one's embodied position within it. At such a point, the prepared, stage-managed gestures of mourning and commemoration – the established and comprehensible aspects of the funeral's symbolic space – might, momentarily, matter only as the basis for another aleatory situation, one of undeviated, altered connections to the contemporary world. This is, of course, a happy (and no doubt hoped-for) outcome of O'Doherty's decision to 'go public' with the death of Patrick Ireland: the artist shifting register from the language/body interplay of the founding *Name-change* artwork to an engagement with social ritual and public space at this "joyous wake and burial." (Aptly, the first lines of the first poem read at the event ran "Let the city be spectacle, circus, arena this evening, / Its justification sensation, its poetry wonder."²)

In a recent essay on the use and value of public gesture in art and politics, Jan Verwoert proposes that the "performative dynamics of the practices that bind society together" can be productively understood as "inherently chaotic" – though intricately formalized and "regulated," ritual social forms have a "multiplicity and theatricality" that allows their presentation and reception to remain subject

to the contingencies of any given moment.³ It is tempting to see in the more compelling effects of the Patrick Ireland funeral some trace of this structural chaos – "the overall picture of society that you arrive at from this angle," Verwoert argues, "immediately seems less closed, making interventions appear possible." In bringing the 'life' of Patrick Ireland to a close not with a revised name-change but with an emotive, theatrical version of a complex, recognizable social form, O'Doherty has offered a further response to the damaged society of Northern Ireland that implicitly and appropriately prioritizes an urgent need for public openness. Yet, the *specific* forms employed by O'Doherty remain questionable – gravely so, it might be said – in a post-Troubles context. As Susan McKay has noted in a typically trenchant chapter on commemoration in her extraordinary recent book *Bear in mind these dead* (itself a magnificent memorial to the many, diverse victims of Troubles violence), "the republican tradition is replete with stirring graveside orations [and] the cult of the martyr has been a powerful engine for the 'armed struggle' for centuries."⁴ Similarly, in their book *Talking to the dead: a study of Irish funerary traditions*, Nina Witoszek and Pat Sheeran describe Irish politics in terms of a "cult of death," identifying a "chronic cultural fixation" on symbolic performances such as processions and funerals which, they suggest, "hardly encode a futurological orientation."⁵ When considered in relation to this residual, variously macabre and militaristic tendency, O'Doherty's well-meaning comment that "we are burying hate" is rendered, at best, somewhat ironical. Feasibly, of course, all established, evocative, persuasive public gestures are in some way contaminated by prejudicial previous use (a point properly considered by Verwoert), but it remains reasonable to ask if indeed a funeral – yes, yet *another* Troubles funeral – can best mark these daunting, if indeed potentially joyful, artistic and historical endings.

- 1 Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p 24
- 2 Anthony Cronin, 'Sonnet 93', from *The End of the modern world*, 1989
- 3 Jan Verwoert, 'Private lives, public gestures', *Frieze*, Issue 113, March 2008
- 4 Susan McKay, *Bear in mind these dead*, London: Faber & Faber, 2008, p 319
- 5 Nina Witoszek and Pat Sheeran, *Talking to the dead: a study of Irish funerary traditions*, Amsterdam/ Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999

Burial of Patrick Ireland: the coffin is carried through the crowd
photo Peter FitzGerald



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BodyCity



The city is hot. Not the heat of global warming, or a break in the bad weather, but as a topic for artistic exploration (art with a distinct theoretical underpinning, that is). Internationally, and in different disciplines, it has been thus for some time, but we in the arts in Ireland are catching up. Fast. Finally fatigued with exploring identity in relation to a mythologised rurality or peripherality, we are now invested in investigating the city. Part of this investment involves catching up and connecting with existing international research and study networks (such as Erasmus PC, www.erasmuspc.com, and PEPRAV, www.peprav.net), and part lies in projects initiated here.

CREATE's *Suburbs and cities* discussion days were pioneering in addressing the relationship of the hinterlands to the centre, as seen through creative practice,¹ but the impetus to many of these investigations has come, ironically perhaps, from capital generated by the large urban developments that the investigations set out to critique. Thus, *bodycity*, a visual-arts project set up "to explore the complex ideas surrounding the human body in relation to the cities in which we live today" was commissioned by the Dublin Docklands Development Authority (DDDA).² Curated by Nigel Rolfe, Clíodhna Shaffrey and Shelagh Morris, *bodycity* was to have been realised over three parts, the first being *Video apartment*, showing a series of video works in a Docklands apartment. This was followed by *bodytalkcity*, a day of discussions and lectures focusing on "the cities we are building today and their effect on our lives."³ This took place on 17 November 2007 in St Michael and John's Church in Temple Bar – there being no appropriate space in Docklands to host such an event. The final realisation of *bodycity* was to have been *PROJECT bodycity*, in which eight artists (Willie Doherty, Graham Hudson, Bethan Huws, Idris Kahn, Daniel J Martinez, Julie Mehretu, Marjetica Potrč and Kathy Prendergast) were to have developed projects.

What this roll call of artists' names demonstrates is that artistic investigation of urbanism is not new. Neither are these individuals unique in their concerns; artists' groups have also focused on urban issues, and doubtless will continue to do so. What has been the hallmark of the current period, however, are a number of significant projects with direct relationships to the supporting structures of urbanism themselves. While *bodycity* came out of private-sphere capital (Docklands), Dublin City Council is engaged in an arts research project looking at "international models of practice that support innovative engagement of artists with Urban and Suburban Open Space."⁴

In addition to these initiatives, *Cork caucus* was a year-long event supported by Cork 2005 (and therefore by Culture 2000, the European cultural foundation, and the Arts Council, among others), with diverse (or to use a different, preferred word: *rhizomatic*) concerns that extended beyond urbanism to address the role of the artists in developing and sustaining critical issues in the spheres of politics, power, aesthetics and possibility. The results of these discussions, events and workshops have just been published in a 472-page book. Another Culture 2000 project (Culture 2000 being the main European Commission funding conduit to the arts) is *Urban act*, a publication that documents the work of a loose network of practitioners and practices researching the city.⁵ Belfast's PS² represent the involvement from this island.

Both *Urban act* and *Cork caucus* set out to function in the same way that cities have historically done – as a collection of networks, growing through linkages, intensifying and becoming denser through participation. There is also a hopeful sense pervading both publications as they document projects, practices and discussions that these endeavours will not just make a difference, but will continue some way, somehow, into the future; that there will be some form of legacy. This is perhaps the individual's only rational response (in the cause of despair-avoidance) to the hegemony of the power structures of the city. Seán Kelly, in the *Caucus* book, describes "the oft-repeated rationalisation for setting up *Caucus* as it was (both conceptually and structurally), was the notion (conceit?) that art might provide both an alternative space for discourse, and a space for an alternative discourse."⁶

Ana Devič, of the curatorial collective What, How and for Whom (WHW) developed the rationale for collectivisation of practice: "we were interested in tracing the strategies that are taken by collectives in public space, in alternative forms of 'sociability' they are generating. How do they occupy and change the system and the conditions of production and representation, how do they affect the social order?" she questions, before continuing "Artists' groups were taken as a paradigmatic mode and form of collective artistic creativity because they include a certain continuity and duration in time, as well as the decision to stay and work together, a decision which cancels all other potentialities, no matter how temporary."⁷ The issue is, however, how successful are such strategies? Do they represent radical transformations and the potential to overthrow the power structures of capitalism and the politics of urbanism? Or are they instead the necessary culturalising, humanising force on which urbanism has always relied?



Nigel Rolfe
image of Dublin Docklands
courtesy the artist/ *bodycity*

Vito Acconci, another *Caucus* participant, conceptualises the individual's relationship to the city in a different way. Describing the development in his own practice, from performance pieces in the late 1960s early 1970s, that included his own body in the enactment and realisation of each piece, he made the decision to rearticulate the idea of the 'self': "Maybe 'self' was only a system of feelers – maybe self existed only as part of a social system, a cultural system, a political system. I wanted stuff of mine to connect with these systems, so I had to take myself out of the pieces."⁸ This marked Acconci's move to a kind of architecture that he now practices with the Acconci Studio. But this relation of the body to a larger system, or rather this understanding of the self as a system analogous to the wider systems of culture, politics and the built environment, also marks the starting point for the *bodycity* project.

Seeking to understand the systems of the city in relation to the body, of cities and bodies as interconnected entities, *bodycity* asked "how does the city, both the material and social environment – which we produce and build, occupy and move through, inscribe itself on our corporeality, and, in turn, how does the body as it is lived – as experiential body – allow the world to be for us?"⁹ A series of quotations, both on the *bodycity* website, and as a projected introduction to the discussion day, underlined the pedigree of thought that has accrued to create the way we imagine and inhabit cities (from William Shakespeare: *What is the city but the people?*, to Henri Lefebvre: *The users space is lived – not represented or conceived*, to Angela Carter: *Cities have sexes: London is a man, Paris a woman, and New York a well-adjusted transsexual*).¹⁰ What is also underlined by these is the relative paucity of input by visual artists, in terms of smart or witty epigrams at least.

This is not to say that artists are not active in their investigations of the urban in Ireland. Joy Gerrard, Brendan Earley, Mary-Ruth Walsh and Jesse Jones have all been engaged on recent projects in this vein, as has Pádraic E Moore, in a curatorial capacity with his *Unreal city* edition. Joe Kerr, Head of Critical and Historical Studies at the Royal College of Art in London, described in his panel discussion presentation at *bodytalkcity*, the King's Cross area of London, where "all you're sure of is meeting another psychogeographer," but he could just as well have been describing so many contemporary cities, Dublin and Cork included, where all you're sure of is coming across another art project critiquing urbanisation and, sometimes, a lack of space for art. This is, in fact, amply illustrated by *Urban act*, which shows a fascinating world-wide network of cultural activism.

bodytalkcity included a filmed interview with philosopher and sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, who described the problematics inherent in attempting action; "the only realistic politics today is local politics, but the issues are global, so there is a discrepancy..." as well as presentations by fellow sociologist Saskia Sassen and artists Stelarc and Paul Seawright. The picture that emerged was of the taught dynamics of the urban, alongside an acknowledgement of the levels of acquiescence that enable them to function.

Sassen's description of the "brutal savagery" of Capitalism was compelling. Linking it to the brutality of Manchester's factories in the Industrial Revolution, she pointed out that today's Capitalism and urbanisation are no less brutal for the fact that they are elegantly dressed. This is the Capitalism of urban renewal, covering vast stretches of run-down cities with beautiful buildings, at the same time as causing displacement and eviction; and the visible brutality of designer handbags manufactured in third-world countries that demonstrate income inequality and show "what the system is able to do." Being a sociologist, Sassen was able to support her thesis with graphs, charts and figures that, in a hierarchy of information absorption, seemed to lend her a greater credibility than her fellow artist-presenters, even when one was disposed to believe both. What was most significant in this is the case for cross-disciplinary action and participation, at the same time as the different languages and approaches of art, architecture, literature, sociology and philosophy make such collaborations often overly fraught.

This is a key issue in another current project – that of the Arts Council (An Chomhairle Ealaíon) to investigate public engagement with architecture. Architecture has, of necessity, its own professional language and practices, and this has served as a stumbling block for engagement with wider publics. It has also been an issue in collaborative projects, and the Percent for Art model of 'something artistic' to be installed at the end, or of a lip-service collaboration that is insulting to both architect (not creative enough without an artist present) and the artist (your job is to humanise things), is in urgent need of re-imagination. From *Urban act* to *bodycity* to *Cork caucus*, it is clear that many different cultural disciplines are engaged in parallel projects and research. Such a weight of activity must surely lead to some kind of change? Some development of more accommodating social and architectural urban models? Possibly not – in understanding the city in terms of the body, perhaps such action is simply similar to a virus dormant in the bloodstream, sometimes active, and sometimes in abeyance, existing in a symbiotic state with its host.

The relentless tide of Docklands development, so heavily critiqued by *bodycity*, particularly in the panel discussion section of the day (Peter Sheridan: *commercial modernity*, Ellen Rowley: *privileging spatial geometries over social structures*, Fintan O'Toole: *the city is being impoverished at an imaginative level...*), has recently been checked by negative financial developments. With some major projects now on hold, financial support for cultural initiatives has also been checked, and with this, the third part of *bodycity*: the work by the eight artists that was to make up *PROJECT bodycity* has, in the words of the DDDA, been "stalled." The creative and cultural responses to development have been limited by a lack of development itself. Financial constraints notwithstanding, there are plans to publish the proceedings of *bodytalkcity*, at the very least on the website, and perhaps in book form. This will be another contribution to the tomes on cultural urbanism, and yet another contribution that will be necessary in its own way. The city is a collection of cells and organs, just like the body, and all its constituent parts are vital for it to function as a healthy whole.

- 1 See www.create-ireland.ie/news/suburbs-and-cities.html and www.create-ireland.ie/news/suburbs-and-cities-2.html
- 2 Quote taken from www.bodycity.org, accessed 2 August 2008
- 3 *ibid*
- 4 Taken from the *Art in urban and suburban open space* tender document published by Dublin City Council, 2007.
- 5 A free PDF version of Urban act is available to download at www.peprav.net
- 6 *Cork caucus: an art, possibility & democracy*, ed. Tara Byrne, 2006, National Sculpture Factory & Revolver, Frankfurt-am-Main, p 418
- 7 *ibid*, p 125
- 8 *ibid*, p 41
- 9 Quotation taken from www.bodycity.org, accessed 2 August 2008
- 10 *ibid*

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

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Degree shows Critics' choices



Pasiphaë, in Greek mythology, was the Queen of Crete who was cursed with a lustful desire for a bull. In order to gratify her lust, the great craftsman Daedalus made a wooden cow, into which Pasiphaë fitted so she could mate with the bull. The result of this mythic coupling was the birth of the Minotaur.

Images from the Minotaur Cycle played a prominent role in twentieth-century art, in the work of both Masson and Picasso. The extent to which the

myth captured the psyche is evident in the titles of Albert Skira's Surrealist publications, *Le Minotaure* (1933–1939) and *Labyrinthe* (1944–1946).

Ruth Cadden's work focuses on the figure of Pasiphaë prior to the birth of the Minotaur. Many of the sketches depict Pasiphaë with her taurine lover in banal contexts; a pregnant Pasiphaë is seen kneeling beside her lover in a stable. These playful figurative sketches contrast with the chaotic abstract and cubist style of many earlier representations of the Minotaur Cycle.

Pasiphaë is infused with an erotic agency in scenes of flirtation with the bull, while the sculpture *Pasiphaë in cow* overtly addresses the explicit and subversive aspects of a myth centred on trans-species sexuality. The Ovidian obsession with metamorphosis is revealed to be of contemporary significance, as the hybrid figure explores issues of identity, transgression and transformation. Cadden's merging of organic and mechanical elements is beautifully crafted to create fluid, enigmatic and thought-provoking works.

Kevin Gaffney
Dublin Institute of Technology Degree Show

Sara Baume is an artist
and writer.

Kevin Gaffney
The Black plum
video still, DVD video (12 mins)
courtesy the artist



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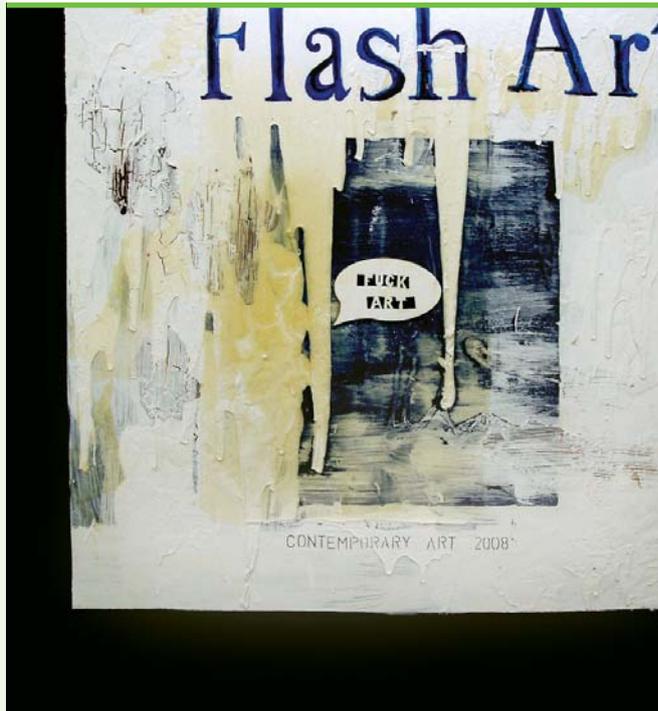
In a show littered with clumsy attempts at tackling issues of global importance, Kevin Gaffney's compelling video piece was refreshingly self-indulgent and egocentric. In a society engulfed by excess and narcissism, it was revitalizing to be confronted with an artist who unashamedly explores and celebrates his own complicated vanity. *The Black plum* tells the vibrant story of Felix and his two fractured personae, Verity and Roger. Throughout this charming and engaging relay of imagery, narrative and sound effect, every detail is precisely attended to and

consequently engaging. Piano notes chime through the shadowy atmosphere, characters dance and drown in theatrical flickers, effervescent lighting enhances the dramatic effect of every action and scene. The narrator employs the sing-song tones of a primary-school teacher, reading fairytales of unknown lands to innocent ears.

Fine Art departments increasingly advocate teaching methods that develop thought processes first and foremost, to the detriment of physical craft. Gaffney, despite his frequent forays into the fictitious,

represents an overall impeccable product of the system, displaying himself to be dedicated, skilled in his chosen discipline, creative, well read and imaginative. There are obvious proclivities toward Cindy Sherman and Isaac Julien, but the artist has managed to remain loyal to himself and his own lavishly embroidered versions of reality throughout. It is this self-assured honesty and authenticity that allow him to touch on broader issues such as sexuality and suicide with effect and sincerity, instead of dissolving into hackneyed meaninglessness like too many of his

contemporaries. *The Black plum* should appeal to the active but self-effacing exhibitionist in all of us.



Emulsion Canvas White
Paint Video Speech
Discourse Babble Talk
Talk Art Declaration
Journal Publication Text
Claim Object
Merchandise Commodity
Statement Fetish
Controversial Game
Dress-Up Fake Genuine
Fake Cover-Up Highlight
Emphasise Black
Categorise Tape Practise
Practise Practise.

“Personally what I think is most important in art is the artist, so keeping it close to the artist, ah, I think is very real, very genuine, em, what I find most important about art is the artist and it’s ideas rather than the work created and the image.” Quote from artist’s exhibition video statement

Down Write Observe
Visible Speech Language
Art Discourse Normative
Performances Generating
Artist Defence Present
Apparent Unclear
Ambiguous Naïve Straight
Forward Partition
Assignment Agenda
Objectives Ambition
Motivation Success
Success Success.

“It is important that my ideas are communicated effectively so every aspect of my work aims to reinforce the communication of my concepts.” Excerpt from Exhibition Handbook

“Em, I think a good artist is someone who comes up with good genuine ideas and communicates them to the target audience, in the best way possible.” Quote from artist’s exhibition video statement

Become Idea Complete
Pedagogical Course
Derivative Metaphor
Eroded Illusions
Consumptive Corrosive
Penetrating Difficult
Slippery Dry Ironic
Confusing Parody
Pastiche Painful Fearless
Empty Speaker Designer
Artist Manipulator Truth
Speaker Genuine Good
Real Fake Orator
Announcer Rhetoric
Dictator Peddler Trickster
Trickster Trickster.

**Fuck art* was exhibited as part of the *LSAD Graduate Show 2008*. The show included several canvases by the artist, digital prints of *Flash Art*, altered to read *FUCK ART*, A ‘video statement’ showing the artist in her studio explaining her work, a ‘handbook’ to further explain the work, a reading desk and display bookshelf, merchandise such as pencils, rubbers, postcards with brand identity of the artist and exhibition, black-and-white gallery logo and window dressing, black border tape to define the viewing area in front of the canvases, copies of *Circa* and *Art Monthly* with cover images of Pamela Myer’s work, as well as graphic symbols indicating the rules of the gallery, such as ‘Do not touch’ and ‘Food/Drink not allowed’.

Meabh Redmond
Institute of Art, Design and Technology,
Dún Laoghaire Graduate Show, Visual Arts Practice

**Laura McGovern is an
artist practising in Dublin.**

Meabh Redmond
montage of images from
Videotape and *Video art*
video stills
courtesy the artist



In one of the smaller rooms that form the maze that is the IADT Graduate Show resides the work of video artist Meabh Redmond. Redmond has mastered her chosen medium to great effect. What results is a sophisticated series that not only captures you with its digital beauty but is also engaging in both its execution and exploration.

Redmond has presented two series, *Video art* and *Videotape*. *Video art* consists of three parts with all exploring the effect of interference when recording digital video from a standard television set. The work is

presented as a large-scale projection that fills the entire height and width of the far wall in this white room. A large sofa invites you to sit down to view the five video artists that are shown on a looped DVD. Redmond's *Video art (i)* appears on the wall and floods the room with vivid blue light, the blue gives way to white as the vertical roll of interference presents itself. Parts *(ii)* and *(iii)* also explore this concept, with static being the dominating feature for *Video art (ii)*. *Video art (iii)* examines the RGB-channel breakdown as one switches off the television set; it lasts only

seconds on screen before being sucked into the black abyss of the blank monitor.

In rather a different approach *Videotape* takes the aesthetic of interference and VHS manipulation whilst playing it against the premise of memory and its subsequent distortion. The fast forwarding and rewinding of family home videos fragments the linear nature of the video tape. The images differ; a family holiday to Disneyland and Sea World, a banal drive down a street and a child sleeping. They are presented in no concise

manner and often appear only as a result of a fleeting glimpse through intense distortion.

Redmond's work is both a comment on her chosen medium, with a constant focus on and awareness of the material, and an examination of how we interact with that medium both on and off-screen. The resulting work is visually stunning, particularly the imagery from *Video art*, while *Videotape* has adopted a tone perfectly suited to the complex familiarity of its subject matter.

James Merrigan
National College of Art and Design
Master of Fine Art

Alan Phelan is an artist
from Dublin.

James Merrigan
"...could we talk before and
after... (Part 2)", 2008
installation shot, Digital Hub
courtesy the artist



All too often grad shows are over-packed, too much stuff and not enough space. The former cash-and-carry warehouse, which serves as primarily a Masters venue, has the potential to do away with this. Sadly, this year what emerged instead was a temporary cubicle city, mirroring the cramped conditions of Thomas Street only with a bit more room to spare. The grads who managed to work around this generally fared better. What I liked most about James Merrigan's installation was that, in and around the cubicles, I missed it completely at first. With no specific lighting, Merrigan's sprawling

pieces looked like some discarded broken-down stage set that there had not been enough time to clear away. Positioned at the rear (or one far end) of the warehouse, it was dwarfed by Sinéad McCann's cement structure with unfriendly performing people and the busy domesticated chaos of Margaret Fitzgibbon.

Merrigan's work was composed of many elements: partially made wood steps; various horizontal fabric-covered frames/ pillars/ partitions; two kitchen chairs joined with gaffer tape; a cardboard box with a jigsaw encased in wood; a torch strapped to

a concrete block; a basketball stuffed with wood; a travel bag; a throne-type armchair covered in bin liners; and more. These elements created an air of mystery, as there was no specific way to read or necessarily connect anything. This mixed-up possible narrative invited audience participation through interpretation, as a site of possibility over some nihilistic introspection, with potential outshining the apparent readymade failure all around.

Leigh San Juan
National College of Art and Design Degree Show

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

Leigh San Juan
The Poetics of shadow (detail)
2008
various framed digital prints,
'Resurrected worlds' paper
theaters with positive slides
installed in found chemists
drawers, collected furniture
items and slide projector
courtesy the artist



For me, many of the highlights of this year's NCAD Fine Art BA Degree Show were to be found in the Media section at the Digital Hub where, overall, the exhibits were of an impressively high standard. Among the most noteworthy installations were Ruth Chadwick's painstakingly created cardboard office; Sarah Lawson's poignant stop-motion animation of a robotic figure in search of a flower; and David Chandler's Buster Keaton-esque multiscreen video installation of a man traversing a wayward urban landscape. For sheer wit and inventiveness, Philip Kennedy is to be commended for playing

with ideas of artistic celebrity, movements in art history and the documentary form in an imagined retrospective of himself from the year 2045.

But forced to select one graduate worthy of attention, I would say I was particularly struck by the work of Leigh San Juan (23) from Fine Art Media. San Juan is an imaginative, thoughtful talent who is certainly one of the most promising graduates to emerge from NCAD this year. For her installation, she created a slightly surreal, theatrical, Alice in Wonderland-style room that felt both familiar and fantastical.

Patchwork-style collages featuring flitting bird silhouettes hung on the wallpapered walls, while the space was filled with looming, lopsided old-fashioned furniture. The drawers and doors of wardrobes and presses were opened to reveal hidden treasures: small, intricately decorated handmade model theatres that framed delicate, whimsical drawings, simple animations and looped films depicting urban spaces, shadowy forms and vignettes from nature. By taking eighteenth-century toy theatre and Asian shadow theatre as her inspiration, and by integrating a low-fi, handmade aesthetic

with contemporary technological media, San Juan's work evokes both a feeling of nostalgia and a desire for a renewed sense of wonderment. San Juan celebrates the theatrical in the everyday, using surrealist techniques to encourage us to embark upon a contemporary voyage of discovery that can be enjoyed simply by looking around us.



Gerry Adams sits at the foot of a candyfloss mountain in the painting *Meeting*, preaching to the crowd beneath, a contemporary Sermon on the Mount. Barack Obama starts to dance, dressed in the draped sheets of a prophet as a close-up Hillary claps beneath in *The Audacity of hope*. Contemporary events and famous figures take on an archetypal or mythical quality, as newspaper image meets Old Master in these parodic restagings. Time seems to collapse and history is present, perhaps endlessly to be repeated, in Richard Gibson's large-scale anachronistic comedies.

This is not the fake historicity of postmodernist retro. No, more a real engagement with history, perhaps reflecting the presentness of deep past in Northern Irish politics. The memorial to the 200-year anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar in *New world* cannot help but evoke the Battle of the Boyne as its unspoken ghost. The work also references social realism and its descendants; the murals of the North, Diego Rivera, Neo Rauch and political cartoons. But they also resemble the *Sergeant Pepper* album cover with their motley collection of the known and unknown (wearing countless

walrus moustaches).

These grand narratives are relentlessly male, with women here largely reduced to pinups and ads and it is hard to tell whether this is pre- or postfeminist. There is a large *Portrait of the artist as a young man*, whose face dwarfs the contemporary scenes. The artist reappears as a crowd member in two other paintings, a witness, like the strange, angelic outsider in Kieslowski's *Dekalog*. The history of painting is contained here just as history itself is. Techniques evocative of social realism, impressionism, photography and collage through to

abstract expressionism at the edges, are evident, all in one painting. This seems a pastiche of the postmodern itself, as visual quotes abound.

Cecilia Danell
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology Degree Show

Michaële Cutaya is an
artist and writer living
in Galway.

Cecilia Danell
Is this Utopia?
2008
installation shot, GMT
courtesy the artist

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It probably was the title that did it: in these days of atrophied imagination, in which fears stand in for political program, the very mention of Utopias is enough to suggest times when a better future was still being dreamt.

The initial impression of Cecilia Danell's show is one of a brightly coloured playfulness. The show is suffused with 1960s imagery, from the geometric designs of the wallpaper covering the installation room to the photographed retro objects, which are part of the artist's collection. It is however more pointedly to modernist architecture that Danell's work refers through

painting and animation.

In a five-minute animated short, *Is this Utopia*,¹ a curvilinear-patterned world is the set for a series of arrangements of urbanistic elements, the construction and deconstruction of buildings using Lego blocks – themselves a legacy of that 1960s optimism that the world is ours to be built in endless colourful possibilities. The alienating effects of such planning are pointed to by having round Maltesers-looking creatures attempting to inhabit this cubic world.

The top-down thinking underlying modern

urbanism is furthered alluded to in a series of one-metre-square paintings. In the luridly idealistic colours of an advertisement are represented views of Stockholm's suburbs which are disrupted by prominent areas of splashed and dripped paint. The featureless spaces left in the painting seem to suggest the ultimate unfathomability of the inhabitants.

Alternatively, these vacant and uncertain shapes superimposed over the representation of places which were inspired by modernist utopias, could be left to be filled by future ones.

¹ *Is this Utopia?*, as well as images of her paintings, documentation of work in progress can be viewed on Danell's website, www.ceciliadanell.com



Stewarts was Northern Ireland's biggest supermarket chain until Tesco bought it out. It was part of the Crazy Prices group which had a series of cringe-worthy TV ads fronted by Managing Director Jim McGaw. McGaw was an ironic local folk hero.

Lego, Tunnocks Teacakes, Meccano, Look and Learn, processed-photograph envelopes. There is a lot of evidence. The work triggers associations and memories – artefacts and cultural detritus abound. Mini Frosties cereal boxes have me in English service stations.

A cigarette butt stands erect on silver-foil milk-bottle lid, and looking at Ben Craig's installation I find it impossible not to think about the past and ethnology and consumerism and capitalism and younger brothers. Craig seems to have transplanted an entire history of himself into the studio, creating a mass of piles, arrangements and papier mâché mountains and silver-foiled structures. I think of growing pains and a time when milkmen delivered milk bottles with silver foil tops that opened with a satisfying squidge of thumb. I think of Thatcher taking away free school milk.

Salvador Dalí grins manically, pasted on top of a mountain with Hockney and Hirst lower down. A very male mountain; mountaineering is very male and this installation is definitely male. This boy is transgressing childhood and navigating art-making and defining a foothold. Behind the mountain is a sleeping bag – it feels a little sordid. I think of hoarders drowning in newspaper seas. Emerging from the junk, a plastic bag bears the unmistakable yellowy-orange Stewarts flower. Tove Jansson's book *Who will comfort Toffle* lies on the floor and now Ikea has arrived in Belfast.



Their catalogue and website (www.irishartnow.com) confirm that the artists of the 2008 MFA, Belfast, share a commitment to succeed.

Martin Boyle's installation with videos, *Untitled I – IV*, aspires to the dictum that good art is "beautiful and not yet beautiful... (and) always efficacious" (Rein Wolfs). Skinless, see-through walls constructed from the batons both allow one to see the whole space and divide it into four 'rooms'.

I. In an elegantly simple *metonymy* for shopping, a person outside the frame positions small

objects, one at the time, on a shelf, then an invisible force, gravity, pulls each out. While filming, the camera and the shelf were positioned at an angle to facilitate a corresponding correct illusion.

II. A *synecdoche* for cleansing is evoked by a video of a dozen white toilet rolls nailed to a board, allowing long strips of paper to move in a stream of air. The piece recalls white ribbons in the wind delivering prayers to the deities.

III. The three-minute loop works as a *metaphor* for both repetition and a hierarchy of values:

the artist, dressed in white, sits in a quasi-lotus position and brushes mortar away from one used brick. More masonry fills the nearby travel trunk.

IV. A digital counter of 60 numbers in 60 seconds alternates with a minute of irregular intervals, and always returns to the start. The headphones issue synchronized clicks.

The tropes add up to an absurd hero, a modern Sisyphus, who is tragic only in his hour of consciousness. At other times, 'all is well'.

Lee Welch
National College of Art and Design Degree Show

Alan Phelan is an artist
from Dublin.

Lee Welch
*Between the essence and the
descent, falls the shadow*, 2008
aluminum and rope
750 x 31 cm
courtesy the artist



Across a few colleges this year it was interesting that the strongest work I saw was by students already practising as artists. These few have been active in the art scene already – making, curating, showing and organising. Lee Welch, one such, runs the exhibition space Four and his experience of how things work was obviously invaluable in contributing towards a refreshingly tight, conceptually complex, and witty cubicle installation as part of the Painting-department degree presentation. He may be the obvious choice as a familiar face about town, but the work did stand apart from his

classmates. As self-directed studies go, he pushed the idea of a final show as far as possible by: attempting to re-zone part of the college campus for art (but failing); producing a small catalogue (with an essay by Jason Oakley and other related texts); as well as securing a slot to exhibit the work 'for real' later this year in the LAB.

Despite being in a painting course, it was no surprise that Welch was not engaged in medium-specific dialectics. Using appropriated (but credited) photographs, an audio interview, a video projection, a bronze cast divining twig, a 7.5 m-tall metal-pole ladder

structure, and an unrealised sculpture, he cross-referenced ideas between fact and fibs, belief and bonhomie, aspiration and failure. Somewhere between fake mountaineering photographs, Alfred Hitchcock gazing at an Indian rope trick, the apparent mysteries of divining, Welch has re-invigorated his practice by, oddly enough, starting all over again.

Reviews

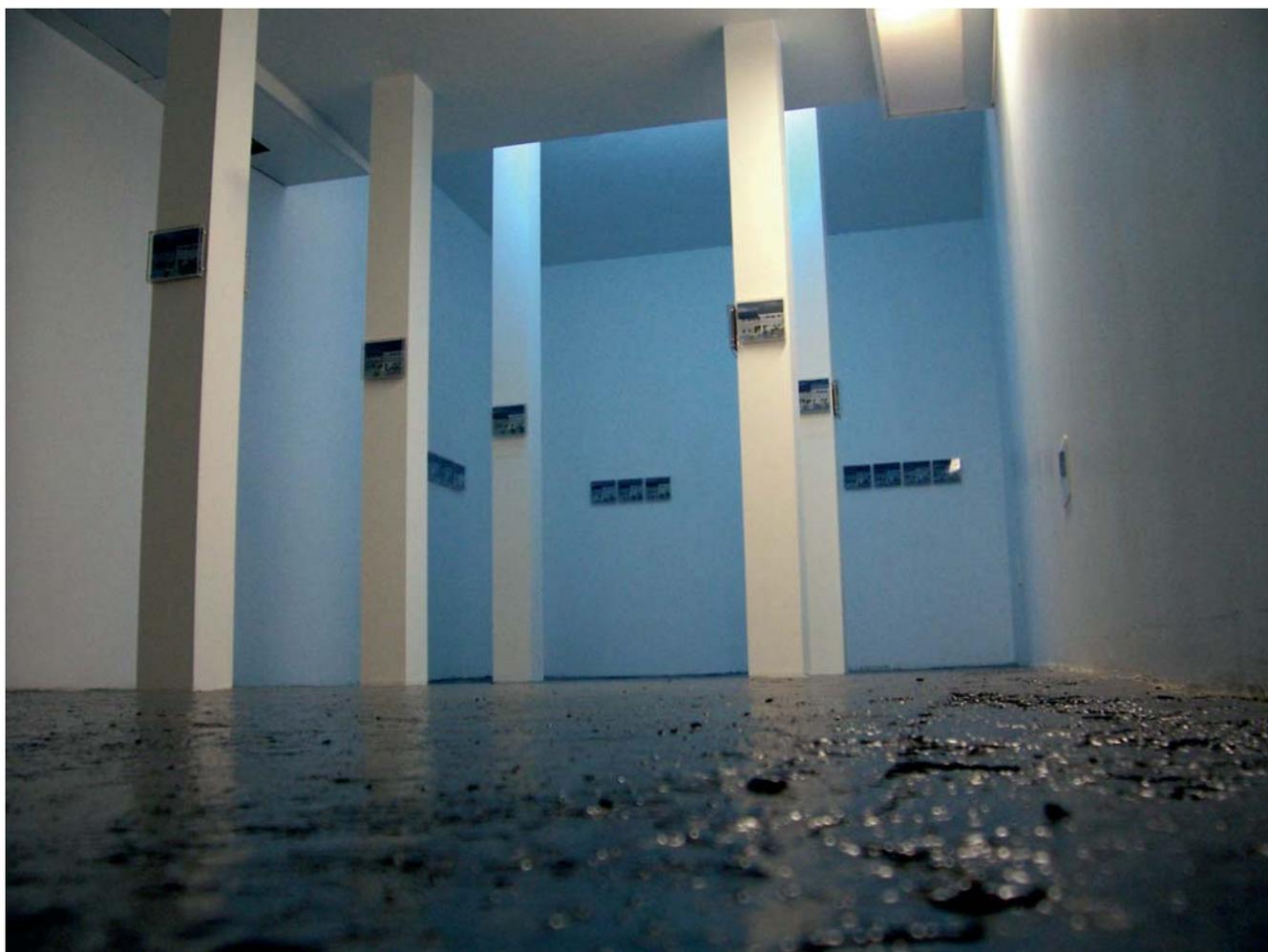
Belfast On reflection **Ruth Osborne 82** | *Majella Clancy: Boundaries, spaces and subject positions* **Slavka Sverakova 98** | **Cork** Danny McCarthy: *Listening with the sound turned off* **Matt Packer 100** | **Derry** Maria McKinney | Aideen Doran, Alyson Edgar, Fergal McSwiggan: *Derry? London? London? Derry? Declan Sheehan 78* | **Dublin** John Lalor: *Forward pass* **Charlotte Bonham-Carter 68** | *Sigune Hamann: A very short space of time through very short times of space* **Gemma Tipton 70** | *Under erasure* **Declan Long 72** | *Sonic Youth* **Karlijn De Jongh 93** | *First shot* **Aileen Blaney 104** | **Hobart** *Repetitions* **Robert Stevenson 75** | **Kilkenny** Ailbhe Ní Bhriain **Eimear McKeith 90** | **London** Susan MacWilliam: *Eileen* **Riann Coulter 86** | **Offaly** Patrick Dougherty at *Sculpture in the Parklands* **Emily Mark FitzGerald 88** | **Wexford** *Once removed* **Kevin Ryan 96** | **Book** Jack B. Yeats *Old and new departures* **Jeannie McCollum 102** |

(background)
Patrick Dougherty
Ruaille buaille, 2008
installation shot
Sculpture in the Parklands
photo James Fraher
courtesy *Sculpture in the Parklands*



John Lalor

Forward pass



Immediately upon entering *Forward pass*, an exhibition by John Lalor at Pallas Contemporary Projects, the visitor was confronted with a poster which resembled the kind of advertisement used to announce coming attractions at the cinema. In this case, the poster addressed the exhibition at Pallas Projects, and specifically Lalor's film, *Very dark skies over social housing*. However, unlike the kind of facile rhetoric that is usually employed in the service of promoting films, Lalor's announcement is tricky, convoluted and dense – a suitable prelude to the project at Pallas.

The exhibition *Forward pass* was comprised of a variety of mediums, including the poster and the film, as well as a series of paintings, and an intervention of columns in the Pallas space. Rather than perceiving the exhibition as a group of independent, isolated, and complete works, it is helpful to understand the show holistically, as a nexus of open-ended investigations into a series of interrelated ideas. The use of the maquette, or the mock-up, for example, is an important, and recurring concept for Lalor. The poster contains a grainy image of what appears to be the gallery space, but is in actuality an image of a maquette of the space. The film is made up of footage from one of Lalor's previous exhibitions, as well as filmed footage of a maquette of that gallery space. The maquette itself was built after the realization of the project in that space. In this way, much of the show at Pallas Projects is about the translation of an idea from one space and medium to another. In reworking material in this way, and obfuscating the boundaries of preparatory material and finished products, Lalor's projects emerge as an investigation in progress, a constant revisiting, and re-inscribing, which becomes, in turn, an act of creation.

Lalor's architectural intervention in the Pallas Projects space – his construction of pillars – also has the effect of assuming the gallery itself as a kind of maquette, or a malleable site for experimentation. The use of the pillars radically alters our perception of the gallery space, while changing the character, viewing angle, and physical presence of the paintings. As we move between and amongst the paintings at Pallas Projects the flatworks take on a kind of sculpture presence. The paintings in *Forward pass* are all unique renditions of the same grey house against the backdrop of a brooding sky. The multiple paintings are part of the *Democratic paintings* series, which have included multiple portraits, as well as a series entitled *Blue skies over social housing*. The serial nature of the work is further demonstration of Lalor's tendency to rework subject matter. The paintings in *Forward pass* were executed to a larger scale in the exhibition shown in the film. Lalor's use of maquettes and experimentation with scale questions our understanding of the differentiation between reality and illusion. The filmed footage of the maquettes, for instance, is almost indistinguishable from the footage of the gallery space. However, the use of a small mobile phone camera to film within the small space of the maquette lends the film a slightly disorientating quality, which alludes to the artist's intervention in the representation of that space.

As Lalor details in the poster about the exhibition, his project is concerned with both representation and memory. According to the stream-of-conscious philosophy that constitutes the poster's text, Lalor understands memory as a construction of reality, and compares it to the idea of the novel. However, the metaphor is circuitous and sheds scant light on the project, while also beginning to explain too much. At times, trying to unravel all of the multiple meanings

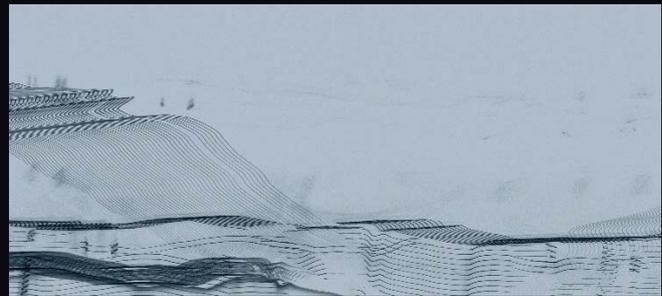
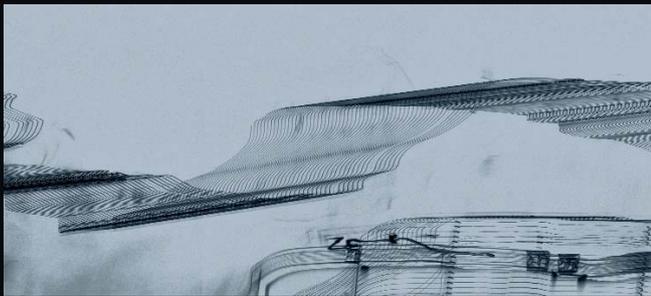
of *Forward pass* feels a bit like the task of trying to cross-reference the encyclopedia. However, with earplugs to the din created by too much to say in too small a space, the cohesive elements of Lalor's interests emerge as innovative and insightful investigations of space, representation, and the processes of translation.

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is a freelance art critic
and an Assistant Curator
at the Barbican Art
Gallery, London.

[opposite]
John Lalor
Forward pass
installation shot, Pallas
Contemporary Projects
courtesy the artist

Sigune Hamann A very short space of time through very short times of space

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Sigune Hamann
*Film strip (Tivoli Gardens,
Copenhagen)*
2008
courtesy Gallery of
Photography

When it comes to capturing either movement or a moment, both painting and photography are deceitful. The implication of the painterly techniques employed by artists like Jack B Yeats and Basil Blackshaw (I'm thinking particularly of Yeats' horse-race paintings, and Blackshaw's *Bulldog*, 1981, which is in the AIB Collection), that here is movement frozen in time, yet poised on the cusp of further dynamic action, is an illusion. Obviously. Equally illusory is that still quality of a single moment, preserved in paint, that was the stock-in-trade of seventeenth-century Dutch genre painters, with their vignettes of interiors. There is duration in painting, a process. The period of a painting is the time it takes to create it.

Not so with photography, its period being the fraction of a second for which the aperture is open. Yet photographs are equally unable to replicate the quality of seeing, for not only is there composition, and exclusion, within the frame of the photograph, but also the eye does not see a fraction of a second's stillness. Our idea of the still image comes from a personal editing of moving data. Sigune Hamann's exhibition, *a very short space of time through very short times of space*, at the Gallery of Photography, addresses itself to these dynamics by use of long exposures of stills, and of film strips, to create images that are painterly in quality, filmic in movement, and yet are ultimately, nonetheless, static photographs.

The most dramatic of these, *film-strip (whatever it's doing it's doing it now)*, 2008, is placed in the long window of the gallery, as a site-specific installation. And, by its site-specificity, it addresses itself to the architecture of the gallery as well as to the history of photography (nineteenth-century dioramas, the camera obscura – and in particular Richard Torchia's camera-obscura installation in the same space in

2002). The Gallery of Photography was designed by architects O'Donnell + Tuomey to resemble a Box Brownie camera, and this sense of exploring the idea of a camera, in a building created to resemble a camera, while looking at the implications of photography, adds an extra layer of cleverness to the work. It also distracts from the more interesting aesthetics and poetics of viewing.

Another addition, perhaps illuminating, perhaps another distraction, is the exhibition's title, carried through to an epigram at the end of the catalogue. *a very short space of time through very short times of space*, comes from *Ulysses*. Stephen Dedalus is walking on a beach, "a stride at a time," his steps bringing with them the idea of inevitable progression, one after another. It is also preceded by the line "shut your eyes and see."¹ And with this, the notion of cleverness grows to a threatening suspicion. It is to be found again in the series of inverted photographs, *heimlich*, 2007, where the everyday bucolic scenes are reflections in water. Flipped over, their uncanny beauty becomes a little more ordinary.

This is at the heart of Hamann's project, not the ordinariness, but its opposite. From "shut your eyes and see" to re-orienting your eyes and seeing differently, the exhibition brings a little magic back that which should never, perhaps, have become 'normal' in the first place. The only issue is to divest yourself of the intellectual gimmicks of site-specificity and epigram, and to instead revel in those aesthetics and poetics. This is not to adopt an anti-intellectual stance, rather an anti-intellectualised one, perhaps borrowing from Susan Sontag's *Against interpretation* exhortation which, although made back in 1964, carries a resonance in this context: "Interpretation takes the sensory experience of the work of art for granted, and proceeds from there. This cannot be taken for granted,

now. Think of the sheer multiplication of works of art available to every one of us, superadded to the conflicting tastes and odors and sights of the urban environment that bombard our senses. Ours is a culture based on excess, on overproduction; the result is a steady loss of sharpness in our sensory experience."² And this is the territory in which Hamann's work really sings.

So, returning to that idea of the moment of an image, what it represents, and how it is to be seen in terms of a reflection of, or comment on, the real: John Berger suggests that a painting is only finished, "not when it finally corresponds to something already existing – like the second shoe of a pair – but when the foreseen ideal moment of its being looked at is filled, as the painter feels or calculates it ought to be."³ Even though this is applied to painting, it can be extended to embrace contemporary photography. It is not the object, but the seeing of the object that closes the circle of meaning. Sigune Hamann's project in the Gallery of Photography is an attempt to capture both the dynamics of looking, and the dynamics of making; to extend the period of the photograph, and multiply the moments at which it may be completed.

- 1 James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Bodley Head, London, 1958, p 34
- 2 Susan Sontag (1964), and collected in *Against interpretation*, Vintage, London, 1994
- 3 John Berger, *And our faces my, my heart, brief as photos*, Pantheon, New York, 1984, p 26

Gemma Tipton is a writer and critic on art and architecture based in Dublin; she is currently a research scholar at GRADCAM, the Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media.

Under

erasure



[opposite]
John Duncan
We were here
2006
courtesy the artist

A grouping together based on taking away: crudely cropped to its essentials, this was the guiding theme of *Under erasure*, an intriguing-sounding exhibition staged by Temple Bar Gallery and Studios during June and July. Six international artists were selected based on a loosely converging interest – quite diversely understood and addressed – in strategic deletions or observed obliterations of interpretatively necessary, telling or troubling detail, assessing the impact of extreme forms of visual and textual editing, both as practical, aesthetic-conceptual experiments and as cultural or historical phenomena.

The show's title nodded respectfully in the direction of Derrida: the designation 'under erasure' (or 'sous rature') arising out of the often *puissant* paradoxes of deconstruction as the post-structuralist X-factor, a mark of deletion that must accompany philosophical declaration, a pronounced crossing-out that calls the meaning of a term or a concept into question even as it is grudgingly but unavoidably employed. Yet any strict, studious application of this nullifying self-referential principle seemed to be of limited interest here. Rather, several dissimilar 'cut outs and cut aways' and a number of politically uneasy reflections on disappearance or impeded visibility were plausibly covered by this convenient catch-phrase (oddly enough, the term 'catch-phrase', with its incidental associations of verbal entrapment, suddenly seems aptly deconstructive). If there was a directly Derridean dimension to the curatorial interest in erasure, however, it was most obviously manifest in the recurring contemplation on the (in)capacities and compromises of representation, especially with regard to the problematic, 'partial' witness of photography: a medium that appeared both dynamic and deflated in this exhibition, visually dominant while at the same time drained of referential power and authority.

Dramatic, large-scale (and larger-again-scale) photographs by Lidwien van de Ven, John Duncan and Ken Gonzales-Day ironically paired ambitious formal monumentality with obscure images of next-to-nothing, notionally 'addressing' historical events, or more precisely their anxious aftermath, but grandly foregrounding photography's unavoidable 'failure' in this task. Van de Ven's *Jerusalem 24/04/2006 (Memorial Day)* was a vast, muted and minimal wall-pasted image of a weathered, pockmarked city wall on which the scrawled word 'nation' was the final, faint trace of a mostly smeared-over graffiti. The poster

format (also employed by Gonzales-Day) effectively erased the prized objecthood of the photograph itself, showing a fading message in an obviously ephemeral form. When previously exhibited as part of an impressive, elaborate installation at *Documenta 12*, this image was one in a substantial series painted and pasted over by the artist after very short spells on display; isolated in *Under erasure*, the Jerusalem photograph loses some of its earlier anecdotal poignancy – its fleeting poetic and political charge – being forced to bear too much portentous allegorical weight in this context.

John Duncan's photograph of a whitewashed regimental banner on the dismal exterior of a dilapidated Belfast building was an equally focused study of blotted out public propaganda, but it had more rogue elements, more sense of the messy material residue of recent history. Less imposing in scale, there was, however, a tragicomic kind of theatricality to this ostensibly empty scene: the barely visible military-style emblem at the 'blank' centre, streaked with broad, uncontrolled strokes of thick white paint, was framed by the wretched proscenium of the crumbling, battered building; a drama, then, as much characterized by collapse and indecipherable detritus as it was by the 'progress' suggested in the deletion of militaristic iconography. Consistent with Duncan's other engrossing views of 'post-troubles' urban settings (and recalling Eoghan McTigue's related investigations of overpainted paramilitary murals), this is a photographic 'absence' packed tight with seemingly un-erasable traces.

Gonzales-Day, on the other hand, has been compelled by specific historical 'erasures' – the numerous, brutal lynchings that took place in California at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries – to actually undertake procedures of deliberate creative erasure, dealing with deletion *in extremis*. A majestic colour photograph of a single, massive tree, set in dusty, deserted terrain against unbroken blue sky, demonstrated one approach: the luridly beautiful image showing a place where Latin American men were killed in vicious racist attacks. This seemingly peaceful landscape scene therefore functions as a self-conscious instance of the trick played by almost all landscape imagery: Gonzales-Day constructing a seductive vision of nature that masks the actual conditions and histories of the framed territory. In another, closely related set of small, framed photographs, Gonzales Day dealt with erasure not through suggestions of buried significance, but through direct, disturbing manipulation of archival imagery: here editing out the central figure of the horribly abused victim from photographic documents of lynchings – leaving a haunting, harrowing vacant space. The strategy is in an obvious way reminiscent of Paul Pfeiffer's digital amendments to Muhammad Ali matches, in which the fighters are actually removed from the footage; and though Gonzales Day's compelling work has quite distinct and difficult historical concerns, in each of these cases our attention is artfully turned towards the circumstances of spectacle and, inevitably, towards the politics of spectatorship.

If problems of representing place were undoubtedly of interest to Lidwien van de Ven, John Duncan and Gonzales Day – in terms of the erasure or residue of historical incident – for Richard Galpin the challenge seemed more immediately to do with the modeling and mapping of the indistinct, shifting spaces of

the contemporary world. Thin image fragments, the result of a persistent peeling away at the surfaces of urban photographs, combined to create strange, sprawling architectural (and perhaps anti-architectural) forms. These elegantly chaotic assemblages (referred to as 'clusters') at once evoked the advanced sci-fi visions of today's most ambitious virtual re-imaginings of the built environment, and at the same time prioritized an obsessively lo-fi tangibility: the little ragged tails left by scalpel cuts providing subtle evidence of a curious artisanal commitment (it's worth noting that Galpin apprenticed as woodcarver) at odds with the elaborate hyper-modernism of the designs. The concentrated craft simplicity in Galpin's work also corresponded in small measure with the determinedly crude mark-making technique employed in Candice Breitz's *Ghost write* series: a body of work drawing on, and deleting from, stories of a body *at work* – Breitz taking an enticingly salacious novel called *The Ninety days of Genevieve* and tippex-ing out much of the essential erotic detail (the book itself is worth Googling: when a businesswoman is "thrown into a world of sexual challenge, she must learn how to balance her career with the world of fetishism"). Breitz's acclaimed oeuvre includes some masterly re-editing of popular entertainment (the multi-screen compilations of emotional fathers and mothers in Hollywood movies were a deserved hit at the 2005 *Venice Biennale*) but the *Ghost write* series finds diminishing returns in its repeat engagements with a trashy text.

Then again, Breitz may not have been especially well-served by the positioning of her severely abridged passages of soft-porn adjacent to Idris Khan's infinitely more sober transformation of the written word in *Every page of the Holy Qur'an* (could we *imagine* a more unlikely juxtaposition?). Khan's composite

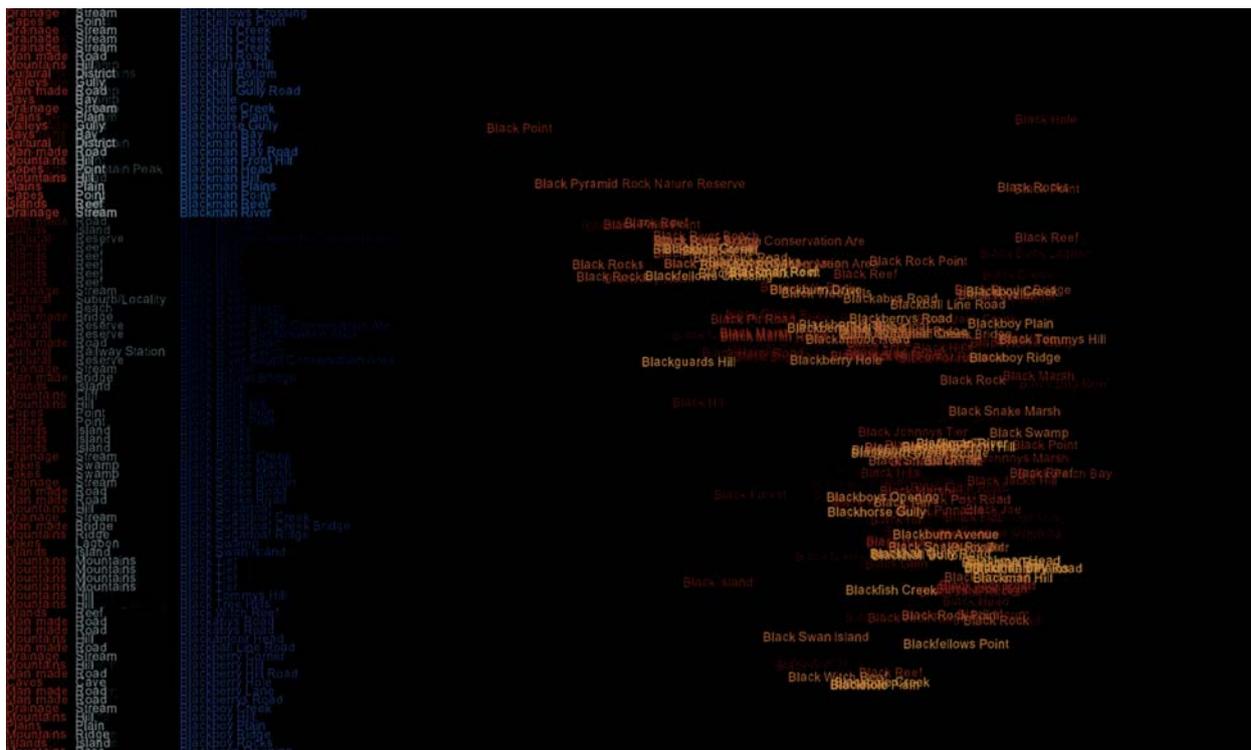
photography is, nevertheless, extraordinary. Detailed images of page after page from culturally influential texts are digitally layered to create wholly illegible, but aesthetically absorbing, representations of entire works. All potentially comprehensible script is obliterated – but this isn't so much erasure or deletion as a startling process of visual accretion and creation, new forms and patterns emerging as 'sense' is reduced. *Every page of the Holy Qur'an* is therefore a vibrantly plural all-at-once archive of a text deemed resolutely unambiguous in certain contexts – the compacted pages fizzing with noisy possibility. But, as with all the diverse works adapted by Khan – and as with much work featured in this exhibition – this photographic image of a 'trembling at the limits of language' (to adapt a Derridean formulation) somehow also makes 'present' spaces of intense, forbidding, impenetrable absence.

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Repetitions

Ciara Moore's recent residency in Tasmania prompted curators Seán Kelly and Paul Zika to develop this exhibition at the University of Tasmania's Plimsoll Gallery. Four artists, all working in digital media, investigate the complex relationship between self and place, questioning the extent to which there is demarcation between the two.

Moore's *Echoes* places us in a boat on a body of water – it happens to be in County Kerry, although the location is not revealed. Our tendency to seek home (so evident in the 'New York' and 'New South Wales' placenames of colonised nations) is clear by the reactions of viewers, who can be heard pointing out to each other evidence of which Tasmanian lake this is.



But Moore's examination of this place is largely independent of geographical location. Her camera lingers on the extraordinariness of simple acts – an oar pushes against the combined inertia of a trillion trillion water molecules, triggering chaotic behaviours in particles and energy flows in its wake. Over and over the oar crashes through a surface, shattering a reflection, at first unrecognisable, but slowly revealing itself as a clouded sky painted on dark water. The genius loci revealed in this work is magnetic; we are utterly drawn in to the interplay of scales and the mesmerising sounds of energy being dissipated at an entirely human scale.

Moore's two works, *Echoes* and *Transmission*, offer an appropriation of space that is entirely phenomenological. We see and hear through the artist's senses the exquisiteness, the multidimensionality and the sensuality of real places in a way that almost mocks our grouping under one placename of even the smallest fraction of the world. It is said that Eskimos have 200 words for snow. Moore might prompt us to ask: "why so few?"

Martin Walch's *Sticks and stones* acts as counterpoint to Moore's work – hers asking how we might ever name a landscape, his revealing our obsession with doing so. His digitally generated list of every name given to places (roads, beaches, waterways, towns) in Tasmania is not, in itself, great reading. However, Walch has coupled each element with its spatial location, so while the dry list scrolls down one side of a screen, elements appear every fraction of a second in their geographical location, determined by latitude and longitude, on the other. So the located names, which fade after ten seconds or so, continually demarcate the shape of the island.

The effect is quite beautiful, but there are more intriguing things about this work than its appearance. We are entitled to ask, for instance, "where is the art?" For while the screen produces an interesting tapestry of taxonomy, at its essence this is merely a computer scrolling through a database. We could remove the Tasmanian dataset and load instead an Irish one, or load the named stars and their location in the heavens. Any listing of words and numbers could be manipulated to fit Walch's artwork: imaginary landscapes could be flashed before our eyes – Middle Earth, or the stock market.

However, because the list is of local placenames, a fascinating thing happens within the gallery space: people stand before this work for a surprisingly long time. Watching them, it gradually becomes clear that this artwork is situated within them – they are waiting until *their place* has appeared. They are not fools – they realise that a computer is dumbly looping alphabetically around the confines of its program, but they will wait five or ten or more minutes just to see "Warren Street" flash up on the screen. Then they smile and wander off.

Leigh Hobba challenges the viewer with two works – neither of which provides the comfort of a known landscape. The first, *Home, away from (thinking of) home – objects of desire – (Chairs by Le Corbusier) – Room 12 Regents Court* (the title alone is a challenge), presents that space most reviled by the frequent traveller: the empty hotel room in a strange city. What Hobba offers to us is alienation stripped bare – the panic-approaching-terror of feeling outside of place. All external references here are anxious and anonymous – occasional subliminal flashes of television screen-grabs lure us to attempt their decipherment, but we can judge by the mood that we will not be comforted with any sense of closure. All that we hold

dear about a notion of home is taken from us by this disconcerting work.

Nor has Hobba quite finished with us. *Bad moon rising* is a mesmerising digital video work. Before we entirely make sense of the image we bring our own preconceptions to bear and see something beautiful – a white creature swimming, a dugong perhaps. But the creature appears not to be underwater, but above a night-time seascape. And the 'dugong' emerges from shadow as something altogether nightmarish. One cold, staring fish devours another of its own size. This beast with two tails drifts across a dark background seemingly portending only the madness of self-reference and paradox. This scene gives us a glimpse of a pre-conscious landscape – a challenge to our faith that our senses deliver to us a true image of the world. A view from nowhere, it alienates absolutely; by corollary, it concretises that place and human experience are one.

Metre by Daniel Von Sturmer takes as its starting point the technology of our quantification of place. The work asks us to question what it is we do when we take measure of our landscapes. A human hand periodically gives impetus to a pendulum, which consists only of a right angled metal ruler hanging from the edge of a table. This simple machine consists of a lever, a fulcrum, an orthogonal device, space divided into the metre of the ruler, time divided into the meter of its swing and the constant intervention of the measurer – the scientific observer – replacing the energy that entropy has stolen away. From various camera angles we see bizarre and beautiful effects: looking along the tabletop a ruler teeters impossibly on one of its edges. And even in this most simple and calculable of periodic motions, shadows and angles interplay in surprising ways.

From every perspective or focal point, the marks on the ruler lose their precision as they recede from the camera. The camera and the ruler both make the claim of the exact sciences – to provide an objective measure. Yet what may dawn upon us is our own predicament – the source of both our frustration and our joy: we cannot escape that we are subjective observers.

In his essay ‘...Poetically man dwells...’ Heidegger recognised in our superficial relationship to place “a curious excess of frantic measuring and calculating.”¹ Yet even the briefest artistic treatment reveals that our interaction with place is beyond what may be quantified; beyond even what may be expressed. Our experience of place is perhaps the most pervasive and fundamental aspect of our existence – it is the totality of us; our first and our last.

[previous spread]
Martin Walch
Sticks and stones
screengrab, real-time-generated video stream that takes approximately 30 minutes to run through a full cycle (that is, the 32,000 place names in Tasmania)
courtesy the artist

[below]
Ciara Moore
Echoes
installation shot
courtesy the artist

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, language, thought*, (transl. A Hofstadter), Harper and Row, New York, 1971, p 228

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Maria McKinney | Aideen Doran, Alyson Edgar, Fergal McSwiggan

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Derry? London? London? Derry?



[opposite]
Maria McKinney
Earl of Leicester
500 piece jigsaw puzzle,
hole punches, glue
courtesy the artist

Repetition is smooth and it re-iterates, and it stammers and halts, and it makes fail (an outcome which is of course open to being an intent, and so a success). These latter elements of repetition – as a process of stutter or stammer – were apparent across all the animations of Aideen Doran. The overarching aesthetic was neither smooth nor fluid. There were two larger casual screens, leaning against walls. An animation, *Contemplating a nowhere*, was projected against one screen, featuring a mass of scratchy pencil marks, and then the text “A Nowhere” becoming gradually legible amid the marks, then disappearing again into the miasma of pencil marks, and then reappearing as legible text again. The animation *London?Derry? London?Derry?* was projected against the other screen of the same size, leant against another wall, featuring a similar process of a mass of scratchy pencil marks, and then the texts “London” and “Derry” becoming gradually legible amid the marks, then disappearing again into the miasma of pencil marks, then reappearing as legible text again. In a work similarly projected against a casually placed smaller screen, *Mapping a place*, a mind-map of theory and concepts – cultural-theory tropes and tricks – grows as an organic map of roots and paths, then shrinks back to nothingness, and then reforms, branch (of thought) by branch (of thought). Across these three animations, the element of repetition is foregrounded (each animation itself is a very brief piece); and contained within the stuttering repetitions are fissures which open up opportunities to engage, dis-engage, regroup ideas, references, and responses, and to re-engage.

It seems that the authoritative position to adopt in this context is to question if a narrative about *London~Derry* is presented within the works in these exhibitions. Or a germ of an idea of a narrative?

Or what form could that narrative take? Yet this approach – a search for narrative – is only one credible path into reading the exhibitions; and within that authority there also lies its decoy, its contrary. This contrary would be, rather than using the logic of narrative, to use the logic of montage: to move, as it were from shot to shot, rather than by story or narrative.¹

The exhibition by Maria McKinney seemed predetermined by a drive to recognize, reformulate and recreate pattern. Within it, the *Derry?London? London?Derry?* project was opened up to “a frenzy of intertextual activity”...² There was a process of oscillation from, for example, pieces which reworked and manipulated crosswords, through a space which featured literal and unembroidered re-presentation of jigsaws (both materials also used in her previous work) to work with more sculptural and less representational elements. An examination of structure itself seemed to become a constant within the work with an examination of various processes of image-making becoming more of a variable. It’s difficult to decipher which is more apparent in the artist’s matchstick-chair construction – its function as a magnificently menacing image or its character as a structurally fascinating larger configuration of tiny equivalent pieces. One other sculptural piece was a large, interconnected almost crystalline structure, an accumulation made up from a multiple hexagon- (or octagon-?) like assemblage of limes pierced with cocktail umbrellas. The structure seemed capable of self-regeneration, with a seeming ability to grow at will; and yet to have halted. There was an exoticism and an otherness within it – which functioned more out of a visceral sense of it occupying space, rather than any representational or allegorical status within the piece.

There's an encounter with three small tents in a gallery in semi-darkness... *Ulster wayward*. As a rule, a tent presents itself from the outside as a route into its interior; and from within its interior, a tent presents a vista into the exterior. In this installation by Fergal McSwiggan, each tent acted as a screen for a back-projected video diary – campers' *POV* videos which had neither element of escapist idyll, nor of 'extreme survival' mythologizing. Instead they featured informal scenes of the campers at work and play, walking, making a fire, on a bicycle, alone, with friends, so that the interior of each tent carried its exterior vista within it. Each of the three tents restaged the ambience of a location – *A walk through the Lagan Meadows, or a walk along the Derry walls. A drive through the South Sperrins scenic route, or through the North-West Passage. Camping out in Belvoir Park, or camping on London street. Walking the Ulster Wayward*. The work operated as a good double-mixture of scenographic skills: the physicality of the installation of three tents and projections making a little theatrical set of the gallery space; and the act of camping itself within the production of the works as an intervention making a theatrical set of civic spaces, be that an urban space such as London Street where the artist camped out for a night, or the rural spaces where the artist camped and which he feels have been neglected in the visual culture of Northern Ireland. In both cases, the artist examined a *space* that is constructed, updated, transformed and transmitted, addressing what he considered "the misrepresented visual culture of Northern Ireland, and how it was in the past, often seen as urban and violent, when it is predominantly pastoral and peaceful."

Multi-narratives functioned within Alyson Edgar's work, with the one geographical location of London Street acting as a connecting strand between a variety of people who engaged with the street on a daily basis – people who travelled there to work, to study, etc. Each participant gave an itinerary of his or her route, and Edgar then traced this path as a drawing of an abstract route, a line sketched on empty sheet, without any other referent. Edgar also sketched a portrait of the participant, which worked only as an element of exchange. The work carried a sense of the location as active/ contemporary, almost outside of history.

These shows are part of a larger project, six consecutive shows curated by invited curators, artists and theatre-producer Jonathan Burgess, with the theme of *Derry?London?London?Derry?*, using the existence of London Street in the city of Derry as a nexus to examine a multitude of ideas. London Street is a Georgian terrace, whose nomenclature refers to the role of London companies in the Plantation of Ulster. And from within that historical framework, a host of contemporary factors have developed, outlined in the text of Jonathan Burgess, curator as: *Still acknowledged – whether consciously or not – London Street still provides one of the many invisible boundaries segregating a city from an element of its population. Running parallel with the 4 main thoroughfares through Londonderry, London street is a world away from the hustle and bustle of a modern 21st Century city centre. A narrow street from Pump Street to New Gate with the high church buildings which bank and bolster a heritage and history which is seldom acknowledged, creating an echo chamber for tightly strung snares, which snap the history awake for a few brief moments each year. Still a place of incendiary where a thin gloss of modern does nothing to disturb the roots of the old. God bless London Street.*

Two ideas in this text are borrowed from critical works on Godard:

- 1 Godard: *A portrait of the artist at 70*, by Colin MacCabe, London: Bloomsbury, 2003
- 2 Jacques Aumont, 'The fall of the gods: Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Mépris* (1963)', in Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau (eds), *French film: texts and contexts*, 2nd ed, London: Routledge, 2000

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[above]
Aideen Doran
installation shot, Context
Galleries, 2008; back: *London?
Derry? London? Derry?*,
in foreground: *Mapping a place*,
both animation projection onto
board
courtesy the artist

[below]
Fergal McSwiggan
Ulster wayward, 2008
installation shot, Context
Galleries
courtesy the artist



On

reflection



[opposite]
George Campbell
Still life with oil lamp, 1969
oil on board
76 x 63 cm
courtesy Bank of Ireland

Corporate involvement in the arts has grown to become a prolific force in twenty-first-century Ireland, with a range of Irish companies seeing the benefits of this affiliation. It is within the midst of this strengthening relationship that *On Reflection*, the Bank of Ireland's (BOI) annual touring exhibition, comes to the Ormeau Baths Gallery, Belfast.¹

The exhibition is part of the Bank's Regional Art Initiative, which sees the bank invest (a suitably 'bank-ish' term) in the arts of a selected region through purchase and monetary awards for emerging and established artists.² Comprised of 55 works from the Bank's continually growing collection of over 2,000, *On Reflection* seems a fairly straightforward affair. It focuses on the direction the BOI collection took during the 1960s – 1990s. The reasoning for this chosen time-frame, we can assume, is that the works purchased or created during these years are the strongest within the collection and therefore have an important role to play in projecting a positive corporate image. The contribution an art collection can make in constructing a desired corporate image has been the topic of much analysis and is recognised as a leading motivation for this form

of corporate philanthropy.³ It thus seems what BOI is actually inviting the viewer to reflect on is the quality, value and standard of itself, reflected through the quality, value and standard of the artworks collected during this time. The artist list is certainly impressive and illustrative of the mid-century Irish art canon. It is no surprise to find Louis le Brocquy, Norah McGuinness and Robert Ballagh on the walls of the OBG.⁴ They are of course artists proven to be a sound, 'status' investment.

On first sweep through the OBG, *On Reflection* does seem particularly orthodox, reaffirming some widely held preconceptions about corporate art. Corporate collections, in Ireland as elsewhere, have been judged as being relatively safe and formulaic. Divisive content is avoided in preference for art that is passive and easily displayed. Thematically *On Reflection* reinforces this trend, being dominated by an abundance of lyrical landscapes by artists such as Patrick Collins and Camille Souter and minimal abstractions by the likes of Michael Warren. The Bank's preference for traditional mediums is also obvious, from Tim Goulding's wool tapestry *Bean banner*, though the usual mediums of painting and works on paper, to a range of metal sculptures. Only Alexandra Wejchert's perspex *Green lines* seems to materially buck the trend.

Yet to say that the BOI collection, as represented by *On Reflection*, rigidly adheres to all corporate stereotypes would be untrue. Its relative safety is perceived from today's context. Many of these works, when created or purchased, would have been considered to carry an element of risk.⁵ Four such works deal with political issues. Micheal Farrell's *Political pressé*, Robert Ballagh's *The Marchers 1968* and Oisín Kelly's *The Marchers* take on renewed significance exhibited in Belfast forty years after the incidents that inspired them, while F E McWilliam's *Help*

(*Women of Belfast series*) addresses the merciless impact of more recent sectarian violence. BOI have obviously taken some limited risks by collecting works of more political content despite their jarring with the banality of the corporate environment. The resulting question is, is BOI unique or have all Irish corporations taken such an approach? If so, this is an intriguing aspect of the wider character of Irish corporate collecting and one that goes some way to distinguish Irish collections from common corporate preferences.

Removed from the corporate environment, the *On Reflection* artworks seem to collectively and implicitly trace the various changes in Irish society as reflected in the art of the nation – the opening up of Irish society through the mid-twentieth century, as signalled by the growing influence of international modernism (succinctly captured in the exhibition by Robert Ballagh's *Woman with a Barnet Newman*), the various political events that marked and marred the country, and the persistent identification with the rural. Certainly grouped together, it seems that this selection has much to say beyond a constructed corporate role. Obliquely, *On Reflection* poses the question of how other corporations may address the implicit cultural value of their collections outside the corporate environment in more public, and perhaps more neutral, settings. Will there be a move in Ireland to in-house or even off-site corporate galleries, as in Britain and America?⁵

The exhibition does not seek to showcase the more recent purchases BOI have added to their collection. Yet BOI's emphasis has always been on collecting and supporting emerging, Irish artists. While this remit continues to guide BOI's approach, the form more recent purchases may take remains ambiguous. Indeed the nature of contemporary collecting throughout Ireland's corporations is equally unclear, though we are often made aware of monetary sponsorship through schemes like the AIB Prize and BOI's Regional Art Initiative.⁷

So, what has BOI been collecting since the mid-1990s? The absence in *On Reflection* of photography and video art, which became widely used mediums by Irish artists during the late twentieth century, seems to suggest BOI's contemporary purchases may be of a somewhat traditional nature. How is the complex terrain of contemporary art being addressed and 'married' to the corporate environment? Another issue is the particularly obvious gender imbalance presented by *On Reflection*. Of the forty artists included in the exhibition only seven (17.5%) are female. While this imbalance may not characterise the whole of BOI's collection, the image painted by *On Reflection* suggests a definite gender bias. This goes some way to project a far from positive image of the whole collection. There are a number of key female artists, who were working during the 1960s – 1990s in both an Irish and international context, that one would expect to find in an exhibition with this particular ambit – Dorothy Cross, Kathy Prendergast and Rita Duffy, to name but a few. If these artists are in fact included in BOI's collection, the question then is, why have they been overlooked for inclusion in *On Reflection*? Furthermore, a number of the chosen artists have more than one work included in *On Reflection* (Patrick Scott, Gerard Dillon).

Given this factor, it seems that there would have indeed been the opportunity to create a more balanced exhibition. *On Reflection* provokes rather than answers questions relating to the wider character of BOI's collection. As a corporation at the fore of collecting in Ireland, BOI has the opportunity to make a public statement as to how corporations in Ireland are and can continue to be representative of Irish art.

On Reflection has the ability to influence current and potential corporate collectors throughout Ireland – something the bank is certainly aware of as local business professionals and dignitaries are invited to the exhibition's launch in each region.⁸ Exhibited in Belfast, where the current economic climate is focused on nurturing growth and foreign investment, *On Reflection* brings the issue of corporate collecting to the North where there are still, comparatively, few corporations collecting art. The BOI collection certainly points to a number of considerations: creating fully representative collections, sensitivity to the artistic climate, taking risks. It also poses the complex issue of how and whether to deal with 'Troubles'-related art.

On Reflection seems to provide more questions than answers as to the future direction of corporate collecting within BOI and more widely in Ireland. However, it would be impossible to leave the OBG without a sense of the strategic and important role that businesses can play in the arts of Ireland, North and South.

- 1 Having been previously exhibited in Cork (2005), Galway (2006) and Limerick (2007).
- 2 Recipients of the mid-career Toradh Award: Mike Hogg and Philip Napier; awards for emerging artists chosen from University of Ulster 2008 Fine Art graduates: Karen Nikell, Alan Henderson and Miguel Martin.
- 3 The Business2Arts 'National Sponsorship Survey' (2005) revealed that the majority of companies surveyed highlighted 'Improving company profile' as their motive for arts sponsorship (69%). Survey available at http://www.business2arts.ie/sponsor_of_year.html, accessed 27 May 2008.
- 4 Full artist list; Robert Ballagh, John Behan, Basil Blackshaw, Brian Bourke, Charles Brady, Louis le Brocqy, George Campbell, Patrick Collins, Barrie Cooke, Michael Craig-Martin, Gerard Dillon, Micheal Farrell, Gerda Frömel, Martin Gale, Erik Adriaan van der Grijn, Tim Goulding, Patrick Graham, Charles Harper, Patrick Hickey, Neville Johnson, Roy Johnston, Oisín Kelly, Cecil King, Norah McGuinness, Theo McNab, Seán McSweeney, FE McWilliam, Anne Madden, Colin Middleton, Evin Nolan, Eilís O'Connell, Tony O'Malley, Daniel O'Neill, Nano Reid, Patrick Scott, William Scott, Camille Souter, Charles Tyrell, Michael Warren and Alexandra Wejchert.
- 5 However, the preference shown by British and American corporations for this 'riskier' style of work,

and its proven suitability for the corporate environment, may have provided a stable blueprint for this first-wave of corporate collectors in Ireland to follow.

- 6 For example, Bloomberg Space, London: <http://www.bloomberg-space.com/>
- 7 It is only with the timely *10,000 to 50: Contemporary Art from the Members of Business to Arts* currently on exhibition at IMMA (30 April – 4 August 2008) that this issue has been addressed.
- 8 "The intention of the customer evening is not only to share our collection with the local business community, but also to encourage by example, the possibility of their support in turn with the local gallery." BOI website, http://www.bankofireland.com/in_the_community/sponsorships/bank_of_ireland_art_collection/index.html, accessed 29 May 2008.

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Susan MacWilliam

Eileen



Interfering voices and invading spirits is how Eileen Garrett (1893 – 1970) described her early experiences of her psychic powers. After spending an hour in Susan MacWilliam's exhibition *Eileen*, I felt a certain empathy with the famous Irish-born medium. The dark confines of the Gimpel Fils downstairs space is the perfect setting for the five pieces that make up the show. The longest and most engaging piece, a 29-minute video also entitled *Eileen*, explores Garrett's world through a collage of sound, image and text presented on three screens. Flicking between documentary-style interviews and discordant passages involving repetition and competing voices, the woven texture of the piece disrupts our desire for coherent narrative and creates a multilayered work that evokes the mysteries of the psychic world.

Divided into chapters, the video examines particular psychic episodes, including one in 1936 in which Garrett successfully dealt with poltergeists that were haunting an English stately home. Other sections mention the numerous celebrities who befriended Garrett – from Dalí and Deitrich to Huxley and Fellini – and her ability to restore and reassure those who consulted her on psychic matters.

The star of this piece – and the show – is Garrett's 92-year-old daughter, Eileen Coly, who, in a disarmingly forthright manner, shares her weird and wonderful stories of growing up with a medium for a mother. Having inherited Garrett's charisma, if not her psychic powers, Coly mediates between the artist, the viewer, and her mother's world. In effect, MacWilliam's subject is the two Eileens, and attempts to conjure up Garrett are often upstaged by her engaging daughter.

A continuation of MacWilliam's long-term research into the psychic world, mediums and the supernatural,

this exhibition is, surprisingly, her first solo show in London. The work is the result of a year-long residency at the Parapsychology Foundation in New York, the institution that Garrett founded in 1951 to encourage research into psychic phenomena. During her residency, MacWilliam lived with Coly and became close to both her and her daughter Lisette, friendships that are reflected in the casual familiarity of the interviews and images. Coly is also the subject of the stereoscopic image *Medium's daughter*, which depicts her sitting beside a photograph of her mother. Another stereoscope, *Artist as medium*, is a self-portrait of the artist crouching among the bookshelves of the Parapsychology Foundation Library. This photographic format, which requires looking through binocular-like view finders, provides a keyhole view which feels particularly appropriate to MacWilliam's mysterious subject matter.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Garrett's story is that she always remained sceptical about her powers. The remit of the Parapsychology Foundation includes encouraging scientific studies of the paranormal, and this spirit of investigation is reflected in MacWilliam's work, particularly the video piece *Library*. Superficially, this piece appears to be a series of stills of the Parapsychology Foundation Library, but it is actually a video of the library shot in real time at night, accompanied by a soundtrack of the air conditioner that adds both a sense of foreboding and the suggestion that the library and the mystical books within it are living, breathing organisms.

With this exhibition running directly after a solo show by Seamus Harahan, the basement of Gimpel Fils has effectively been occupied by Northern Irish artists. While this schedule was a coincidence, the gallery's interest in artists from Ireland extends back to 1945 when,

during a visit to Dublin, Charles Gimpel admired the work of the young Louis le Brocqy at the Irish Exhibition of Living Art. When le Brocqy moved to London a few months later, he began a relationship with Gimpel Fils which has lasted over sixty years. Considering this history, it is heartening that the gallery has expanded its interest to include a new generation of artists from Ireland.

Looking back over MacWilliam's career, from her Glen Dimplex nomination in 1999 to her solo show in New York earlier this year, and the recent announcement that she will represent Northern Ireland in the next *Venice Biennale*, it would seem that the time is ripe for a major survey of her work. These recent pieces would benefit from being considered within the context of her ongoing interest in all things paranormal, and such a show would reveal the scope and depth of her inventive oeuvre. With another North American residency in her diary, MacWilliam is making a name for herself across the Atlantic: it is time she had a major show at home.

Riann Coulter is an academic and curator specialising in Irish and British art.

[opposite]
Susan MacWilliam
Eileen, 2008
video still; synchronised
three-screen video work,
28 mins 53 secs
courtesy the artist/ Gimpel Fils

Patrick Dougherty at Sculpture in the Parklands



In 1856 Henry David Thoreau, deep into his sojourn in Walden Wood, wrote in his journal that “It is in vain to dream of a wildness distant from ourselves. There is none such. It is the bog in our brain and bowels, the primitive vigor of Nature in us, that inspires that dream.” The richness of Irish bogland – its metaphoric and symbolic resonance – has long inspired craft and art-making traditions on this island, forming an alternative history of Irish landscape wrapped in ancient mythologies and couched in the Sublime. And yet, as Thoreau observes, the dream of a primitive Arcadia is paradoxically wrought from our own dark and instinctual wildness – the ‘id’ in the idyll.

Intertwining such notions of land, memory, and myth, Patrick Dougherty’s recent artistic residency at Co Offaly’s *Sculpture in the Parklands* has engaged with the Lough Boora bog wetlands to create a fantastical monumental willow installation that will be in place over the next few years. *Sculpture in the Parklands* itself has emerged since its founding in 2002 as one of the most significant and evocative settings for outdoor sculpture in Ireland. Uniquely, this open-air sculpture park (managed and programmed by Kevin O’Dwyer) was developed in conjunction with Bord na Móna’s transformation of its cutaway boglands into a public recreation site and nature reserve. Today *Sculpture in the Parklands* is home to fourteen site-specific public artworks, the product of a series of innovative and highly progressive international residency programmes. Its latest addition is by North Carolina-based artist Patrick Dougherty, known for his massive sculptural forms woven from saplings, wrapped around buildings or bent into freestanding structures, hundreds of which he has built at museums, parks and other sites worldwide over the past two decades.

Over three weeks in May and June, Dougherty utilised eighteen tons of willow and the help of a volunteer artist team to construct what he describes as his most ambitious work to date, and one of the few to integrate itself so entirely within a pre-existing landscape. Interwoven amongst an existing copse of Alder trees behind the *Parklands*’ newly erected visitor pavilion, Dougherty’s intricate structure is built out of branch sinews twisted and shaped into forms which balance tension, rigidity and suppleness. The sculpture has a bodily presence, its bundles of fibres creating a series of interiors both architectural and plastic. According to Dougherty, the design derives from linear compositions, built up three dimensionally as the work progresses:

...these sticks are also lines with which to draw, and my assistants and I, using the body like a pencil, add lines again and again to the surface of the sculpture. And as unlikely as it seems, many of the drawing conventions, which we all used in school to draw interesting pictures are the same techniques I employ to build the drawn surfaces of my oversized sculptures.

Irish artists from Alice Maher to Katie Holten have played with the atmospheric resonance of wooded groves, the slip from a sunlit world to the shadowed subconscious of childhood memory and dreams. Like a Pan’s Labyrinth, Dougherty’s installation relies on a fantastic and theatrical immersion into his sequence of corridors, canopies and enclosures, simultaneously eerie and nostalgic. The public appeal of the work is obvious and instantaneous, as visiting children immediately adopt the grove as a playground, and as its arched passageways dwarf adult viewers to a child’s dimensions.

If some of Dougherty’s earlier works have strayed too far towards whimsy, his *Parklands* commission strikes a more successful balance between romantic or mythic associations and a self-conscious primitivism, demonstrating a deep sensitivity to site. The boglands themselves are a thick repository of natural memory, and a landscape endlessly shaped by human intervention and exploitation: like the cultivated field, they are an illusion of wildness, wrought by human hands. The work explicitly references the primeval human instinct for shelter-building and branch weaving, yet also retains a distinct sense of the uncanny – the scale and texture of the chambers alternatively charming and unsettling. Organic in material and process, the temporality and gradual decay of the work over the next few years will form an effective counterpart to the *Parklands*’ permanent installations: a reminder of the slow sedimentation that accretes to constitute our physical and psychological ecology.

Dr Emily Mark FitzGerald
is Lecturer in Art History
and Cultural Policy at
University College Dublin.

Patrick Dougherty
Ruaille buaille
2008
installation shot
Sculpture in the Parklands
photo James Fraher
courtesy *Sculpture in the Parklands*

Ailbhe Ní Bhriain

90



[opposite]
Ailbhe Ní Bhriain
Perimeter # 5
2007
C-print
courtesy Domobaal Gallery

The Butler Gallery's decision to stage a solo exhibition by Cork-based artist Ailbhe Ní Bhriain (b 1978) was both shrewd and timely, as the artist's relative youth belies the technical and thematic maturity of her photography and video work. Her academic credentials, too, are impeccable: she graduated with a first-class honours degree from the Crawford College of Art, following this with a master's at the Royal College of Art in London, for which she received a distinction. At present, she lectures at the Crawford, while studying for a Ph D at Kingston University. Ní Bhriain has also won several awards, including the Jerwood Drawing Prize in 2004, is represented by the Domobaal Gallery in London, and has participated in many exhibitions here and abroad.

The Kilkenny show, however, was Ní Bhriain's first major exhibition in Ireland, and featured a selection of photographs and video works made between 2006 and 2008. Seen together, the overall sense conveyed by these meditative works is that of contingency: the contingency of the moving and the still image, the contingency of the self, the contingency of reality. In her work, internal and external, conscious and unconscious, stillness and movement, past and present, dream and reality – these traditionally conceived opposites – do not so much collapse as merge into each other. Through *ostranenie* techniques, that which was once assumed to be familiar or knowable is rendered strange, uncanny, indefinable. This Ní Bhriain achieves

both by exploiting the technical possibilities of photography and video, and in terms of the content of the works. Indeed, Ní Bhriain once said she was drawn to ancient Chinese brush drawing, as it “attempts to marry the nature of the materials of the craft with the nature of that which it depicts,” and a similar attempt is revealed in her work.

There are two overlapping strands to Ní Bhriain's work in this exhibition: a series of photographs and a video loosely based on portraiture; and a series of photographs and three video pieces that take landscape as their starting point. In each, she uses the techniques of photography and video to confront us with our assumptions about the medium itself and the visual strategies used in portraits and landscapes – those familiar devices we have come to accept as 'natural'. Her work thus explores representational constructs of staging, framing, perspective, horizon lines and techniques to suggest surface and depth. By revealing such strategies as artistic constructs, we are by extension invited to question our relationship to perceived reality.

The mutability of memory, traces of the past and fragmentary reconstructions are also explored, creating a sense of time as something which is not linear but is, like her work, fluid and inconclusive. This is particularly the case in *Perimeter*, a series of nine black-and-white photographs. Each image plays with the viewer's perceptions and reveals its own constructedness. They are at once familiar and alien, recognisable and strange, like half-remembered dreamscapes. The images have been created by compositing and layering details from videos and photographs of places Ní Bhriain has encountered in Ireland and on her travels – a tree from Cambodia, a west of Ireland bog, a former prison camp – to create a series of uncanny,

eerie images that are part-interior, part-landscape. The photographs are in dialogue with each other, establishing a syncopated rhythm across the series – a pattern of similarity and difference in which elements are played with, reused or changed.

Each photograph takes a frontal viewpoint and has a similar depth of field, creating room-like spaces not unlike stage sets. But these interior elements are integrated with fragments of landscapes: the floor becomes a flat expanse of water, rolling sand-dune or stony grey soil; a tree grows inside a dusty, empty interior; a wall dematerialises into a gloomy landscape expanse; a window frames an unexpected vista; a horizontal line on a wall becomes a horizon line on a blasted wasteland; a transparent rickety bedframe hangs upside-down from a ceiling, its reflection in water beneath it taking on a three-dimensional presence. There is a sense of harshness and decay in these unpeopled constructions, with their crumbling walls, murky corners, abandoned spaces, leafless trees, fluorescent lights and tiled, institutional floors. Inexplicable shadows, strange reflections and uncertain light sources, meanwhile, add to an overall sense of constructed dissolution.

In the three landscape-based video pieces – a diptych depicting a decaying beached dolphin on a boggy beach; a part-room, part-landscape of frames within frames; and the nine-screen *Palimpsest*, where each screen shows a view of a constructed landscape – an initial impression of stillness is gradually eroded through the act of looking. Small changes reveal themselves over time: a bird flying overhead, a plume of smoke puffing gently, a light flickering, a boat slowly traversing an expanse of sea. Thus stillness and movement become intertwined; there is a sense of time stilled, yet passing still.

Portraiture, meanwhile, is addressed in the works that bookend the exhibition. In the reception area of the gallery, two long rows of black-and-white photographic images traverse the wall, nine per row. The top row features indistinct images of a face at various angles; the bottom shows different sections of a body, blurry under water, its curves and indentations abstracted to evoke a watery underworld landscape. The title of the top row is *Aftermath (self-portrait) series one*, and the bottom row is *Aftermath (self-portrait) series two*. In a sense, these images encapsulate the essence of Ní Bhriain's practice, for it could be argued that the fluidity of self is at the core of her work. In her photographs and videos, the self is always both present and absent, suggesting something yet revealing nothing; her work is seeking, somehow, to represent the self yet acknowledging, too, the impossibility of achieving such an aim.

Perhaps, more precisely, her work involves the questioning of what it is that defines the self or, indeed, the inevitable inability to define selfhood. Instead, all that can be aspired to are versions of a self, a series of inconclusive images that can only capture certain angles or sections, images which are themselves rendered in such a way as to be vague, blurry, inconclusive. The self is thus in a perpetual state of becoming and, simultaneously, of dissolution. The titles of her works are, in this context, revealing: *Aftermath (self-portrait)* underscores the impossibility of rendering the self in portrait form – all that can be achieved is an aftermath of a moment, a trace of something fluid and liminal. Titles such as *Palimpsest* and *Perimeter* likewise underscore this sense of liminality and contingency.

In the last room, at the end of the Butler Gallery's colonnade of spaces, the exhibition concludes

with *In memoriam*, playing looped on a small television screen placed in a modest position on the floor. A face gradually emerges from opaque, lapping water, merging in and out of visibility with the ripples of the water: but although appearing to be submerged, the face is in fact projected onto the water's surface. The chimerical visage is both present and absent; it is a vision that hints at hidden depths – but only on the surface. These depths take on added complexity when one knows that the projected face is the artist's portrait, and the water onto which it is projected was the site of a drowning. Thus *In memorium* becomes a translucent, ephemeral memorial – to a lost life, to a past time, to a contingent self – rendered infinite by the ever-looping video.

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



Sonic

youth

The title of Green On Red Gallery's exhibition ***Sonic youth*** plays with the visitor's expectations and anticipations in relation to a performance by the famous rock band at this Dublin gallery. The invitation card contributes to this: it shows the image of the group's well-known album *Goo*. On the way to the event, the steep stairs and narrow entrance of the gallery leave visitors in the dark for a final moment. Turning the corner at the end of the corridor, however, visitors suddenly finds themselves in a white exhibition space surrounded by eight television screens: *Sonic youth* is a group exhibition and shows work by seven young video artists who have a love for music and sound in common.

Curator Mary Cremin's play with the visitor's expectations gives a first indication of what this exhibition is all about. *Sonic youth* addresses a crossover between popular culture and video art and deals with the appropriation of icons and the sampling of other worlds into visual art in order to form an identity of one's own. All artists on display use music to give an impression of a person, either themselves or someone else. At the forefront are themes such as one's expectations of the future and the exploration of and confrontation with one's physical and cultural limitations.

The most engaging work in the exhibition is Kate Murphy's *Britney love*. *Britney love* highlights the life of the English girl Brittaney; the exhibition shows the first two parts of this triptych in the making. In the first video (2000) we see the chubby eleven-year-old Brittaney giving seductive performances in her parent's living room, dressed in shiny dance costumes. Extremely self-confident, the young girl talks about her future and the difficulties of deciding what to do when you are good at everything. The one thing she is sure of is that she wants to be a singer and she demonstrates her skills by singing *Crazy*, one of the hit singles by her great idol Britney Spears. The second video is shot seven years later, when the girl is eighteen. Here we see a young woman in an elegant black dress, seemingly practicing for an audition for a girl band. The differences between the two videos are striking: sweating and fidgeting, Brittaney has lost most of her self-confidence and her hesitation and choice of words seem to indicate she already assumes that she will fail.

A more physical struggle is presented in William Hunt's *Even as you see me now*. This video documents and investigates his attempts to test his own limits. The video shows Hunt in a room with a piano; his performance

exists in moving the piano around until he lies on the floor with the piano on top of him, having his hands free to play the instrument. The screen is displayed vertically to give the impression of a letterbox through which the viewer peeks into Hunt's life. Interesting in this respect is that at the start of Hunt's performance the piano is only visible for the viewer when s/he turns his/her head. The moment Hunt covers himself under the weight of the instrument, the object is turned so that it looks horizontal again – how it is 'supposed' to be: the easier it becomes to see and understand the video, the bigger the struggle for the artist, who – despite the weight – is still well able to sing about how "nothing can hold him back."

Yvonne Buchheim's video *Herder's legacy* presents amateur singers from different countries. Inspired by the song collection of the eighteenth-century philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, Buchheim's work investigates the visibility of cultural identity within songs. People of various ages and cultural backgrounds sing a song they are familiar with. Buchheim shows the struggle that the singers have with themselves and with the song: a 70-year-old woman wanting to sing an Elvis Presley song cannot remember anything but "you ain't nothing but a hound dog"; a younger woman sings *Over the rainbow* while being constantly aware of the presence of the camera. Because the screen is divided into four parts that are not in sync, the singer sings in canon with himself; continuity is presented by cutting the next singer in the screen, giving the impression of an audience.

Although all screens in the show display singing figures, the use of headphones prevents the presence of sound. The strange atmosphere that is created by the absence of sound is intensified by Cremin's decision to place all works at the same height and at about the same

distance from each other. Apart from the videos mentioned above, Johanna Billing's *Magical world, The white and black minstrel show* by David Blandy, Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard's film project *File under Sacred Music*, and Ben Kinsley's *GESICHTSMUSIK* surround the visitor. Standing at the centre of the exhibition space, the moving images all face our direction. Our position becomes ambiguous: we are both audience and centre of attention at the same time.

Sonic youth is an intriguing exhibition that raises questions about life and identity. The video works in the exhibition demonstrate different approaches to these questions. Through the combined play of the artists' different approaches on the one hand, and the visitor's double function on the other, the video works do not only show us other people's reality; they offer us the opportunity to reflect upon our own reality, too.

Karlijn De Jongh is an independent curator based in Dublin.

[this and previous spread]
Kate Murphy
Britney love
2000 – 2007
video stills
courtesy Green on Red Gallery



Once

removed



With *Once removed*, artist and curator Sean Lynch has brought together a group of artists who use a variety of documentary processes in their work. The work on show documents the research and examination of environmental issues as well as, in the case of John Smith's film *The Girl chewing gum* (1977), the documentary form itself.

The effects of environmental pollution on the local wildlife and the inhabitants of the Shannon River estuary are the concerns of Michele Horrigan's video and photographic installation *Nature obscured by factory/ factory obscured by fog* (2007). A large projected video shows Aughinish Alumina, the largest alumina refinery in Europe, located on a 1,000-acre site in Askeaton, Co Limerick, with smoke billowing out, covering the area in a cloudy fog. Through this haze, wildlife can be seen trying to survive in this environment. On a TV monitor, various reports and statements are displayed showing the concerns of the local people about the impact the plant has on the environment and also calling into question the role of both local and national government environmental agencies.

Morning, noon, night (2008) by Holly O'Brien is a series of photographs capturing instances of social interactions within the built environment. Each photograph shows the same specific place over a period of time and how people behave in that space at different times. In the daytime photographs, the public seem to be diligently going about their business and to inhabit a world of their own, while at night a group of drunken revellers are shown engaging with themselves and those around them. The photographs become an investigation of how rules of society – 'the right time, the right place' – influence and codify our behaviour.

The concept of time and place can also be seen in Carl Doran's piece, a slide projection entitled *About 4 months* (2008). A series of drawings are projected depicting an overlooked landscape of trees and bushes outside his studio building. Each drawing is dated and shown in chronological order, documenting the changes that take place over a period of time.

Included in the show and available for free to visitors is an article by Jim Cowman published in *Horticulture & landscape Ireland* in which he writes about the agendas involved in the planning and management of the often-overlooked areas of public landscaping. Cowman, who has extensive expertise in horticulture and has worked in education and the local-authority area, addresses the conflicts that emerge when discussing the issue of green amenities. He argues that decision-making is not in the hands of the experts but with elected laypersons who have little or no expertise in horticulture.

Sculpture, photographs and video documentation form John Beattie's installation *(Ex)change series* (2008). Two videos show a large drawing device completing a drawing on a table in an empty room, one close up, the other from a distance. With no human presence in the frame one is to assume that either the device is actually drawing by itself what seems like random buildings or the layout of the room, or that it is remotely controlled. Only at the end of the video do we get of a view of a shadowy figure at some undisclosed place working the sculptural drawing device.

Disclosure, and how it is revealed in the documentary form, is what comes to mind when watching John Smith's film *The Girl chewing gum* (1977). The film consists of two shots, one showing a busy street in London the other a country landscape covered by pylons which, during the course

of the film, the narrator claims is "fifteen miles" away from the street scene. The soundtrack consists of ambient sound and a voiceover that seems at first hearing to be directing the elements of the scene we are watching. There is a documentary feel to the film, the combination of sound and vision with the voiceover describing what is happening on screen. But on closer inspection connection between sound and image begins to jar. As the narration becomes more and more absurd, a flock of birds is directed to fly across the screen, a clock is told to move its hands, and we begin to question the 'truth' of what we are watching. By calling into question the relationship between image and sound, Smith makes us aware of how we can be guided by such devices in our reading of images.

The film is thought provoking and entertaining. Like the whole show itself, it is well worth repeat viewing.

Kevin Ryan is an artist living and working in County Wexford.

[opposite]
Michele Horrigan
Factory obscured by fog
lambda print
120 x 90 cm
courtesy the artist

Majella Clancy

Boundaries,
spaces
and subject
positions

98



The digital photographs for the eight small images in this show were taken in Sri Lanka, during May 2007. Clancy visited the temples in Batticaloa, in the East of Sri Lanka, in 2004 and 2006.¹

When I returned in 2007 I revisited a temple in Kandy called Perapeniya Buddhist Temple, I was particularly intrigued by a small area in this temple where people make offerings through tying pieces of cloth to a railing. It was a visual feast of colour, form and space. What intrigued me also about this area was that it was constantly changing ... The work in the exhibition originated from this area of the temple.²

Rarely have I seen abstraction rooted in the changeable yet strong identity of age-old rituals being transferred with such a light touch from a far-away culture to the Western idiom. No nostalgia, no astonished naïveté, just that lightness of being, that feast she notes in the above quote, an intoxication by colour and space, the principle of indeterminacy operating silently under the experience. The final image is a seamless co-existence of a photograph and a painting. A careful handling of the materials, as if not to disturb their authentic energies, governs both parts of the creative process. The first part consists of taking the photograph, manipulating it, overlaying it with bits of the original take, and printing. The second part is painting over the print:

How I paint on it depends on what is already there and how I want the image to read. Sometimes the photograph is laid flat on the ground and the paint is poured on, this way I can predict that the paint will dry in a flat semi opaque way ... and free of the brush marks ... to avoid oil marks residue on

the paper it has to be poured off away very quickly ... it is unforgiving surface ... I cannot go back over the areas once they are painted.³

I read that Juan Miró poured blue paint over the horizontally positioned canvas to inspire a new composition.⁴ In his art practice the change and chance were under the sole supervision of the 'inner model'. Clancy works in the opposite direction: first, the 'outer model', the one the lens can 'see' and record is being temporarily 'fixed' and then 'responded' to by her imaginative powers governed by the poetics of colour and space. Thus the ground is lens-based, the layers are placed not just by chance, but by empathy with the final image, which is not known until it is made. This is a risky strategy, for which the neurology brings some support: our brains have 'mirror neuron systems' that fire both when we do something or watch it being done. Clancy's images start with lens-based mimesis, a record of watching the changeable object. Later on she changes that record by 'doing', acting upon its surface.

*Fiction versus reality*⁵ presents shimmering colours, not unlike Aurora Borealis, in a soft voluminous form closed off from our world by a fragment of blue elliptic brushmark. The composition has no centre; instead, a small red triangular shape incises a diagonal into the major form. Kandinsky comes to mind, and evokes a realization that Clancy's print/ paintings are a reflection not just on the relationship between photography and painting, but also on the history of painting. The colours range from Rothko to disco. The sensuality of hues, tonality and textures have their forebears in late Gothic and Baroque. It all appears as luxurious materials in *The Play is serious*. The simultaneity of black with orange and pink with pale blue in *Points of departure* is utterly

modern and contemporary in its denial of drama.

Amongst the prominent ID signs of Clancy's art is the role of light. It has a specific job to produce the illusion of vast depth, or is it just inches deep? Contemplating facts as fallible, *Convergence* presents a large red-and-green asteroid/ jelly/ iceberg form pierced through with a dark-blue determined line coming from nowhere on the right. Profound and vacuous, active and immobile, palpable and transient, these works of art not only insist on the impossibility of fixing anything permanently, they celebrate it! Clancy keeps inventing the rules for directional thought and chance to construct a space, which does not exist outside each image:

Pleae add:

"The poet must enter an impersonal state, in which the familiar division between subject and object dissolves and feelings are at liberty to enter into a new combination"⁶

1 e-mail Clancy to Sverakova, 27 June 2008

2 ibid

3 e-mail Clancy to Sverakova, 24 June 2008

4 *The Birth of the world, 1925*, MoMA, New York

5 All works are 2008, unless otherwise stated.

6 T S Eliot, *The Sacred wood*

Slavka Sverakova is a writer on art.

[opposite left]
Majella Clancy
Fiction versus reality, 2008
oil on inkjet print on diabond
51 cm x 61 cm
courtesy the artist

[opposite right]
Majella Clancy
Convergence, 2008
oil on inkjet print on diabond
25 cm x 18 cm
courtesy the artist

Danny McCarthy Listening with the sound turned off

100



In the mid 1980s, Danny McCarthy organised a series of performance events at the Triskel Arts Centre, featuring scores from key Fluxus artists such as George Macunius, Dick Higgins, George Brecht, and others. Twenty years or so later, in the presence of McCarthy's solo exhibition *Listening with the sound turned off*, these same names continue to hover in the air.

Indeed, many of the key tenets of Fluxus find equivalence in McCarthy's own work: the play of chance, the pronouncement of everyday materials and processes, the renegotiation of the art object, and the emphasis on performance, event, and sound-based works.

Central to McCarthy's practice is sound, but rarely does it end just there. Over the years, McCarthy has produced an impressive backlist of sound works in the way of recordings, live performances and audio installations. McCarthy's works also include drawings, paintings, collage, sculptural works, plus installation works that are more visually orientated – much of which use sound as a visual-compositional device or reference. *Listening with the sound turned off* is an exhibition that seems a little imbalanced if we consider the full spectrum of McCarthy's work to date, however. Besides two audio installations, the exhibition focuses on recent drawings, paintings, and collage works.

Soundscapes are a series of works on both paper and canvas, produced using the vibrations of a speaker cone that has been dipped in coloured pigment. In these works, the visual form is determined by the sound that is fed through the speaker. As the speaker vibrates, lines are drawn, marks occur, and colours are shifted.

Curiously enough, a dehumidifier is also on-site in the production of these works. Using water that is

collected from the dehumidifier's air filtration process, it is then applied to the surface of the work, affecting the fluidity and imprint of the paint. The final work is therefore a trace, not only of sound, but also of other environmental elements that are concurrent. Like in much of McCarthy's work, technology features as way of transferring across material and visual thresholds – the use of the speaker cone and dehumidifier being prime examples.

The specific technologies of sound reproduction are also featured in a series of works that fall under the investigative rubric of *The Rematerialisation of sound as an art object* – a sure reference to Lucy Lippard's seminal book, *Six years: the dematerialisation of the art object 1966 to 1972*. While Lippard's focus was on the bypass of the material object in works of Conceptual Art during this period, McCarthy points in another direction. 'The rematerialisation of sound' in this case includes drawings made with magnetic audio tape, vinyl records painted gold, and arrangements of foil from shattered CDs.

Despite their playfulness, these works are heavy-handed in their presentation. Too many of them in too small a space, each in thick wooden frames, with the artist's bold signature a little oversized and overbearing in its propensity. A disappointment also to see the price of the work so confidently displayed (rematerialised?) on each wall label. On these matters of presentation, more de- than re-materialisation would be welcome here.

Aside from the wall works are two audio installations, *Hello/ hello*, and *No more/ no more*. Installed discreetly on the staircase that separates the gallery floors, *Hello/ hello* consists of several speaker placements that resound a variety of 'hello's at slow, lingering intervals. Produced with residents of O'Connell

Court care home who participated their voices for the project, each hello takes on its own character. Some are assertive, while others are questioning; some are spoken as though addressing another person, others as though speaking into the dark. The effectiveness of *Hello/ hello* is in diversifying a commonly spoken word, which not only reveals something about each speaker's disposition, but also emphasises the inconstant and tentative act of speaking to no-one in particular.

The second of the installation works is *No more/ no more*, consisting of four hanging silver buckets, each embedded with a large white speaker cone at the base. The sound of milk dripping into a bucket completes the audio-visual circuitry of this work; perhaps a reference to George Brecht's *Drip music* (1959), a musical score with the simple proposition of water being dripped into an empty vessel. Using milk rather than water, McCarthy's work also references the old business of hand-milking animals, the sounds of which are now lost to automatic processes.

In many ways, *Listening with the sound turned off* is a homecoming exhibition for an artist that has been engaged and committed to the local scene, while also seeking his opportunities elsewhere. His first exhibition in Cork for over ten years felt a little ungenerous, restrained, and suspiciously wall-based. Absolutely, positively, without a doubt: there is more to Danny McCarthy than this.

Matt Packer is Curator of Exhibitions and Projects, Lewis Glucksman Gallery, Cork

Danny McCarthy
Listening with the sound turned off
2008
installation shot with *No more/ no more* (sound installation) in foreground
courtesy the artist

Jack B. Yeats

Old and new
departures

The book is a result of a symposium held by the Irish Art Research Centre (TRIARC) in Trinity College, Dublin, to accompany the exhibition, *Jack B. Yeats: amongst friends*, which took place at the Douglas Hyde Gallery in 2004. The exhibition was held in honour of Victor Waddington (Yeats' dealer since 1943) and presented by his son Theo in association with Bruce Arnold, Yvonne Scott and the University.

This publication takes a significantly different approach from somewhat more celebratory accounts of Yeats' work to date. A much more critically considered reassessment of Yeats is late in emerging, and the discourse compiled here goes some way towards redressing the balance. The volume comprises a number of short essays, based on papers delivered at the 2004 symposium. It embraces various aspects of Yeats' work ranging from subject matter, technique, patronage and the positioning of Yeats within the international arena.

Debate over the nature and extent of Yeats' nationalism are issues which concern many of the authors here. Róisín Kennedy's article considers a selection of discourse to date and comes to the conclusion that certain attempts to "depoliticize" Yeats' work could be interpreted as a desire to reclaim the artist from his national identity. Whilst Kennedy perceives such 'depoliticization' as vital to a more unbiased understanding of Yeats' aspirations, she also warns that issues concerning Irish nationalism cannot be totally removed from the equation. The way Yeats' work may be related to issues concerning national identity is examined by Tricia Cusack. In particular, Cusack explores Yeats' portrayal of the western landscape as a critique of modernity, signifying a desire to return to a more primitive, less materialistic pre-modern era. This search for the primitive was, of course, central to the work of many European

modernists, and together with the representation of travellers and peasantry in Western art, demonstrates how Yeats' work borrows from a wider international discourse.

Yvonne Scott, editor of this publication and Director of TRIARC, also adopts a more universal approach in her consideration of Yeats' work in relation to the concept of 'chaos' theory. Building upon Immanuel Kant's theory of 'the beautiful' and 'the sublime' (explored in *Critique of judgment*, 1790), Scott attempts to examine whether the 'deliberately chaotic' nature of many of Yeats' later works could be regarded as representing a challenge towards Academic values, generally associated with calmness and order. Yeats presents something of a dichotomy here, in that he continued to exhibit with the Academy throughout his lifetime, despite employing relatively nonacademic techniques.

Significant questions concerning Yeats' technique and method of working are raised in an article by Bruce Arnold. To date, little is known about Yeats' method of mixing pigment, priming the canvas, method of composition and application of paint, an area which is clearly in need of immediate scholarly attention if potential restoration problems are to be addressed in years to come. Yeats' relationship with the Cuala Press, and his approach to printmaking, is explored by Angela Griffith, who attempts to evaluate Yeats' direct involvement with Cuala, despite his deep reservations about the possible detrimental effects such reproductions would have on his career as an artist. Whether such prints had a negative impact upon his reputation is difficult to assess. Arguably, as with Albrecht Dürer's prints in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the Cuala prints served to bring Yeats' art to the attention of the wider public. The final essay in this publication is by Riann Coulter, who examines the vital role played

by Victor Waddington in nurturing the early careers of many young artists amidst a climate of relative sterility and conservatism towards the arts in general and modern art in particular.

This book is a scholarly production and serves to enlarge Yeatsian scholarship by taking account of the historical, cultural and political issues facing artists working in the early to mid-twentieth century. It will be of immediate appeal to readers within the disciplines of art history and visual studies, but will also be of interest to those within the wider field of cultural studies, given its interdisciplinary approach. Yeats' work lends itself to interrogative questioning, which is still of relevance today. The questioning here revolves around issues concerning artist's identity, hybridity, ethnicity, and neo-colonialism. The essays compiled here make a substantial contribution to Irish art research and will undoubtedly serve as precedents for further study. They also serve to highlight that within the discipline of Irish art history, there is still a long way to go.

Yvonne Scott (ed), *Jack B. Yeats: old and new departures*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008; €55.00; ISBN 978-1-84682-021-2

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First

shot



[opposite]
Ciaran Dolan
Untitled
lambda colour print
courtesy Paul Kane Gallery

First shot provided visitors to Dublin's Paul Kane Gallery with a first and lasting impression of four emergent visual artists – Ciarán Dolan, Diarmait Grogan, Philip Murray, and Jamie Saunders – in their first big break following degree shows at IADT and DIT. Under the curatorial guidance of photographer Jackie Nickerson, whose outstanding ethnographic projects have summoned critical attention at international and local levels – most recently, she was the winner of the 2008 AIB Prize – the exhibition gave a fascinating cross-section of contemporary art-led photographic practices.

Notwithstanding that creative and technical sophistication common to all of the artworks made a level playing field out of the gallery space, thematic dissonances between the symmetrical beauty of Saunderson's carparks, Murray's fantastical forests, Grogan's everyday images, and Dolan's theatricalised mises-en-scène made for a vertiginous viewing experience. Productively, these variances brought the exhibition's range of photographic languages into focus, and testified to the photographers' fluency in their respective idioms. While the collection's indelible images are certainly beholden to the expert eye of the photographer-beholder, it is nevertheless worth mentioning that three out of four artists exploit the technological possibilities of digital cameras, photography software and printing to realise their artistic visions.

The presence of Grogan's gelatin silver prints here would have satisfied photography purists, while his camera's playful interaction with domestic and social spaces ensured that his photographs appealed simultaneously to a larger audience. Without sacrificing quality for quantity, the relatively smaller dimensions of his prints allowed his series a numerical advantage to those of his co-exhibitors. Generously dotted across one of the gallery walls, Grogan's series of photographs invited viewers to let their attention skip giddily back and forth between disparate yet accessible images taken from scenes of the everyday. Although at first glance the photographs' sequencing might appear disjointed, their layout owed a lot more to design than accident. Grogan's motley assortment of images conveyed the extent to which both urban and suburban life is saturated with diverse and oftentimes jarring visual information. For example, a cutesy picture of a poodle peering glumly out from behind the glass of a shop door-front bore no sequential relationship to the dizzying perspective of a clouded sky, a deserted street scene by night, or a man and woman clinched in an embrace. Although these intimate, solitary and public scenes appeared in random order, their dispersed distribution recalled the constancy of movement between "private and familiar worlds" – a theme which Grogan himself alludes to in his artistic statement accompanying the exhibition.

Murray's digitally enhanced forests might have been torn straight from the pages of an illustrated children's storybook. In this series of digital photographs, the indexical relationship between the image and its referent disappears into the gilded boughs and babbling brooks of Murray's enchanting world of make-believe and fairytale. In a similar vein, the photographs' titles – *The forest watcher's hut*, *Lake of the forgotten*, *Path through Whisp's Wood*, and

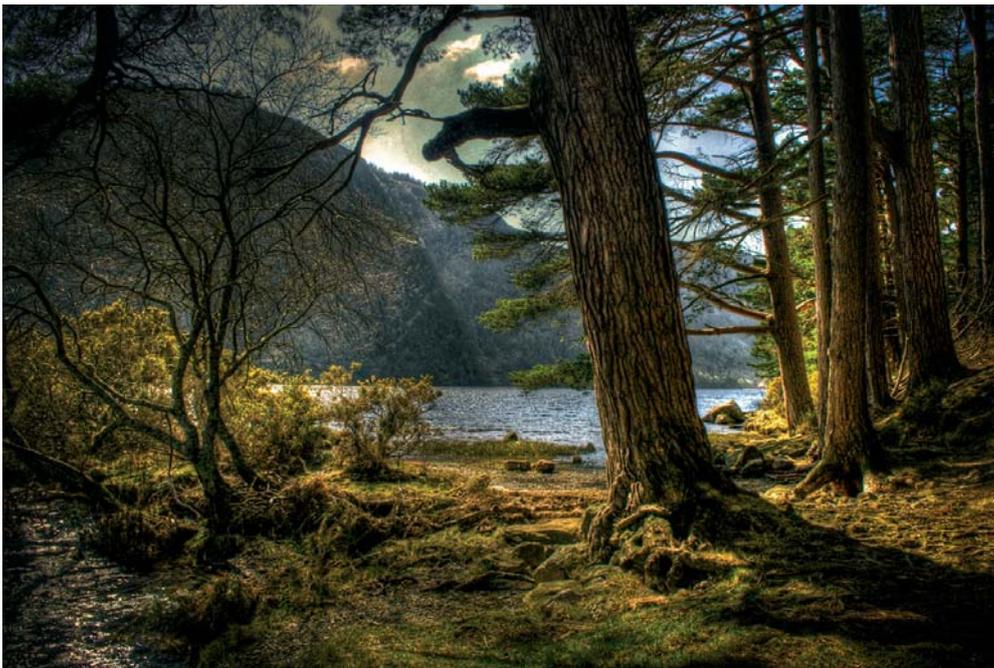
Last tree of the Elders, asks the viewer to loose their adult selves to the storybook charm of myth and folklore. Even if Murray's fantastical forestscapes speak to one's inner child, there is nothing childish about the painterly textures and colours of all four digital images that delight the eye as much as the imagination. Bathed in sunshine, the images appeared on the one hand to be indebted to the light-reflective properties of photography, while on the other, their palette of glorious greens and golds seemed less faithful to a photographed reality than to painted days of halcyon yore. In these instances, the photographic image served as a point of departure for the artist's flights of fancy, allowing him to digitally dabble in colour and light.

Saunders' series of photographs, titled *Conditioned space*, was singled out for being "the most sophisticated treatment of designed spaces" in an *Irish Times* review of this year's Dublin art-college degree shows. Across the five fine-art giclée prints selected from the project for exhibit in *First shot*, Saunders displayed a precocious mastery of the medium of digital photography. All but one of these images made the familiar space of the car park unfamiliar by zoning in not on the nearest available parking space but on the architectural designs of ramps, multi-story parking facilities and office parking. By showing form before function, these photographs enabled viewers to look at what is more often overlooked, and become reacquainted with intensely familiar urban environments. As thoughtful contemplations of spaces ordinarily seen and experienced in practical as opposed to aesthetic terms, the photographs evoke the powerful irony of the extraordinary nature of the ordinary.

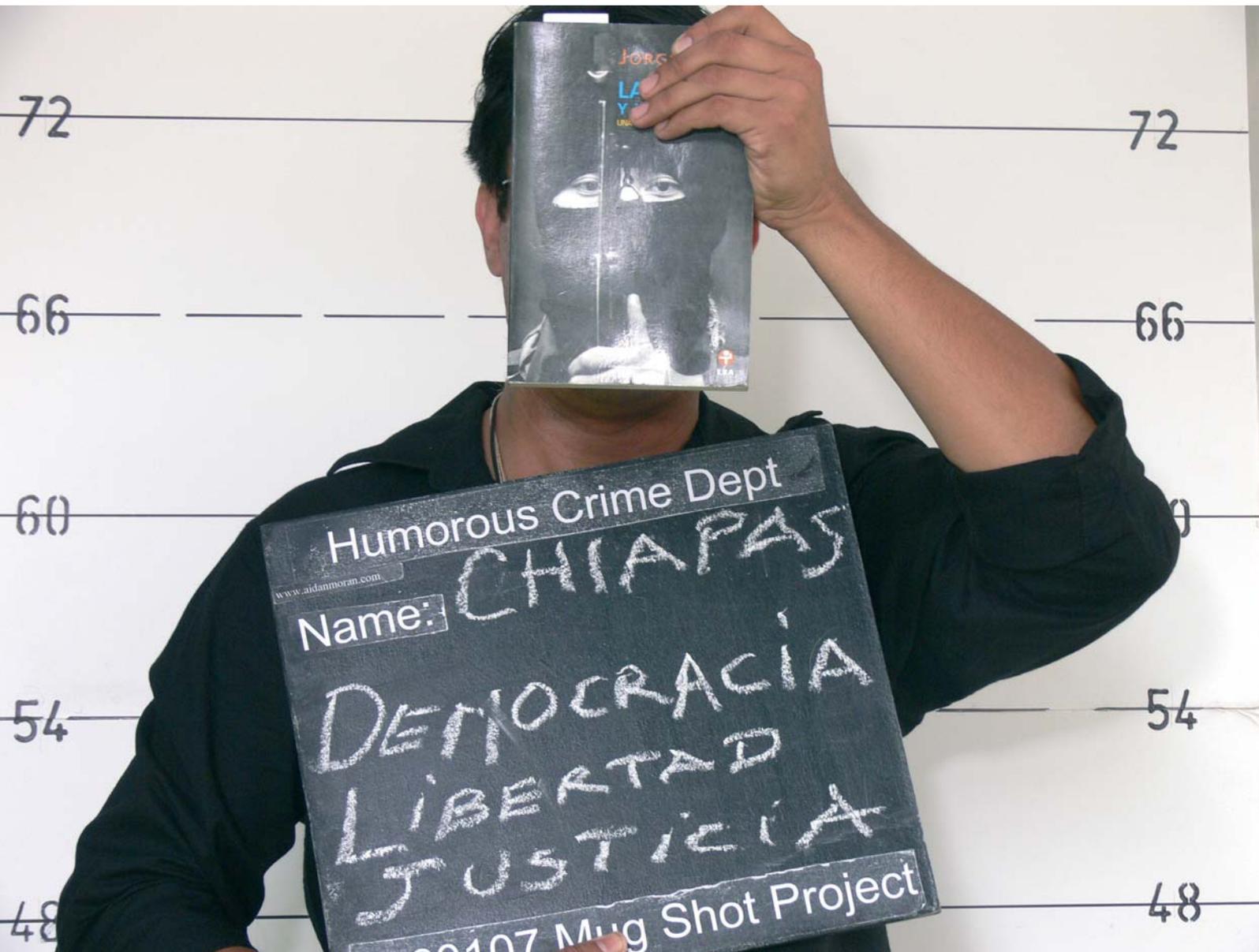
Each of Dolan's four large-scale constructed images shows a subject, or character more precisely, in a moment of the photographer's making. In one peculiarly contrived set-up after another, an actor strikes a highly self-conscious pose at odds with their surroundings. In one of the works, for instance, set in wasteland surrounding the underpass of a motorway, a girl stands over a grocery bag spilling potatoes and an old-fashioned milk bottle – its contents tellingly seeping into the earth beneath. Aside from the geographic bearings gleaned from a large road sign displaying directions to Tallaght, Blessington, and the City Centre, the image leaves the viewer bewildered and adrift. The remaining scenes – in one, a conservatively dressed middle-aged man holding a breakfast mug and newspaper wades through knee-deep grass in a wooded area – are similarly inexplicable. The cumulative effect of Dolan's images suggests that by suspending moments in time, photography conceals as much as it reveals, and that its communicative strengths derive less from any inherent qualities of the image than from the manner in which it is

mobilised in the service of a story – which in these cases eludes the viewer. Each in their own unique way, the photographer-artists represented here have made auspicious first steps toward promising professional careers. Judging from the quality of this collection, buyers may snap up the photographers' artworks as fast they snap their cameras.

Aileen Blaney is a research fellow in the Film Studies department at Chung Ang University, Seoul.



Philip Murray
Lake of the forgotten
digital print
courtesy Paul Kane Gallery



Humorous Crime Dept
www.aidanmoran.com
Name: CHIAPAS
DEMOCRACIA
LIBERTAD
JUSTICIA
100107 Mug Shot Project



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Humorous Crime Dept
www.aidanmoran.com
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Humorous Crime Dept

www.aidanmoran.com

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The Mugshot Project, which is ongoing, has been created by Irish photographer Aidan Moran, now based in Connecticut. More information at www.aidanmoran.com

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Irish Museum of Modern Art



William McKeown, *Hope painting - The Light Inside*, 2006, Oil on linen, 43 x 40.5 cm, Kerlin Gallery, Dublin

William McKeown

5 November 2008 – 11 January 2009

