

# paper

visual art journal | 11.11

paper visual art journal

email: papervisualart@gmail.com  
www.papervisualart.com

Dublin Edition 11.11, issue 1.

*Editor* Niamh Dunphy  
*Co-Editor* Adrian Duncan  
*Assistant Editor* Barbara Knezevic  
*Website Assistant* Caroline Usher

Printed in Dublin by +Plus Print Ltd.

Design by Niamh Dunphy

Copyright © *Paper Visual Art Journal* and individual contributors, 2011. All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmissions, in whole or in part, may be made without written permission.

*Paper Visual Art Journal* is an online website that publishes art writing, essays and reviews. This is the second hardcopy edition of *Paper*.

*Paper Visual Art Journal* is a Dublin-based non-profit art journal that began in November 2009.

*Paper* wishes to thank all of our contributing writers over the last two years for their support and ongoing generosity. In particular we would like to thank all contributors to our first (and hopefully not last) Dublin edition. Thank you also to Greg Baxter, Miranda and Feargal at the Joinery, Ciarán Smith at Plus Print, Ciara Moloney, Kitty Rogers, Roisin Russell, Cullen Camic, Declan Keenan, the E-dog, and Gypsy.

Inside sleeve: Map of Dublin in 1821, William Duncan.

paper visual art journal

*contents*

***essays***

- 7 *A Proposal for Activation in Visual Art Writing*  
ADRIAN DUNCAN
- 15 *It’s Hard to Satirize a Guy with Shiny Boots*  
FRANCIS HALSALL

***insight***

- 12 Gallery Profile  
OONAGH YOUNG GALLERY

***reviews (west to east)***

- 25 *Nor for Nought*  
REBECCA O’DWYER  
Kevin Cosgrove and Brendan Earley at Mother’s Tankstation
- 28 *Last and First Men*  
DAVEY MOOR  
Fiona Marron’s solo exhibition at The Joinery
- 33 *Notes on the Missing Oh*  
SEÁN O’SULLIVAN  
Adrià Julià’s film work at Project Arts Centre
- 37 *this brief visual pattern*  
JOHN GAYER  
Ciarán Walsh’s solo exhibition at Pallas Projects

## *Note*

During a two-week residency at the Guesthouse in Cork last August, we created *Paper's* first hard-copy edition. We then decided to create a Dublin-based edition. These hardcopy editions are accompaniments to the website, which is an ongoing visual art journal that began in November 2009.

Initially, the emphasis for the journal was to open up a dialogue for artists between graduate and established art practice. Two years on, while retaining the need for this dialogue, we also recognise the importance of art-writing that emerges out of an active editorial interaction.

We hope to continue making these hardcopy editions in 2012, both in Dublin and elsewhere.

I would like to thank all of the contributors to this edition for their time and efforts that they gave generously. I would also like to acknowledge the continual support of writers who we have published over this two-year period.

Niamh Dunphy

A Proposal for Activation in Visual Art Writing  
ADRIAN DUNCAN

In this year’s March edition of *Texte zur Kunst* they printed the contributions from their “Where do you stand, colleague?” seminar of December 2010. It was an international symposium set up to address “the fundamental question of the relationship between art criticism and social critique”.<sup>1</sup> The symposium celebrated twenty years of *TZK*, and there were contributions from such heavyweights as Luc Boltanski, Diedrich Diedrichson, Isabelle Graw (editor of *TZK*), etc. Some of the ideas presented in this issue were difficult but made accessible by the writing, some ideas were potentially more accessible but made difficult to access by the writing. It is the latter that is a problem, and further, within art-writing discourse, poor writing which relays potentially simple ideas as difficult is being presented as being on an equal footing to clear writing about difficult or complex ideas. Benjamin Buchloch’s contribution, for instance, elucidates the difficult in language that was mostly cogent and clear. Yet alongside Buchloch’s piece is one that is virtually incomprehensible. The artist Andrea Fraser writes:

Increasingly, I see art discourse, like art itself, as dominated by a set of strategies that are inseparably social, psychological and artistic or intellectual and that the aim to maintain a steady distance between art’s symbolic systems and it’s [sic] material conditions, be these economic in the political or psychological sense, located in a social or corporal body; that serves to isolate the manifest interests of art from the immediate, intimate and consequent interests that motivate participation in the field, organize investments of energy and resources, and that are linked to specific benefits and satisfactions, as well as to the constant specter of loss, privation, frustration, guilt, shame, and their attendant anxiety.<sup>2</sup>

It might seem unfair to extract this sentence out of the context of the printed contribution, and it is necessary to say that this was originally a prepared speech for a ‘public’ seminar. These issues aside, the fault lies with *TZK* publishing sentences in this form. Someone on the editorial team of *TZK* should have asked, or should have been given the time to ask: *what does this sentence mean?* None of the meanings in this warren-like sentence can contribute in any meaningful way to what Fraser’s argument might be, and in turn elucidate what she might stand for.

If we look at the first sentence segment: *Increasingly, I see art discourse, like art itself, as dominated by a set of strategies that are inseparably social, psychological and artistic or intellectual...* From this we are being told that art discourse and art itself are separate, but similar in that they are dominated by a set of strategies that are social, psychological, and artistic *or* intellectual. In what way are they dominated? And how are these disparate strategic practices inseparable? Are they inseparable in their dominance of art and art discourse or inseparable outside of this situation of dominance, or both? Does social mean here, external to art discourse, or inclusive of? At what level are we talking about psychological? Social psychology or personal? Does the grouping of the artistic strategies and intellectual strategies at the end of this sentence segment – by using the conjunc

1        *Texte Zur Kunst*, March 2011, p 122.

2        *Texte Zur Kunst*, March 2011, p 155.

tion “or” – suggest that the artistic and intellectual are somehow inherent in each other? Is this inherence all pervading and if not, to what degree? Also what are intellectual strategies? What kind of intellectual strategies is Fraser relating to? Etc. At the end of this sentence segment, I am in no position to enter the next segment, never mind apprehending the sentence as a whole.

The microcosm of this sentence gives a sense of the macrocosm of the argument, or position that Fraser doesn’t deliver. But it doesn’t matter.<sup>3</sup> These are just another collection of words which in this art-writing context are allowed to operate outside of any use other than to be things that appear on a printed page, and bound with other pages with words on them too, and this bound object says: *look at and feel the amount of text that has gone into this event and thus the rigour with which it has been covered, and by extension how important it is .....*

The problem with *TZK* publishing writing like this is that some people *will* read it - people in the business of art theory, the visual arts in general, and most damagingly, students. *TZK* is viewed as being at or near the peak of European art critique and art writing in general, so, if a student from an undergraduate or postgraduate visual art degree reads something like this, the fact that it is impenetrable somehow gives it merit. Such merit that the style, obfuscation, and jargon that is used, is mimicked, and this mimesis in art-writing goes unchecked until it becomes normalised. In Ireland (and the UK) when studying for a visual arts undergraduate degree, the amount of original writing created by a student (i.e. formal assignments) is small, perhaps twenty-five thousand to thirty thousand words over four years. Contact from the lecturers with the students in relation to their writing specifically is also very small, (there are any number of reasons for this, some of which we hope to cover in *Paper* - Dublin Edition 2) as such the students are left to their own devices as to how they are educated in art-writing, and by extension how they begin to write about art. Places like *Sternberg Press*, *Texte Zur Kunst*, *October*, *Afterall*, etc., become the educators - and these are the good ones. For the most part, in publications like these the writing is informative, if a little flabby, often pretentious, sometimes entertaining, but almost never activating. The writing is too dulled with jargon, too overdesigned, too couched, and too insulated for the meanings of the words, potentially dangerous words, to reach their edge, the edge from where the potentially activated reader could take them, onward into the readers’ practices and into the world.

This idea of activation is what I want to unpack in relation to art-writing in Ireland. There appears to have been, in the last number of years (since 2008 at least), a call for the visual arts to engage more critically with itself and with the political situation in post-boom Ireland. I will focus on the former and by extension, with the analysis and method I propose, the latter will be broached.

In terms of having an effect, all that is important in writing critically about the visual arts in Ireland today is whether that person is influential or not. Reviews by the broadsheet press are generally dismissed as crude overviews, written for the non-specialised but interested masses. However, for the professional artist, art writer or art educator this form of reviewing is insufficiently specialised and by crude extension insufficiently critical. Insufficiently specialised often means that there is not enough reference being made to current critical and art theory practices/fashionable philosophical ideas, current and past. These places of reference produce jargon which at times is utterly necessary for talking about a specific subject, but more often is mis-used, mis-interpreted, or used not for the clear futherance of an argument, but for the appearance of furtherance of an argument. It is this verisimiltude of argument that is a problem in ‘specialised’ contemporary art writing in Ireland. Although this is a reductive way of apprehending the subject, there is some use in pointing out that

3 This in itself is not a new problem. Anyone who has read George Orwell’s essay “Politics and the English Language” will see similar concerns being aired, it having been written almost seventy years ago.

within this verisimiltude there lies at least three major faults:

1. Cliché
2. Flab (mis/over-used jargon or normalised jargon and thus further cliché)
3. Legitimation of argument and ideas using theory/philosophy

In relation to point three, argument is based on persuasion, not legitimation based upon the arguments of others, no matter how high profile or how well received or embedded in discourse the philosophical theory being referenced may be. This meek practice has at least two other negative effects, both public: it alienates the reader, and, it creates a specious currency within the economy of reputation - an economy that is one of the cornerstones of the current visual art market. The result of which is that *appearance* is mistaken for and lauded as the fulfillment of an argument that has only been vaguely gestured at. Of course critical theory and philosophical thought has an important place in art-writing, but the ideas from these fields should be allowed to settle and infuse in the mind of the writer, a writer who has read, understood, and judged the relevance of the ideas at stake.

Point two is an extension from the core of one. Both stem from uncritical reading of writing. Critical reading is done by an activated reader, not a reader seeking only to be entertained. A reader is activated when the words on the page are being brought to the edge of their meaning and the reader must then imagine these words forth into their own selves. Cliché and jargon are the great insulators from this interaction. They are abound in current art-writing and masquerade as “voice”. As such art writing that is viewed as being critical is merely comprised of giant husks of cliché and jargon noisely barked, cautiously nudged, or urbanely sneered toward the thing, or person being critiqued/humiliated. This form of criticism is a monochromatic misuse of the potential of writing. It fills pages, and creates brief and hollow sensation.

Real critical response happens long before the writing is published. I believe it happens within the interaction between the writer and another, let’s say this other is an editor. The editor can suggest changes, make elisions, remove cliché, lessen jargon, and question the motives and modes of a piece of writing in a way that the writer never could.<sup>4</sup> If these suggestions are (hesitantly) accepted by the writer, a space is cleared within the text. This space is where the activated writer will extend into, to think through and mine the issue already evoked by their piece, thus making it richer, more concise, more complex, and more active. A relationship develops and writing that is activated can emerge for a reader who will in turn be activated, ready, aware, politicised.

\*

*The Dublin Review*, a literary journal, has published some of the best personal and journalistic essays in Ireland over the last ten years. It has been edited throughout this time by Brendan Barrington (also of Penguin Ireland). I will pick from it a recent essay written by Brian Dillon on the artist Gerard Byrne.<sup>5</sup> The essay, which was published in 2010, is titled “Future Anterior” and it charts Dillon’s interaction with Byrne’s work since about 2007 where he first viewed Byrne’s *A Country road. A Tree. Evening*. Dillon’s essay brings Byrne’s work and ideas from what could be argued as an art-writing setting, to a literary setting. The editorial interaction here happens between Barrington and Dillon. It is a very successful partnership, having previously produced *Tor-*

4 Greg Baxter, the essayist and novelist, has written on this issue in *Paper Visual Art* online and *Paper’s* hardcopy Cork Edition – “A Brief Note on the Editing Process.”

5 The reason I pick Dillon is because he is a writer that operates in both art-writing and literary settings.

*mented Hope: Nine Hypochondriac Lives* and *In the Dark Room*, both non-fiction, and published by Penguin Ireland. In this essay, from *The Dublin Review*, there were a number of sentences that stood out, here is one:

In part, these are the typical cultural coordinates and awakenings of anybody of Byrne's age in Ireland at the time, but what he seems to have taken from his early visual education – as also from Beckett and Brecht, from a belated acquaintance with Peter Lennon's documentary 'Rocky Road to Dublin' or from the alienation effect of overdubbed Sinn Féin voices on 1980s television – is a sense of involution of history and performance, the way facts become spectacle and the way history insinuates its way into our most fantastical dreams of what we might become.<sup>6</sup>

Again it may seem reductive and unfair to extract one sentence out of the context of the whole piece in question. But if we were to compare this relatively long sentence from *The Dublin Review* with the one from *Texte zur Kunst* above, we can make one major conclusion - that despite the lack of context, this sentence is at least apprehendable, and at most potentially activating.

The sentence has clear information, i.e. that there are, according to Dillon, a number of specific cultural instances that he sees as having an influence on Byrne's work. Dillon could have said that the influences on the young Byrne's visual education were: literary, theatrical, filmic, and socio-political. And this, though not wrong, is less rich, less specific, less suggestive and certainly less activating for the reader.

There are layers that are allowed to exist in this sentence, without the basic meaning of the sentence being abandoned. This basic understanding of the sentence offers a platform from where the reader can push off and extend into the extra layers that the words offer. By simply looking critically at the verbs in this sentence, we are offered a number of sympathetically alternative and additive layers of meaning, for example: ... *but what he seems to have taken from his early visual education* ... 'Taken from' suggests Byrne, even at a young age was aware and judicious, and that these formative influences still have an effect on his art making now, which also suggests that Dillon considers Byrne's work as having a groundedness and authenticity to it (whether these are important qualities to have is beside the point).

.... *the way facts become spectacle* .... 'Facts become' at once accosts and brings into focus the reader's understanding of 'facts' as being something solid and inarguable, not something in flux or 'becoming' from one thing to another. This verb also brings to the reader's mind the historical process of: happening, description, report, documentation, verification, storage, recollection, etc. 'Become' is an extremely rich verb in this context and furthermore it doesn't need an adverb or any other attendant word (cliché/jargon) to suffocate its effect, the effect of extension and activation on the reader.

.... *the way history insinuates its way* .... 'History insinuates' somehow makes 'history' human, fluid, unstable, or not to be trusted. This second verb in this sentence segment somehow adds col-

our to the fluidity evoked by Dillon's proposal that 'facts become'. Not only are we being given a description of what Dillon proposes as being influences on Byrne's work, but we are being given a bare and dangerous insight into what Dillon himself thinks of the disorganisation and perforation of the historical process. By extension we become aware with this verb that this process has an unsettling effect on him, and by extension a similarly unsettling effect on society in general.

..... *fantastical dreams of what we might become*. 'What we might become' has a dramatic effect which leaves the reader with an open-ended situation to imagine into, and, it is mimetic of Byrne's work. Using the verb 'become' twice in the sentence creates a sort of rhythm that is then brought to a halt. These words have meaning and effect, where one doesn't negate or take precedence over the other – put another way, these words let each other breathe. And there are countless other eddies of complexity that can be summoned from this sentence - complexity that stems from and is delicately placed upon simplicity and cogency - without undermining it.

This place of rigorous and creative editorial interaction that helps produce texts and sentences like Dillon's above, does not exist in any art-writing context in Ireland. But it is the site where meaningful critical art-writing and reading can emerge. This editorial process is unglamorous, and there is little or no recognition of this shared practice in the visual arts. It is slow. But it is an alternative that should be considered. If this process is taken seriously and given time to develop, reviews, essays, and articles on the visual arts will start to emerge that are not only accessible, informative, and complex, but also full of dangerous sentences that are allowed to ping and awaken.

---

<sup>6</sup> Dillon, Brian. "Future Anterior." *The Dublin Review*, issue 38. 2010, p 27. There is also, in this issue, an excellent journalistic essay on Ireland's 'looming water crisis,' by Colin Murphy. This can now be accessed on the DR website: [www.thedublinreview.com](http://www.thedublinreview.com).

*Insight*  
**OONAGH YOUNG GALLERY**  
**1 James Joyce Street, Liberty Corner, Dublin 1**

Oonagh Young Gallery is a space for art, artists, curators, writers and all those interested in the world of contemporary art. A diverse and interesting programme is developed through working with curators and artists who have a distinctive voice and vision for their practice - thus creating a space that aligns the intellect and the aesthetic in exhibitions that challenge and reward the viewer.

Founded in 2008, the gallery shows between four and six exhibitions a year, featuring both Irish and international artists. The gallery was originally established in order to fill a perceived gap and to provide a quintessential white cube as an alternative space for less established artists of outstanding quality. It has also become a place where essential elements such as curatorial expertise and practical support contribute towards the professional development of the artist.

Since I am very aware that it takes a number of years for a good gallery to gain a reputation, my own relationship with Oonagh Young Gallery has been evolving in an organic way. I have been ‘learning on the job’ and making progress, yet the important thing has always been the sense of excitement and honour I feel whenever I work with artists and curators. The joy is in the passion, but sometimes focusing this passion is a challenge.

The exhibition is as much about the viewer as it is about the artist. I am very conscious that there is a limited audience for contemporary art and one that is relentlessly criticised for being elitist. Although it might be true to some extent, I do not believe it should be exclusive to the point of near extinction. The language associated with contemporary art is problematic and I endeavour to make press releases accessible without being patronising.

I curated the most recent exhibition in the gallery, called *Timecoloured Place*, with a view to extending the ideas in the exhibition beyond the gallery walls. It was an attempt to play with the inherent uncertainties of ‘site-specific’, bringing together science fiction from the 1950s, contemporary poetry, live soundscapes created in real time and accessible on line, new sound works based on old recordings, and visuals which use technology to create, reinvent, or breakdown. It created a lot of interest because of its multidisciplinary nature. The exhibition consisted of artworks installed in the gallery by Henderson Six, a small book with the work of J.G.Ballard, and newly commissioned work from the poet Patrick Chapman. Three evening sound-based events took place over the duration of the exhibition. A turntable was installed in the gallery and it played the special edition (1/5) vinyl record pressed by economicthoughtprojects, with newly commissioned works from ETP, Machinefabreik, The Plumber Anders Quartet, and Music for One.

The diversity of practices brought together in this project attracted a wide audience interested in music, literature, and computer science, as well as contemporary art.

That a gallery and exhibition of this kind can attract such good will and support, including a Project Award from the Arts Council, is a thrill not to be underestimated, but also a great indication of a desire for experimentation and thirst for contemporary art itself.

**Oonagh Young**



***Twosome Twiminds*, group show, installation view, 2008. Courtesy Oonagh Young Gallery. Inaugural show with Shane Bradford (UK), Kris Emmerson (UK), and Mary-Ruth Walsh (Ire).**

## *It's Hard to Satirize a Guy with Shiny Boots*

FRANCIS HALSALL

Having agreed to “respond” to Dublin Contemporary I felt, initially, a little resentful. The call to “respond” seems to mirror the demand on the Dublin Contemporary website to “ENGAGE!”, and I, perhaps petulantly, resented such extortion. An initial idea, then, was to follow John Peel’s producer John Walters’ example of criticism: he once said that it was his life’s ambition to review a Yes album with one word: ‘no.’<sup>1</sup>

Instead of responding in such a stark way I offer two concrete examples and then the necessary judgment. I have a strong intuition that my examples are related to the task in hand, albeit tangentially. They are both underwritten by the same idea: that any claim that we should look to art for answers in times of crisis and change will always ring hollow. When politics becomes curated into an empty spectacle it loses its edge; and artworks become mere symptoms of the structural flaws in the social systems that they are supposed to ‘cure.’

My judgement is similarly underwritten by two thoughts: that we can expect a lot from art, but not so much that we have a right to be disappointed when the world doesn’t change around it; and that if you’re going to put on an empty spectacle, then at the very least you should do it well.

### (1) Art, Crisis, and Change?

On the 17th February 1821 the following notice appeared in *Saunders’s Newsletter*, a Dublin newspaper (published between 1746-1879):

Messrs Marshall respectfully beg leave again to solicit the kind patronage of the Nobility, Gentry and the public of Dublin, and its vicinity, for their lately finished, entirely novel Marine Peristrepheic Panorama of the Wreck of the Medusa French Frigate and the Fatal Raft. Also the ceremony of crossing the line. Each view Accompanied by a full and appropriate band of music. The picture is painted on nearly 10,000 sq. feet of canvas, under the direction of one of the survivors, in a superior style of brilliancy and effect – the figures on the Raft and on the boat being the size of life and the Picture being of the Peristrepheic form, give every appearance of reality....<sup>2</sup>

The subject matter for this spectacle was the sensational, and by this point hugely well known public scandal of the wreck of the frigate Medusa. It had been the flagship of a small French fleet of four boats carrying soldiers, officials, and slaves that set off in June 1816 to re-possess the French colony of Senegal from the British, in part to continue activities involved with slavery. The mission had been poorly planned and the commanding Captain, Hugues Deroy de Chaumareys, was incompetent and inexperienced (he had not been to sea in twenty years). The ship ran aground on a sandbank fifty kilometres off the coast of what is now Mauritania. In the resulting chaos around 250 people (mostly officers and their friends and family) made their escape in a small craft leaving the remaining crew, low-ranking soldiers, and general civilians (149 men and 1

<sup>1</sup> My second favourite review is the one for Spinal Tap’s album that Marty DiBergi reads out in the film: “The review for *Shark Sandwich* was merely a two word review which simply read ‘Shit Sandwich.’”

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Lee Johnson, “‘Raft of the Medusa’ in Great Britain,” *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 96, No. 617, (Aug., 1954), p 249-254.



## **Suzanne van der Lingen** *I Can't Tell the Changes*

Photograph, 2011; Image courtesy the artist.

woman) to survive on a large makeshift raft that was agreed would be towed to the shore. The officers, however, panicked and broke their vow. The raft was unhitched leaving those onboard to fend for themselves with little food or water and no navigational equipment or means of propulsion. The situation quickly descended into desperate acts of mutiny and violence. By the fourth day cannibalism was rife, and by the eighth injured and dying survivors were thrown overboard. After thirteen days just fifteen men survived.

To retell this grotesque and scandalous story, the Marshall spectacle immersed the audience in an environment that made a multi-sensory address through a rotating (peristrepic) painted panorama of six scenes accompanied by a loud soundtrack.<sup>3</sup> And it proved immensely popular. Scandal had become entertainment. Accounts tell of it playing three sell out shows a day and continuing by popular demand until the 9th June.

There are two reasons to think of why this spectacle would be relevant to contemporary Dublin and they hinge on the relationship between the publics that are created through display and collective forms of aesthetic experience; and moments of social crisis and change which those publics witness.

**First**, there is the reason that the Medusa scandal had become such a *cause célèbre* in France and beyond. It was taken to be a very clear manifestation of the absolute failure of the ruling establishment and existent political order in France. The system itself was in crisis, and this had lead to the terrible consequences for those who were subject to it.

As a result of Napoleon’s defeat a neo-conservative, Royalist, ruling order was established under the Bourbon-restoration monarchy of Louis XVIII. The ship’s captain, De Chaumareys, was widely regarded as a pompous, complacent relic from the *ancien regime* who was appointed through privilege and cronyism. The subsequent scandal was characterised by attempts by politicians and officials to cover up what had happened in order to protect those responsible, and the public were outraged at the ‘whitewash’ of the court martial of De Chaumareys when he was sentenced to a mere three years in jail.

In *Narrative of a Voyage to Senegal* in 1816, the sensational account of survivors Henri Savigny and Alexandre Corréard, the authors were unequivocal in directing blame for the whole incident directly at the ruling order. In the preface they write:

Here, we hear some voices ask, what right we have to make known to the government, men who are, perhaps, guilty, but whom their places, and their rank, entitle to more respect. They are ready to make it a crime in us, that we have dared to say, that officers of the marine had abandoned us. But what interest, we ask, in our turn, should cause a fatal indulgence to be claimed for those, who have failed in their duties; while the destruction of a hundred and fifty wretches, left to the most cruel fate, scarcely excited a murmur of disapprobation? Are we still in those times, when men and things were sacrificed to the caprices of favour? Are the resources and the dignities of the State, still the exclusive patrimony of a privileged class? and are there other titles to places and honours, besides merit and talents?<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See also: Jonathan Crary, “Géricault, the Panorama, and Sites of Reality in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Grey Room*, 09, (Fall 2002), pp 5-25; Christine Riding, “Staging the Raft of the Medusa,” *Visual Culture in Britain*. Vol. 5, no. 2, (Winter 2004) pp. 1–26; Jonathan Miles, *Medusa, The Shipwreck, The Scandal, The Masterpiece*, (Jonathan Cape, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> J. B. Henry Savigny and Alexander Corréard, *Narrative of a Voyage to Senegal* in 1816 available at Project Gutenberg: [HYPERLINK<www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/11772/pg11772.html](http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/11772/pg11772.html) (Oct. 21, 2011).

**Second**, there were a number of different iterations of Medusa phenomenon. The Marshall panorama, and Savigny and Corréard’s narrative were just two such instances alongside William Thomas Moncrieff’s *The Shipwreck of the Medusa: Or, The Fatal Raft!*, a melodrama.<sup>5</sup> And, of course, Géricault’s large history painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1819) that was also exhibited as a public spectacle by the impresario William Bullock first at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, London 1820 (12 June – 30 December) and again in the Rotunda in Dublin from 5th February 1821.

What’s interesting about the Dublin exhibition is that it was cut short by the competition that the Marshall panorama offered despite Bullock’s attempts to generate interest by dropping the price from one shilling and eight pence to ten pence “in order that all ranks may have the opportunity of viewing”.<sup>6</sup> The reason why is pretty clear; and it is not because of a simplistic conflict between high and low art in which the low can be seen as meshing more neatly with a public will. It’s rather that when seen equally as forms of entertainment within a visual culture the panorama more fully captured the public’s attention and made for a better spectacle than the painting. It generated a more thrilling aesthetic experience.

The Medusa represented a moment – with obvious pertinence today - when a crisis in a political system irrupted into the social imaginary to become a visible wound in the order of things. Crucially, however, the wound became a spectacle *to be enjoyed*. It acted as a focus for phantasmagorical delight and shared aesthetic experience. It offered a form of sociality by generating a collective fascination in a pathological injury in the body politic.

(2) Non-Compliance?

Just last week in London, I had a strange and jarring experience. I was waiting for someone in Trafalgar Square and decided to sit on a wall just below the Fourth Plinth (where the Yinka Shonibare piece *Nelson’s Ship in a Bottle* was on show). After a few minutes, I was approached by two men in semi-official looking jumpers and peaked hats. They asked me, politely, if I would mind getting down from where I was sitting.

“Yes I would mind,” I said.

They asked again politely, and again I, also politely, declined. I gave my reasons: that I was doing nothing illegal, or in any way offensive, and that I didn’t want to move. I then asked them who they were and was told that they were employed by GLA. (I later found out that this was the Greater London Authority who had contracted the private company Chubb Security Personnel Limited.)<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The panorama was shown in London from 1st December 1823 at the Great Room, Spring Gardens, as ‘the French panorama of the Shipwreck of the Medusa’; Moncrieff’s play showed at the Royal Coburg Theatre (The Old Vic) from 29 May to 28 June 1820 and played again there in 1827 after which it was adapted for a show at the Bowery and Franklin theatres in New York City in 1837.

<sup>6</sup> *Saunders’s Newsletter* quoted in Jonathan Miles, *Medusa, The Shipwreck, The Scandal, The Masterpiece*, (Jonathan Cape, 2007), p 206.

<sup>7</sup> “It is proposed that a tender exercise is undertaken in order to procure a new contract for Security Services at Trafalgar & Parliament Square, with an estimated start date of 1 May 2011 for a period of 4-years with the option to extend for up to 2 years in 1-year lots...The estimated cost of the proposed new contract for 4-years is £1,715,044, which equates to approximately £428,761 per annum and will have to contained within the budget provision for London Squares subject to the annual Strategic Planning & Budget Process.” “Trafalgar and Parliament Square Heritage Warden Contract Extension and Tender ” at: [HYPERLINK<www.london.gov.uk/>](http://www.london.gov.uk/)(accessed 17th Oct. 2011).

“So, you’re not police, you can’t arrest me then,” I said.

“Well you see sir, it’s a health and safety issue. We’re just doing our job.”

This back and forth went on for a little bit longer, during which time they remained calm, polite yet insistent whilst I became increasingly upset, irrational, and incoherent. It ended with me getting down and shouting.

“Fuck off!”

They just laughed and walked off. My miniature protest and attempt at non-compliance had been utterly inconsequential. It had been a pointless, petulant bluster of inchoate impoliteness that had no effect whatsoever.

A few moments later I saw them chatting with some adults and taking photographs for them of their kids clambering over the lions down in the square.

I had found the intervention of these ‘Heritage Wardens’ threatening and troubling and had been unsettled by the whole experience. The claim that it was a health and safety issue seems to point to what’s at stake; because it’s in the regulation of the body, specifically, to which the concerns of health and safety are directed. It was my body that was precariously balanced on the classical balustrades, and it was my body that was being challenged.

The body is important in this example because of its involvement. We are implicated in a whole system of things and meanings; we are involved in what Husserl called a “thingly nexus”<sup>8</sup> of objects and events. There are at least two implications of this *involvement*.

On the one hand when demands are made of me, or infringements, then they are directed specifically not toward my ideas or my feeling but toward the substance of my body. It is a direct physical address.

And on the other, the body is a transcendent, or at least quasi-transcendent thing. It can migrate between different places and different systems; and disrupt their operations.

Clearly this is Merleau-Ponty’s insight in *The Phenomenology of Perception*. But, crucially this is also what Husserl means when he says that the body is constituted in a “double way,” as a physical thing and as an entity that participates in meaning (or ‘sense,’ *Sinn*).

This doubling means that the body cannot only be acted upon, but also that it can *resist*. It can push back. It can refuse to comply.

The body is coiled up with a potential to disrupt the easy flow of capital and information within social systems. And hence, it forms the origin of a politics. This would mean, then, a politics that

8 “We have seen that in all experience of spatio-thingly Objects, the body ‘is involved’ as the perceptual organ of the experiencing subject.” Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: Second Book*, trans. R. Rojcewicz & A. Schuwer, (Springer, 1990) p 36.

is grounded in what Husserl calls the “physical-aesthesiological unity” of the body. He says of this unity:

In the abstract, I can separate the physical and aesthesiological strata but can do so precisely only in the abstract. In the concrete perception, the Body is there as a new sort of unity of apprehension. It is constituted as an Objectivity in its own right, which fits under the formal-universal concept of reality, as a thing that preserves its identical properties over and against changing external circumstances.<sup>9</sup>

To make a leap – it is a critique of politics that are abstract which forms the basis of Žižek’s critique of the “lost causes” of liberal politics. In this section his focus is Simon Critchley:

The lesson here is that the truly subversive thing is not to insist on ‘infinite’ demands we know those in power cannot fulfill (since they also know it that we know it, such an ‘infinitely demanding’ attitude is easily acceptable for those in power: “so wonderful that, with your critical demands, you remind us what kind of world we would all like to live in ~ unfortunately, however, we live in the real world, where we are just honestly doing what is possible”), but, on the contrary, to bombard those in power with strategically well-selected *precise, finite* demands which cannot allow for the same excuse.<sup>10</sup>

Which when I read it recently (he is particularly critical of Critchley’s defence of humour as an ethical and political strategy) immediately reminded me of that great exchange in *Manhattan*:

*Man*: I heard you quit your job?

*Isaac*: Yeah, a real self-destructive impulse. You know, I want to write a book, so I, so I ... Has anybody read that Nazis are going to march in New Jersey, you know? I read this in the newspaper, we should go down there, get some guys together, you know, get some bricks and baseball bats and really explain things to them.

*Man*: There was this devastating satirical piece on that on the op-ed page of the *Times*. It is devastating.

*Isaac*: Well, well, a satirical piece in the *Times* is one thing, but bricks and baseball bats really gets right to the point.

*Woman*: Oh, but really biting satire is always better than physical force.

*Isaac*: No, physical force is always better with Nazis. Cos it’s hard to satirize a guy with shiny boots.<sup>11</sup>

It’s hard to satirize a guy in shiny boots. And ones in jumpers and peaked hats too. We need to think about what forms of non-compliance are most appropriate. And it’s my guess that swearing,

9 Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: Second Book*, trans. R. Rojcewicz & A. Schuwer, (Springer, 1990) p 40.  
10 Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, (Verso, 2009) p 349-50.  
11 Woody Allen, *Manhattan* (1979)

sculptures, and large scale art shows are equally inconsequential.

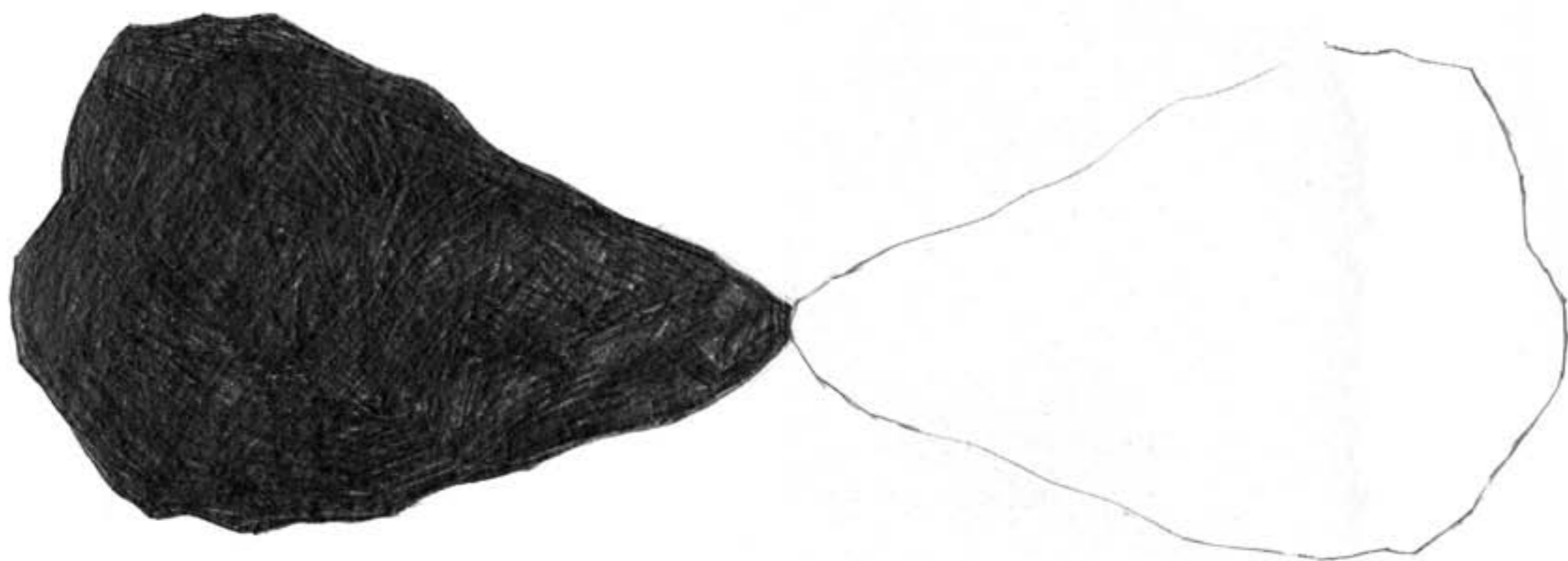
(3) A judgement

In the Autumn of 2011 a large exhibition took place in Dublin called ‘Dublin Contemporary.’ The curatorial statements around the show were incoherent and so broad as to be nearly meaningless. It was as if they’d been sketched on the back of a cigarette packet on the plane over. Frustratingly this failure to define any terms made the claims slippery and hard to pin down, and engage with (what has “terrible beauty” got to do with crisis and chance?; “non-compliance” with what? ). The publicity for the show was similarly lacking in coherence and included bill posters that read like parodies of advertising slogans: “see the world through different eyes.” It seemed to be offering up a form of politics as a spectacle; but it was not very spectacular. There seemed to be some claim being made about art as a form of social commentary; but it had nothing concrete to say. Some art in the show was very good, some quite good and some very bad. Right now we need responses to contemporary crisis and change that address specific problems with precise and finite demands. In these times any shoddy spectacle, and particularly this one, is not good enough.



**Louise Brady**  
*Untitled*

Photo collage, 2009; Image courtesy the artist.



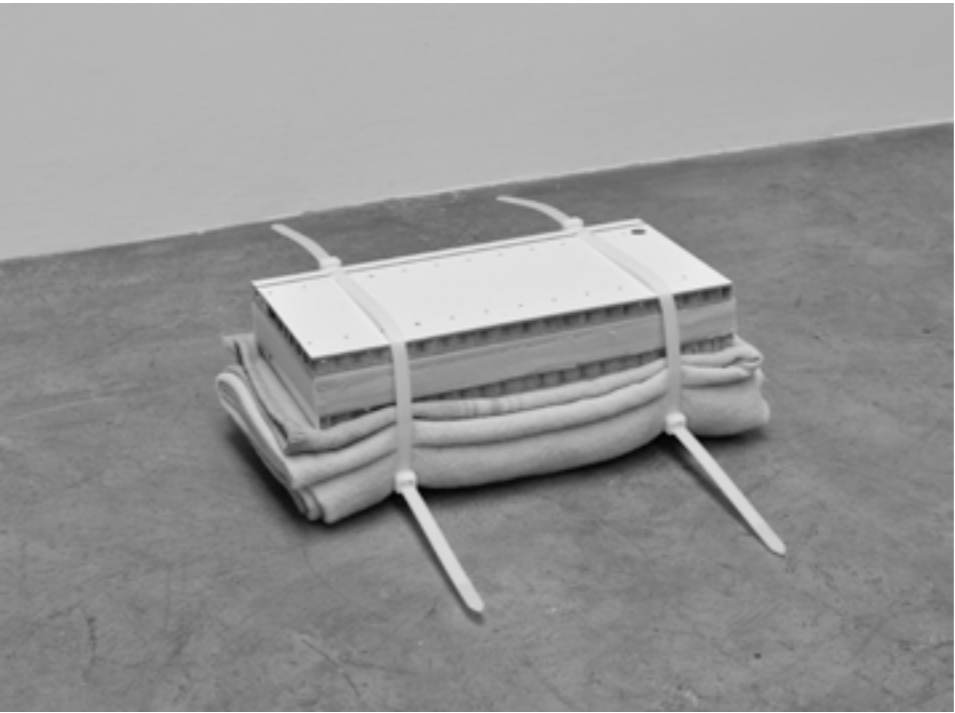
KEVIN COSGROVE & BRENDAN EARLEY

Nor for Nought

Mother’s Tankstation

14 September - 29 October

Brendan Earley and Kevin Cosgrove’s *Nor for Nought* at, Mother’s Tankstation, is a show in which very little happens: directly counteracting the desire for action or stimulation, the work explicates a space wherein such properties are stopped dead in their tracks. The two very different kinds of work – Cosgrove’s modestly sized, figurative oils, and Earley’s sculptural assemblages, which act almost like thwarted readymades – exist in a relationship jointly informed by the language of making both in and of itself. The objects in Cosgrove’s paintings – a car, a tractor, a small dumper truck – are both created from something, by people or other machines, and furthermore are proponents of creation; they are created for the purpose of further creation. Here, however, they lie dormant, and oddly so. The paintings appear almost as portraits of these objects, studying them in unproductive cessation. Adjacent to Cosgrove’s studies of the things and places of making, Earley’s sculptural forms thwart traditional expectations of productivity or usefulness. The materials used – aluminium, plasterboard, fibreglass, a reassembled IKEA kitchen, workbenches, and so forth – all point to an interest in making as process. There is a sense of incompleteness, however; the workbench, typically used as a prop for the creation of something, becomes the final resting site for that which it creates (*Pieces of the City are Forming like Islands* (2010), and *Workbench* (2011)). Function breaks down as the work ceases to be passed on to another locale, and thus put to use. Instead, it gathers the site of production – the workbench – to itself, and realigns itself as useless, aesthetic. In both bodies of work, the site of non-creation, where function or purpose breaks down, is viewed productively, and enacted upon to make something new.



**Brendan Earley: *They Bedded Down for the Night*, woolen blanket, foam, plastic ties, melamine, 2011; Image courtesy the artist and mother’s tankstation.**

Preceding page:

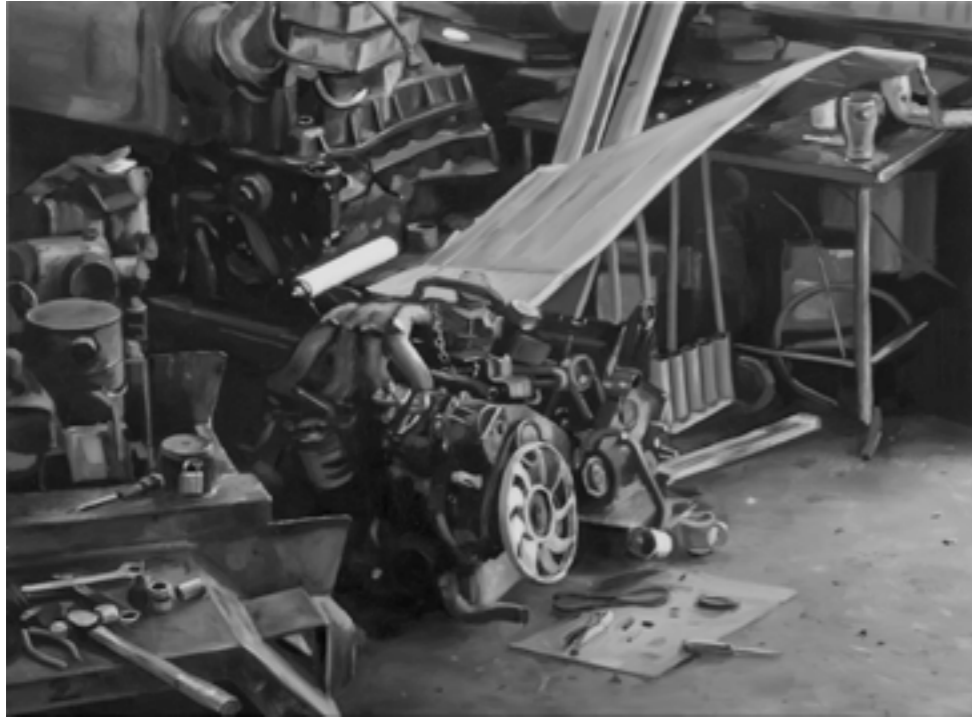
Barbara Knezevic

*Study for a Testament for Bravery*

Graphite on Fabriano paper, 2011. Courtesy the artist.

The title of the exhibition, *Nor for Nought*, also gives some shading to the pairing of these two artists. The title cites a passage from the bible, a tract in which Paul puts forward to the Thessalonians the value of earning, and working for sustenance; it is a reward in itself, once it has been earned. Recompense exists in such a scenario, regardless of what form it takes. There is value, he suggests,

in the simple process of work. As previously mentioned, both Cosgrove and Earley appear to share in this view. Both, through their varied depictions in the breakdown of function or usability, negate a dominant demand for an end result that is finalised, or useful. In such a way, they glean a view of working that accepts the half-done, the static or abandoned, as befitting the labour that precedes its formation. The pleasure in working is its own reward; it does not stipulate a clear and defined outcome or product. That is not to say that the artworks contained in the exhibition are neither finished nor complete – they are – but rather that they use a breakdown in function or activity as a starting point in productively giving rise to a product that diverges from both.



**Kevin Cosgrove:**  
***Workshop (with cardboard)*, oil on linen,**  
**2011; Image courtesy**  
**the artist and mother's**  
**tankstation.**

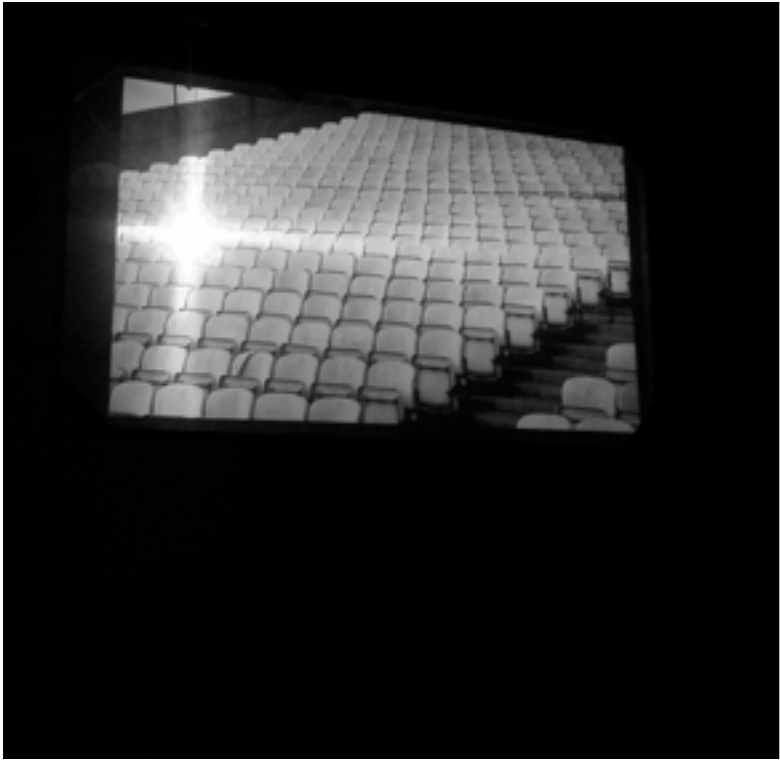
The exhibition itself contains paintings by Cosgrove and a collection of sculptural forms by Earley, which quietly intersperse the painterly depictions of the things and places of making. An unoccupied yellow workshop, emitting that too-bright fluoro-hue common to offices everywhere, hangs above Earley's *The Lights are On* (2011). This floor-based assemblage combines a thwarted IKEA kitchen, plastic ties, foam, and fluorescent tubes. The exchange between object and image on traversing the gallery is intriguing; one might imagine the objects being made in such spaces as Cosgrove's, but the question of function creeps interminably in – just what kind of space would this be if given over to the creation of objects such as these? Do such spaces make any sense once the prerequisite condition of function has been abandoned? There is an almost belligerent celebration in the subversion of the object's expected uses and narratives in Earley's work, for example in his alternative, counter-intuitive usage of flat-pack constructions. Furthermore, another piece, *Don't Look Back* (2010), uses mahogany – generally seen as an almost precious wood – in such a way as to render it virtually invisible. This wall piece comprises an aluminium form perching above a sheet of mahogany affixed to the wall, over which a sheet of black glutinous perspex is overlaid. It is infuriating both formally and ergonomically. And yet it is here that the work is interesting: to hide away that which is most valued is to run counter to economic expectations. Function does not come into the equation, but rather a dominant expectation founded on the consumerist predicate; in any case, to use mahogany here simply seems wholly function-less – MDF would have done the job just as well. It is not dissimilar to the approach taken by Cosgrove in his paintings, as he meticulously paints, pointedly in *oils*, spaces in which nothing is happening, or machines which at the moment he paints them, have ceased to function. A prevailing disinclination towards light and contrast – most of the works are of a similar breed tonally – further iterates the humdrum quality of these spaces and things. And yet he works towards representation of these scenes, running

counter to an expectation of what, really, a painting should be. This is still life in the truest sense, empty of people, devoid of activity, and thus still yet a site of possible creation or epiphany. Another work, *Workshop (with cardboard)* (2011), shows a grimy workshop, all gnarled shapes and forms seeping out from a soot-black darkness. Sheets of cardboard are haphazardly thrown onto these surfaces, and out of the darkness jumps a luminous gold shade; so extravagant it appears as almost baroque. There is an excessiveness present here that seems out of place, and it is this that holds the viewer. In other works, a swath of light serves the same purpose, pointing to a resonance which supersedes that which is represented in the work. As with Earley's work, these paintings present us with a moment of resistance or intransigence. It is not for nothing that this exhibition appears to say little, or to deny a sense of finality. It is in this repudiation of a normative cycle – work, progress, completion – that both artists celebrate the process of making as an activity *in itself*. In offering an alternative finality, dependent on moments of inactivity or subversion, both Cosgrove and Earley put forward an alternative notion of finality. This is something that exists in a symbiotic relation to incompleteness, and finds its own resting place – in time and space – through the simple acts of making, and of working.

**Rebecca O'Dwyer**

FIONA MARRON  
*Last and First Men*  
The Joinery  
19 - 30 October

Although I know better, this exhibition has inspired in me a fanciful vision of Fiona Marron, circumnavigating Ireland in a little boat; TV and radio receiver pointed at the land, recording news reports and magazine shows. From these she chooses disparate items to weave together uncomfortable narratives, featuring the gross excesses of unfettered capitalism and greed. Every once in a while, she comes ashore, video camera on a tripod, held, resting on her shoulder. Silently, en plein air, she commits to disc, calm, moving images, which evocatively bear testament to her research.



**Fiona Marron: *Last and First Men*, HD rear projected-video, installation view, 2011; Image courtesy of the artist.**

The first time I saw Fiona Marron’s work, *There Was Truth in What They Said*, I was confused. Good confused. I wasn’t sure the abandoned trading floor, revealed in a robotically smooth pan was computer generated or real. Several people I spoke to about it afterwards had the same quandary; fervent disagreements had broken out. It’s a question that is poised to become a key one in the future, as the digital world challenges our perceptions of reality. Within this work, I felt it was a triumphant matching of aesthetic form to context. The set was a closed financial exchange building interior, presented Ozymandias-like from its former power. Absence, abandonment, emptiness, as well as varieties of silence feature heavily in Marron’s work. In *Plenty of Furniture* we see an elevated view of a warehouse, or industrial workshop perhaps? True to its titled promise, there are many tables, chairs, etc piled up on view as well as a lone character, barely discernible. Marron often favoured mute silence in her videos, but there is audio here, just: Cagean rustlings seeming to anticipate an event we’ll never know. Sound is used suggestively in another previous work, *Fend*, which shows two fencers sparring in an empty space that looks as though it should house an open-plan office. Its most interesting moments are when the action forces its way out of the frame, temporarily leaving an adjudicator, dead centre, alone, hands stoically clasped behind his back as the foils clatter furiously against one another. In *Caveat Emptor*, Marron makes a (silent) turn, playing a solicitor representing the sellers of a salubrious property in an affluent Dublin suburb. A lengthy

– though statedly abridged – list of legal preconditions is reeled off by the presiding auctioneer, who despite being a professional talker, stumbles over the gobbledygook legalese. More recently, in *Construct #1.4* for *Construct #1* at Monster Truck Gallery, her video loop of a falling tree was beautifully displayed as part of a successful marriage of sculpture and audio visual.

So to *Last and First Men*, the second installment of a five-part exhibition sequence *Selected Stories* in The Joinery, Dublin. The show was a snapshot of juggled ideas, interrelated, but frozen in time, leaving the viewer unsure of source or destination. The exhibition is populated by extraordinary characters, who pushed their names upon the world by the scope of their ambition, and greed. Marron’s main areas of interest abound here, high finance, the mechanics of trade, property, and the question of verisimilitude.

Entrance to the show was through The Joinery’s garage doors, which had been augmented with clear plastic strip curtains, such as are found across industrial loading bays, hinting at the exhibition’s econocentric concerns. In this room, the first part of the show’s title work consisted of a rear-projected video, shot by Marron in HD, seemed to serve as oblique visual touchstones to the exhibition. Here were ships, boats and their cargo holds; goalposts; hillside cave entrances; flood-lights; a justice building; stadia and a lone living object: a horse grazing in front of a viaduct. These mostly panned images are displayed on a high screen, hung from the ceiling. The effect is enhanced uncomfortably by the projector’s beam shining directly at you through the material and a subtle rumble piped into the space.



**Fiona Marron: *Bias Index*, inkjet print wall installation, 2011; Image courtesy the artist.**

In the next room, the viewer was surrounded by *Bias Index* which comprises two walls covered with A4 screen-grabs of a 1960 televised debate between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy. The first of these four on-screen head-to-heads was a famous game changer for political electioneering, when it became apparent that the analysis of body language could be intrinsic to voters’ stances on candidates. So influential and divisive were these debates that most candidates refused to take part for another fourteen years.

The work *First and Last Men* is continued here, in multiple, overlapping media. One could take a wireless headphone for a walk to (re)contextualise the visual elements. The audio contained



**Fiona Marron:**  
***Last and First Men, view of installation detail, 2011;***  
**Image courtesy the artist.**

snatches of archive news footage about ‘rogue trader’ Nick Leeson and Irish businessman Kevin McHugh. McHugh, who passed away from CJD in 2006, was responsible for Atlantic Dawn, the largest and most controversial fishing trawler in the world. Initially, McHugh was denied fishing rights for the vessel, until the then Fianna Fáil government stepped in to wrangle a deal for him, causing the European Commission to begin two court actions against Ireland. A private deal with the Mauritanian government allowed the ship fishing rights in their waters for nine months of the year, decimating the indigenous fishing industry. Marron puts the size of the Atlantic dawn in perspective by projecting an image of it over printed plans of Croke Park ‘and a half’, its oft-quoted match in terms of length. Leeson mostly speaks for himself, ruminating over his toppling of Barings Bank and offering critical analysis of a finance industry seemingly unwilling to learn from its past failures. An LED ticker display on the wall, zoomed the figures (the precise significance of which, if any, were a mystery to me) 160,000,000 and 862,000,000 in red, past the viewer. A small TV (with headphones) on the floor replayed a BBC News report on the ‘mega-dairy’ of Cwrt



**Fiona Marron:** ***Fathers of the Future, archive digital image reel & audio, installation view, 2011;*** **Image courtesy the artist.**

Malle Farm in Wales where 1,800 cows are battery reared, prompting animal welfare concerns. In the rush to construct a slice of American-inspired agri-economic efficiency, the dairy’s sheds were built without planning permission.

Keeping closely with the series’ fiction themed title, *Father of the Futures* connects the two loves of its subject, financier Leo Melamed: futures trading and science fiction. The flat-screen, wall-mounted video work comprises archive pictures, mainly of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, where Melamed was chairman from 1969-91, and snippets of biographical data on Melamed by an uncredited voiceover. It begins not with an account of his groundbreaking work in introducing computerised futures trading to the derivatives market, but how his moonlighting as a sci-fi writer inspired him to drive his vision of financial trading forward. With reference to his novel, *The Tenth Planet*, he pondered: “...if I could create a master computer that could run five planets, why can’t we create one damn electronic system that could run orders?” References to his fiction – published and unpublished – crop up again during the five or so minute piece, as it gives a potted chronicling of his moves to unfetter trading from the ‘open outcry’ of the trading floor’s exchange pits to a fully electronic system, such as his: Globex. There are sinister connotations to the complex systems of the futures market, perhaps seeming to the uninitiated like pure vagary, but Melamed is ultimately painted here as a sort of lucid dreamer, seeing himself as a Quixotesque character of determination. Is Melamed real? We are never led to believe we are seeing him in the images flashing up, and a possible significance of the narrator/author’s anonymity crops up – that the absence of source information could cast a shadow of doubt over the apparent documentary.

The exhibition takes its name from Olaf Stapledon’s sprawling science fiction novel, charting aeons of humanity from the twentieth century on. Ostensively speculative fiction – its twentieth century ‘author’ is really the conduit for a history of man, telepathically transferred, by our furthest descendants – the eighteenth incarnation of humankind, two billion years in the future. Like the alien race in Melamed’s *The Tenth Planet*, who find a Pioneer space probe<sup>1</sup> and set out in search of its origin, the exhibition (and title) also brought to mind Kim Deitch’s graphic novel, *Shadowland*, in which a character on an orbiting space station “watches scenes that were beamed telepathically from Earth...made over a period of ninety years and preserved on laser story chips”. If we were judged by an alien race on the basis of news reports speeding out through space from this planet, we might fare poorly, but one’s evil is another’s evolutionary necessity. Back on Earth, *Last and First Men* presented itself as an absorbing collection of interrelated stories, of individuals forging changes to society, decorated with Marron’s distinctive visual discourse.

## **Davey Moor**

<sup>1</sup> Sent from Earth, complete with its return address calling card in the form of a plaque (with biological and astronomical information).

## Stephen McGlynn

### *Untitled*

Antique textile, thread, screenprint, 2009; Photograph Aniz Durant. Courtesy the artist.



## ÀDRIA JULIÀ

### *Notes on the Missing Oh*

Project Arts Centre

2 September - 29 October, 2011

In the early 1980s Sun Myung Moon, leader of the Unification Church of Korea, poured \$30m into one of the worst box-office disasters in history. The 1982 film *Inchon* dramatises the 1950 American invasion of Korea. Laurence Olivier delivered a shoddy performance as Douglas MacArthur; it was probably the worst of his career. In this nadir, Olivier struggled alongside a stuttering cast, cardboard set pieces, and financiers who could barely conceal their religious zealotry. *Newsweek* memorably described the film as “a turkey the size of Godzilla.” It is from this sorry corner of cinematic history that Adrià Julià constructed his exhibition *Notes on the Missing Oh*.



**Adrià Julià: *Notes on the Missing Oh*, installation image of three screen film projection; Photo: Ros Kavanagh, image courtesy the Project Arts Centre.**

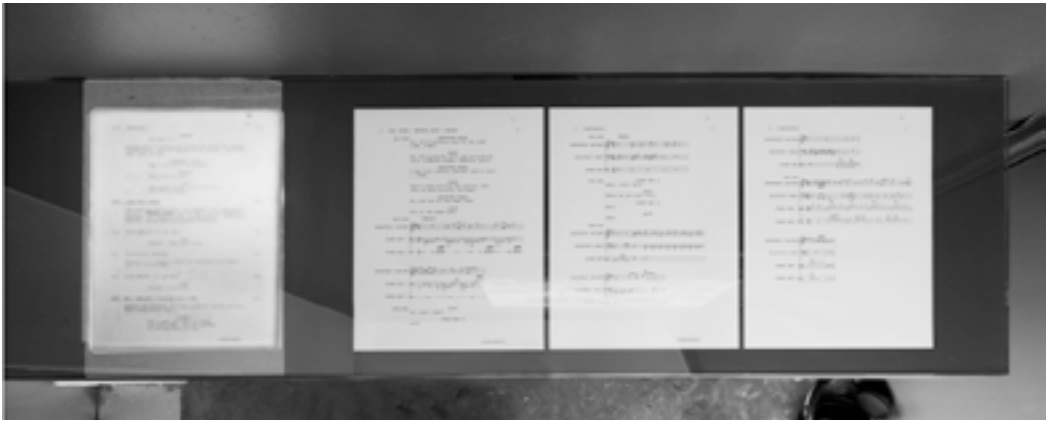
The main Project Arts Centre gallery contained three films, which Julià projected on to sparse wooden screens. The largest, entitled *Notes on the Missing Oh*, was ten feet tall and fourteen feet wide and obstructed the room’s front entrance. I wrongly presumed that I had arrived at the halfway point, a fixed monochromatic shot of a field and a dirt road. There was a tree in the foreground, just at the road’s curvature, and its leaves blew against a low rushing sound that issued from speakers near the ceiling. The image was very still, and quite transfixing. Most of its movement came from small pockmarks of 16-millimetre film grain, and the camera shaking in the artist’s hand. Eventually the scene trailed off into a light grey, it flickered for a couple of seconds, and transposed its way to the exterior of a small petrol station, under a clear grey sky. It stayed there for three more minutes.

In *Notes on the Missing Oh*, Julià focuses on a muted kind of space. Although he depicts normal movements – cars driving around, people walking or fishing – everything is slow, his subjects take their time. The viewer passes through city scenes, harbours, a fairground, and a series of subways. There were no particularly surprising recordings, and nobody in them was doing much of anything. In one scene, the artist positioned himself high above a roundabout, and captured a stream of ant-sized cars travelling around some indistinguishable concrete monument. Elsewhere, he captured a long panoramic view of the lake surrounding a long bridge. Here the camera jumped and stam-

mered rightwards, passing the small silhouette of a fisherman at the water’s edge, and eventually turning a full circle. When the bridge flickered into grey, it was replaced by a fixed monochromatic shot of a field and a dirt road. There was a tree in the foreground.

How is it possible to resolve the meaning of these mute and indeterminate spaces when Julià implicates a film like *Inchon* so heavily in the exhibition’s subject matter? Each of the film’s scenes were long enough to defuse any perception of what had already transpired; the artist prevented the viewer from juxtaposing his shots into a recognisable narrative. His material was so spaced apart that its meaning could only become more indeterminate as *Notes on the Missing Oh* went on. Julià coupled this muddiness with the fact that the film had no clear beginning or end. Instead, the viewer circumnavigated it, and in this navigation of unknowns lay the kind of perspective that is offered by a certain type of historical stock footage which makes a time and place that has long passed seem once again apparent, populated, and real. In place of what *Inchon* professed to understand about the Korean War, Julià’s scenes refused to know. Moreover, where *Inchon* made its subject matter into a direct, easily resolved trope, Julià allowed *Notes on the Missing Oh* to get lost in the drizzly complication of ‘real’.

On the other side of the gallery, two mid-sized wooden screens closed off the room’s north corner. On the right was a short silent shot of Namgung Won, a popular actor in Korea who starred in *Inchon*. On the left, there was an interview with Dick Millais, a film industry figure of some sort, whose company came to possess the orphaned internegative of the *Inchon* feature. The shot of Namgung is very much in the style of the larger *Notes on the Missing Oh* film; it is silent, grainy and shot to film, with no beginning or end. The actor was in his 60s, and made halting, jerky facial expressions. He sat there for about four minutes, looking as though he was listening to his fraternal projection, or just waiting for something. Millais, for his part, presented very differently to Namgung. His interview was in full colour, with dialogue throughout, and digital compression artefacts fracturing the space around his head. Millais told the story of how the creators of *Inchon* came to abandon ownership of their film. He comfortably brought up work colleagues and technical terms. He also called the artist “Andrea”. His recollections provided a counterpoint to the abstracted contextual information that Julià wove throughout the rest of the exhibition. In this interview, the



**Adrià Julià: *Notes on the Missing Oh*, detail of new work featuring lightbox and printed materials; Photo: Ros Kavanagh, image courtesy the Project Arts Centre.**

artist seemed as much willing to allow the viewer a basic access point to his research, as he was to retool and manipulate the thin substance of *Inchon*’s history. The films featuring Millais and Namgung are not synchronised, and yet it is hard not to imagine that Namgung is an editorialising figure – looking over at his fraternal interviewee – not really knowing what to say.

In making *Inchon*, the Moonies toyed with applying an overarching moral lesson to the Korean War. Julià has rewritten the film’s contextual trajectory with a realist’s restraint. The topic of the exhibition is exciting, and I initially feared that the artist would relish in the colossal failure of



**Adrià Julià: *Notes on the Missing Oh*, installation image of three screen film projection; Photo: Ros Kavanagh, image courtesy the Project Arts Centre.**

*Inchon*. But he did not. Instead, Julià’s representations of South Korea seize something of value out of the Moonies’ tepid sludge. Julià assumed that the audience would understand the logical and moral problems of characterising war by a saintly cartoon of MacArthur. Instead, *Notes on the Missing Oh* offered up a version of South Korea - with its quietness, its pacing - which gave a sense that life there is ordinary. In the simple act of recording and recollecting, Julià explained the weakness of the war’s retelling, by characterising the kind of ‘real’ that was not retold.

**Seán O’Sullivan**



## Karl Burke

### *Heap*

*Taking a Line*, Solo Show, Leitrim Sculpture Factory, 2011; Image courtesy the artist.

## CIARÁN WALSH

### *this brief visual pattern*

Pallas Projects

8 October - 12 November

Ciarán Walsh's latest exhibition at Pallas Projects consisted of a tripartite arrangement offering viewers disparate modes of experience via a collection of static visual material, a looped video, and a booklet. Presented under the rubric *this brief visual pattern*, its components comprised a complex and circuitous interweaving of images and text that not only provoked viewers with their unconventional narratives, but also tested their cognitive abilities.



**Ciarán Walsh:**  
***It's Just a Shadow Away*, 2011,**  
**DVD, 9'30"**  
**(looped); Image**  
**courtesy Pallas**  
**Projects.**

In the gallery's back room viewers were able to drift through the *Image as it Appears* (2010-11) – what amounted to a didactic presentation bereft of any labels or sheets of explanatory information – and parse the links and potential meanings posed by an assortment of old photographs, painted text, a geometrical structure, and some partially obscured watercolours. While the objects' arrangement according to a colour coded system conferred museological underpinnings, other aspects contradicted such precepts. Visual and physical access to the artworks, for example, varied dramatically and their organisation intimated no timeline or other logical type of progression. Whereas some objects had been placed beneath glazing, others rested on top of it, and translucent white paper veiled two of the images. Pictures of an aboriginal bear costume, an ancient terracotta mask, and a diaphanous hooded figure represented diverse cultures and referenced a spectrum of practices that included primitive ritual, theatre, and investigations of paranormal phenomena. Similarly, the sole 3-dimensional component contributed to this evocation of transformative possibility and mystery. The portion of the form that should have projected laterally out into space from the edge of the table appeared to have been affected by a structural quirk. Instead, it gravitated downwards directly toward the floor.

*It's Just a Shadow Away* (2011), the work in the front room, tendered an equally enigmatic experience. This looped video projection depicts two actors performing scenes from Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, a Russian film adaptation of Polish writer Stanislaw Lem's science fiction novel of the same name. Set in the bleak surrounds of a production studio, the actors speak a language neither of them understands in an attempt to convey the emotional and psychological content of a story



**Ciarán Walsh: *It's Just a Shadow Away*, 2011, DVD, 9'30" (looped); Image courtesy Pallas Projects.**

that features conversations between a man and a hallucination of his dead wife. Even for those familiar with this slow moving tale about the strange events on a space station, the work disorients. Walsh alternates performance excerpts with English translations of the Russian dialogue. While the format recalls the structure of a silent movie, viewers first stepping into its continuous pattern of play found it difficult to tell if the translations preceded or succeeded the actors' scenes. Though ongoing observation eventually established the correct sequence and allowed me to modify my first impressions, I initially drew what I could from the sounds of the performers' voices and their body language. Then, as the subjects' predicament became more legible, it also assumed greater intensity. Moreover, key words and phrases stood out, particularly the brief repetition of a short clip in which Kris' ex-wife Hari says "listen." In one sense the word represented an obvious contradiction as it implied listening to a language that I could not understand. But in another it functioned as an imperative that, reworded, could be understood as 'pay attention,' a term that implied the use of more than one's ears. Ultimately, recurrent viewings of this charged and awkward encounter failed to dispel the video's haunting aura. I became preoccupied with all the ambiguities of the narrative. For a time I was stranded between states imaginary and real.

In essence, the publication *no one can arrive in the past, before they depart from the future* brackets the presentation. Released in the form of a pdf file in advance of the opening and a print version, it formed an introduction, became a component of the installation, and functions as a souvenir/reference that can be read and reread long after the exhibition's closing. The content, which clearly mirrors themes evident in the gallery works, consists of edited correspondence between the artist, curator Padraic E. Moore and Friedrich von Bose, a scientific assistant with the Department of European Ethnology. Though it is concise, the discussion touches upon a broad range of concerns. They range from the complicated position of museum objects and established conventions associated with their presentation to notions of time travel, abstract sound poetry, non-rational responses to artwork, unobservable phenomena, and the role of the audience. Of course, the gist of the discussion revolves about the ways we experience and translate works of art and other cultural artefacts.

Not only do the correspondents convey a general sense of dissatisfaction with traditional modes of presentation, they also consider ways through which it may be possible to see back to the past or circumvent such conventions. In this respect Walsh's stimulating gallery contributions offered viewers practical experience. He has reordered – or distorted – familiar structures as a means of destabilising our intellectual footing that we might discover previously unseen information and develop new elucidations from it.

**John Gayer**

CONTRIBUTORS

Writers

FRANCIS HALSALL is lecturer in the history and theory of modern/ contemporary art at National College of Art and Design, Dublin where he coordinates the MA: Art in the Contemporary World. He has research interests in aesthetics, systems theory, phenomenology and modern/contemporary art. Recent writing and ideas can be found at his blog: [alittletagend.blogspot.com](http://alittletagend.blogspot.com).

SEÁN O’SULLIVAN is a curator who specialises in discussions, editorial projects and printed materials. His projects to date include A&E (2010 - 2011), a rolling series of public discussions at Monster Truck Gallery, Temple Bar, and *The Wheel* (2011), a publication and discussion project for emerging art critics. He sits on the Board of Directors for the Black Church Print Studio Dublin, and is currently studying on the MA in Visual Arts Practice at IADT, Dun Laoghaire. [www.seanosullivan.ie](http://www.seanosullivan.ie)

JOHN GAYER completed studies in studio art and art history in Canada, the country of his birth. His writing has appeared in *Espace sculpture*, *Art Papers*, *the Visual Artists News Sheet*, *Sculpture*, and other publications.

REBECCA O’DWYER is a writer currently based in Sydney. She holds a BA Fine Art Sculpture (2008) and MA Art in the Contemporary World (2010), both from NCAD, Dublin. She plans to commence doctoral studies at NCAD next year, focusing on the role of transcendentalism in contemporary art. O’ Dwyer is also co-editor of the publication *Not Drowning but Waving*, and compiles a personal blog at: [www.rebeccaodwyer.wordpress.com](http://www.rebeccaodwyer.wordpress.com)

ADRIAN DUNCAN studied and worked as a structural engineer in the UK and Ireland for over a decade before returning to study fine art and contemporary art theory at IADT and NCAD. He has exhibited throughout Ireland, Europe, South Africa, and the U.S. He is a guest lecturer at UCD School of Architecture and an editor of *Paper Visual Art Journal* to which he also contributes. [www.adrianduncan.eu](http://www.adrianduncan.eu)

OONAGH YOUNG is the director of Oonagh Young Gallery which opened in 2008. [www.oonaghyoung.com](http://www.oonaghyoung.com)

DAVEY MOOR is a curator, photographer & arts manager based in Dublin. [www.daveymoor.com](http://www.daveymoor.com)

Artists

SUZANNE VAN DER LINGEN (1988) is an artist and writer currently based in the Netherlands. She has studied at the National College of Art and Design in Dublin and the Royal Academy of Fine Art in Antwerp. Her work has been shown in numerous exhibitions, including a soloshow at the Joinery in May 2011. She has written for a number of publications including *CIRCA*, *GUP Magazine* and *Paper Visual Art*. [suzannevanderlingen.com](http://suzannevanderlingen.com)

KARL BURKE’S practice is primarily concerned with perceptions, both emotional and physical, of our three dimensional world, and takes the form of sculpture, installations, photographs, video and sound.

Solo exhibitions include the Wexford Arts Centre, Rua Red and the Leitrim Sculpture Center. National group shows include Temple Bar Galleries, Galway Arts Centre and IMMA. International shows include a solo show in Washington DC, USA with group shows, Auto Italia, London, England, Mattress Factory art Museum, Pittsburgh, USA and the Maria Stenfors gallery, London, England.

Burke also produces music under the name Karl Him. He lives and works in the Firestation Artists Studios in Dublin.

STEPHEN MCGLYNN is an artist born in and presently based in Cork. His practice has evolved out of the processes of printmaking, printed matter, and lens-based media. Predominantly narrative led, his work uses site-specific installation and incorporates textiles, print, appropriated objects, and other visual signifiers, operating collectively, to engage the viewer. In these considered environments, elements of the everyday shift in meaning, and the interplay of traditional craft and the use of design, allow for alternate narratives to be uncovered.

LOUISE BRADY is a Dublin-based visual artist. Her current work, which uses both video-based installation and projected image, centers on the grammar of cinema and audience awareness and expectation.

BARBARA KNEZEVIC is an Australian-born artist practicing in Dublin. She attended the Sydney College of the Arts where she received a Bachelor of Visual Arts and completed her Masters in Fine Art at the National College of Art and Design (NCAD), Dublin. Recently, she was awarded a Project studio at Temple Bar Gallery and Studios and South Dublin County Council Artist’s Bursary Award. Recent solo exhibitions include *Alderamin Rising* at Queen Street Studios, Belfast, *In Pursuit of a State of Uncertainty*, Kings ARI, Melbourne, Australia and Firstdraft Gallery, Sydney, Australia. Recent group exhibitions include *Futures 11* at the Royal Hibernian Academy, *New Connections* at RUA Red and the Claremorris Open curated by Chris Hammond. [www.barbaraknezevic.com](http://www.barbaraknezevic.com)



