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Tír na nÓg

Younger Irish Artists from the IMMA Collection

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exhibition curated by Marguerite O'Molloy;

Assistant Curator: Collection, and Catherine

Marshall; Senior Curator: Head of Collections

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cover image

Grace Weir

Dust defying gravity, 2003

16 mm film transferred to DVD

Dimensions variable

Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art

Purchased, 2004



Irish Museum of Modern Art

Tír na nÓg

**Younger Irish Artists from the IMMA
Collection**

Tír na nÓg in ancient Ireland was the land of the ever young. Of course that does not mean those who are chronologically young, quite the contrary, it means those who never grow old no matter how many years they have lived for. Artists who constantly engage with new challenges and new issues in their work, irrespective of their age are as close as most of us ever come to that fairytale situation. Much of the work in this show draws on new media, DVD, video, and installation to call attention to new aspects of earlier experience or to throw fresh light on recurring issues, in the process confirming the youthful vision of its makers.

Since 2000 the IMMA Collection has acquired a strong body of work by Irish artists or by artists whose work practice is largely based in this country. This exhibition will draw on some of that material, most of which will be shown on this occasion for the first time at IMMA. Fergus Martin and Anthony Hobbs are both well established in their separate fields but the collaboration represented in *Frieze* is a new process for them, where painter and photographer work inseparably to produce a twenty first century version of the medieval fresco. While using the presence of the painter as its central motif *Frieze* breaks with tradition by not being a painting, but it does dissolve the architecture in much the same way as the great fresco cycles of the past. The sequence of photographs plays with abstract concepts that have been at the heart of art in the West for many years: progression and recession in relation to the planar surface of the work; nuances of light and shadow on the figure; the business of looking itself. The two *Cardinal* paintings by Paul Nugent offer another approach to surface planes, in this case the physical ground of the painting becomes



Clare Langan

this page:

Forty below XII, 1999

Super 16mm film transferred to DVD
with surround sound

Dimensions variable

Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art

Purchased, 1999

page 8:

Too dark for night, 2001 (top)

Glass hour, 2002 (bottom)

Super 16mm film transferred to DVD
with surround sound

Dimensions variable

Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art

Purchased, 2003

a vehicle for an investigation into the planes of memory. The shadowy figures of the two prelates hover below the surface of the painting as they also do in the history of art and in Western European culture. The physical qualities of oil paint become the subject of Paul Doran's work so that it is fair to ask if *Melt* is a piece of sculpture or a painting. Sculptural concerns, this time with the relationship between positive and negative, provide energy and tension in John Graham's carborundum prints. The surface seems to be bored through by his bold, abstract mark-making.

Clare Langan's *Trilogy* also incorporates the human figure, isolated beings in strange, mysterious and often disturbing worlds created by the artist's innovative use of coloured lenses and her feeling for the sublime. *Dust defying gravity* by Grace Weir echoes the sense of time passing that is evident in Langan's *Trilogy*, but this time the sands of time are themselves the focus of the artist's scrutiny. Each dust molecule sketches a metaphoric dance to the music of time in contrast to the scientific instruments that surround it. Time and the changes it brings are alluded to again in *New sexual lifestyles* by Gerard Byrne. Made in 2003 this witty conceptual piece, comprising a series of DVDs and photographs, looks at attitudes to life and sexuality, contrasting contemporary views with those that pertained in the freedom-loving sixties when its glass-box architectural setting was built. The DVD was filmed in the restored house in the Devil's Glen in Co. Wicklow, designed as a summer house for Sir Basil Gouling by the architect Ronnie Tallon. The house, a classic of Irish Modernism, is open to the most inspiring landscape and the transparency of the space it represents is echoed in the set of photographs of windows that accompany the DVDs. The artwork plays on the link between sexuality, the lush natural world visible through the glass walls and issues of privacy and voyeurism. Modern lifestyles are parodied in the work of David Timmons. *There is no estrangement between you*

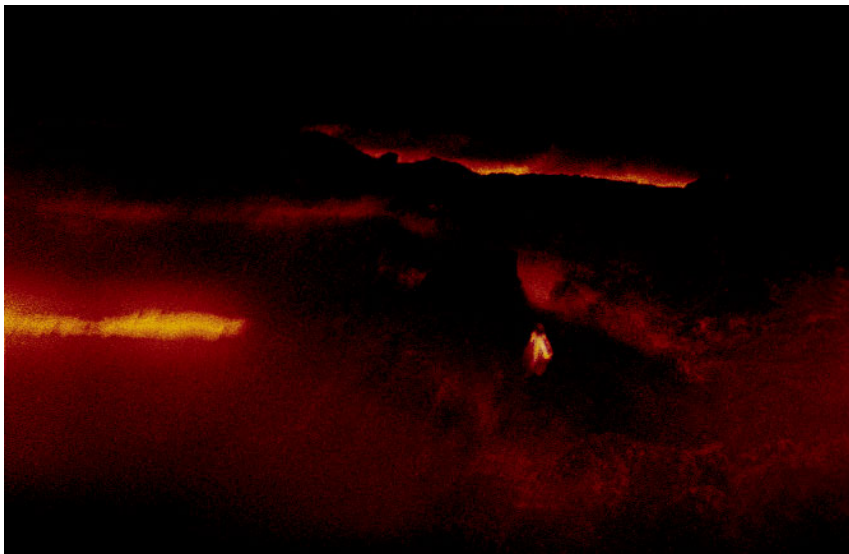
and the machine, is an MDF structure, painted to a seamless, high gloss finish with car paint to evoke the salesroom rather than the gallery. Timmons is fascinated by the gulf between the perfect object, and the often sordid but creative process out of which it emerges. By accompanying his paintings/ sculptures with titles that evoke evangelical or advertising slogans he queries the positioning of the artwork in contemporary life.

In keeping with his other work, all is not what it seems to be in Paddy Jolley's *From the Burn series, 2001–2002*. In his still from the short film *Burn*, which he made in collaboration with the artist Reynold Reynolds, a figure in a living room seems unaware of the fire that is consuming both her and the room in which she stands, making us as viewers question our own perception. *Do you know what you saw?* by Andrew Vickery, an English artist who has been working in Ireland for some years now, presents memories of Wagner's opera *Parsifal*, which the artist saw in Bayreuth, through a combination of painting and slide projection. By painting his recollections of the journey and then turning them into slides which are projected from behind onto the stage of a little model theatre the artist creates a space for the viewer's personal memories of childhood, of miniature theatres and the creative space between the painted image and the photographic representation of it. Vickery's question is relevant also for Hannah Starkey's *Untitled–August 1999*. This large work baffles notions of photography as factual record since Starkey works like a theatre director, setting up a tableau, that looks both ordinary or mysterious, and pregnant with possibility at the same time. Alice Maher makes a similar reference to the fantasy world of childhood through her sculpture *The axe (and the waving girl)*, where her Swiftian shifts in scale between the doll-like small female figure and the overblown axe evoke fairytales, recalling not just moments of pleasure but also the fear of danger. *Ombre V* is an earlier work by the same artist,

this time dealing with a massively enlarged female figure seen mysteriously from behind and enveloped in her long hair. When it was executed in 1997 during her residency at the Artists' Work Programme at IMMA, it marked a new shift in the artist's practice and a new emphasis on drawing. Another drawing in this exhibition is a remarkable portrait drawing of a fellow artist, Corban Walker by Nick Miller. Miller experiments with ways of overcoming the distance between himself and the subject of his work, whether that be another person, the landscape or inanimate objects. The degree to which he achieves his aim in *Corban* is immediately evident in the manner in which the face appears to thrust itself out of its paper ground and into our space.

Stephen Brandes is another English born artist who has based his work practice in Ireland. Like Andrew Vickery's *Do you know what you saw?* Brandes' painting *Chandelier* also refers to a journey, in a playful and surreal manner in which real memory and fantasy are interlinked. The work issues from a group of paintings responding to a journey that Brandes made to his grandmother's old home in Romania and her journey from there to England in 1910. Brandes' personal experience is intertwined with his grandmother's accounts of her very different one. In *Chandelier* the artist uses an off-cut of vinyl flooring as a ground for his painting which is hugely informed by his love of children's book illustrations and Eastern European animation.

The plight of refugees and economic migrants is foregrounded by Phil Collins in his photographs and his recent video work *How to make a refugee*. The work is particularly relevant in Ireland, given the country's long experience of emigration and the new experience for the Irish of migrants coming here in search of the assistance that Irish people sought abroad in times past. Collins manages to express the complex emotions and experiences of being a refugee in an unsympathetic environment without sentimentality. *Alpha and Omega*, a sculptural



installation by Janet Mullarney, also makes reference to other cultures. The little bronze cows were inspired by a memory of an early morning vision of a cow, bedecked with its ritual ribbon, emerging from the river Ganges. The quiet presence of these little figures invites contemplation and restoration. Janet Mullarney's art generally references cultural and religious practices, from Ireland to Mexico and India. This is also true of Abigail O'Brien. In 1996 the Museum bought *The Last Supper*, her graduation piece from the National College of Art and Design. Following on from that and other works relating to the seven sacraments O'Brien recently photographed an ancient pre-Christian rite in rural Ireland that is still practised today. The currency of ongoing practices such as dressing old hawthorn bushes with rags in the modern world invites speculation about progress.

The complexity of personal identity lies at the heart of Isabel Nolan's *Sloganeering 1-4*. This witty DVD installation reminds us of the confusions and difficulties that surround us and our sense of self in a world where the clichés of advertising logos and mass communication often override more personal statements. The seriousness of the central issue is balanced by the humour of its presentation.

It has been our intention in this exhibition to bring together some of the varied responses to artmaking and the concerns that stimulate it that are represented in recent additions to the Museum's young, but growing collection. While the Collection is not limited to Irish art and most exhibitions drawn from it reflect its international interests, we feel that it is timely to put on show some of the richness and range of invention of a new generation of artists based in this country.

Catherine Marshall
Senior Curator: Head of Collections



Grace Weir

Dust defying gravity, 2003

3 channel DVD, 54mins, seven photographs

Dimensions variable

Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art

Purchased, 2004

Gerard Byrne

New sexual lifestyles, 2003 (detail)

3 channel DVD, 54mins, seven photographs

Dimensions variable

Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art

Purchased, 2004





Paddy Jolley

From the Burn series, 2001-2

C-Type print, ed. 2/5

102 x 102 cm

Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art

Purchased, 2004



Andrew Vickery

Do you know what you saw?, 2004 (detail)

Mixed media and slide projection

120cm x 85cm x 50cm (theatre)

Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art

Purchased, 2004



Hannah Starkey

Untitled-August 1999,
1999

C-type print, 122 x 152 cm
Collection Irish Museum of
Modern Art

Donated by George and
Maura McClelland, 2004



Alice Maher

The axe (and the waving girl), 2003

Painted bronze

Axe: 295 x 74 x 13 cm

Girl: 42 x 18 x 11 cm

Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art

Purchased, 2004



Abigail O'Brien

Red ribbon, 2003

Lambdachrome print mounted on acrylic, A/P

120 x 120 cm

Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art

Purchased, 2004



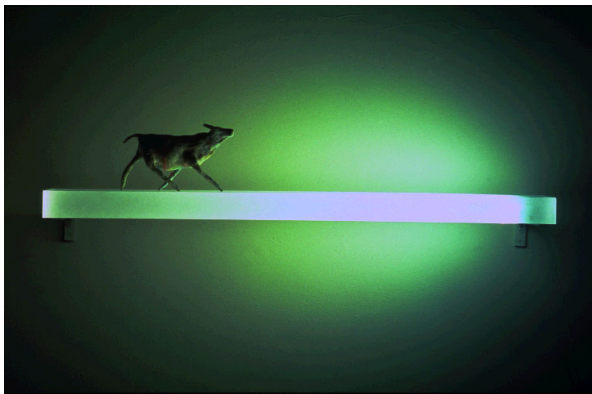
Phil Collins

How to make a refugee, 2000

DVD, ed. 2/3, 11 mins

Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art

Purchased, 2004



Janet Mullarney
Alpha and Omega, 2003
 Plexiglass shelves, led lights, bronze
 90 x 15 x 19 cm each
 Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art
 Purchased, 2004

list of works in the exhibition

Stephen Brandes

Chandelier, 2004

Gerard Byrne

New sexual lifestyles, 2003

Phil Collins

How to make a refugee, 2000

Oliver Comerford

Out here III, 2003

Maud Cotter

One way of containing air, 1998

Paul Doran

Melt, 2002

John Graham

Untitled, 2000

Untitled, 1999

Paddy Jolley

From the Burn series, 2001-2

Clare Langan

Forty below XII, 1999

Too dark for night, 2001

Glass hour, 2002

Alice Maher

Ombre V, 1997

The axe (and the waving girl), 2003

Martin & Hobbs

Frieze, 2003

Caroline McCarthy

The luncheon, 2002

Nick Miller

Corban, 1996

Janet Mullarney

Alpha and Omega, 2003

Isabel Nolan

Sloganeering 1-4, 2001

Paul Nugent

Cardinal 1, 1997

Cardinal 6, 1997

Abigail O'Brien

Red ribbon, 2003

Hannah Starkey

Untitled–August 1999, 1999

David Timmons

There is no estrangement between you and the machine, 2003

Andrew Vickery

Do you know what you saw?, 2004

Grace Weir

Six cherry blossom petals, falling, 2001

Dust defying gravity, 2003