

IMMA Talks:

Artist's Discussion with Simon Fujiwara
Friday 20 May, 1 – 2pm / Lecture Room

Artist Simon Fujiwara and the renowned screenplay writer Michael Lesslie (*Macbeth*, 2015, *Assassin's Creed*, 2016) explore processes of script writing, heroism and conventional Hollywood narratives, as they relate to the historical biography of Roger Casement. Moderated by Rachael Thomas, Head of Exhibitions, IMMA. **Booking is essential.**

Curator's Lunchtime Talk: Drop In
Wednesday 1 June, 1.15 – 2pm / Meeting Point / Main Reception

Join Karen Sweeney, Exhibitions, IMMA for a free exhibition walkthrough, where background information on *The Humanizer* will be explored in detail. No booking required, just come to the Meeting Point in the main reception.

For a full programme of events and free tickets visit www.imma.ie

Simon Fujiwara *The Humanizer* is curated by Rachael Thomas, Senior Curator: Head of Exhibitions, with Karen Sweeney, Assistant Curator: Curatorial and Partnerships.

Collaborators:

Screenplay – Michael Lesslie
Sound Design – Moritz Fehr
Actors – Gerard Byrne, Phelim Drew, James Hayes, Ian Lloyd Andersen, Janet Moran
Casting – Kelly Phelan, the Abbey Theatre
Sound Engineer – Mark Murphy, Sound Butlers
Props and Costumes – Babelsberg Film Studios
Document designer – Annie Atkins
Document Handwriting – Jan Jericho
Production Manager – Maria Bartau Madariaga

© Simon Fujiwara 2016

Furthermore Simon would like to thank Kurt Van der Basch for his consultation and generosity with his introductions to colleagues within the movie industry.

IMMA would like to thank our valuable Members and Patrons, whose support has made this exhibition possible.

The exhibition was supported by Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York and Dvir Gallery, Tel Aviv

This exhibition is part of the Ireland 2016 programme. It is also supported by:



19
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Programme

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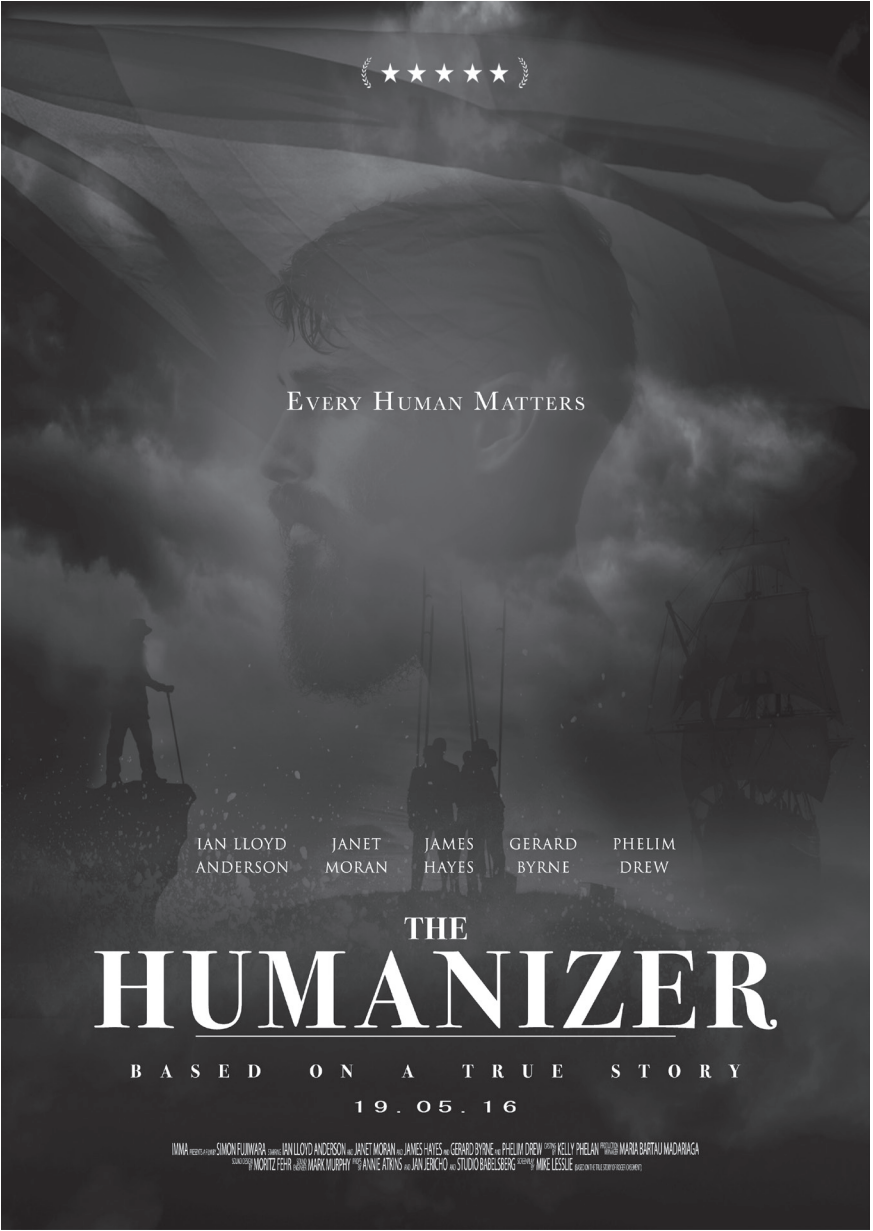
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Front cover:

Simon Fujiwara,
The Humanizer
© Simon Fujiwara 2016
Courtesy of the artist

IMMA - IRISH MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
COURTYARD GALLERIES, EAST GROUND
20 MAY - 28 AUGUST 2016

Simon Fujiwara
The Humanizer



This is the first major exhibition in Dublin of the work of Berlin based, British/ Japanese artist Simon Fujiwara. He is best known for his complex performance, video and installation works that blend fact and fiction, personal and universal to the point where such distinctions are often no longer distinguishable.

Told through voice, objects and pictures, Fujiwara employs and manipulates the narrative form, asking us to reconsider our acceptance of ‘narrative’ as a reliable form of communication. In constant dialogue with specialists from a broad range of fields, Fujiwara’s works are inspired by new systems that seek to structure individual identity in an increasingly globalized and homogenized world.

This new commission for IMMA, titled *The Humanizer*, is presented here for the first time on the occasion of the centenary of the historic Easter uprisings of 1916 which marked one of the most tumultuous and significant events in Irish history. *The Humanizer* is one of three major new works being commissioned by IMMA that reflect on the legacy of the commemoration of the Irish State.

The Humanizer is Simon Fujiwara’s proposition for a Hollywood biopic composed almost uniquely of sound and based on the life of historical Irish nationalist figure Roger Casement (1864–1916). Known as the world’s first human rights campaigner, Sir Roger Casement was awarded a knighthood in recognition of his fight for the rights of slaves in the Congo and South America; before turning against the British in the Irish Nationalist cause that led to the Easter Uprisings of 1916. His fateful demise and execution came at the hands of the British government who tried him on charges of treason against the British State and denied clemency on the grounds of moral perversion following the discovery of a highly controversial diary – ‘The Black Diaries’ – containing explicit ‘evidence’ of Casement’s homosexual activities. To some Casement is a shining hero of the Irish Independence

movement, to others he is a traitor and a sexual delinquent.

Casement’s life was so full of drama that as early as 1934 there were plans to shoot a Hollywood Casement biopic; as Fujiwara discovered in a cache of letters sent from Universal Pictures to Casement family members. With numerous Irish émigrés working in the American film industry in the 1920s and 30s, Ireland became the subject of many films, often depicted through the emigrant’s nostalgic lens as a rural and undeveloped idyll. Set against this backdrop and with a carefully edited script, the life of Roger Casement provided enormously potent material for a film about a heroic protagonist who would sacrifice everything for his nation. Even in its highly edited state, however, the proposed movie was banned by the various censorship laws of the nations involved.

Inspired by the Universal Pictures’ letters, housed in the archives of the National Library of Ireland, Fujiwara enlisted a group of contemporary Hollywood movie professionals to collaborate with him in imagining how the facts of Casement’s biography might be depicted through the lens of today’s multinational movie corporations. Fujiwara gave the biography of Casement to Hollywood screenwriter Michael Lesslie, whose film credits include *Macbeth*, 2015 and *Assassin’s Creed*, 2016, both starring Marion Cotillard and Michael Fassbender. A movie script was developed in which Casement’s life and character were adapted, manipulated and often completely reinvented to comply with the current models of the Hollywood biopic form. Leslie presents Casement as a righteous man born in the wrong age – a man who may have betrayed the country he worked for, but never betrayed his principals, and in true Hollywood style, every character, action and line in the script underlines this overarching narrative construct.

The script was then enacted by a company of professional actors in Dublin, before being set to a soundtrack that evokes

a prolonged Hollywood trailer, created with sound designer and artist Moritz Fehr. Set across a series of four rooms that house objects and personal effects, the sound fragments of the biopic interject into the rooms at unexpected times, rupturing what appears to be, at first glance, an authentic historical exhibition of Casement’s life. However, Fujiwara’s skeletal selection of objects did not belong to Casement, but are props loaned from Berlin’s renowned Babelsberg Film Studio where a number of historic movies from Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*, 1927, to Tarantino’s *Inglorious Bastards*, 2009, have been filmed.

Accompanying the exhibition props are a series of replica documents from Casement’s life including love letters, an arrest report and of course the famous Black Diaries, all produced by Oscar winning designer Annie Atkins (*The Grand Budapest Hotel*, 2014; *Bridge of Spies*, 2015) and historic handwriting specialist Jan Jericho (*Valkyrie*, 2008, *Cloud Atlas*, 2012). Here, existing paper documents from Casement’s life are recreated through the lens of the Hollywood designer to make them appear, at times, even more authentic than their originals.

Through fragments of sound, a minimum of objects, documents and an environment of red curtains and carpet reminiscent of a cinema, *The Humanizer* seeks to evoke the experience of a big budget Hollywood movie with the most modest means. Without the seductive moving pictures associated with movies to communicate exactly what we are seeing, the audience is no longer a passive recipient but an active agent in visualising the movie.

The Humanizer asks if today’s audience, with its unprecedented reserves of visual information can picture an entire movie, its locations, cast and even its message without ever having to see it.

About the Artist

British/Japanese artist Simon Fujiwara (born London, 1982) lives and works in Berlin. He studied Architecture at Cambridge University (2002–05), and then Fine Art at the Städelschule Hochschule für Bildende Kunst in Frankfurt am Main (2006–08). He has participated in several recent biennials including the Venice Biennale (2009); Manifesta 8 and São Paulo Biennial (2010); Manchester International Festival, and Performa, New York (all 2011). His work has been presented at galleries around the world including The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto; Tate St Ives; Pompidou Centre, Paris; and The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Simon Fujiwara was the winner of the Cartier Award at Frieze Art Fair and the Baloise Art Prize at Art Basel, both in 2010.

List of works

Room 1: Early Years

All Props on loan from Babelsberg Film Studios, Berlin.
Courtesy of the Artist.

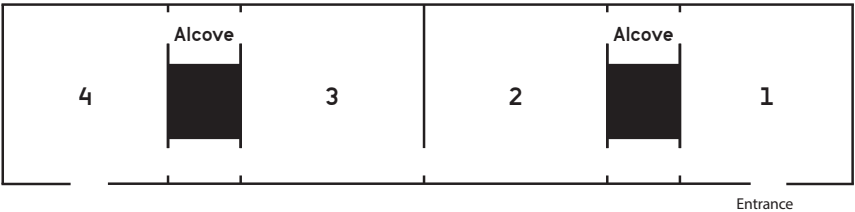
Room 2: Hero in Africa

All Props on loan from Babelsberg Film Studios, Berlin.
Courtesy of the Artist.

Room 3: The Betrayal

All Props on loan from Babelsberg Film Studios, Berlin.
Courtesy of the Artist.

East ground galleries



Room 4: Trial and Execution

All Props on loan from Babelsberg Film Studios, Berlin.
Courtesy of the Artist.

List of Documents in the Exhibition:

Annie Atkins
Roger Casement's Birth Certificate, 2016
Ink on paper
Courtesy of the Artist

Annie Atkins
Letter from Universal Pictures, 1934, 2016
Ink on paper
Courtesy of the Artist

Annie Atkins
Menu from the Palace of King Leopold II, 2016
Ink on paper
Courtesy of the Artist

Annie Atkins
Portrait of Christensen, 2016
Ink on paper
Courtesy of the Artist

Annie Atkins
Casement Exposes Leopold, 2016
Ink on newsprint
Courtesy of the Artist

Jan Jericho
Love Letters, 2016
Ink on paper
Courtesy of the Artist

Annie Atkins
Irish Pamphlet, 2016
Ink on newsprint
Courtesy of the Artist

Annie Atkins
Casement Movie Censored: Newspaper Cutting, 1934, 2016
Ink on newsprint
Courtesy of the Artist

Annie Atkins
Casement's Arrest Report, 2016
Ink on paper
Courtesy of the Artist

Jan Jericho
Last page of a Letter from G.B. Shaw to R.C., 1916, 2016
Ink on paper
Courtesy of the Artist

Annie Atkins
The Black Diary, 1916, 2016
Found object, calligraphy
Courtesy of the Artist

Daily Mirror July 19th, 1916
Original Newspaper Cover