Of Tulca: *After the Fall*

Michaële Cutaya: Ten Years of Tulca
Valerie Connor: Falling then, Falling now
Sean Lynch: Que Sera, Sera (Whatever Will be, Will be)
Fiona Fullam: Thinking by Writing
Joanne Laws: Counter-Monuments
Gavin Murphy: Ambition and the Earnest
FUGITIVE PAPERS

2 CONTENTS

3 EDITORIAL

4 Ten Tulca and Counting
   by Michaèle Cutaya

6 Everyone who is sent here brings with them
   all the thoughts and actions of their life in a bag
   by Valerie Connor

8 Que Sera, Sera (Whatever Will be, Will be)
   by Sean Lynch

12 Re-Writing
   by Fiona Fullam

14 Responding - Before and After The Fall
   by Joanne Laws

18 After the Fall: A Short Story
   by Gavin Murphy

Thank You:

Alan Butler, Helen Carey, Mary Conlon, Valerie Connor,
Michael Dempsey, Chris Fite-Wassilak, Peter FitzGerald,
Damien Flood, Fiona Fullam, James Harrold, Don
Hawthorn, Joanne Laws, Sean Lynch, Ann Lyons, Anne-
Marie McKee, Aoibheann McNamara, Niall Moore,
Megan Morley, Maeve Mulrennan, Ailbhe Murphy, Gavin
Murphy, Deirdre O’Mahony, Deirdre Power, Robert
South, Ruby Wallis, Fiona Woods, Dave Wrenne, Irish
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Editorial

The public sphere of civil society stood or fell with the principle of universal access. A public sphere from which specific groups would be ipso facto excluded was less than merely incomplete; it was not a public sphere at all. Jürgen Habermas’ projection of an all-inclusive public sphere of coffee house discussions, where the use of reason superseded social hierarchies, was largely idealised but it is a horizon that we might embrace as our own. As an artistic research project, Fugitive Papers aims to open critical spaces to explore, think, exchange and debate ideas about art, writing, criticality and publics in Ireland. We are exploring different spaces to do so: public discussions as Fugitive Dialogues, printed publications with Fugitive Papers, and online through our website fugitivepapers.org, which hosts archives of past events, digital versions of publication and the Fugitive Blog.

For the first issue of Fugitive Papers we have invited artists, writers and publics to discuss what the publication could be in terms of content, form and distribution. We then invited our contributors to respond to the issues that were discussed through the focal point of Tulca 2011, After the Fall, from the 4th to the 20th November 2011. We chose Tulca as it embodied some of our concerns within specific art exhibitions, workshops and talks.

By framing the Fugitive Dialogues with an actual art event, and commissioning texts that responded to an actual art exhibition, we hoped to avoid driftwood discussions about the so-called ‘crisis in criticism’, and writings that have no focal point. However, because we invited such an open process on Issue #1 of Fugitive Papers – in which public and commissioned writers had an influential say in the private and public dialogues – the editorial became a work in progress; an assemblage of opinions and desires as to what an art publication could be, but more importantly, can be, in Ireland today.

So, the form and content of the contributions were left to the writers and artists to decide upon. Since this issue was not formed from a pre-mediated format but as the result of consultation and shared initiative, it has inevitable inconsistencies, which we hope will prove to be incentives for further explorations. Our contributors have responded at once, or in turn, as artists, writers, critics, historians or citizens; mixing the critical, the aesthetic, the personal and the historical in a variety of ways.

As the focal point for contributions was Tulca, the Galway Festival of Visual Arts, the first essay, by Michaële Cutaya, presents a critically rigorous, but caring overview, of the ten years of Tulca’s existence. After the Fall was the theme chosen by this year’s curator Meg Morley – to address “a position that exists in a juncture at the end of one era, but also at the beginning of the next”. As such the theme invited comparisons with the other ‘fall’ in Eastern Europe at the end of the USSR and was an invitation to think the changes in our democracies through the prism of the eastern past. Eastern Europe was a strong thread for the festival both as subject through its artists and as the object of artworks.

The tension between the fall then and the fall now is the subtext of Valerie Connor’s essay as she reflects on a time spent in 1980s Prague, when MacDonalds embodied western promises, while touring the Galway exhibitions; presenting ways of reconstructing the past. For the artist’s project, Sean Lynch presents documents from his personal archives with commentaries, drawing attention to the changing attitude of public and media reception of art and architecture in Ireland; and how shifting criticality can be. In her essay, Fiona Fullam teases out the relationship between writing about art and experiencing art and relates it to three films presented at Tulca. The films, themselves wavering between documentary and fiction, deal with the unstable boundary between memories and events – while Valerie Connor’s Prague of the past is coincidentally revisited by Fullam in the present. The figure of the monument already present in Fullam’s work returns as counter-monument, and its role at shaping territories and identities in Joanne Laws’ ‘assemblage of voices’. As metanarratives ultimately prove deceptive, Gavin Murphy’s ethereal fiction (or fact?), reflects on the current ‘earnestness’ of his local art scene, and how one art object evades memory, time and place.

1. Jürgen Habermas, Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere, MIT press, 1991, p. 85

Note:
For our first issue of Fugitive Papers, we chose to distribute the printed publication through the Public Library Authority of Ireland, while the pdf will be available for download at fugitivepapers.org. We took this potential controversial decision for several reasons, not the least of them being our commitment to public space and institutions at a time of rampant privatisation. We want Fugitive Papers to be a space for exchanges and debates and as such we welcome responses to all our activities whether as comments on our website or as letter to the editor in the publication – those that cannot be accommodated in print will be posted on our website. Below is the list of Public Library Authorities through which Fugitive Papers will be distributed:

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IMAGE: Tom Molloy, Shake, 2011
59 framed photographs
Installation view in Galway arts Centre
Photo by Jonathan Sammon
Tulca, Galway Festival of Visual Arts has come a long way since its first edition in 2002. Throughout its brief and eventful history it has managed to form a recognisable identity out of the ad hoc conditions of its precarious existence. And if, in 2011, it is still something of a miracle every time it takes place, Tulca has nonetheless established itself as a landmark in the cultural life of Galway and the Visual Arts in Ireland.

It was to give more visibility to the visual arts in Galway that the proposal for a dedicated event was first thrown in by the Galway Arts Centre's board of directors, acknowledging that although known as the city of the arts, Galway was not all that well disposed towards contemporary visual arts. Tulca was to give them time apart from the usual festivities. From the beginning there was a desire to stray from the festival culture generated by the tourism from which Galway draws much of its revenue. The month of November was chosen for its "un-touristic turn" and placed the emphasis towards local publics. The term 'season' was initially preferred to 'festival' to place the event within a continuity.

The brief from which Tulca set out in 2002 was rather vague as there was no constitution, clear mission statement or specific budget. Based in the Galway Arts Centre and helmed by then education officer Michael Dempsey, Tulca was more of an umbrella-name for independent events like the community based projects from the outreach program 'Naviga-tor', and exhibitions from collaborating institutions such as the Galway County Library, NUI Galway and GMIT. Debates on the arts were also an early feature as Tulca aspired to open spaces of discussion in Galway.

Over 2004 and 2005, Tulca developed an independent organisation, emancipating from the Galway Arts Centre fold. A board of directors was constituted with representatives from each participating organization2 and Dempsey as chairperson. With financial support from the Arts Council and Galway City and County, Tulca developed a programme of its own with an open application process as well as specially commissioned artists. Tulca Live, dedicated to performance art and curated by Aíne Phillips, was the first fully formed programme in 2005. The involvement of art students through the collaboration with GMIT also allowed for a more expansive exhibition programme.

The curatorial statement for 2004 introduced two themes that were to shape Tulca for the years to come: the collaborative and the concept of periphery:

Our vision for Tulca is to become an organisation committed to acting as a resource and support group for collaborative exchanges between and among diverse artists, public audiences, participants, organisations and individuals.

Joseph Beuys spoke of energy that gathers on the periphery and is drawn into the centre, and how on the edge of Europe we have the distinctive advantage of allowing Tulca to be both mainstream and marginal. It's a conceptual position in development that can be generated physically and programmatically.

Spelling out its strategy, the statement announced Tulca's local and national ambitions. 2005 however was a year of conflict in the visual arts scene in Galway, which led Tulca to develop "challenging projects that make us aware of uncomfortable issues in our communities." Katherine Waugh commented in her review of the year:

Tulca, rather than attempting a 'catch-up' process, is instead trying to challenge directly any existing complacency which exists in the Galway public's attitude towards conventional artforms. It presented a programme which was inventive in its choice of exhibition locations and confidently confrontational in its inclusion of a wide selection of contemporary media.

Two divergent propositions confronted Tulca in 2005: one that favoured an independent organisation which would support visual arts practitioners throughout the year, and another in which the collaborating organisations, acting through the board of directors, would appoint a curator each year. 2006 would set the template for the following years: Tulca became Galway Festival of Visual Arts, Cliodhna Shaffrey, Sarah Sea-son and Aíne Phillips were the appointed curators. They were given a blank card for the programme and '90 artists were included in 'Within and Without'. In continuity with precedent years the geographic situation remained a source of inspiration. In her curatorial statement Shaffrey wrote that:

Tulca hopes to make new relationships happen between art and audience, between artists and viewer/participants. If there is a cultural shift away from the predominance of a Dublin centric Ireland, perhaps it is to be found in places like Galway, where the intimate scale and peripheral location creates a good home for a new generation of artists to commit locally and connect internationally.

2009 marked another turn in the evolution of Tulca. By then the festival had acquired recognition as a visual arts event in Ireland. Its length had been reduced to two weeks to sustain its large exhibition programme but its growth in number of artists and venues was based on a series of loose arrangements and it lacked identity. Tulca 2009 curator, Helen Carey, attempted to rationalise its infrastructure. She focused on a level of excellence and reduced to 12 the participating artists, which were given a high level of technical support. She tried to establish a base for future developments.

Although this compacted format was not to last, the festival has since acquired a clearer remit. The two last editions could be seen as the coming of age for Tulca, establishing the number of artists between 30 and 40 while keeping close to its core characteristics: a strong anchoring within Galway topography with an emphasis on the collective in promoting forms of art, that are less concerned with aesthetic form than with an engagement with socio-economic conditions.

For 2010 Michelle Browne developed an ambitious performance programme, which fitted well with her theme of movement and displacement. In her curatorial statement she wrote:

This year's exhibition is called 'Living on the Edge: People, Place & Possibility' and draws from the location of Galway as the starting point. The city of Galway is situated on the coast of Ireland, on the edge of Europe, and looks out to the vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean. Over time Galway has inspired both inward and outward movement of people and in many cases offers a unique way of life to its citizens.

The theme of TULCA 2010 'Living on the edge' looks at the notion of living, not in the perceived centre, but on the periphery and what this vantage point can offer.

Over the years the visual arts scene and its place in Galway has changed significantly with an increasing number of art graduates choosing to remain in the city and several artist-run organisations now well established. 126 Gal- lery and Engage Studios have joined Artspace to offer new partnerships for Tulca to develop upon. The perception within the city population has also undergone a radical transformation. The last edition of Tulca was revealing as curator Mags Morley paid particular attention to promotion within the
local medias. The general attitude has moved from one of indifference at best to one of support – Tulca 2011 was well relayed which resulted in an optimal attendance to all events. Morley chose to sacrifice glossiness to have paired with specially recorded audio tracks. All efforts were made to make the artworks and events accessible without compromising their complexity.

In her introduction she shifted the emphasis toward the national and beyond in drawing attention to the shared fate of many countries:

The deepening recession, political collapse and social upheaval have exposed the porosity between the logics of society, economy, politics and capital. And, if exhibition-making is the representation and staging of a discourse, then, as an Irish exhibition with an international remit, Tulca is uniquely positioned to reflect and query this context in Ireland. [...] What all the artists selected and invited to participate in this year’s Tulca share is a desire to play a role in social change by interrogating received forms of knowledge, imagery and power and by challenging the politics of representation, subjectivity, commemoration, historiography, narrative construction, identity and memory formation in a world ‘after the fall’.

In many ways Tulca 2011 was the most successful edition so far: bringing together a challenging programme and a large public. But the precarity of its situation was painfully exposed when the arrangements made by the organisers for the main exhibition space with the owners of Galway Shopping Centre, Harcourt Developments, fell through days prior to installation due to a retailer’s offer for the lease. Disaster was avoided through a weak hand in negotiations, but it may also be why it elicits the personal commitment from all involved which ultimately rescued the situation. Its lack of economic status may have dealt Tulca a weak hand in negotiations, but it may also be why it elicits the personal commitment from all involved which ultimately rescued the situation.

Its small budget, flexible organisation and strong local support has allowed Tulca to weather budget cuts and difficulties so far, it would need however a more secure structure to build upon the work done over the past ten years. It is a fine balancing act.

Whether one speaks of dissent or disruption, it is an integral part of our conception of art since the Renaissance. What room for it if the arts are to align themselves with the economic consensus? For all its limitations, the fact that Tulca is still something of a miracle may be part of its appeal and the reason of its survival. Its lack of economic status may have dealt Tulca a weak hand in negotiations, but it may also be why it elicits the personal commitment from all involved which ultimately rescued the situation.

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My thanks for sharing informations and insights to Helen Carey, Michael Dempsey, James Harrold, Megs Morley, Maeve Mulrennan and Deirdre O’Mahony.

(Endnotes)

1. Eight organization came together to form the initial board: Galway Arts Centre, Galway City and Galway County, NUIG, GMIT, Galway County Library, Artpace and Aras Éanna.


6. In the absence of a large exhibition space in Galway, events like Tulca or the Galway Arts Festival rely on the availability of empty commercial spaces without contract. The Galway Shopping Centre space had been wholly fitted for the GAF in July and was thus ready to be used.


8. Tulca is supported by the Arts Council and by Galway City and County arts office, but it could not function without the important support in kind of such organizations as the Model Sgró, Galway Film Centre, Micro Marketing or Galway Arts Festival.

9. Plans for Tulca include a full time administrator and year round office which would help to give the organization a better visibility within the Galway cityscape, to make it an European Festival thus acknowledging its international participation. Megs Morley also started a much needed archive for Tulca that can be explored at http://www.tulca.ie/. Beyond Tulca there is also a project to acquire a Nama building as a permanent exhibition space for Galway.

IMAGE: Amie Siegel, Still from DDRIDDR, 2008 Super 16mm film.
Everyone who is sent here brings with them all the thoughts and actions of their life in a bag.

by VALERIE CONNOR

After the Fall, Tulca, Galway.
Very much better, all in all,
Than Dublin Contemporary.
After the Fall.

See all venues? Eh, no, not all.
Dublin and back, by bus, same day!
Right, the appeal then overall?

The programme. Able to convey
How thinking’s about the long haul,
No need to fear complexity
After the Fall.
'here' is the pavement outside a McDonald’s in Prague. In 1992, little more than a couple of years after the Gentle or Velvet Revolution of 1989, the first of the fast food franchises opened in the old city area, appearing to replace the sour taste left by the old communist ideology of the past with a flavour of the free market of the future. In 1988, I was in Belgrade with another friend. On arrival, a smoker then, I bought a pack of Dunhill at a kiosk. Smoke first. Eat after. High prices. Fine, but a rip-off or a little extra for the foreign brand; not remarkable. To eat. How about those doughnuts? Double-checking the calculations, struggling to learn the currency, yes, the doughnuts were more expensive than the cigarettes. Ok. Something was up. What was happening was that the currency was in freefall. This was bad. We opted to eat in McDonald’s. It had only opened that year. It was brand new, the first franchise to open in Central Europe. Air-cooled, young customers, meticulously and fashionably dressed, talking loudly, sharp looks, no eye contact. We were grubby and a bad fit. But we spoke English. Tourists. A security guard watched discretely from the door. The menu prices were the same as at home and everywhere else. It was hard to reconcile this with what was going on outside in the intense heat with the cigarettes and doughnuts. We got served and we got out. We left on the night train, south through Yugoslavia, as it still was, to Greece. A difficult journey of eleven hours. A young soldier standing between us and harm’s way. I think of that soldier. I thought of him while in the Niland Gallery, night train, south through Yugoslavia, as it still was, to Greece. A difficult journey of eleven hours. A young soldier standing between us and harm’s way. I think of that soldier. I thought of him while in the Niland Gallery,
Que Sera, Sera  
(Whatever Will be, Will be)  
by SEAN LYNCH

For Fugitive Papers I'm presenting a collection of documents from my personal archive, each accompanied with a commentary and contextual note. My selection consists of newspaper pages, documentary photographs and found images. Each of these choices detail objects and moments that have occurred as public actions or events in Ireland. It is also possible to consider that each document and its associative and explanatory text also functions within the perceived parameters and grammar of contemporary art-making and its reception.

While I use text in my artistic practice for several years now, I've always distanced myself from the nuances of art writing. This, coupled with the fact that I haven't yet seen other contributor's texts in this first issue, makes me somewhat unsure about how the material I'm publishing here might fit into any conscious or conflictual scenario involving art criticism in the country right now. Despite this somewhat hermetic position, I do understand that the framing devices of art criticism, by their very nature, always suggest that art cannot be purely experienced. While the role of this mediation, played out through the fashion of the day, or the discursive nature of its community are omnipresent issues, I'm interested in how this selection and its discursive complexities might challenge the idea of 'now' in a localised art criticism. Much of the material alludes to how isolated threads of history have been, and continue to be, recontextualised for cultural production. Various modes of translation, displacement and transposition are evident in each of the seven examples here, which I hope have use-value as precedents, touchstones and reference points for further investigation and research.

1. On the 5th March 2008, The Irish Daily Mirror details a stack of bricks, covertly removed from the ground and neatly piled on top of each other, at the centre of a roundabout in Wexford town. The structure existed for a few hours on a Saturday night through to Sunday morning, and was photographed by an unnamed local man. An accompanying editorial recognised and endorsed it as being an unusual piece of public art.

While the story did not feature in the UK edition of the same day, the report suggests an editorial shift in the Mirror's stance on the use of bricks in art. On 16 February 1976 the paper famously led with the headline: WHAT A LOAD OF RUBBISH, reacting angrily to the Tate Gallery spending taxpayer's money and purchasing Carl Andre's sculpture Equivalents VIII for their collection. The artwork consisted of 120 bricks arranged in a rectangle. On the same day, London's Evening Post interviewed several bricklayers on the matter.

2&3. Interview with Danny McCarthy, 7 February 2011

Sean Lynch: I became aware of an artwork entitled One-Hundred Bottles for James Joyce which you began in 1982 by throwing a hundred whiskey bottles from O'Connell Bridge into the Liffey. Subsequently, whoever found a bottle was asked to post a note inside, back to you.

Danny McCarthy: I love the idea of using the river as a source for the piece and an initial inspiration was something that Joyce said, that Ulysses would keep the professors busy for centuries. I wanted a piece that would be never-ending as such, because I've never expected to get one hundred replies back to the hundred bottles. Each bottle had a little note inside asking whoever found it to write back to me – care of Triskel Arts Centre Cork, and just say where they found it and give their name. I got replies very, very quickly after it happened, obviously from around Dublin Bay,
then one came from Howth, and eventually about six months later I got one from Wales.

Lynch: You’ve always considered the notion of continuity, how this artwork stretches over time and will continue to stretch over time. So far you’ve got eight replies, but the work is still not finished.

McCarthy: Exactly, I mean that’s the whole idea with the work is that it’s ongoing. Those bottles are out there somewhere floating around, hopefully, or some of them will be still in existence anyway.

4. This photograph details stonemasonry on 28 Angelsea Street in Dublin. The building was constructed in the 1866, and throughout the facade the stonemason’s skill of vermiculation is evident. Irregular holes have been carved into architraves around windows and doors, intended to resemble a process of worms eating their way through the building until it collapses into rubble. While there are many examples of vermiculation in Ireland, and on buildings such as the Louvre in Paris, this rendering on Angelsea Street is particularly curious. Its styling is less apparent than other impressions of worm tracts on quoins and ground floor masonry throughout Dublin, but can be clearly linked formally to this idiom. Moreover, the mason’s entropic and symbolic digression – that all that is built is bound to sometime fall into ruin – might be viewed in light of the building’s current tenants, the Irish Stock Exchange.

5. Another example of a transformational materiality of architecture can be seen in this architectural model of the Campanile in Trinity College. While the structure was built by Charles Lanyon in 1854, the subsequent model converted the Portland stone belfry and granite arcade into an accomplished shape rendered in butter. The image was found by Eddie McParland, once a professor of architectural history at Trinity College. He cannot remember where or when the image was sourced and jovially noted in a 2003 text that the present whereabouts of the model are unknown.
A steel sculpture by Richard Serra was installed on Crane Street in 1984, as a commission for that year's Rosc exhibition. The work, still visible today, consists of a series of chevron-like metal shapes indented into the cobblestones of the street in the midst of the sprawling Guinness brewery complex. Hundreds, maybe thousands of cars drive over the sculpture each day, as the street is used as a short cut for motorists to get from The Liberties onto Thomas Street. The title of the work, *Sean's Spiral*, is named after structural engineer Sean Mulcahy's involvement in the project, a firm friend with Serra to this day.

Serra's original idea for the site consisted of two steel circles, sixteen feet in diameter, placed into the road's surface. Corporation workers were employed to close the street, dig out foundations, lay a cement bed and place the sculpture, with Serra supervising the install. The scene was captured by cartoonist Martin Turner in *The Irish Times* of 7th July 1984, featuring two workmen and city manager Frank Feely all onsite. Evocative puns were made of the Irish economy, Serra's surname and a correlation between his artistic genre as a Minimalist sculptor and the daily efforts of a Dublin Corporation employee.

The chorus of the cartoon, *CHE SERRA SERRA...*, alludes to 1950s popular song *Que Sera, Sera (Whatever Will be, Will be)* pre-empted the eventual result of Serra's endeavour, as difficulties arose with the fabrication of the piece. Serra was quoted:

> What was very disheartening here is that I had an idea for making a circular piece in the street... a circle within a circle with a conjunction which I hadn't done before. The people told me that they could build that, that with an 8" flange they could bend the steel into a circle. As it turned out, after telling me for a week that they could do it and ordering the material they couldn't do it. I was fit to be tied! I had a 160-foot of material and they couldn't bend it. I had the street open with people waiting for me to do something and about a day and a half to come up with an answer... I'm not going to know until the piece is actually embedded in the ground in the cobblestone there.
7. Pat McAuliffe lived and worked in Listowel, County Kerry from 1846 to 1921. In a career as a builder he applied exterior plaster, or stucco, upon shopfronts and townhouse facades in the region. Over thirty examples can still be seen today. From the 1870s onwards he began to develop an ambitious and often exuberant style, using a broad range of elements culled from the vocabulary of classical architecture and ornament while exploiting an eclectic mix of Art Nouveau, Celtic and Byzantine influences. The fascinating aspect about McAuliffe’s practice was how he twisted all this information into a vernacular idiom, capable of expressing social, economic and political relations of his craft and time. Upon the gable end of a large farmhouse, off the N69 road and sometime around 1900, McAuliffe rendered a large scroll with the Latin text Ecce Signum. Somewhat bizarrely, this translates as ‘behold, the sign’, expressing his interest in using language to comment on the product of his work in the locality. This sign about a sign is indicative of McAuliffe’s use of Latin mottos and reflective of an eclectic knowledge that became part of the culture. “When every boy knew his Virgil and Horace and Homer as well as the last ballad about some rebel that was hanged…when Kerry peasants talked to each other in Latin…they spoke the tongue of Cicero and Livy – the language of the educated world”.

8. An Buile Shuibhne, translated as ‘The Madness of Sweeney’, or ‘Sweeney’s Frenzy’, is the story of Sweeney, a legendary king of Ulster. It is told in a mixture of poetry and prose, set in the year 637. In the legend, the king was annoyed by the sound of a bell. When he learned that the sound came from Bishop Ronan who recently set up a church, the pagan king Sweeney, awoken from his sleep, stormed naked to the church and pulled the bishop away from the bell. He would have killed him were he not called at that moment to fight in battle. Instead he broke the bell with his spear. At this, Ronan cursed Sweeney with madness. Later, when the battle began, Sweeney went insane. He dropped his weapon, and he began to levitate like a bird. From that point on, Sweeney leapt from place to place. Also, like a bird, he could never trust humans. His kinmen and subjects sent him mad with fear, and he could only flee from spot to spot, naked and hungry. The poetry in the story of Sweeney is rich and accomplished, as the mad and exiled king laments and composes verse as he travels. At every stop in his flight, Sweeney pauses to give a poem that describes the countryside and his unfortunate plight.

My early familiarity with the story is twofold. Flann O’Brien incorporates much of the tale into his novel At Swim-Two-Birds, adapting it into a frenetic pace as Sweeney hops and leaps from one location to another, at such a pace it never seems possible to visualise his presence in any one place. Moreover, I always thought about this roaming king when I encountered Tom Fitzgerald’s 1987 sculpture called Sweeney’s Throne. The piece was one of several artworks Fitzgerald made about the story of Sweeney in the 1980s, and was made as part of a Sculptors’ Symposium that saw sculptures placed throughout Limerick City. It stood for many years on Rutland Street, and I would walk past it on my way into the art school on Georges Quay. Each day I would gaze at it, imagining I would see Sweeney taking up Fitzgerald’s invitation, for him to rest from his travels, to finally find a place of comfort and compose one last ode to the new surroundings he found himself in.

(Endnotes)

1. Young Rosc 1984 catalogue, p.11
2. P.A. Sheehan, The Literary Life and Other Essays (Dublin 1921) p.52
3. For example, the original ‘an clog náomh re náomhaibh,’ translated by J. G. O’Keeffe in the standard edition as ‘the bell of saints before saints’ is rendered by O’Brien as ‘the saint-bell of saints with saintly-saints’.

SPRING 2012 | 11
One can say that there is writing about art, above art, across art, after art, against art, along art, alongside art, amid art, among art, around art, as art, atop art, barring art, before art, behind art, below art, beneath art, beside art, besides art, between art, beyond art, by art, concerning art, despite art, except art, excluding art, failing art, following art, for art, from art, in art, including art, inside art, into art, like art, minus art, near art, next to art, notwithstanding art, of art, off art, on art, onto art, opposite art, out of art, outside art, over art, pace art, past art, per art, qua art, regarding art, since art, through art, throughout art, to art, towards art, under art, underneath art, unlike art, until art, upon art, versus art, via art, with art, within art and without art (and vice-versa). I assume that the act of writing allows one to understand things that can only be understood when written, just as there are things that can only be understood in the presence of art. The relationship between writing about art and experiencing art do not exclude each other. But at the same time, neither can be completely subsumed by the other. And both contaminate one another.¹

To do this one has to write, re-write, dismember, re-member.

How do you take someone with you on this journey? Bring them from one germ of an idea to another, the one you’re thinking, make the links, the same links you’ve made.

You can’t! Not really.

Neither can an artist prescribe a certain ‘reading’ of his or her work. Every time the work is experienced it might be different. There is no way to quantify the reading of the work and as I’ve written elsewhere the same person may read the same work differently at different times, for a myriad different reasons, up to and including the weather outside.

Context, one’s reality therefore has a big role to play in how we read. (Did you make that jump?)

I saw three films recently at Tulca 2011, three films which really made me think. But I should explain the context in which I saw them, so that it might make sense to you how I experienced them, and why I’m writing about them now in this context.

I went to Tulca thinking about writing about art. I do this all the time, but this time I had been given a task to think about writing about art, so I was thinking about writing about art in a very focused way. So much so that I was at that stage really thinking about writing about writing about art. How to write about writing, which was writing about art. (You can see I was already in the frame of mind to think about the essence of things, and ripe for an out-of-body experience.) Added to this was the fact that I had just returned from Prague the day before, where I had been talking about writing about art and talking about writing about art-writing. I had also been writing about talking about writing about art. As it turned out later, not only the talking about writing about art, but also the Prague element of that experience was really relevant to the context in which I saw the three films.

So, to the three films…

The first was a film by Joanne Richardson and David Rych, called Red Tours, which was screened at the Niland Gallery. This film was described as a ‘docu-fiction that investigates the dialectic between tourism and collective memory in statue parks, museums, and staged re-enactments of com-
munism in the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary and Lithuania. It explored “exhibit for edification” and the “ciphers for active forgetting” through three stories; three very different perspectives. The contradictions of reality were made apparent, as the film explored how the death of an idea, the erasing of a particular history, made it impossible for people to even voice it to themselves. They became visitors to their own past. History had been re-written through the taking down of monuments, the dismembering of statues and the re-staging of perceived histories; performing the past literally. In that re-writing reality and realities had been lost, deliberately expunged. I would argue that all history is viewed from a skewed present, which alters or re-writes, however in this case, in the examples portrayed in this film, it had been widely and actively done. The irony is that once artists, the avant-garde would have had a role in building the legitimacy of the system, whereas in the present their role is now the opposite. This film also constitutes a critique of the politics of documentary film, which claims to present reality or history.

I should mention that while in Prague, I had seen in the Old Town Square a temporary monument, a sort of commemorative piece, which could equally have been an art installation. It was in front of St Nicholas’ Church and surrounded by chains and police tape. It was an almost elaborate coffin, covered in wreaths and ribbons with the words “Never Forget”, and tall candles all around. It was clear it was not to be touched or interfered with. I couldn’t decide whether it was propaganda or art-installation, or both. I couldn’t decide whether it was pro- or anti-communism. I couldn’t decide whether it was duplicitous or genuine. I wasn’t sure it mattered that I couldn’t make those decisions, as it had started me thinking about reopening thought processes, ways of thinking. Whether it was art or memorial was almost irrelevant, as I was now thinking about history and how it is represented and remembered, as well as what might constitute history at all; and whether what we accept as any given history is real and to whom and why. And how does one decide which history to accept, if any, as all must be equally valid, unless you make it up, and who’s to say that’s not as valid or as real as any other, if you believe it?

The narrator in Red Tours spent some time talking about a tour guide, being filmed talking about art, the art which described a history, which legitimised and was legitimised by the art, and was the shared (recent) history of the tourists listening to the talk, imagining imagined pasts (their own) which are not actually imagined at all. A colonising of the self. A commodifying of memory. A mix of reality and staging for tourist purposes. In Berlin real passports were being stamped with fake stamps for the DDR, or perhaps what were real stamps of a country now passed into history, so what is real?

Might we start thinking about an end of history as we know it?

The second film was a much shorter piece by Kristina Norman, titled After War which was screened at Galway Art Centre. It was the documentation of an art installation, which was the placing of a stature, The Bronze Soldier, a painted imitation of a real statue, a memorial to Soviet soldiers, which had been taken down in 2007. The space where it stood was still visited every year by Russians in Estonia, where they lay flowers, paying homage to something, a statue, an idea, a way of life, which no longer exists in the present. This film then is documenting a real life situation in which a former (no longer real) real-life situation was memorialised by a deliberate fiction, which elicited a very real life response from the Tallinn police. Different ideologies and peoples identifying with different histories, only some of which are allowed to survive into the present. The imagery of people laying flowers where there is nothing, a blank space, emptier than a blank space because it wasn’t always blank, contrasts sharply with those in Red Tours, who participate in a re-staging of barracks life (complete with screaming sergeant) for fun, something to do.

Art versus reality. Art about reality, or how reality is constructed or perceived... versus reality itself. Kristina Norman is making art about art about reality, a reality which is no longer real. I am now writing about art about art about a no-longer-real reality.

What is reality anyway?

I should also mention that while I speak very good German, I speak no Czech at all, which I found very disconcerting while in Prague. More disconcerting was the fact that because I wasn’t in an English-speaking environment, I began thinking in German and in fact spoke in German several times to various Czech people, which didn’t go down well at all and made me feel like I was out of my body and very much observing from the outside. So then I started thinking about reality and whose reality I was in, and whether I was only really real if I was acknowledged as such by those around me. It was all very surreal.

The third film was by Amie Siegel. DDR/DDR was screened at Nun’s Island Theatre and began with the camera, which in this film plays a central role itself, self-consciously adding yet another layer to the layers of meaning and interpretation, catching a DDR car sign, the mark for a country which now only exists in history. This film is 135 minutes long and is comprised of several elements. One of these is the playing of recorded interviews, real interviews in a real room, the real former office of the ministry of Staatssicherheit, better known as the Stazi. These interviews discuss the kind of work the Stazi were involved in, the kind of documentation they kept on citizens and how. There was also documentation of personal interviews with a camera and sound man, who performed some of this intelligence work. He showed the tiny holes in walls for surveillance and what was then sophisticated equipment for carrying this out. This room full of equipment is now an archive, historical objects, which were key to the prolonging and maintaining of a status quo, which has not only passed into history, but which also psychologically damaged a whole generation of the people under this regime. The system is gone, the actual physical equipment still exists, as do the behavioural patterns and psyches of those affected.

One psychoanalyst speaks both from her chair as doctor and the couch as patient, speaking about the effects this regime had on its citizens. This surveillance consisted of both reality and fiction, depending on what suited the Stazi’s needs. The reason for so much psychological damage, was that the link between what was sure and known and what could potentially be the reality you might have to live tomorrow, was broken. This ‘Bruch’ was brought about through the panoptic culture forced on the people, where citizens closed themselves off from society, manifesting the “outward signs of inner immigration.” How does repetition shape cultural memory?

Vladan Jeremić writes in ‘The Perspectives, Part 1’ about Jean Luc Godard’s saying “that it is not enough to make political films, films must also be made politically”. These three films throw into sharp relief questions and ideas about past and present, time and memory, re-writing dismembering and re-membering, about docu-fiction, documentary, reliability and authenticity, challenging us to stand in one place, if that’s possible and watch the unfolding around us.

My Prague and Tulca photographs all ended up in the one folder on my computer, which in retrospect (always the most interesting of perspectives) felt really appropriate, reality (if that means anything anymore) mixed up with the art.

(Endnotes)

1. Bernardo Ortiz Campo, ‘Criticism and Experience’, e-flux journal #13, February 2010. In the original, this was presented as plain text in a journal column.
2. Tulca 2011 Programme, curated by Megs Morley, p.11.
3. Both phrases taken from the film Red Tours, by Joanne Richardson and David Rych, which was screened at the Niland Gallery in Galway.
Responding – Before and After the Fall
by JOANNE LAWS

In forming a response to Tulca 2011: After the Fall, I have compiled an asemblage of voices from some academic, literary, media, and artistic sources. Although each extract has the potential to exist autonomously, it is within their coexistence and ultimate fusion that a dialogue can emerge. The task of this dialogue is to anchor, contextualise, supplement and extend the thematic inquiry initiated by Tulca, in a way that provokes an ongoing reflection towards the present moment. For my purposes, I have gravitated towards two prominent lines of inquiry, involving the inter-play between geographical location and conceptual notions of ‘counter-monument’, in the construction of an over-arching narrative.

Many of the artworks shown at Tulca made reference to land, territory and nationhood via the geographical and conceptual sites of ‘border’ and ‘island’. These images resonate within the immediate Irish landscape, while also offering access to wider geopolitical discourse. Over the last two decades, the ‘border-zone’ has been revived as a source of study within geography and wider fields of social theory. Whereas classical anthropological examination primitivism and the typology of ethnic groups, contemporary anthropological studies focus on cultural differences between groups which persist because of ethnic boundary division, presenting the border as an active force rather than merely an agent of separation. Existing at the peripheral edges of migration, surveillance, and an agent of national sovereignty. It functions as a threshold between native/foreign, enemy/allies, import/export – but in a period of late capitalism, binaries like these are no longer sufficiently defined. Good? Evil? Territorial? Notions of a ‘borderless world’ promoted by globalisation theories, with the attenuation of national barriers in promoting international trade and the flow of global distribution, provide a counter narrative to border study. Or maybe it’s the other way round.

The global distribution of products and services, relocating multinationals, and the out-sourcing of labour are characteristic of the current global outlook. Similarly, the saturation of tourism and mass travel propose a condensing of history and culture through the spectrum of leisure, to the extent that tourism can be experienced as a process of human self-colonisation. Just as world tourist attractions are precluded by the circulation of their own image, so must the moment of confrontation be perceived with questions about how we may inhabit this history.

The monument as an indexical artifact, or mode of commemoration, often exists as a point of convergence for incomparable versions of history – a process that does not necessarily lose traction when the monument is removed. In the case of the ‘counter-monument’, bearing witness to an absent structure can prove more affective than any physical presence.

Speaking recently at the TRADE Seminar (2011) in Leitrim, artist Phillip Napier used the new EU funded M1 motorway connecting Dublin and Belfast as a metaphor for the seamless transition from one country to another, only visible via the signage (denoting either miles or kilometres). The M1 is part of a larger European infrastructure, the EU10 route, which connects Ireland to mainland Europe via land and sea links with Portugal and Spain, facilitating an ease of passage for production and distribution. No trace of the border checkpoints remains; no military, no surveillance, no flags. “The logic economy has swept away the sovereigns of the foreign. A nation that historically was defined by Unionist intercession is now being asked to adopt an outward-looking perspective. How does geography shape new realities? What might we do now? Is it still possible to posit ‘frontier discovery’ over established routes? To connect with whom? Art is a good site for questions like these”.

When New York artist Andres Serrano plunged a plastic crucifix into a glass of his own urine and photographed it in 1987 under the title Piss Christ, he said he was making a statement on the misuse of religion. Controversy has followed the work ever since, but reached an unprecedented peak on Palm Sunday when it was attacked with hammers and destroyed after an ‘anti-blasphemy’ campaign by French Catholic fundamentalists in the southern city of Avignon. The violent slashing of the picture, and another Serrano photograph of a meditating nun, has plunged secular France into soul-searching about Christian fundamentalism and Nicolas Sarkozy’s use of religious populism in his bid for re-election next year. It also marks a return to an old standoff between Serrano and the religious right that dates back more than 20 years, to Reagan-era Republicans in the US.

The photograph, full title Immersion (Piss Christ), was made in 1987 as part of Serrano’s series showing religious objects submerged in fluids such as blood and milk. In 1989, rightwing Christian senators’ criticism of Piss Christ led to a heated US debate on public arts funding. Republican Jesse Helms told the senate Serrano was “not an artist. He’s a jerk.” Serrano defended his photograph as a criticism of the “billion-dollar Christ-for-profit industry” and a “condemnation of those who abuse the teachings of Christ for their own ignoble ends.” It was vandalised in Australia, and neo-Nazi fans ransacked a Serrano show in Sweden in 2007.

On June 1st 1985, in a field in Wiltshire, The Ministry of Defence sanctioned the interception of a convoy of several hundred new-age travellers who were enroute to the Stonehenge free festival. The annual event, which had historically attracted tens of thousands of visitors, was a source of embarrassment to the authorities, and the gathering was suppressed with violent force by Margaret Thatcher’s militarised police. Like the Miner’s strikes of 1984, The Battle of the Beanfield was a ‘brutal display of state violence that signalled a major curtailment of civil liberties. The Battle of the Beanfield was not the end of grassroots dissent in the UK, as a new threat emerged just a few years later, when the acid house scene, with its giant warehouse raves and outdoor parties, once more threw the government – and the tabloids – into an authoritarian frenzy.

The legislation that followed, the 1994 Criminal Justice Act, enabled the police to ban groups of 20 or more people meeting in a particular area.

The Watchman falls into the trap of looking. The ‘spy’ is a different person…The spy must be ready to ‘move’, must be aware of his entrances and exits. The watchman leaves his job and assumes a new ‘threat’ emerged just a few years ago. A new ‘threat’ emerged just a few years later, when the acid house scene, with its giant warehouse raves and outdoor events, once more threw the government – and the tabloids – into an authoritarian frenzy.

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Superficially, the world has become small and known. Poor little globe of earth, the tourists trot round you as easily as they trot round the Bois or round Central Park. There is no mystery left, we've been there, we've seen it, we know all about it. We've done the globe, and the globe is done... As a matter of fact, our great-grandfathers, who never went anywhere, in actuality, had more experience of the world than we have, who have seen everything. When they listened to a lecture with lantern-slides, they really held their breath before the unknown, as they sat in the village school-room. We, bowling along in a rickshaw in Ceylon, say to ourselves: "It's very much what you'd expect." We really know it all. We are mistaken. The know-it-all state of mind is just the result of being outside the mucous-paper wrapping of civilization. Underneath is everything we don't know and are afraid of knowing.

D.H. Lawrence, New Mexico, 1928, in The Spell of New Mexico, Tony Hillerman (Ed.), University of New Mexico Press, 1984, pp. 29-30

The fervent tourism at Ground Zero, which has not appeared to lessen as time has passed, is a primary example of what I am calling the tourism of history. By necessity as a site of mourning, Ground Zero is stripped of its larger political meaning and situation within global politics. The souvenir culture at Ground Zero functions as a means to provide connection to site, to testify to a visitor's pilgrimage there, and to provide comfort – the comfort of kitsch, and the comfort that commerce continues. These souvenirs also participate in a kind of re-enactment, a stasis in which the moment of the towers' fall is imagined to not yet have taken place. In the constant reinscription of the twin towers, these objects project a fantastic time, in which the towers still stand yet are charged with the meaning of their loss, their presence re-enacted.

Marita Sturken, Tourist of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero, Duke University Press, 2007

On 19 October 1988 Tory Home Secretary Douglas Hurd announced that organisations in Northern Ireland believed to support terrorism would be banned from directly broadcasting on the airwaves [in the U.K.]. The ban affected 11 loyalist and republican organisations but Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, was the main target. It meant that instead of hearing Gerry Adams, viewers and listeners would hear an actor's voice reading a transcript of the Sinn Fein leader's words... A list of actors was drawn up and would be called on, often at the last minute, to record voices for news and documentaries about Northern Ireland.

"The ban as far as we were concerned was a weapon of war used by the government" Danny Morrison, former director of publicity for Sinn Fein

"There was a lack of sympathy in the government towards the media at the time" Lord Tebbit, Former Tory chairman

"We must try to find ways to starve the terrorist and the hijacker of the oxygen of publicity on which they depend" Margaret Thatcher

BBC News, Tuesday, 5 April 2005: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4409447.stm]

'The broadcast ban on Sinn Fein, Francis Welch (Producer of 'Speak no Evil')

‘Quelling the Oxygen of Publicity: British Broadcasting and The Troubles During the Thatcher Years', Gary R. Edgerton, The Journal of Popular Culture, Volume 50, Issue 1, p. 115

His mind slid away into the labyrinthine world of doublethink. To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, to use logic against logic, to repudiate morality and believing in both of them, to use complete truthfulness while telling half-lies, to tell lies big and small on alternate days, to be conscious of complete unconscience, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed. Even to understand the word 'doublethink' involved the use of doublethink.

Olhe, um terrorista! yelled the construction worker as I passed. I was living in Salvador, Brazil, where eighty percent of the population identifies as something other than white. Though not sharing the same ancestry as my neighbors, I never, as a moreno (brown-skinned person), stood out to them as different. Yet to the man who pointed me out that day, I did. He apparently had been watching the news: another round of Arab men arrested on suspicion of plotting a terror attack. It was a small moment, an aberration amidst the abundance of hospitality I was enjoying in a country not my own. Born in Sri Lanka and raised in the United States, I chose to move to Brazil mainly for personal enrichment—to study and practice liberation theology in a land regarded as one of its homes. With so varied and privileged a background, I saw myself as something of a supra-cultural globetrotter, immune to other peoples' limitations of cultural and national identity. Whenever crossing what others referred to as borders, I rarely ceased to feel centered. Yet that day—the day I was labelled a terrorist—I suffered something of the migrant's anguish, the de-centering humiliation that typically accompanies the border corridor.


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Marita Sturken, Tourist of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero, Duke University Press, 2007
The term ‘counter-monument’ was a phrase developed by American English and Judaic Studies scholar James E. Young, in his exploration of the removal of commemorative monuments and sculptures in sites around Germany in the 1990s. Emblematic of questions surrounding history, memory and representation, the counter (or vanishing) monument is the marking and reconfiguring of loss with impermanence and physical absence. “Holocaust memorial-work in Germany today remains a tortured, self-reflective, even paralyzing preoccupation”.

Discussing the removal of Sol Lewitt’s Black Form: Dedicated to the Missing Jews from its intended site in Munster, Germany, Young stated that “an absent people would now be commemorated by an absent monument”.

In 1987 Horst Hoheisel created Negative Form Monument for Kassel, Germany, as a monument to Aschrott’s Fountain, which had been condemned by the Nazis as ‘Jew’s Fountain’ and demolished. Sunk into the ground like a funnel, Hoheisel’s commemorative sculpture was barely visible on the surface of the town’s square where the fountain once stood. Alluding to citizenship, and the historical responsibility towards active remembering, Hoheisel stated that “the visitor is the monument”.

“All our projects are absolutely irrational with no justification to exist. Nobody needs a running fence or surrounded islands. They are created because Jeanne-Claude and I have this unstoppable urge to create. They are made for us first. Not the public. Artists have a huge white canvas and an indescribable urge to fill it with color. There is no reason. Of course, if Mr. Smith likes the canvas, it’s good, but the true artist doesn’t make it for Mr. Smith. It is so fragile, so human, so marvelous. The reason we don’t like the projects to stay is no one can charge for tickets, no one can buy this project. It is freedom. Freedom is the enemy of possession and possession is permanence. These projects are once in a lifetime. It is not like the bombardment of pictures of repetitious things, the globalization of the same imagery—the blockbuster exhibition, the big Olympic Games, the same thing over and over. Humans, unique themselves, like to be in the presence of the unique. When a project is realized, the joy, the beauty makes for total awe and everything else looks trivial and banal”.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Surrounded Islands, Biscayne Bay, Greater Miami, Florida, 1980-83: ©

Laura Horelli interviewed by Maxine Kopsa, IDEA Atea & Societas, Issue #21, 2005

Laura Horelli’s Helsinki Shipyard/Port San Juan consists of a series of interviews carried out with two work forces making their living from the cruise ship industry. The life of the labourers who build the ships is contrasted with those employed in the service industry onboard. These works examine shifting and dislocated perceptions of place, labour and leisure which exist beneath a homogenized global surface.

The shipyard in Helsinki is faced with pressure in order to keep up with global competition. It is no longer able to construct the ever larger vessels demanded by the industry; it has run out of space in its location in central Helsinki. Many of the employees have never been on a cruise and cannot relate to the idea of taking a cruise. The cruise companies like to market the diversity of the crew. However, in the guest spaces of the ship the employees are not allowed to speak in any other language but English. Their flags of convenience are in countries like Liberia and Panama, so the companies do not have to follow the (labour, environmental) laws of the nation states they are based in. The cruise tourism industry is the most successful major branch of tourism. It is an industry quite free from geographical restrictions under which many industries still operate and can therefore be seen as an example for globalization and its causes.

Irish property developer Joe McNamara came to prominence in September 2010 when he drove a cement lorry, with the words ‘Toxic Bank Anglo’ painted on its side, into the gates of Leinster House. The vehicle registration plate displayed the word ‘bankrupt’. Over the weekend of November 25th 2011, a massive Stone-henge like structure was erected on commonage land on a hilltop in Achill, Co. Mayo. McNamara (dubbed the ‘Anglo Avenger’ by the media due to his high-profile protests against Anglo Irish Bank) was ordered to stop building, as the structure does not have planning permission.

“Echoing both Stonehenge and the Poulnabrone dolmens, in the Burren, Achill-henge takes its lineage from those ancient burial sites, acting as a metaphorical grave for the hubris of our property bubble. Does it represent a scathing critique of how we have forsaken our heritage for the unattainable chimera of property wealth? Is it a shrine to the folly of the ghost estates that litter the country and despoil our landscape? Is it synchronised with the angle of the sun for the summer and winter solstices? In which case, as a giant sundial, it doesn’t so much tell the time as tell the story of our times. Or is it a modern-day fairy fort, with cold concrete supplanting organic trees? The forbidding slabs of concrete speak volumes: they are a brutalist affront to the landscape that surrounds them.

An interesting detail was the “believed cost” of the structure, widely reported to be in excess of €1 million, though McNamara has asserted that the actual cost was closer to €20,000. ‘The difference between the first figure and the second is itself a commentary on the imaginary property prices we were willing to believe in.”

In 1949 a peculiar act of political vandalism, perversely reminiscent of Paul Klee’s technique of “taking a line for a walk,” saw the de facto division of East and West Jerusalem. This act, which sought to reflect the new distribution of power following the cessation of hostilities in the war between Arab and Zionist forces of the previous year, was one that both literally and symbolically rewrote the map of the region. All that it required was the pencilling of two lines across a map of Palestine. The Jordanian representative, Abdullah El-Tal, drew his line using a red wax crayon, while Moshe Dayan on the Israeli side drew his line in green. It is the green line that would in time, of course, acquire an emblematic significance for Palestinian aspirations, reaching far beyond the pressing exigencies of the political situation of 1948.


“The grease pencils made lines three to four millimetres wide. Sketched on a map whose scale was 1:20,000, such lines in reality represented strips of land sixty to eighty meters in width. Who owned the ‘width of the line?’”

Meron Benvenisti, City of Stone: The Hidden History of Jerusalem, University of California Press, 1996, p. 57

Image source: davidzwirner.com
After the Fall

A Short Story by GAVIN MURPHY

All things start with good intentions. This is no exception. The brief was clear enough and discussions had covered grounds well. Tulca has been covered too. But deadlines catch up with you. Here, late in the evening with a glass of wine and not a scratch written. The lecture is due for the evening. Globalization needed updating. The Gulf War was the issue then. Now it is not. Now it's the big crash. And now it is back to Marx. Round and round it goes. I must make a note of that.

So what is to be done? Work is work. Deadlines are deadlines. Art is art. And I suppose openings are openings too. There was earnestness in the air the other night. It was ambition a few years ago. It probably still is but the stakes are higher. We’re just about adjusting now. The new rules ought to raise the pitch of voices networking ever so slightly - that they be that bit more enthused by the fact that you’re not actually up to much at present. But if you can sense it, they can sense it too. So a dip in tone marks the new gravitas. I am concerned about that.

The air was fraught as well. Suáin, one of the organizers, was there on opening night. She moved through space like a bluebottle. Her mouth was in the shape of an n. Serifs and all. It is often hard to get a word in, but you do have empathy:

‘In a world becoming, what if we have already become?’

‘Augh, I'm stressed beyond belief. What I’ve had to deal with,’
she replied, shifting direction quickly.

The ensuing conversation was peppered with augs, yeahs and naws. All in earnest it has to be said. Then she’s off again.

Openings can be hard work. It was inevitable that the smokers outside would draw me in. There's comfort here. Old territory. Stories are well rehearsed, refined and timed. They’re great sparks for banter. And wit counts for a lot in the cold. I’m a fresh ear for this stuff these days.

But not in this instance. For there’s a deadline. A deadline for words. More words. Words seeped in words. Words coming down in sheets. Words spread damp from mouths, mouldering. Words ever more electric, scattered from cursors, warm, static, ubiquitous, immaterial. Flash reviews, spontaneous opinion, blogs on blogs, hyperlinked, marketed, surplus, entropic. Every recession brings a new expressionism. This is ours. And every recession needs a new realism, whatever that could be. We’re all doing our bit.

I take a sip from my glass. This really is quite a wine. I need a break. I’ll turn up the stereo. Ah, The Tom Tom Club:

Rap it up for the common good/Let us enlist the neighbourhood/It's okay, I've overstood//This is a wordy rappinghood …

Strange, an image is haunting me at this late hour. Better to write about that. There’s nothing better than to be gently spooked. I can’t be certain where it was seen, caught up as I must have been in the rush of images after the fall. One thing for sure is that I had seen it before - eight years ago where it was seen, caught up as I must have been in the rush of images after the fall. One thing for sure is that I had seen it before - eight years ago.

Here’s nothing better than to be gently spooked. I can’t be certain what is striking about the image is the sense that it has been rejected. You recognize the tricks of an art gallery over time: how the odd placement of things can create a quirk. How oddness is an act of overturning traditional convention. How the quirk can be an almost apologetic understatement that can be contrasted to a world of brash assertion. I say almost in the sense that it holds its own authority – like the world’s cold grey against the warm cream.

Here was the trickery in a solicitor’s home at the point of doing business. You might expect a print of horses in a hunt leaping with those strange splayed legs. Something with the confidence and reassurance of an old order presented through cheap reproduction. Not this time. This was business funked up with a new kind of space: aware of its own artifice and reveling in it. An image, promissory in nature, stood witness to the legal contract being signed. Imagine that. Suffice to say, the paperwork was finished. Job done. Out the door and up the road. End of story.

You’d think I’d be surprised when the work reappeared. Far from it. It was recognized for sure. For this reason I stood before it. But little interest arose other than a faint curiosity of how it ended up where it was. Of course, now that I think about it, recollections surface and even more questions arise. Why was it on exhibition in town when presumably it was bought by a solicitor? It may have been sold, returned to the artist, or lent out for exhibition. There’s little point dwelling on this. Someone will recognize the work and fill me in with the details. In the meantime, the mystery can be savoured while it can.

What is striking about the image is the sense that it has been rejected. There it was, attached to a wall of a rental space that was now surplus to commercial interest. Not that there was much interest shown. For the space was in prime condition - literally. A concrete space with concrete walls, all tough in dim light. There was loose, dead wiring hanging out. I imagine a pool of black water on the ground to one side but really that could not have been. You do get the picture though.

The work had lost its spring. The grey of the photograph in the grey of the room. The receding landscape a distant aspiration. History. The swirls on the print now echoed the sweep of the plasterer’s trowel. The coloured paint marks referencing an Italianate sunset were stranger still as you stood on ground where cold spreads quickly through the feet.
Then the industrialists: such crippling losses

They can't find work for more than one in three

I told the other two: Best ask the bosses

I'm ignorant about economy.

Bertolt Brecht, *Ballad on Approving of the World*, 1929-33

But in truth, this was its charm. It was not a fall from grace. It was not an image of redemption. The work held its own - and no more. Just as it did when first viewed. Where once its authority was recognized, and now appearing ever more coolly aloof from those times, it stands at present as a memory stretching far back and beyond those times and these. Its strength lies in referencing a classical pastoral image. Its persistence lies in its promise of order, stability and repose. It is a promise that can never really be delivered. If you could journey in, the colour of the pastoral retreat remained forever on the surface. The blurred photographic surface is an insistent reminder of flatness, mediating forever between depth and reference.

And this is what gets me. All the time the work has retained an indifference. Its presence each time lay consistently on the cusp of insignificance. Its lure is barely perceptible; its draw like a ghost unwanted.

I must make a note of this. But really what can be made of it? Art criticism starts from purpose; it thrives on definition. That was one of my more determined proclamations in one of Tulca's discussions last Saturday. It was meant too. Purpose and definition. What a pair to hang before a looming deadline and a ghost of an image. It's all I've got though. And anyway, it's really late now and I've a lecture to give in the morning. I've got my notepad to hand. Another glass of wine? Better not. I'll change the record first though.

‘Well?’
‘Well?’
‘How did it go then?’
‘A late night. Met the deadline. Finished the lecture. I’m a free man now.’

‘Happiness dwells in the point of completion.’
‘Yourself?’
‘Barthes and photography in the first year studios. This has been and all that.’
‘Good?’
‘Sort of, I’ll tell you about it over lunch. So what did you make of Tulca then?’

‘Yeah, really good stuff. A lot of referencing of sixties radicalism. You were never sure if the artists quite knew what to make of it though. It’s kind of interesting for that. Yourself?’

‘I got round yesterday. Collectivism is cool again.’

‘Y’up for lunch?’
‘Yeah. You too?’

‘Yeah. I’m starving.’

‘The Wa?’

‘The Wa, yeah.’

‘Yeah, the Wa.’

‘Ah, here’s herself. Y’up for lunch?’

‘Yeah, lunch’d be good. Where you thinking?’

‘The Wa?’

‘The Wa will be good.’

‘The Wa it is then.’
This Space was the culmination of many years planning to deliver a dedicated visual art space of an international standard in terms of design, management, environmental control and security.

That Gallery, houses one of Ireland’s foremost collections of modern and contemporary art. That Gallery also has a dynamic temporary exhibitions programme, which encourages contemporary dialogue, often encompassing the permanent collection, as well as exploring new expression in multimedia. That gallery also stages historical and retrospective exhibitions, particularly of Irish art.

This organisation seeks to develop the educational opportunities, engagement and enjoyment of contemporary art in Ireland, as well as in the larger global community. To encourage continued development, experimentation and innovation, This organisation actively supports artists, other art organisations and groups working and experimenting with new and emergent art practices. This organisation does this through the provision of residencies, resources of space and materials, workshops and seminars, consultation and exhibition opportunities. This organisation is committed to the establishment, preservation and documentation of a permanent collection of work that accurately and authentically represent the historical course of contemporary art, while simultaneously supporting speculation and forecasts of future trends.

That Art Centre’s acclaimed contemporary exhibition programme features several major exhibitions annually drawn from noted national and international contemporary artists. Previous artists have included Andy Warhol, Patrick Hall, Sean McSweeny, Mark Orange, Runa Islam, John Shinnors, Camille Souter, William Kentridge, Jaki Irvine and Barrie Cooke among others.

Since 2006, our huge turnover of exhibitions has made The Organisation one of the most talked about art spaces in Dublin city. The Organisation has appeared in numerous art and non art media, including features in The Sunday Times Style Magazine, Image Magazine, The Irish Times Saturday Magazine, The Sunday Tribune, TG4, RTE, Newstalk radio, and ArtReview magazine.

This Art Space presents the work of a balanced mixture of local, national and international artists. It is the mission of This Art Space to be rooted locally but known internationally, so that our most immediate community is integrated and linked in a meaningful way into the programmes we present. Our gallery spaces have been designed to the highest specifications allowing for flexible and innovative displays, which give artists an opportunity to flex their creativity and expand the scale and materials they use to make their work. Our galleries are unrivalled in Ireland for its size, light, clarity and proportions and will offer both a challenge and opportunity to any artist who takes it on.

That Academy is an artist based and artist orientated institution dedicated to developing, affirming and challenging the public’s appreciation and understanding of traditional and innovative approaches to the visual arts. That Academy achieves its objectives through its exhibition education and collection programmes.

To introduce our audience to new artists as well as expand our audience through the exhibition of work by well established artists that has not been shown in Ireland previously. • To be a centre for the development of new work and artistic practices by actively organizing workshops and events that provide the space, time, and support to create new works. • To create and maintain an open friendly transparent welcoming space to enjoy and celebrate art.

Located at the heart of artistic life in Dublin, This Arts Centre remains at the forefront of cutting edge, high-quality art in Ireland.

It is the critical faculty that invents fresh forms.
The tendency of creation is to repeat itself.
Oscar Wilde