



## SHE DEVIL in Belfast

17.12.15 - 06.02.16

*SHE DEVIL IN BELFAST* was created to further our engagement with the complexity and multiplicity of current perspectives concerning gender identity.

It has been my great pleasure to invite guest curators Jackie Barker, Sara Greavu, Angela Halliday, Sarah McAvera and Marguerite O'Molloy to each contribute a selected artist and artwork for the *SHE DEVIL IN BELFAST* video programme.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of the invited curators for so generously participating in this project and for providing a short introduction to their selections. I would also like to thank all of the participating artists in this programme: Pauline Boudry & Renate Lorenz; Vivienne Dick; Frances Hegarty; Isabel Nolan; Sinéad O'Donnell; and Daphne Wright.

I would also like to thank the artists and curators from the accompanying *SHE DEVIL* programme selected from the previous eight instalments of *SHE DEVIL*: Antonia Alampi; Orsola Mileti; Manuela Pacella; Cristiana Perrella; Lydia Pribisova; and Elena Giulia Rossi. Artists include: Kelly Dobson; Kate Gilmore; Malak Helmy; Klara Lidén; Jumana Manna and Sille Storihle; Tamara Moyzes; Luana Perilli; Ma Qiusha; Larissa Sansour; Jeanne Susplugas; Rona Yefman; and Tanja Schlander. Finally, I'd like to thank Stefania Miscetti and Manuela Pacella for instigating this project.

SELECTED BY JACKIE BARKER

TITLE: *SCREAM OF THE SEA*

ARTIST/S: SINÉAD O'DONNELL, DARYA KADER, POSHYA KAKIL,

*Scream of the Sea* was originally created as part of a Paralympic London 2012 unlimited commissioned project, CAUTION. The project looked at hidden disabilities and acknowledged that in some parts of the world, society's reaction to gender and sexuality can itself be disabling. Describing the performance, that was actually an hour in duration (edited to just over three minutes for the video work), Sinéad O'Donnell states:

"We requested a stop to violence against women in Iraq in red lipstick on glass in Arabic, English and Kurdish language. Our requests blurred through the action. Sinéad O'Donnell and Poshya Kakil carried the glass as Darya Kader improvised a sound of action. There were moments when we thought we would be arrested during this action: it was a very intimately silent agreement of eyes that we would make this artwork happen and face the consequences if we needed to. That happened without speaking."

The silent grace of O'Donnell and Kakil carrying their pane of glass between them is at odds with the cacophony of sound between the singing of Kader and the bustle of the street. They push the glass between them and it begins to seem that they are struggling against each other in addition to the outside world. As the lipstick plea is rubbed off on their faces they change to carrying the pane between them in an almost funeral procession past a line of staring soldiers. They have shown us just how dangerous it can be to be a woman in Iraq.

Sinéad O'Donnell's practice is an exploration of what it is like to be her: to be female; to be dyslexic; to have survived domestic violence herself; and to have the ability to empower other women she feels could be in the same situation through her performance art practice. O'Donnell would prefer not to be labelled. In a 2009 performance work PAVES she and three other female artists threw away their countries' flags and formed a new entity for themselves as "woman". However, we are all labelled whether we want to be or not and O'Donnell's work is an attempt to impose her voice over those who insist to do so. In *Scream of the Sea* her ability to express herself was transferred to give a voice to all those women who do not have a voice because they do not dare.

JACKIE BARKER has been Director of Millennium Court Arts Centre, Portadown, for six years. During that time she has developed and curated projects with some of Northern Ireland's most significant artists. She has an MA in Art History from UCL and an MA in Cultural Policy and Arts Management from UCD, and was Arts Policy Officer for Local Government in Northern Ireland before joining Millennium Court. She has experience of contemporary art in public settings and has worked in commercial galleries in Ireland and London for over 12 years.

SELECTED BY SARA GREAVU

TITLE: *OPAQUE*

ARTIST/S: PAULINE BOUDRY AND RENATE LORENZ

Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz have worked together since 2007, engaging in what they call 'queer archaeology': they seek to recode, reclaim and reanimate documents of the past - excavating them, overlaying and embodying them...queering them. They return to the same collaborators again and again - often writers, choreographers, artists, and musicians in their own right - creating the sense of an ongoing conversation through their body of work.

The radical potential of queer goes beyond the critique of normative, binary constructions of gender and sexual identity. It provides a dynamic response to complex, shifting and interlocking processes and systems of categorization and hierarchy, offering the possibility of a transgressive, revolutionary, anti-assimilationist politics of desire. But queer as a form of sexual identity, while opening up new opportunities for agency, also offers new forms of commodification. Activist/filmmaker Sarah Schulman, part of a queer community forged in the struggle around the AIDS crisis, writes of a new gay generation complicit in a process of 'gentrification of the mind', forgetting difficult, tragic and messy truths about the recent past in favour of privilege and the approval of the dominant culture. In *Capitalist Realism*, Mark Fisher writes, "What we are dealing with now is not the incorporation of materials that previously seemed to possess subversive potentials, but instead their *precorporation*: the pre-emptive formatting and shaping of desires, aspirations and hopes by capitalist culture."

There is a demythologizing lack of polish to *Opaque's* underground revolutionaries, portrayed by regular collaborators Werner Hirsch and Ginger Brooks Takahashi. Their radical gestures and speeches, by turns stiff and mischievous, are the opposite of the pantomime of masculinity and power familiar from the statement videos of radical military groupings.

In *Opaque*, Boudry and Lorenz return to a regular source, Jean Genet, reanimating a text written in the form of a personal ad that seeks an enemy rather than a lover. It lists the ideal characteristics of the desired enemy, proposes the terms of the relationship, fantasises about the activities of subjugation that will be enacted within it. This *true* enemy is pure, undiluted, unmistakable, *declared*. The imperfect re-voicing of the text evokes the broadcast ban on 'terrorist' speech, but the certainties of our old codification of enemies cannot be relied upon; the new enemy can't be draped in the clothes of the old. It is like smoke: it disintegrates, migrates, envelops, re-assembles. The artists quote Antke Engel:

There is not simply "the enemy", and it is not always "over there." Rather, the enemy might be a lover, a friend; it might dwell in the heart, and resist being pinned down to the position of perpetrator - or victim; and named war, or capitalism, or patriarchy. One might like to fight it over there, while enjoying its profits right here.

Within any asymmetrical order of power and access, opacity is tactic of resistance - smoke and mirrors; dazzle and glamour; camouflage and disguise. Hiding in plain sight against a backdrop

of commodified gay aesthetics, queer opacity perhaps allows for the existence of that which cannot be contained, fixed, measured, categorised and made intelligible.

SARA GREAVU is Curator (Public Programmes) at CCA Derry~Londonderry. She has initiated and delivered a wide range of projects in both institutional and independent frameworks, including events, exhibitions, and public programmes. Recent curatorial credits include *Between a Dog and a Wolf* with Sarah Browne, Andrea Francke's *Play Laboratory* project, and the exhibition *Of Other Bodies*. She holds an MFA and a PhD from Ulster University.

SELECTED BY ANGELA HALLIDAY

TITLE: *AUTO PORTRAIT #2*

ARTIST/S: FRANCES HEGARTY

*Auto Portrait #2* draws on the history of portraiture in art, the proportions and orientation of the video image reflecting this. Hegarty adds motion and sound to what has traditionally been an image-centric exercise. *Auto Portrait #2* offers a haptic experience for the viewer, where senses other than the visual are engaged. In *Relational Sense: Towards a Haptic Aesthetic*, Jennifer Fisher suggests that art criticism's preoccupation with the visual sense excludes a consideration of other senses and poses "a more immanent and relational aesthetics: an aesthetics which refers to experience as well as objects". The 'haptic sense', a dimension of sensory experience comprising tactile senses, is as important as the visual sense. The haptic allows us to perceive weight, pressure, balance, temperature, vibration and presence.

In *Auto Portrait #2* visual and haptic senses combine. The darkness in the background of the video image merges with the darkness of the installation space rendering the video frame invisible. The figure appears to be coming forward, moving beyond the space of representation and into the gallery space, making the viewer aware of the position of their own bodies and of the presence of the artist's body in the space. Whilst this is a visual effect, the affective result is haptic. The changes in lighting and sound act as driving forces, pushing the work forward and taking the viewer along towards some kind of frenzied conclusion. There is, however, no closure, finality or ending, as the work slows only to begin again its repetitive cycle of stability, escalation, intensity and subsidence.

Hegarty's use of the strobe lighting within the video renders the video image somewhat indistinct in that we are prevented from fully reading the visual image, from perceiving the object; the female figure. Hence, we cannot master the image and objectify the female body. From a feminist point-of-view, a haptic image calls for mutuality between image and viewer and certainly appeals to any attempt to avoid objectification of the female body. The work's cyclic nature contravenes the conventional linear narrative structure of mainstream cinema, whilst the artist's position as protagonist, subject and creator revises the position of woman as object of, but not subject of many cinematic narratives. The cyclic narrative structure and the female subjectivity imperative in this work are both reasons for my selecting it, as I am interested in the use of a cyclic structure being a potential strategy for producing alternative video narratives in which the female subject can be constructed.

ANGELA HALLIDAY (b.1978, Belfast) is a visual artist and the director of the Digital Arts Studios. Angela curates and writes about visual art. She completed a practice-based PhD entitled *Video Narratives and The Construction of the Female Subject* in 2011. [www.angelahalliday.com](http://www.angelahalliday.com)

#### FURTHER READING:

Fisher, Jennifer, 'Relational Sense: Towards a Haptic Aesthetics', *Parachute*, vol. 87, (1997), 4-11

MacWilliam, Shirley, 'A Snapshot of Performance and Video Editing, Punctuation and Self-image in "Auto Portrait" and "Instant Exposure"', *n.paradoxa*, vol. 5, (2000), 27-34

Marks, Laura U., 'Video Haptics and Erotics', *Screen*, vol. 39, no. 4, (1998), 331-3

SELECTED BY SARAH MCAVERA

TITLE: *SLOGANEERING*

ARTIST/S: ISABEL NOLAN

Instagram and facebook may have taken over from the statement t-shirt, but we are still so often reduced to a single image, statement, status update or tweet. Created in 2001, Isabel Nolan's video work *Sloganeering* predated facebook by some three years, yet predicted the attempt to reduce our identity to a pithy line of text. The video shows a young woman writing statements about herself onto her t-shirt, before removing the outer one to start again on the t-shirt underneath.

"I wish I had one great passion" she proclaims in a line that, like the work as a whole, could be taken as a heart-felt search for self or a tongue-in-cheek parody of the slogan t-shirt wearing. "When I think of the future I feel sick" speaks too closely to the general human malaise of fear to feel like humour, while "Fuck rich Capitalists" is either some sound advice to choose one's Capitalist wisely (only the rich ones) or a term of abuse.

As the work moves on, T-shirts are not just removed, but the "slogans" are scribbled out and new ones written, filling t-shirts with one attempt after another at self-proclamation until we get to "It's trivial", and finally "I'm sick of perky slogans". Slogan after slogan questions the very nature of the popularity of wearing an identity as a sartorial choice – can you really self-identify as an individual while wearing a mass-produced item? Can identity ever be reduced to one statement? The work can be read as an appreciation of the fluidness of identity, how it shifts, blurs and at times directly contradicts.

The young woman writing slogans on her t-shirts in 2001 has gone now, the nature of time dictating that even had the exercise given her an answer, it would no longer be the correct answer. Choosing this work in response to the brief of female identity in Ireland provides the perfect response that there is no answer to what female identity is, just as there is no clear answer to what anyone's identity is. Nolan suggests that proclaiming something is not the same thing as being something and that the interpretation of the readers of her slogans is likely to say more about them than her.

SARAH MCAVERA has worked in the arts since 2003. Currently working as Gallery Manager for the Golden Thread Gallery, she was a founding member of the Untitled Arts Group and continues to act as a free-lance arts facilitator, curator and writer.

McAvera has facilitated numerous exhibitions at local, national and international levels. Her current position includes the organisation of exhibitions, securing funding, representing artists and representing the organisation. She has written for various arts magazines, including the Irish Arts Review, State of Art, Circa and Cura magazine, Italy.

SELECTED BY MARGUERITE O'MOLLOY

TITLE: *I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE*

ARTIST/S: DAPHNE WRIGHT

Much of what excites me about art is its power to expose taboos, to highlight the unseen and make other voices heard. When Peter Richards invited me to participate in the *She Devil in Belfast* project, I took it as an opportunity to champion a work that, in all its strangeness, speaks to my personal concerns. Often we feel the need, whether self-imposed or not, to separate the personal and professional and in the process silence our own truths. I took the opportunity to research and subsequently select a work, which I had not yet seen, by Irish artist Daphne Wright. I was aware of the brief descriptive texts citing the piece as “exploring social taboos such as breastfeeding, sexuality, ageing and parental coldness.”

The artist says that her works often combine “a cool standoff and very intimate address”<sup>1</sup> which is the case in this work *I know what it's like*. An elderly woman adopts a near motionless pose and, unblinking, delivers a series of intimate statements directly to camera. Daphne Wright has an ongoing interest in Phonics, and what the voice can carry by only guttural sounds, and describes the movement of the mouth as a very sculptural act where sounds are shaped.<sup>2</sup> Speaking about the tongue, the artist Carol Rama says “it’s always the same, it never ages”. In this film, the sounds that usher forth from an ageing body evoke a strange hinterland between past and present, forgetting and remembering.

For me, this work is surreal, unsettling and unflinching and it captures the visceral mother/child relationship. It is somewhat disconcerting to be faced with an ageing woman speaking of the intimate act of nursing her child as though it were yesterday. Seeing an ageing woman embody her younger self reminded me of that often broken cycle; daughter – mother – grandmother. The piece resonated with me as a mother. Having breastfed my own child, *I know what it's like*. Through my own journey, I became interested in the politics surrounding breastfeeding. While my experience was of a supportive mother and grandmother, I became acutely aware through my peers, of the loss or lack of generation-to- generation support networks.

In the final, aching moments of the film, the mouth moves, but the words are left unsaid.

DAPHNE WRIGHT. Daphne Wright’s work manoeuvres things into well-wrought, but delicate, doubt – shifting between tautness and mess. It sets imagery, materials and language in constant metaphorical motion. Using a wide range of materials – plaster, tinfoil, video, printmaking, found objects and performance – she creates worlds that are beautiful and rather eerie, which feel like the threshold to somewhere new.

MARGUERITE O'MOLLOY is a mother, curator, feminist, writer and editor based in Dublin, where she works as a Programme Production Manager at IMMA. She holds an MA in Visual Art, and has extensive experience curating the Collection at IMMA and on a freelance basis. She volunteers with FoBF, helping mothers reach their personal breastfeeding goals.

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<sup>1</sup> Daphne Wright, House of Beasts Symposium: Enquiries into the Human and the Animal Darwin Festival 2012, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, 18th February 2012.

<sup>2</sup> In conversation with the artist, Dublin, 2015

SELECTED BY SUSAN PICKEN

TITLE: *A SKINNY LITTLE MAN ATTACKED DADDY*

ARTIST/S: VIVIENNE DICK

“A look at my family and the place where I grew up. So much of what is 'me' comes from attitudes, expectations, fears, habits and beliefs that I inherited from my parents (and they in turn from theirs). This video is about separation from the family. My work is to try to know myself - the only way to change inherited patterns.”

Vivienne Dick, 1994.

For anyone who has left their family and home, moved away and then returned, Vivienne Dick's film will strike a chord. An honest and lyrical exploration of her return to her own family, and to Ireland, for me this film embodies the tensions and joys of this unique yet universal experience – to be (in one's own head at least) mature, experienced, evolved, grown-up and at the same time to be an eternal child, sibling, niece, nephew in the eyes of one's family.

A representation of Vivienne Dick's own return to her family in rural Donegal, and the emotional landscape surrounding that return, *A Skinny Little Man Attacked Daddy* is a film of contrasts: between the gentle Donegal countryside and the rough textures of the city; between the nostalgia of the past and the reality of the present; between the joy of being with one's own flesh and blood and the sadness of inevitable mortality; between individual and family.

One of Ireland's most important film-makers, Vivienne Dick was born in Donegal in 1950 and studied at University College, Dublin. Moving to New York in the late '70s, and inspired by the music and aesthetic of punk, she became part of the 'No Wave' group of film-makers.

She returned to Ireland in 1982, subsequently moving to London in 1985. She now lives in Galway where she teaches and continues to make films.

SUSAN PICKEN is Head of the Queen's Film Theatre in Belfast, Northern Ireland's only dedicated arthouse cinema and a champion for world, independent, documentary and experimental film. She has worked in the film industry for almost 20 years, prior to this she studied film at Middlesex University and Birkbeck College in London.