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The gallery as context and the installation work of Willie Doherty.

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I wish to thank both Willie Doherty and David Fitzgerald for agreeing to be interviewed. Their time and co-operation are greatly appreciated.

In this thesis I intend to discuss the gallery space, paying particular attention to the work of contemporary Irish artist, Willie Doherty. I will concentrate on an examination of the gallery space as a place in which the artist can interface with the public in such a way as to communicate by presenting his work. I am particularly interested in the artist's relationship with the gallery system. The contemporary art gallery is a self-appointed space in which to exhibit, view and appraise art. I will examine the implications and effects of this system on Doherty's work.

In the first chapter I will outline some of the possible historical precedents and influences which have affected the perception of the modern gallery. I will concentrate on its evolution as a public space in the twentieth century and discuss the form of the contemporary gallery as a place which is often seen as being very exclusive and inhibiting.

In the second chapter I will discuss the work of Willie Doherty, focusing on his objectives and aims in the context of the gallery.

The gallery, generally the place in which the public experiences art, has been modelling and remodelling itself ever since the practice of displaying works of art became widespread. From the seventeenth century onwards, the rules governing the display of collected works of art came to be formalised by the institution of the Academy. The French *Academie Royale des Beaux-Arts*, for example, founded by Louis XIV in 1648, gave annual exhibitions of the work of its members at the salon of the Hotel de Rambouillet. Here paintings were hung in a blatantly hierarchical manner, with history/mythological paintings being allotted much more wall-space than, say, still-life or landscape. (History paintings were huge by comparison with depictions of 'lesser' subjects.) The sort of gallery thus established was specifically designed to condition the viewer's response to what was on display. These galleries were not of course open to the public, being reserved solely for the well-connected rich, many of whom had their own private collections displayed in designated rooms in their houses as indicators of their wealth and good taste.

In the late twentieth century, by contrast, the gallery is generally intended to be as neutral and

bland as possible - it cannot be seen to be tampering with the form of a work or interfering with the way in which the work is viewed. David Fitzgerald discussing the design of the Kerlin Gallery in Dublin sees neutrality as a major concern:

> A space like this has to be functional. There are many ways for a space to be functional, but first and foremost it must be neutral.(App.II,p.49)

For this reason, unnecessary architectural features are erradicated. Describing a 1989 exhibition of the evolution of twentieth-century gallery design held in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, Andrew Brighton observes the following:

> In the first room there were skirting boards, dadoes, picture rails and coving. As you passage through the chronological exhibition each of these features were removed until at the end there was the unbroken white box of the contemporary museum.(1)

But any attempt to make the context disappear in this way is futile; as Brighton goes on to comment, the resulting space is only "apparently neutral." Fitzgerald concedes that, "you do end up with a tough space, but" he argues, "it is a working space"(App.II, p.49)

It is clear that there are certain physical parameters that must be adhered to. The gallery must have walls and a ceiling and, by definition, it must facilitate the exhibition of works of art. That the design of a gallery space must conform to physical constraints is obvious it is after all only a space. The reasons for the position the gallery holds within our society remain unclear. On the one hand it positively promotes the work of artists, providing an arena in which their ideas may be presented and discussed; on the other hand it is of little or no interest to the majority of the public and in many cases provokes feelings of alienation and social prejudice.

It is our attitude to this space which really creates the sense of mystery, exclusiveness and inhibition that surrounds it, and fuels the negative feeling about galleries that exists amoung the public. It is easy to accept that the 'white cube' which represents the gallery today is the best it can be given the parameters but why do these negative attitudes persist so strongly?

The gallery is seen as being an exclusive place in which social boundaries are exaggerated. The gallery can often often be perceived as a place where social distinctions based on class,

intellect and education are reinforced, thereby seeming to exclude certain people or to intensify feelings of exclusion and alienation. Brian O'Doherty (1976) states that:

> For many of us the gallery space still gives off negative vibrations when we wander in. Esthetics are turned into a kind of social elitism - the gallery space is *exclusive*...The classic modernist gallery is the limbo between studio and living room, where the conventions of both meet on a carefully neutralized ground, there the artist's respect for what he has invented is perfectly superimposed on the bourgeois desire for possession. For a gallery is in the end a place to sell things.(2)

One of the reasons for the failure of the modern gallery to create a truly neutral environment lies perhaps in what it has inherited from the salon tradition. It is clear that gallery-visitors in general see themselves as being bound by rules of behaviour not normally observed in other public contexts, and which may be viewed as a hangover from the social conventions which were appropriate to an eighteenth-century *hotel*. The modern gallery seems to demand a certain standard of comportment from its visitors:

> ...amongst public places the rules of behaviour in galleries are some of the most restrictive. Try smoking, drinking, snogging, dancing, laying down, whistling or even having an animated conversation in a public gallery. Galleries are amongst the spaces most subject to surveillance. If you refuse the message you are in danger of expulsion from the medium.(3)

A further reason, and a more solid one, for our reverent behaviour in the gallery becomes clear when we consider that the visitor to the gallery is indeed under surveillance. The average gallery employs a security guard or perhaps a security camera to overlook the exhibition space. Standards of behaviour in the gallery are therefore based on the fact that gallery visitors are constantly being watched so that they are immediately defensive, afraid of being caught acting inappropriately. Comparisons with the conventions of the eighteenth-century may be fanciful given this situation, but I think it is reasonable to consider that the modes of behaviour we adopt in the gallery may come from a combination of these factors.

The gallery is often referred to as having a church-like quality. David Fitzgerald, says that the exhibition space of the Kerlin Gallery has "an ethereal feel." A sense of other-worldliness may indeed be felt as the visitor climbs two flights of stairs to enter the gallery from below, where light streams down the white walls creating a space of airy purity. Thomas McEvilley, in his introduction to Brian O'Doherty's *Inside the White Cube* (1976), draws an analogy between modern galleries and prehistoric painted caves,

specifically "the Paleolithic painted caves of the Magdalenian and Aurignacian ages in France and Spain":

> There, too, paintings and sculptures were found in a setting deliberately set off from the outside world and difficult of access - most of the famous cave galleries are nowhere near the entrances, and some of them require exacting climbing and spelunking to get to them. Such ritual spaces are symbolic re-establishments of the ancient umbilicus which, in myths worldwide, once connected heaven and earth.(4)

An art gallery is a place in which things happen. A person is almost expected to have a revelation there. The viewer is in a subordinate position, subordinate to the purity of the space and perhaps in awe of the art on show. The apparent importance of art is magnified by the allocation of such a space, a space solely devoted to its display, if not its worship.

The reverence many of us feel when we enter a gallery extends itself to a respect for the work encountered there. That art is precious is obvious by the way in which it is treated; it is partitioned off from the mass of ordinary objects and given its own space, the gallery. Marcel Duchamp was an artist in the first half of the twentieth century who worked in a variety of media including painting and sculpture. Duchamp challenged the nature and authority of the gallery

with the most famous of his works which he called *readymades*. These consisted of ordinary objects, a bicycle wheel, a bottlerack and a urinal, elevated to the level of art merely by their placement in a gallery. These *readymades* were seen as a derisive gesture against the excessive importance attached to works of art. The strength of these works was their challenge to the authority of the gallery -it was the shock of their placment which created their meaning. Duchamp made the viewer self-concious. He was questioning the validity of the spectator as much as that of the artist. The spectator may have felt threatened by this work, not knowing whether it was genuine or whether it was a joke at his expense. The *readymades* emphasised the position of the viewer within the gallery and placed the whole syste under scrutiny. The ability to distinguish good art from bad and the appreciation of asthetics were confused by these works and the viewer was forced to consider meaning and context. Duchamp stated:

> A point which I want very much to establish is that the choice of these "readymades" was never dictated by esthetic delectation. This choice was based on a reaction of visual indifference with at the same time a total absence of good or bad taste...(5)

Recent concerns in art, it seems have seldom concentrated on the physical context in which art

is to be placed. The majority of art produced in the twentieth century might be viewed as centring on the importance of the object itself; the object is often seen as the the sole focus of our attention. The artwork stands alone as the embodiment of a particular concept, emotion or feeling. The art-object is perceived as the final result of a period of struggling in which the artist grapples with particular emotions or issues in a quest for their expression. The gallery in this context is merely a "place to sell things", and indeed the success of artists has often been measured by how many of their works have been sold, how desirable their works have proven to be. It is thought to be one of the great tragedies of Modern art that Van Gogh only sold one of his paintings in his lifetime.

The positioning of a work of art has been based, it seems, entirely on its saleablity. The meaning and context of particular pieces, once they had left the artists studio, were entirely secondary to the marketing of the object itself:

> For much of this century, and for the whole of the modernist period, the question of place has been one of the least pressing problems for the contemporary artist. In general, considerations of form and content have preceded and often precluded considerations of form and context. The object has reigned supreme, the question of place essentially a problem of placement. (6)

Artists like Duchamp began to question this treatment of art, and while it might seem that artists this century have seen the art-object as their major concern, context has in fact also been an important issue. Many artists in recent history have challenged the authority of the gallery and have attempted to adjust the perception of it as an uninvolved, insular space. They have attempted to create an environment in which their work will function in intellectual terms and not merely in terms of its commercial value.

Duchamp questioned the form of the gallery in a number of other ways. O'Doherty (1976) describes the installation of *1,200 Bags of Coal* in the 'International Exhibition of Surrealism' (New York, 1938) in the following terms:

> ...Duchamp turned the exhibition topsy-turvy and "stood you on your head." The ceiling is the floor and the floor, to drive home the point, is the ceiling.(7)

Duchamp had attached 1,200 coal bags, padded so as to look full of coal, to the ceiling of the exhibition space, and in the middle of the floor he had placed a brazier with a lightbulb inside. The brazier becomes, in the new scheme, a kind of "chandelier". O'Doherty continues:

> Above (below) are 1,200 bags of fuel and below (above) is their consuming organ. A temporal perspective streches between them, at the end of which is an empty ceiling, a conversion of mass to energy, ashes, maybe a comment on history and on art.(8)

In this work Duchamp questioned the basis on which we view art and the art gallery. He recontextualised the gallery entirely, and indeed O'Doherty suggests that Duchamp invented the idea of the gallery space as a "context". The presentation of the gallery as a "context" has been an issue in many artistic movements since Duchamp. The Minimalists of the 60's and 70's for example, saw the ideas of context and place as crucial to their aims.

In the 1960's Minimalist artists questioned the gallery as they probed its actual physical form. The Minimalists were concerned with the formal elements of painting and sculpture:

> It (Minimal art) expresses beliefs about the self and the self's perception of the world that are based on material- objecthood- and space as occupied by that material and the artist/viewer's body.(9)

The Minimalists sought to place the viewer firmly in the gallery, some of their works inhibiting movement around the space, others encouraging movement, thus creating a direct relationship between the functioning of the architecture and

the perception of the sculpture; "It was difficult art that placed strong demands on the spectator"(10). They sought to draw attention to all the elements of the space which encapsulated their work.

> Practically every Minimalist contrived new ways of dealing with floors, walls, ceilings, and corners. Andre for example laid his sculptures so low that they mimicked the floor's flatness, rising no more than a fraction of an inch above it. Judd cantilevered his stacked boxes from the wall, proposing a new support for non relief sculpture.(11)

Certain Minimalists felt that the full appreciation of their works demanded that the viewer be able to see it from all angles. Carl Andre, for example, believed that his sculptures could not be fully understood from only one viewpoint. In works such as *144 pieces of magnesium*, made in 1969, Andre placed squares of sheet magnesium on the floor in a formal arrangement somewhat similar to the way in which floor tiles might be arranged. Andre made a number of works in this way, using a variety of materials - steel squares, blocks of wood, fire bricks and bales of hay. These works often occupy quite a large area of the floorspace of the gallery so that the visitor is faced with the decision of whether to stay on the side-lines or stand on the work itself.

Andre encouraged the visitor to walk on his works:

> Like roads, he said "They cause you to make your way along them or to move ... over them."(12)

Again this presents the gallery as a self conciously designed space, a place in which the presence of the viewer completes the meaning of the art. Andre thought of the site as being equal in importance to the actual made object, his dictum being "Sculpture as form/Sculpture as structure/Sculpture as place"(13). So the artist again asserts (as Duchamp had in *1,200 bags of coal*) the importance of the gallery, or of any space in Andre's case, as a considered context.

Sol LeWitt is another artist who was involved with the Minimalists. He called his art "conceptual" and attempted to make his work mentally interesting to the spectator, and therefore usually he would want it to become emotionally dry. He has presented installations consisting of drawings on the walls of the particular gallery space. Often these drawings represented solids or structures presented by isometric projection rather than perspective. LeWitt said;

> I wanted to render form but without space as much as possible. One lesson learnt from the fresco painters of the Quattrocento in Italy was that they had a sense of surface, of

> flatness where actual linear perspective was not used but a system of isometric perspective that flattened the forms. I thought that was more powerful in terms of expression and adhered to the sensibility of the idea of the flatness of the wall and the integrity of the picture plane. I have always tried to keep the depth as shallow as possible and preserve the integrity of the wall.(14)

LeWitt indicates here a respsct for the space, the 'integrity of the wall'. He wishes to preserve the honesty of the space, and this intent would seem to be at odds with Duchamps in *1,200 Bags of Coal*. However, the effect is much the same: an affirmation of the gallery as an integral part of the work of art.

Where LeWitt argues for a retention of the truth of the gallery space gallerist David Firzgerald suggests a free and open manipulation of the space to suit particular needs:

> You have to end up with almost a warehouse that can be used and worked with and controlled, that does not impose itself or try and dictate how you go about using the space...you dictate to it, so an artist or in particular an installation artist would then try and kerb the environment, reinvent it or recreate it.(App. II, p.49)

Again, despite the apparent conflicts in these two views they are not mutually exclusive. In fact LeWitt's use of the gallery, his demarcation of it as a particular kind of space, paved the way for

Fitzgerald's view. It is the contextualising of the gallery which allows it the freedom to metamorphose according to specific artists' wishes.

Many artists have elected to use the gallery in this way. Since the seventies performance art and installations have become increasingly popular vehicles for artists. The artists have turned to these forms of expression in order to avoid commercialisation of their work. These ways of working, particularly performances, cannot be bought or sold, thereby negating one of the foremost aims of the gallery, to sell. Artists have attempted to shift the focus of the art world from money to ideas.

The German artist Joseph Beuys created installations using felt and fat as his materials. Beuys used these two materials in his work as a result of an accident he was involved in during the war. He had been rescued from a plane wreckage and wrapped in fat and felt to aid the healing of burns he had sustained. Beuys also created performance pieces, an example being *Coyote* (1974) in which the artist was encaged with a live coyote for several days. Beuys believed in the ability of art to heal the ills of society. He identified a

link between the artist and shaman - the belief in the power of simple materials. Beuys, by this belief in the healing nature of art, adds a further dimension to the contextualization of the gallery. It is a place imbued with the power to cleanse society.

We can see then, that the gallery space is loaded down with baggage of all shapes and sizes. A lot of what is seen as being the critically important work of the twentieth-century would not have happened if it had not been for the altering relationship between the artist and the gallery system.The most important development has been the contextualisation of the gallery, the shift in emphasis from the saleable art-object to the provision of an environment in which artists can sustain an on-going dialogue.

Derry is arguably one of the most photographed cities in Western Europe. Images of the city and its people have proliferated in books, magazines, newspapers and the electronic media. For the most part these images have been produced by visiting photo-journalists, photographers and artists. The body of images made from within the city is less visible, especially those created by artists for dissemination outside the mainstream media.

Willie Doherty is an artist who lives and works in Derry city. Over the past twelve years or so he has produced a body of photographic works which, in contrast to the genre of documentary reportage, offers more considered, oblique and layered representations of the urban space he sees around him.

Discussing the "visual language" that exists within the context of the Northern Ireland conflict Doherty points out the paradox that "Sinn Fein and the Northern Ireland Office often end up using the same images."(15) He emerged from an environment in which these same images were being used time and time again. "I think this is something which implicates artists. Obviously the visual language available to describe the

situation is very limited..."(App.I,p.46) A lot of the images chosen by Doherty for use in his work refer directly to those circulating in the popular press and popular culture. By bringing images and ideas from outside the gallery inside the gallery the artist can produce work which funtions on many levels. In works such as *Same Difference* (1992) and *They're All the Same* (1991), for example, the artist has appropriated images directly from the media. The one used in *Same Difference* is of the face of a woman, enlarged from a photograph shown on the television news. It is a picture of Donna Maguire who had been arrested in Holland earlier in 1992 for suspected terrorist activities. In the installation the image is projected and two sequences of words are overlaid across it, sequences of words which offer quite opposing views on the woman pictured. "MURDERER DELIRIOUS MURDERER IMPULSIVE MURDERER AGGRESSIVE..." is a sample taken from one of the groups of words used. The other contains terms such as "VOLUNTEER DARING VOLUNTEER FEARLESS VOLUNTEER EMBITTERED..." The installation entitled *They're All The Same* presents a similar duality, in this instance the projected image is of a man who had escaped from prison (earlier in 1991) where he was being held for terrorist

activity. Rather than projected text this work is accompanied by an audio tape on which a voice discribes romantic scenes juxtaposed with references to personal characteristics: "The clean sweet air is interrupted only by the lingering aroma of turf smoke. I'm pathetic. The verdant borders of twisting lanes are splattered with blood red fuschia. I'm barbaric. " etc.

Doherty saw the media ban which was imposed on Sinn Fein, and on other groups - both Republican and Loyalist - associated with the use of violence, as a hinderance to an open, full and fruitful exploration of the Northern Ireland conflict:

> The language for describing the Northern Ireland conflict was so restricted and with things like the media ban the possibilities for expanding the language were so limited as well.(App.I,p.46)

The gallery system offered the artist a forum in which to present his work and explore ideas which, at the time, were being ignored by the mass media.

> I believe the gallery is a unique space offering a unique opportunity for artists. I do not mean that in an elitest sense, I mean that it offers an experimental space almost, where the artist gets the opportunity to make work and present work which otherwise would not happen.(App.I,p.39)

Doherty sees the gallery as a very important part of his work, he recognises the historical precedents that have made the gallery what it is "...the Minimalist and Conceptualist work from the 70s and 80s, depends on the gallery or an understanding of the gallery as a particular kind of space..." He sees the gallery as fundamental to the form and reading of his work and the space in many cases adds impact and meaning:

> I have always thought of my work as being involved with installation and with using the gallery as an active part of the work and not a passive component.(App.I,p.39)

In a work entitled *Stone Upon Stone* from 1986 (see ills. 1 & 2) two photographs are hung on opposite walls in a corridor-type space. The photographs represent the banks of the river Foyle which flows through Derry city. They are down-facing shots in which the water laps against small rocks and stones. The photographs are very similar and the artist has overlaid text to clarify the work. One inscription reads, "STONE UPON STONE TOICFIADH AR LA THE WEST BANK OF THE RIVER FOYLE"; the other, "STONE UPON STONE THIS WE WILL MAINTAIN THE EAST BANK OF THE RIVER FOYLE." These inscriptions are common slogans in the political graffiti to be

found daubed on walls throughout the city. Doherty has positioned them in terms of the banks of the river which has historically separated the two communities of the city: the east bank has been populated mainly by the Protestant community, the west by Catholics. Doherty, by using these slogans, highlights the political division of the city - the Loyalist community on the east bank, the Republican on the west.

The placement of the photographs on opposing walls is a simple installation device which adds a further dimension of meaning to the work. The viewer is allowed by this arrangement to view only one of the photographs at a time, thereby being symbolically forced into one position, then the other. The viewer becomes a kind of mediator. It is plain to see that both banks of the river are much the same and that without the texts the viewer would be unable to tell the river-banks apart. There are no other clues as to the locations depicted in the photographs. This, I think, is one of the difficulties with this work. The artist sets up a conundrum for the viewer yet leaves only the sparsest of clues as to the answer. The commentaries contained within this work are specific to a certain situation (the

impact of 'the troubles' in Northern Ireland on the city of Derry). For a full understanding of these commentaries, therefore, the viewer needs to have a knowledge of the language, geography and politics of the situation. It is difficult to decide if this is a weakness in the work or if it is an appropriate way in which to express the complexities of the situation. Doherty's work does not prioritise one side or the other; the suggestion is one of stalemate where, neither side can make the 'winning move'.

In *The Only Good One is a Dead One* from 1993 the artist presents two videos , one the view from the windscreen of a car as it winds along rural roads in the dead of night (Ill. 6), the other a view from a stationary car on a city street (Ill.7). This installation also includes sound - a voice describing both the fear of being assassinated and the ways of carrying out an assassination,

> ... the work seemed to describe two characters, one a potential assassin the other a potential victim and both those roles are normally understood as being very separate...In this work both roles were spoken by the same voice so it was about the possibility of the same person being both the victim and the assasin.(App.I,p.41)

The language used in this work refers to film

making and cinema: "I see the same scene shot from different angles. I see a sequence of fast edits as the car swerves to avoid him and he starts shooting" and "I've seen it so many times I could write the script."

This piece was installed in the gallery in a similar way to the earlier work *Stone Upon Stone* - the videos were projected onto opposite walls:

> The way in which this work was actually installed in the space was critical in making the work function properly because the work was projected onto two opposite walls of the gallery so when the viewer was actually in the space it was very much about having the viewer move from one image to the other constantly looking over their shoulder...(App.I,p.41)

In this installation Doherty attempts to place the gallery visitor in the centre of a dilemma. The work suggests questions about the fabric of our society in situations of which the majority of us have little or no first-hand experience. The cinematic references draw us into the piece by touching on the indirect ways in which we do experience the fears and anxieties expressed by the voice.

Doherty has used installation techniques to

exploit the peculiarities of the gallery space in a much more radical way. In an installation at the Douglas Hyde Gallery in Dublin in 1993 entitled *30th January 1972* the artist darkens the entire space in order to project slides. The Douglas Hyde is quite a peculiar space in that the viewer enters the main area from above via a flight of stairs. Doherty uses this peculiarity of the space in this installation by constructing a large box-like room in the centre of the space on the inside of which an image of a crowd scene (Ill. 4) is projected. This projected image may be seen from above as the viewer enters the space, thus providing the viewer with roughly the same vantage point as the camera which took the shot. The image is not actually visible from the floor of the main space unless the viewer enters the box through one of two entrances. On the outside of the box, between the entrances, another image is projected, that of the back of a group of houses on an urban housing estate. There are commentaries coming from stereo systems around the walls of the space. One of several voices is disjointedly describing a bizarre event - part of an eyebrow being picked off a wall; another voice states that "Bloody Sunday should never have happened."

The crowd scene is taken from television footage of the protest march which took place on the 30th January 1972, and the backs of the houses shown are on one of the streets where the Bloody Sunday killings took place. In order to obtain the commentaries just described, Doherty took a tape recorder on to those streets and asked passers-by to describe their memories of what had happened on that day. He found that much of what was said was based on coverage of the event on television and in the press rather than on first-hand experience. In this installation, then, Doherty is examining the influence of the media on the public's perception of such events. The architecture of the space is crucial to the meaning of the work, since it allows him to place the viewer in the position of the television camera which was recording the protest march, thereby challenging the complacent acceptance of a single, establishment viewpoint.

> I have always been interested in a more active role and using the gallery as part of the making of the work, so the installation (*30th January 1972*) in the Douglas Hyde would not have happened the way it did if it had not been for the particular architecture of that gallery.(App.I,p.40)

Doherty recognises the intense nature of the gallery space, he acknowledges that the audience in a gallery is restricted to a minority but is

unconvinced about the merits of the alternatives:

> I have heard some artists argue that the gallery is somehow the worst possible place to put art, and somehow art should be on the street or in supermarkets, airports or wherever. I'm not convinced about that.(App.I,p.43)

The artist has, however, moved outside the gallery on several occasions experimenting with the more public exhibition spaces of commercial billboards. The move from the gallery to a public space may be interpreted as a rejection of the elitism of the gallery in favour of a more accessible means of exhibiting. Doherty, however, uses both vehicles saying that, "...they offer different opportunities that are difficult to turn down."(App.I,p.46). When he first started using billboards to show his work the artist was naive about the possibilities they opened up;

> ...you become involved in it on this notion that somehow it is going to be much better in terms of getting feedback from people where in fact that does not really happen.(App.I,p.45)

Doherty has attempted to unite his billboard works with the gallery shows. On the billboard entitled *It's Written All Over My Face* from 1992 (Ill.3) the artist used a detail of the image he had used in the earlier work *They're All the Same*. The text

on this billboard work reads "I AM RUTHLESS AND CRUEL IT'S WRITTEN ALL OVER MY FACE I AM PROUD AND DEDICATED." The billboard poster refers to the gallery work in two ways, the image used and the apparent duality of the person depicted, it seems to offer a condensed version of the gallery installation.

In an installation in Germany (1991) entitled *Six Irishmen* Doherty used public billboards and a gallery wall to exhibit posters of the faces of six men; the title of the piece plays on the public's awareness of the Birmingham six case. In this project the artist, by using both the gallery and public billboards united two methods of exhibition which are often seen as conflicting. The billboards he used in this case resemble those used by election candidates, thus adding a further twist to the piece. It is an examination of the presentation of faces in the media. The foucused presentation depersonalises the pictures and somehow exposes the anonymity or banality of the subject. The pictures used in television news and newspapers when dealing with the identity of an individual, often come from informal or unofficial sources, they often seem to be family snapshots so they are incongruous in these contexts. Doherty

draws attention to this misplacement by using images of two of his friends, a Sinn Fein politician, a suspect on trial in Germany, an informer assassinated by the IRA, and an informer who turned himself in.

Doherty's contribution to the 1993 Venice Biennale consisted of posters of a burned-out car (Ill.5) on billboards throughout the city and in the allocated gallery space. This work entitled simply *Burnt Out Car* again brings the city street and the gallery together. The photograph is anonimous and analytical it is a statement of fact, a record of the wreckage of a car. One aspect of the image which may affect our view of it is the colouring, it is a deep blue-purple and seems to add an air of gloom to the piece. This work may be read metaphorically as an illustration of the political situation in Northern Ireland. The burned car representing the inability of the people to move forward and peacefully resolve their differences. The road is a motif which recurs throughout Doherty's photographic work it is seen disappearing around corners (*Unseen* 1985) shrouded in fog (*Enduring* 1992) and as a dark muddy track (*Unapproved Road* 1992). The road is a means of escape it leads into the future and perhaps the

unknown. Doherty uses it is a metaphor for progress and presents it as defective to the point of uselessness reflecting the intransigence of the politicians and people involved in the Northern Ireland conflict. Within this metaphor the vehicle for compromise is the car which Doherty presents as totally defunct.

In his most recent photograph installation in the Kerlin Gallery in Dublin entitled *Factory* Doherty presents a series of seven photographs and a video. The photographs depict the interior of a derelect building which was obviously a factory of some description, pipes and rusting girders cover the floor and it looks as if it has been abandoned for quite some time. Luke Clancy in a review of the exhibition points out the possible metaphorical nature of the images, given the current paramilitary ceasefire and ongoing peace negotiations he proposes that:

> ...with the military and paramilitary aspects of the conflict left aside, we are allowed to glimpse a structure behind events and, for a moment, to contemplate an economic reality running, frequently invisibly, alongside the present mannered, optimistic language of Anglo-Irish politics.(16)

There is no text overlaid on these images so their formal qualities, composition, lighting and colouring are more evident. The way in which these photographs are installed in the gallery also highlights their formal aspects, particularly their composition. They are hung quite low on the walls so that the perspective of the floor depicted links with the actual floor of the gallery. This serves to unite the space in which the viewer stands with the illusory space of the photographs. The link is further enforced by the stillness of the photographs which echoes the calm of the gallery. Luke Clancy says:

> A fire has swept through the building and the roof has subsequently fallen in. Doherty has photographed the scene from various angles using the predominantly linear debris to achieve a series of icily still compositions.(17)

The artist draws the viewer into a comparitive study of the pristine gallery and the dilapidated factory.

Doherty sees the gallery as a place in which he can become involved in an ongoing and exciting dialogue. The gallery provides a context for him to present ideas which are not perhaps being explored thoroughly enough in other public arenas.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I set out to examine the anatomy and psychology of the gallery space. The gallery is certainly as David Fitzgerald puts it "a tough space" (App.II,p.49). It is forbiding and intimidating but its current form (the white cube) is a result of an evolution of ideas in art and attitudes towards art, which has been encouraged by artists and gallerists alike throughout this century.

The nature of the relationship between the artist and the gallery space has changed greatly in the course of the twentieth century. The gallery fulfills a different in the 1990s than it had in the earlier years of the century. The most important development in this century has been the altering of the context of the gallery space. The gallery is not simply a place to sell things and the gallerist is no longer a glorified shop keeper but a contributor to the substance of the work. Marcel Duchamp worked to transform the context of the gallery, to create a platform for the artist to exchange ideas and set the gallery aside as "...an active part of the work and not a passive component," as Willie Doherty prescribes.

There are an abundance of prejudices which still surround the gallery based on any number of social and economic factors. Artists are attempting to counter act these by moving into more public domains with their work, when this happens, however it becomes much more difficult for the artist to quantify the response to the works and they seem to become lost amongst the plethora of other activities which take place in these spaces. Doherty solves this problem by using both forms of exhibition, playing one off the other and seeing them as offering "...different opportunities that are difficult to turn down."(App.I,p.46)

APPENDIX I

Interview with Willie Doherty

How does your work relate to the gallery? Does this relationship add meaning, in your piece, 30th January 1972 for example how does the gallery space affect the work itself?

I have always thought of my work as being involved with installation and with using the gallery as an active part of the work and not a passive component, so for me the work is always being activated by the gallery. It hasn't been a question of when the paint is dry on the canvas, for example, that that is the artist's responsibility finished. I have always been interested in a more active role and using the gallery as part of the making of the work, so the installation you mentioned in the Douglas Hyde would not have happened the way it did if it had not been for the particular architecture of that gallery. So in that sense the work was a kind of collaboration between myself and the gallery, both in terms of what the gallery had to offer and the architectural space of the gallery. So I believe the gallery is a unique space offering a unique

opportunity for artists. I don't mean that in an elitist sense, I mean that it offers an experimental space almost, where the artist gets the opportunity to make work and present work which otherwise would not happen.

The *30th January 1972*, for example, I did not have the opportunity to make that anywhere else and I would not have made that piece if it had not been for the collaboration with the Douglas Hyde. That has actually happened quite a few times and it seems to be more and more the way I am working. If I am making a one-person show for a gallery I will try and make a work that is specifically for that situation. At the moment I am working on a piece for the Kerlin Gallery in Dublin. The work I'm showing there is very much a result of seeing that architecture and seeing that new space and what I can make that will work there. So this exhibition will consist of a number of colour photographs and a video which will be played in the emergency exit at the back of the gallery on the staircase. So it is trying to use two elements of the space. Again this work would not have happened if it had not been for the opportunity offered by this exhibition and the peculiar or particular architecture of the space.

Would you relate your pointing out of the peculiarities of specific gallery spaces to the ideas you are dealing with within the actual work itself?

I often try to make works that use the space as an active element. A lot of the works I make seem to have a duality built into them. I have made quite a few photograhic works that function as diptychs and appear to present two sides of a situation, and a lot of the installations I have made have used a similar device. The installation I showed in Matt's Gallery and a number of other galleries, *"The only good one is a dead one"*, that work used a similar situation where the work seemed to describe two charcters, one a potential assassin, the other a potential victim, and both these roles are normally understood as being very separate, like two clearly different sides of a conflict (for want of a better word). In this work both roles were spoken by the same voice, so it was about the possibility of the same person being both the victim and the assassin. The way in which the work was actually installed in the space was critical in making the work function properly because the work was projected onto two opposite walls of the gallery, so when the viewer was

actually in the space it was very much about having the viewer move from one image to the other, constantly looking over their shoulder and referring back, constantly moving in the space between these two positions. And likewise the *30th January 1972* was about trying to use the space and I suppose to some extent manipulate the way in which people move within the space. There was a box built in the centre of the space and there was an image projected inside this construction, which was visible from above but not visible from the ground unless you actually walked inside the box, so it was about trying to create two different types of space, or two kinds of experience, in the gallery. So the answer is yes, in a work like that the space becomes critical. Even with the photographic works I try to place them in the gallery in such a way that how people walk in the space, how they enter and leave the space, becomes part of thinking where to place things, where I put the image, so for me it is important that I visit the gallery and spend some time there, watch people coming and going. People might walk clockwise or anti-clockwise around a space; some spaces will have a more intimidating effect on people; so it's good to take these qualities of a space into consideration.

You talked about the gallery representing an opportunity for artists to present ideas and new works. Could you expand on that?

If you look at that historically I think a lot of the critically important work of this century would not have happened without the artists' involved relationship with the gallery. I think that if you look at a lot of the Minimalist and Conceptualist work from the 70s and 80s, a lot of that work depends on the gallery or an understanding of the gallery as a particular kind of space, and I do not think that work would have happened otherwise, and for me that's not a problem - it is a question of how these spaces work. I have never thought of a hierarchy. I have heard some artists argue that the gallery is somehow the worst possible place to put art, and somehow art should be on the street or in supermarkets, airports or wherever. I'm not convinced about that.

But the gallery is an intense place, demanding a lot from the viewer, a knowledge of art, before it can be appreciated fully. So in this way it is really not open to the general public.

Yes, I appreciate that fully, and I think that is

the way things are at this historical moment, but I suppose it is because I feel a part of that process that I do not have a problem with it, and I know that other artists and members of the public do have a problem with it. But personally I do not, and that is why I got involved in art, because I found that kind of engagement exciting.

So who are you presenting your ideas to?

I suppose, given what you've said about the gallery being a particular kind of space, involved in a particular kind of language, a dialogue, to me the work is presented as part of that dialogue, belonging to that realm of ideas, and I do not have a problem with that. But I also think that that is only one of the levels on which my work operates. I do not think it is mutually exclusive, I think there are ways in which people who are not so intentionally involved in that particular discussion can become involved in the work, and I'm also not convinced that the quality of the experience would be any better if the work was seen in a supermarket or on the street. There are so many other concerns which interfere with work which is presented in a public space; these are much less visible within the gallery.

Were your billboard projects an attempt to move outside the gallery?

Well yes, I am not opposed to working outside the gallery, so yes, I have been involved in public projects in which I have produced billboard works which happened outside the gallery. But one of the frustrating things about that is that initially when you become involved in it on this notion that somehow it is going to be much better in terms of getting feedback from people, where in fact that does not really happen. So the gallery is actually better from that point of view; people see the work, there is discussion within the art world which, although it may be limited, it is discussion which has some result or ramification, whereas a lot of artists' projects that happen in public spaces do not have the same knock-on effect. A lot of the discussion around work in public spaces has been in the language of advertising - getting to the mass audience, projecting strong, clear messages. Having that opportunity is interesting, but you're not trying to sell anything, you have no product, so it is difficult to quantify how successful a particular campaign or project has been. No market research is done, no questionnaire or analysis takes place. I think it is probably a misapplication of those

terms. It is for these reasons the gallery space is better. Personally I think I will continue to use both, because they offer different opportunities that are difficult to turn down.

You have said that Sinn Fein and the Northern Ireland Office often end up using the same images. How does this affect the images you produce?

The language available for describing the Northern Ireland conflict was so restricted and with things like the media ban the possibilities for expanding the language were so limited as well. Inevitably the same sound-bytes, the same images circulated freely among everyone and there was no way of breaking out of that situation. I think it has been interesting since the start of the cease-fire to see the new body of images that have started to emerge which are actually quite depressing - the slogans like "Time to build" and posters with children who for some reason aren't wearing any clothes; they look like waifs from the blitz. The television ads where the hand-pistol turns into the starting-gun for a marathon, the bollards transforming into flower-pots. I think this is something which implicates artists. Obviously the visual language available to describe the situation is very limited or undernourished. If

those are the immediate images that spring to mind, if those are the images that are used to sum up people's feelings of hope, optimism, joy, it is not a very good situation. A lot of the images I use tend to refer to or come directly out of the images which are circulating in popular culture; they are not self-referential or entirely referring to the gallery space - they are about bringing things from outside the gallery and the politics of that critical discussion from outside the gallery into the gallery. It can work both ways.

APPENDIX II

Interview with David Fitzgerald, joint-director of the Kerlin Gallery, Dublin

What concerned you in the planning of the new gallery space? Were you, for instance, concerned with the common perception of the gallery in general as an inhibiting space?

A space like this has to be functional. There are a lot of ways a space can be functional, but first and foremost it must be neutral. So if you take a space like this, we've actually started out with a lot of experience in the business, and I suppose anyone will tell you about any exhibition space that the more neutral it is, preferably the bigger it is, the taller it is, the way it's lit, optimum lighting, all these aspects, the more you can push them, the better. If you end up with a space like this which has quite an ethereal feel to it...To try and soften the space, to make it more appealing, you do end up with a kind of tough space, but it is a working space. You have to end up with almost a warehouse that can be used and worked with and controlled, that does not impose itself or try and dictate how you go about using the space. So I think it is actually the other way

around - you use it, you dictate to it, so an artist or in particular an installation artist would then try and kerb the environment, reinvent it or recreate it. So we were very conscious with this space that, as much as it is neutral, it is also controllable as an environment, and the architect, John Paulson, who is very experienced in working with galleries, he designed Waddington's in London, PTOW New York...So we, with these new premises we had the opportunity to have a second chance. Our previous gallery was a revamped shop-floor, a high street environment. This new gallery is for us the optimum because we started from scratch, so we have a gallery which as much from an initial point of view might be quite intimidating, is still a working space. I think Willie Doherty's show, with video and a series of large cibachromes, uses the space in an interesting way, expanding the exhibition space into the fire exit. The more we use the space, the more the artists work in the space, the better it feels for us. It is a growing thing as well - we have changed a few details of the space; we're still talking to the architect about the idea of splitting the space - so it is an ongoing process, quite organic.

Would you consider this space to be as neutral as possible?

It is as neutral as possible. "Neutral" is a difficult word. It's the best given the parameters. Everyone is limited. You're limited first and foremost to budget. Someone like us, a private gallery, I know the architect had some very fancy ideas, but that involves some very fancy budgets. So at the end of the day you are limited to your own means, you are tied down by financial constraints, but given these constraints we've been very lucky. I think that is what's nice about someone as creative as the architect - he is good at ideas, simple ideas; again simple ideas which tend to be problematic, certainly when you build a place like this you have a lot of things that aren't seen, and those things do cost a lot of money. The idea of no pillar obstructions here has meant that we had to start from the outset with huge foundations which would actually hold a multi-storey car-park, never mind a three-storey building. We've had to use huge RSJ's in the floor which hold up the entire building, including the fourteen-feet-high walls. The engineers had a bit of a nightmare with this and also the length of it, the concrete floor, x amount of tonnes of concrete. So from those parameters, those things

aren't seen but do cost a lot of money. We've also had a lot of restrictions in terms of access - fire exits etc constrain what you would really like to do; we have to obey the same rules as everyone else! Initially we wanted a lift up to the place for disabled access. It was one thing we really fretted about for a long time, and also the idea of getting work up as well - some kind of service lift. These things were way beyond our budget. You're getting into more public spaces, which are able to have both a stairway and a service lift. These things are constraints. We've done some nice features to overcome these problems. This end wall, we are able to take that wall out - it's dry-lined; and the window in behind comes out so we can fork-lift stuff up from the lane, so in the eventuality of large sculpture, we can get it up here. So these are simple solutions to what were potentially big problems.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ILLUSTRATION 1

ILLUSTRATION 2

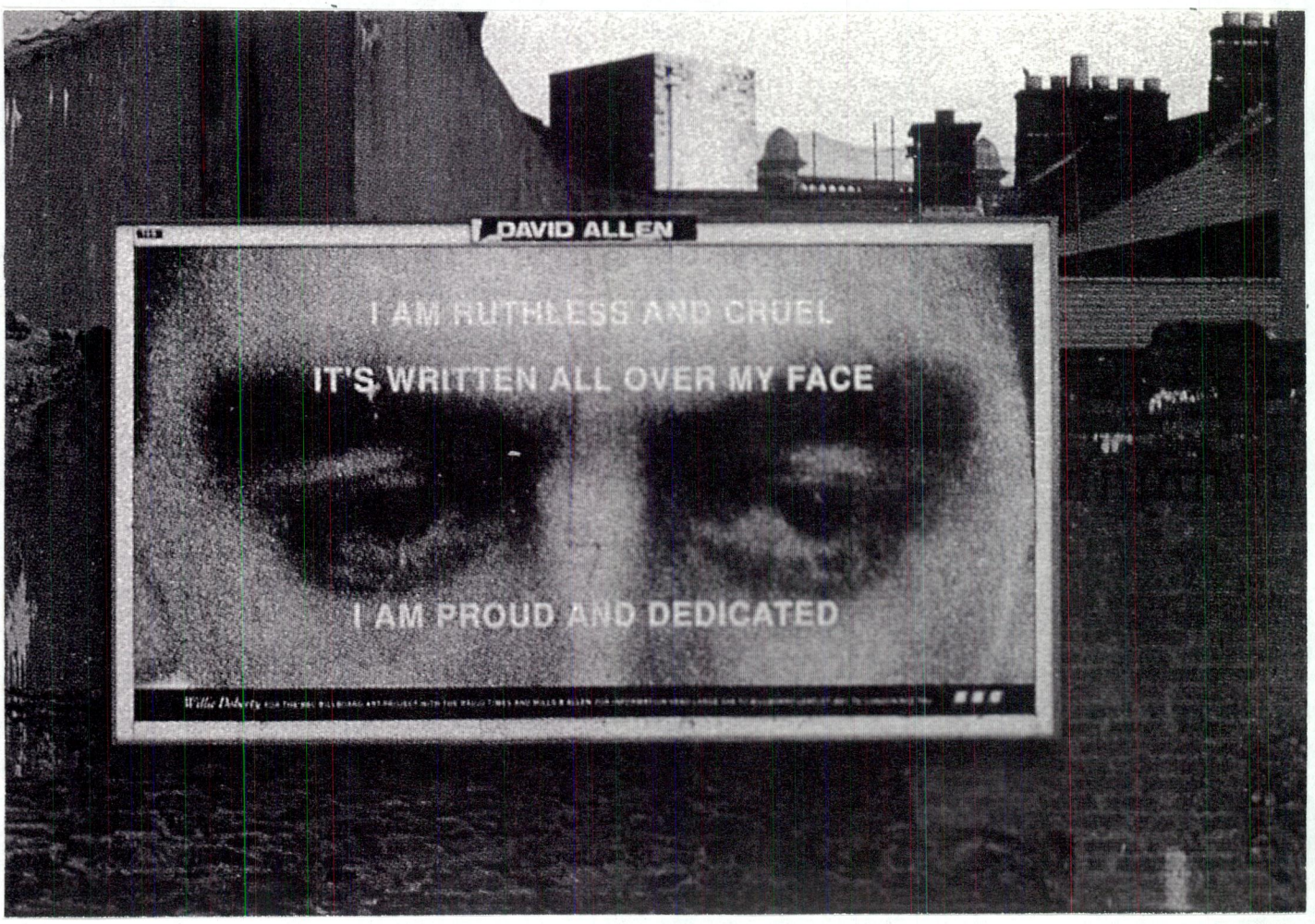


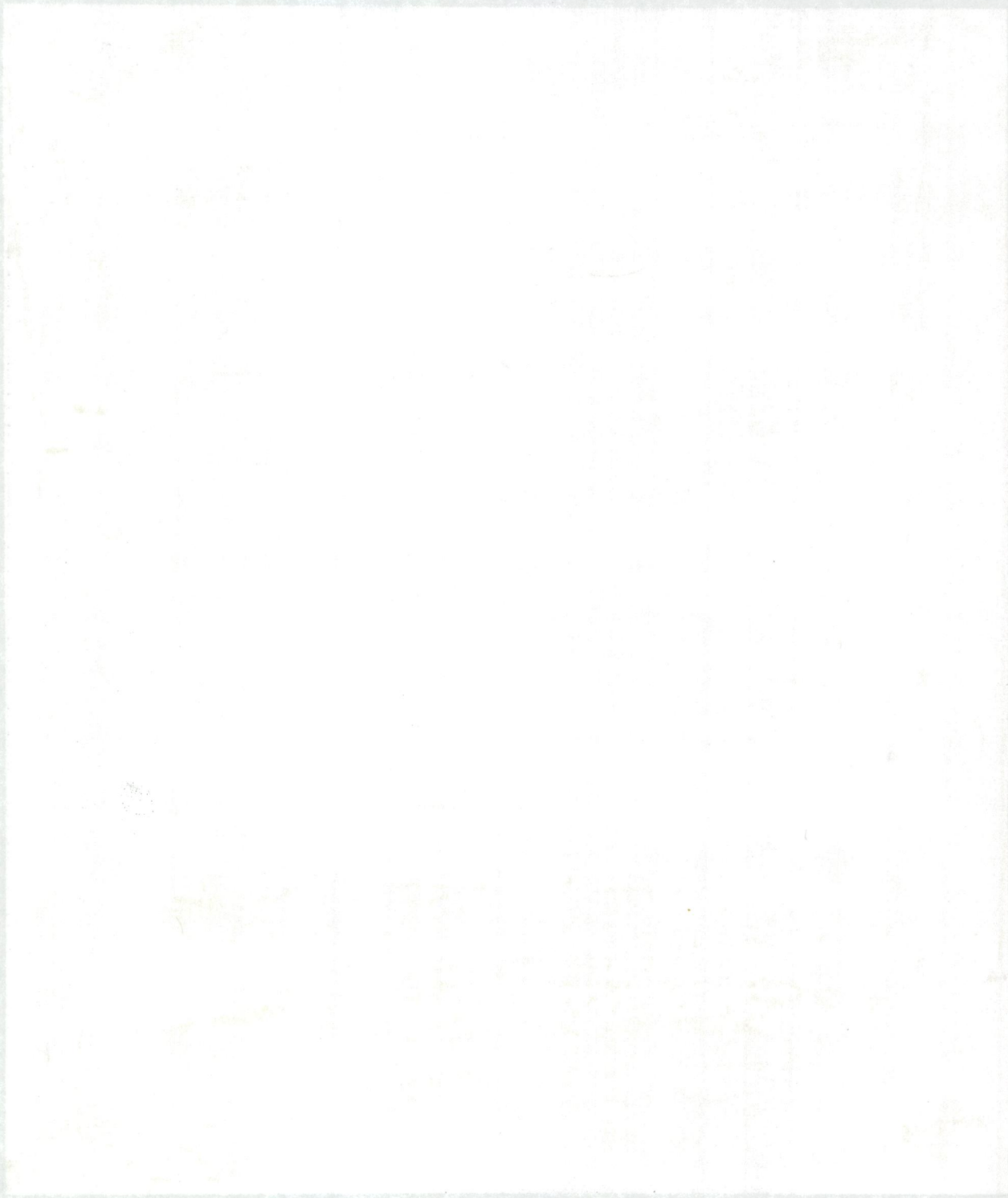
ILLUSTRATION 3

ILLUSTRATION 4 OVERLEAF

ILLUSTRATION 5

As my assassin jumps out in front of me everything starts to happen in slow motion. I can see him raise his gun and I can't do a thing. I see the same scene shot from different angles. I see a sequence of fast edits as the car swerves to avoid him and he starts shooting. The windscreen explodes around me. I see a clump of dark green bushes in front of me, illuminated by the car headlights. The car crashes out of control and I feel a deep burning sensation in my chest.

ILLUSTRATION 6



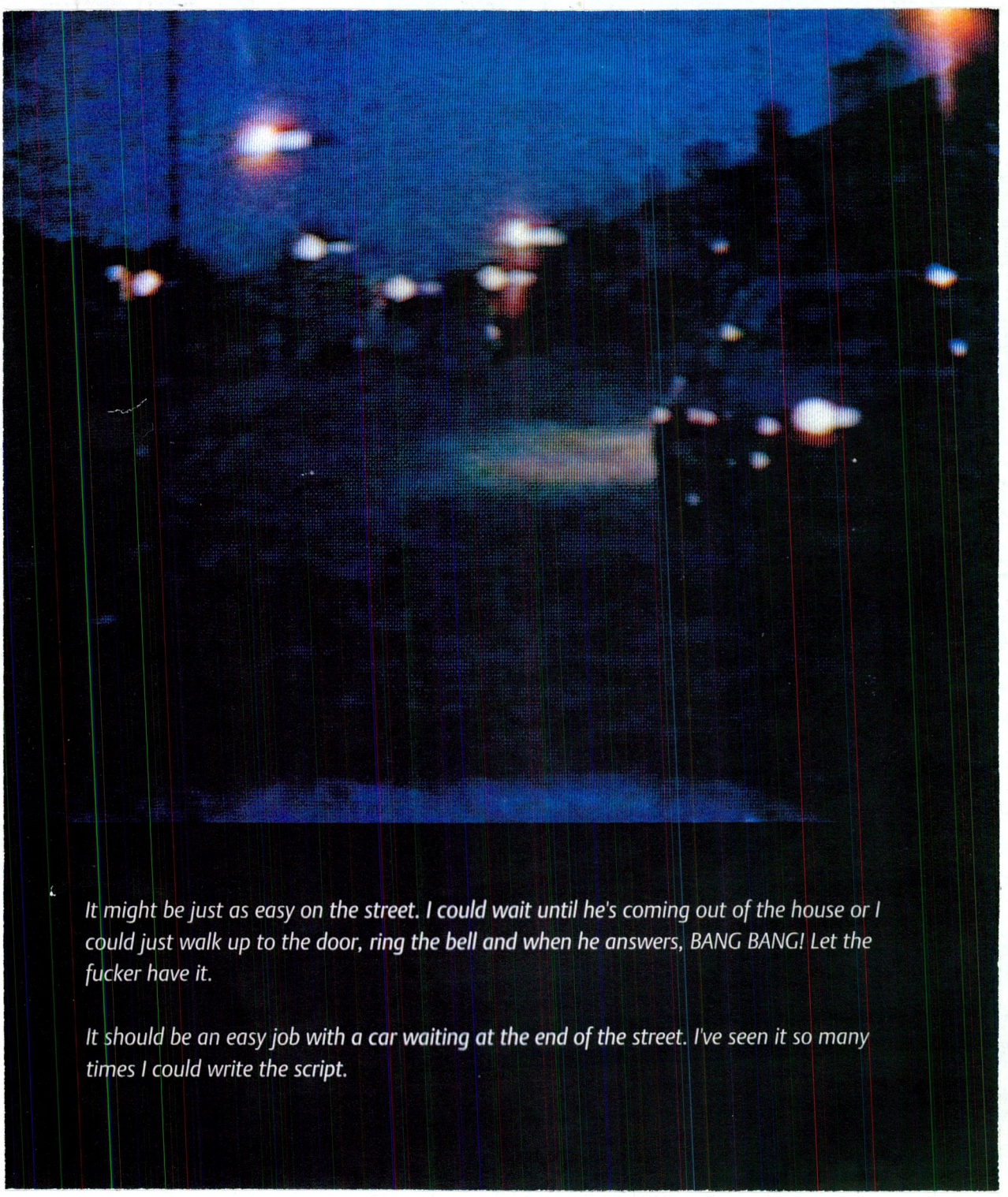


ILLUSTRATION 7

NOTES

1 Brighton, Andrew, "Is Art or Architecture the Enemy" in De Ville, Nicholas & Foster, Stephen (eds.), *Space Invaders* (Southampton 1993), p. 50

2 O'Doherty, Brian, *Inside the White Cube* (San Francisco 1976), p. 76

3 Brighton, op. cit. p. 50

4 O'Doherty, op. cit. p. 8

5 Duchamp, Marcel, "Apropos of 'Readymades'" in Sanouillet, Michel & Peterson, Elmer (eds.), *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, p. 141

6 Lingwood, James, "Place" in *Space Invaders*, p. 21

7 O'Doherty, op. cit. p. 69

8 Ibid

9 Colpitt, Frances *Minimal Art* (Washington 1990), p. 132

10 Ibid

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13 Ibid, p. 85

14 Wilson, Andrew, "Sol LeWitt Interview." *Art Monthly*, March 1993 p.3

15 Buck, Louise, "Exposure, Willie Doherty." *Sunday Times Magazine* 6th November 1994, p. 10

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