National College of Art and Design;

Department of Craft Design (Ceramics);

The evolution of temporary public art in Dublin,

by

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Introduction

Through this thesis I want to document the evolution of temporary public art here in Dublin, from its origins in 1975, until 1997.

Public Art Research Project.

I feel that it is an apt time to analyse this subject not only because of the recent surge in temporary public art projects, which took place this September, but also due to the recent government publication, *Public Art Research Project Steering Group report,* which created much controversy and debate.

This report responded to a brief for the Public Art Research Team, which "...aimed to facilitate the more effective promotion of art in the public sector in Ireland by developing a strategy for use by public authorities for the commissioning of art".(Prior, 1997, p.14). Only a very short, rather disappointing Steering group report was published. The absence of any recognizable artistic name on the original Steering group was also a disappointment, as was the exclusion of the Sculpture Society of Ireland or the Artists Association of Ireland. However, this is a unique document of its kind in Ireland in that it is practically impossible to find any official publication regarding public art in the country. If nothing else, a possitive response from the report has been the resulting level of discussion surrounding public art in the country.

It has taken quite a while for temporary public art to take off in Ireland, mainly due to shortage of funds. But with the recent input of capital from the European Union, a substantial amount of money has been made available for the administration of the visual arts, much of this finding its way into temporary art projects.

Brief History.

Dublin experienced the beginning of temporary public art through the *OASIS* exhibitions (Open Air Show of Irish Sculpture) which began in 1975. Throughout the 1980s there was a considerable lull in temporary public art shows in Dublin, as permanent bronze

structures appeared to be in vogue. Temporary public art developed in Dublin throughout the 1990s, particularly this year, 1997.

I intend looking in depth at some of this year's exhibitions – Nissan / IMMA's *For Dublin* art project, , the Sculpture Society of Ireland's, *Ireland and Europe,* Fire Station's *Inner Art* and Temple Bar's *Street Art* Symposium. By analysing these individual projects, I hope to document the type of temporary public art that is being produced in Dublin. I intend approaching the areas of location, consultation, accessibility, aesthetics , process and socially concerned pieces.

Temporary / Time Based Public Art

It is important to define what I mean by temporary public art. In the past, public art has been regarded as sculpture or painting in the open, which was intended as a permanent fixture.

The idea of temporary or time-based art simply means that the work is impermanent, ie. it is only in existence in the public forum for a given time, whether through natural disintegration, or by the placing of objects, performances or any other medium in a place for a given time.

Temporary public art can be object based, narrative fine art or may consist of the extremes of conceptual art. It can involve a combination of media, from the tools of traditional 2+3 dimensional work, to the use of modern technology such as film and video, light and sound, or any other time-based medium.

The public includes all individuals who use a given area. The public domain is defined as any space or process to which the general public has ready immediate access.

Sources of information.

Through researching this thesis I have found that the best way to find in-depth information on public art in Ireland is through interaction, ie. Meeting the artists and administrators themselves and attending exhibitions. I also found some information in exhibition catalogues, newspapers and magazines, such as The Irish Times, Circa, Art Bulletin ,the Sculpture Society of Ireland's Newsletter and An Artists Newsletter. Through *Art Working,* (an independent administrative arts group), the extended version of the Public Art Research Report was made available to me. I also attended two debates

in Temple Bar Gallery and Studios which were of benefit:

- Public Art - Friday September 26th- Saturday September 27th, 1997
- Practice Please - Saturday 22nd November, 1997

From the information I gathered, both published and verbal, I wish to document sequentially and analyse the state of temporary public art in Dublin today. From this overview I hope to offer valuable opinions on how not alone the role, but also the content of public art is and has been changing in Dublin.

Chapter 1

The Beginning of Temporary Public Art in Dublin

"Rather surprising things have come to be called sculpture ... However various these experiments may seem, they begin with a single motive : to escape the constraints of the pedestal, the gallery and finally of art itself".(Mitchell, 1992, p10.)

This quote sums up why temporary public art began in Dublin. The aim of this chapter is to document the beginning of temporary public art in Dublin.

OASIS 1975

OASIS began in 1975 with John Byrne, Micheal O'Sullivan, Brian King and Rob Costelloe as chief organisers. It was a time-based public art exhibition by artists living and working in Ireland at the time, which was a pioneer event of its kind in Dublin. Although one might think that this idea stemmed from what international counterparts were doing, this was not in fact entirely the case. The idea of introducing time-based sculpture to the public domain stemmed mainly from practicality.

This group of contemporary sculptors who were involved in *OASIS* were part of the Independent Artists Group who exhibited regularly in the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery. Prior to IMMA and the RHA Gallagher Gallery, the main public galleries in Dublin were the National Gallery Of Ireland, The Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery, The Douglas Hyde Gallery and the Guinness Hopstore.

Both the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery and The National Gallery were quite traditional, wall orientated galleries with heavily mosaiced floors.

At this time (mid 1970s), sculptors were working in a more experimental and exciting way and felt the need to break away from the constraints of the gallery space. Sculpture had lost its pedestals. Large metallic, painted sculpture was in vogue, but the impact of the piece was lessened if placed on a heavily patterned floor, in a claustrophobic corner of a gallery.

In order to overcome this hindrance, some of the sculptors organised their own public art exhibitions which reached a wider audience than most indoor exhibitions.

Their pieces demanded spaces outside the gallery. Working outdoors created freedom of expression, accessibility for the public and space, both mentally and physically. The

motivation for this venture was completely artist-led.

The first *OASIS* show took place in 1975 and was funded to the tune of £3000 by the Arts Council. It was a brave venture and was situated in Merrion Square. *OASIS* was a great opportunity for young Irish sculptors at the time. There appears to have been very little written documentation about the works, although through talking to the artists involved I got a feel for the work and the contents of the show without ever having seen the actual work.

OASIS 1975 was comprised of 12 works by Irish sculptors who were selected on the basis of an open competition. The work was site specific and became a learning experience for the artists involved, as most had not worked in the public sphere before. The artists were confronted with problems they had not experienced through a gallery, such as organisation, survival of the piece and sensitivity to other artists' work.

The work was lively and fresh. The media used included perspex, neon light, timber, fibreglass, foam rubber and plastic, which was highly innovative when compared with other pieces of public art in Dublin. One piece which stands out in my mind was Aileen Mac Keogh's *Grass*, (fig.1), which was made from foam rubber and plastic. This group of sponge weeds bounced around and responded to weather, drooping in the rain and jumping back up again when dry. The piece was playful and fun, which involved the public simply by the fact that it welcomed touch and encouraged interaction. This piece was a success because it made art more accessible. Not everyone's piece worked as well as Mac Keogh's as some of the pieces were not very durable. As Brian Fallon commented, rather too many of the works exhibited were interesting ideas carried out in materials which looked perishable. For example, Adrian Hall's *Slow Rise Avenue* which had the appearance of an enormous length of scaffolding, partly collapsed (Fallon, 1975, p.14).

***OASIS* 1977**

OASIS 1975 gave the artists a clearer vision of how to work together in the public domain. The *OASIS* show of 1977, which took place from September 14th -October 3rd, demonstrated much more confidence and ambition. The scale of the show increased from

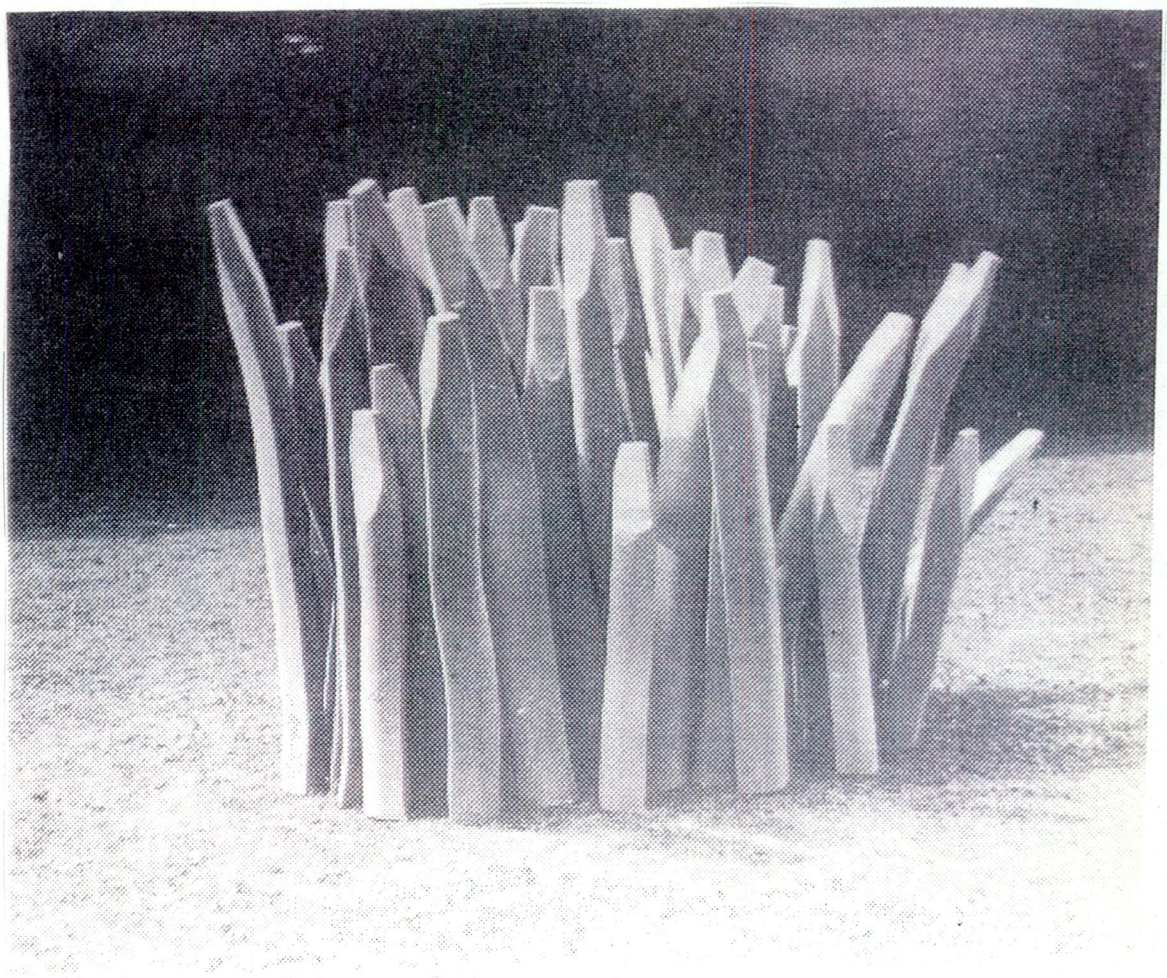


Figure 1 Aileen Mac Keough's *Grass, OASIS* 1975.

12 to 24 pieces and the grant from the Arts Council increased to £7000. This increased funding alone shows the potential that was seen in the pioneer temporary public art show of 1975.

Vandalism.

In 1977 artists appeared to work more with the physical environment of the area which was St. Ann's Park, Raheny. The artists involved varied from established gallery artists, to first year students. The approach was fresh, creative and intelligent, but unfortunatelly was made more memorable by the response it got from some of the public, namely the infamous Raheny Boot Boys. This gang of teenagers did not appreciate their territory being invaded by works of art and destroyed all but two works, which survived due to durability (metal structures).

The artists aimed to enrich community life and reach a wider audience with their sculptures and on the whole the community did appreciate and interact with the sculptures, for example, one of the remaining sculptures, Brian King's *XIT* , (fig.2), was greatly enjoyed by children. According to a journalist from Hibernia Arts Review, the children believed that the sculpture had been put there for them to climb on and that it had "always been there".(DY Hibernia, P.21, 1977). However, the impact that a marginalised section of a community can create is often detrimental and, hence, must be considered as a very important element. The works, due to their materials, may have been destroyed anyway due to pleasure, for example, children took great delight in climbing over them, swinging on them, running around them and crawling over them. But the anarchistic response which occurred cannot have been inspiring for some first-time exhibitors.

biblio ?

Bribery.

Ironically, the night before Charles Haughey (Minister for Health and Social Welfare) was due to open the exhibition (Sunday August 7th 1977), the group of vandals was threatening the sabotage. Charles Haughey went down to St Ann's Park to negotiate with the group. He explained that no invasion was meant by the exhibition and attempted ~~to bribe the gang of youths with alcohol~~. This only fuelled the fire which crackled,

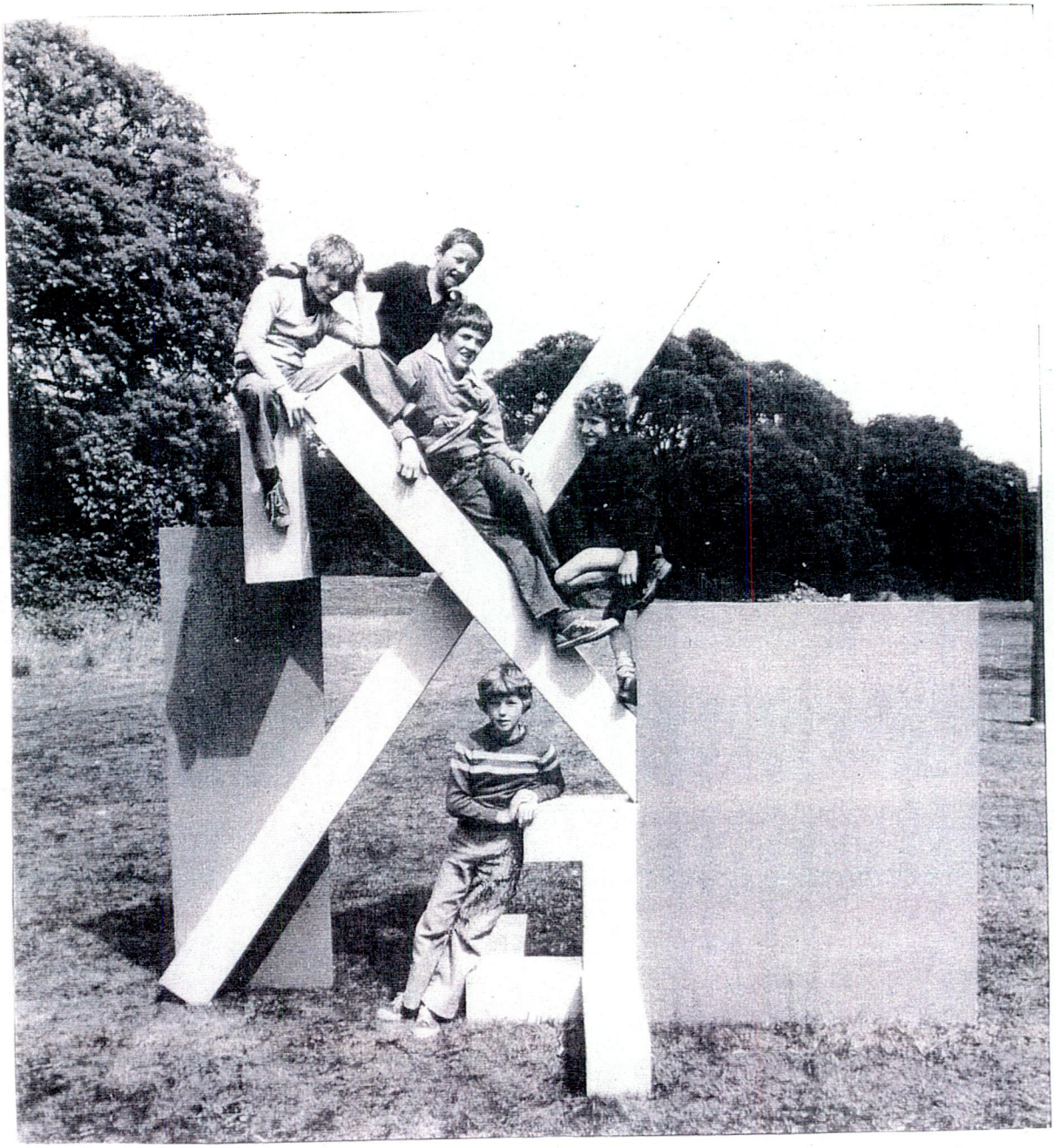


Figure 2 Brian King's *XIT, OASIS* 1977.

buckled, melted and contorted the original sculptures. (Interview with Brian King, 10th October, 1997).

Communication and location.

This reiterates the importance of communication. Consultation should have occurred at the beginning stages of the project with the artists and the public, not the Minister and the public. Bribery certainly should not have been on the agenda as a means of communication. Perhaps the inclusion of marginalised sections of the community in the concept or construction of the work would have prevented such an aggressive reaction. In an article in Circa, Gemma Tipton spoke of the recent *Inner Art* project, which was organized by Fire Station Artists Studios..."inclusion, mediation and consent became crucial to the success of the project, measurable not only in numbers, of people, reviews, coverage, but in the existence and survival of the work itself".(Tipton, P.31, 1997).

This can be compared to *OASIS* '77 as the location, St. Ann's park, Raheny, was also an area of deprivation as was the location for the *Inner Art* project, which was the north inner city. Stephenson commented "..If...*OASIS* were to be based firmly on working over a long period with the very people who destroyed this year's exhibition and becoming one with their experience. If the work is of them and, in a way therefore, by them it will provoke their interest"(Stephenson, 1977, p.4).

An important element which artists essentially should think of before invading a public space is the actual users of the public space. The work did not relate to the lives of the people and in an area of deprivation residents may find such works of art patronising and exclusive to the educated and middle classes, which emphasises the perception of art being elitist. St. Ann's park, Raheny did not prove to be an apt location for a temporary public art exhibition. This rebellious reaction did not occur two years previously at Merrion Square, or at *OASIS* '79, Wilton Place, so perhaps it was a case of bad management where location and communication should have been considered logically.

The people who live, work or use a given area should be considered before locating a public art exhibition. Richard Serra believes that the needs of art, not the public, come first (Elsen P.291, 1989). This attitude has come to be known as "the public be damned".

Serra's indestructable *Tilted Arc*, (fig.3), which was a 120 feet long and 12 feet tall bend of steel, which was installed in Federal Plaza, Lower Manhattan in 1981, had to be removed in 1989, due to public outcry. Obviously the needs of the public must be considered as a very important element. This reiterates the importance of location and in particular, the users of a location

Perhaps one way of overcoming this problem of destruction would have been to make the destruction the actual part of the work. As Selwood believes, "the relationship between the art and the public may itself become the artwork" (Selwood P.6, 1995).This has been a common theme for some public artists internationally.

Burnt Out.

The idea of making the destruction the actual work of art was a major part of Copenhagen's Art in City 1994 exhibition, which was a summer festival for art in public spaces (Plenge Jacobsen and Brinch P.84, 1995). *Burnt Out* (fig.4), consisted of eighteen cars, a caravan and a public bus which were placed in a car park in Copenhagen. The work was created to give the impression that a crowd had gone mad and smashed up a public car park. The public actually became involved in the destruction, in that they completely wrecked the vehicles as opposed to how the work had begun. Eventually, however, there was a public outcry and the work had to be removed.

Within *OASIS* '77 Owen Mac Carthaigh's hut, (Fig.5), was completely destroyed which showed an interesting time-cycle of a piece of temporary public art. As Frank Barry commented " it was fittingly burned, which must have pleased its maker"(Barry, 1977, p.3).

Durability.

On a more practical note if the works had been made in a more durable material, this also would have prevented this destruction from occurring. For example, Paul O'Keefe's *Durer's ladder* ,(fig.6), survived due to the fact that it was indestructable. However, the use of materials such as concrete, metal or stone are infrequently used for temporary

Figure 3 Richard Serra's, *Tilted Arc,* Lower Manhattan, New York, 1981-89.

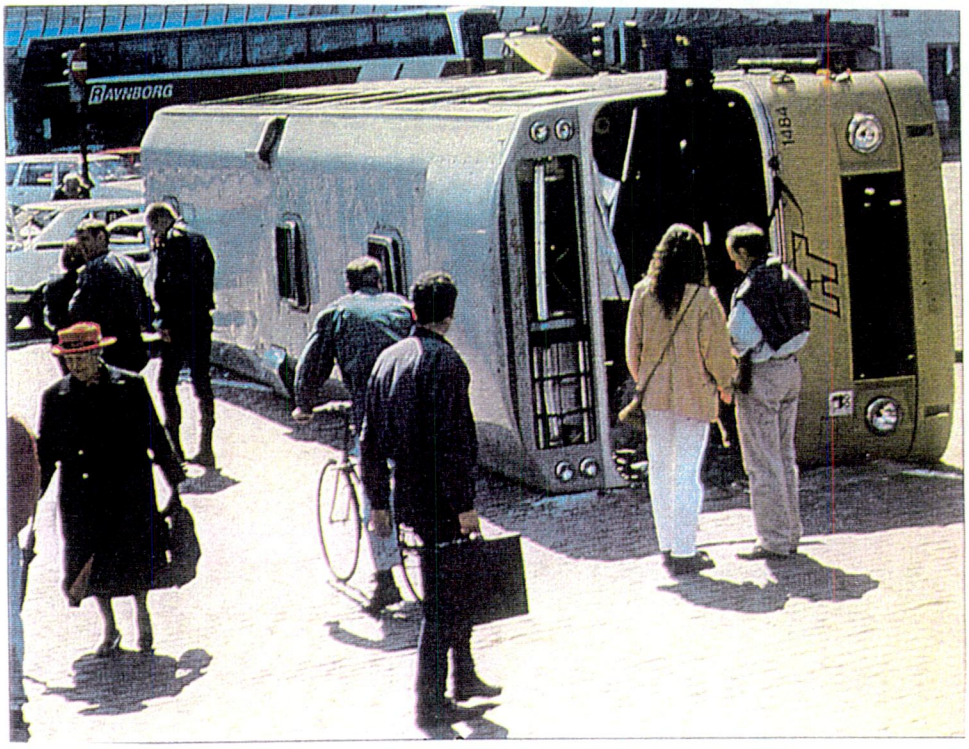
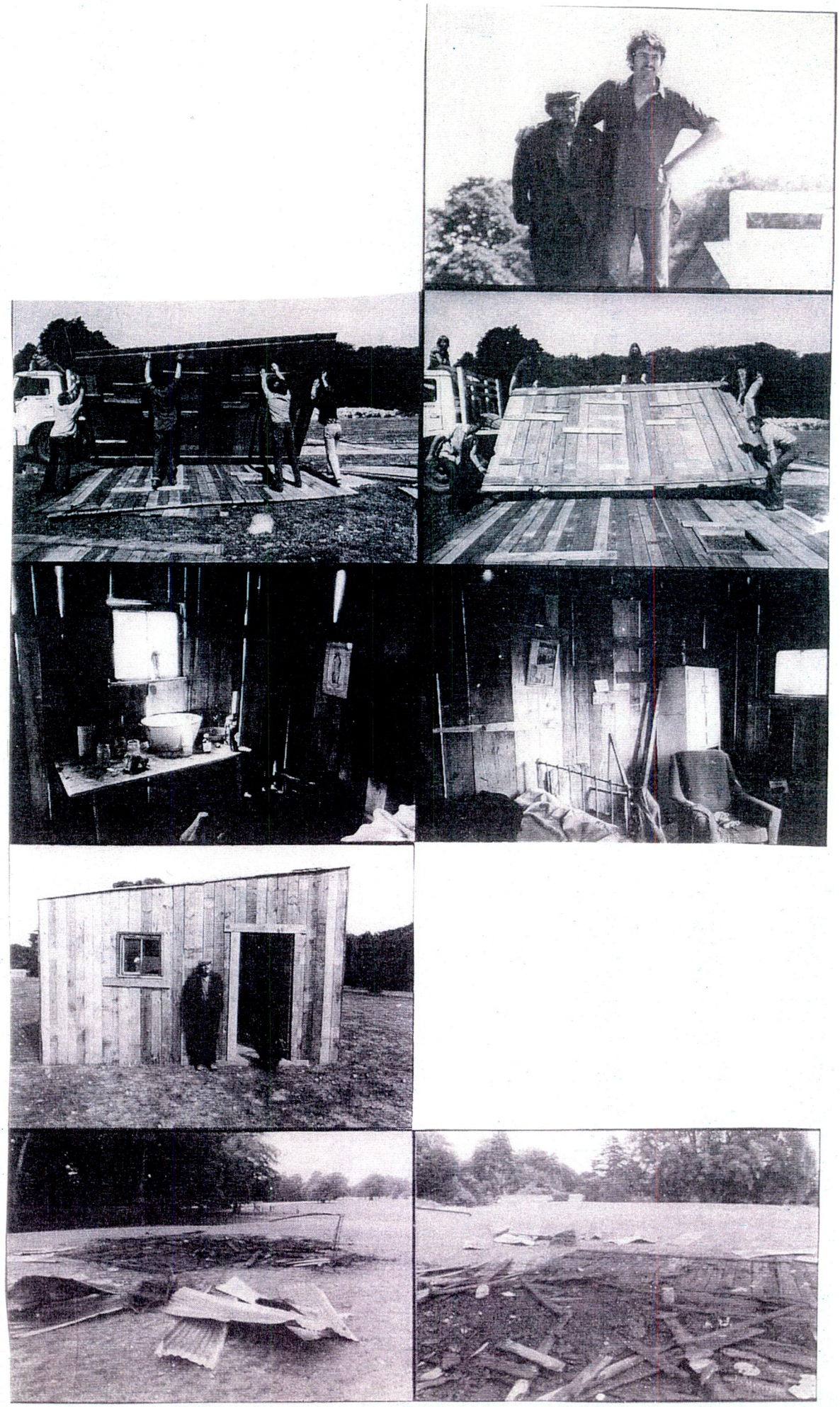


Figure 4 Plenge Jacobsen and Brinch's, *Burnt Out,* (Copenhagen's *Art in City*, 1994).

Figure 5 Eoin MaCarthaigh's, *Hut, OASIS* 1977.



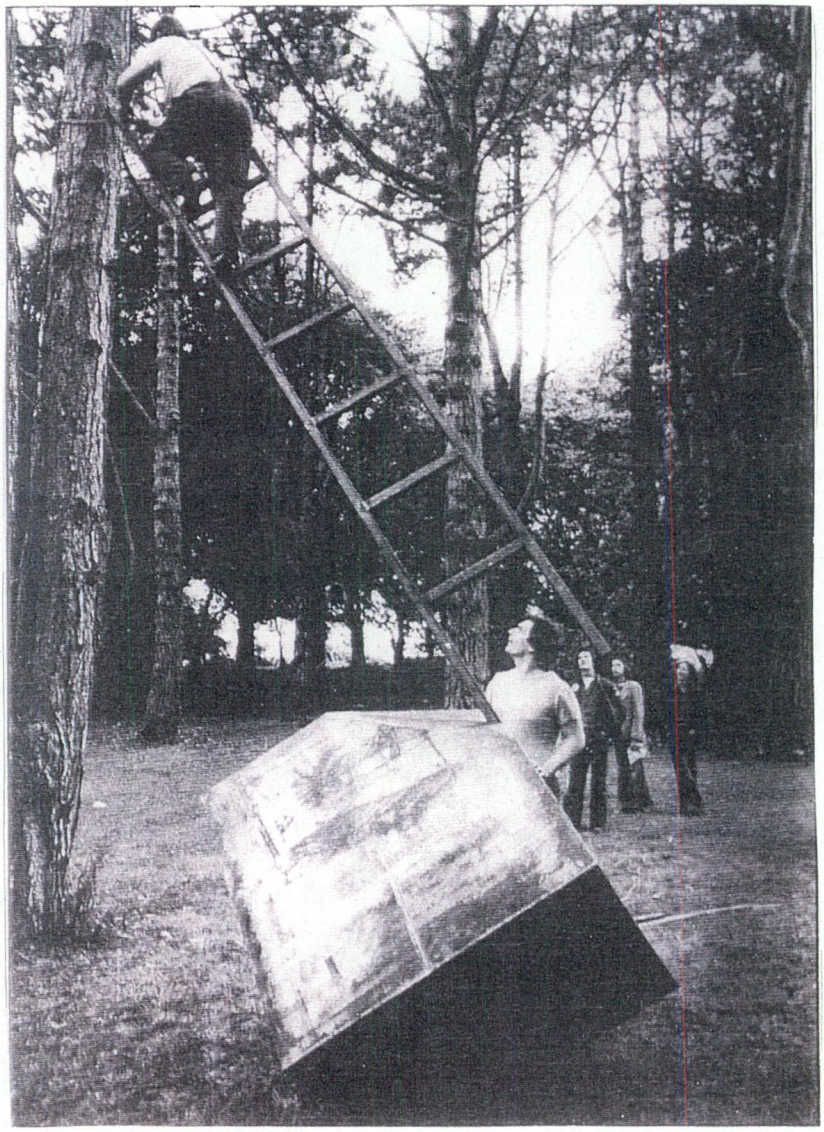


Figure 6 O'Keefe's, *Durer's Ladder, OASIS* 1977.

public art shows. Perhaps this is because of their permanence and hence the work would no longer be temporary as such.

Conclusion.

The preceding chapter has attempted to document the beginnings of temporary public art in Dublin, through the *OASIS* eehibitions. It has been made aware that temporary public art got off to a bad start in Dublin. Vandalism, location, communication and durability became heightened concerns for artists working in the public sphere through *OASIS* and as a result of this, perhaps gave the artists who participated, a clearer insight into the implications involved in working in a public space.

Figure 7 Note left at gate at Saint Anne's Park, Raheny at *OASIS* 1977 exhibition.

Chapter 2.

The Development of Temporary Public Art in Dublin as far as 1997.

The aim of this chapter is to document the evolution of temporary public art in Dublin after *OASIS* , right up to 1997.

After *OASIS* '79 there was a considerable lull in temporary public art exhibitions. Throughout the 1980s permanent metallic public sculptures were being erected such as the 10 works for the Millennium Sculpture Symposium of 1987-88. Dublin experienced no temporary public art in the 1980's, however, between 1982 and 1990, 7 permanent public artworks were sited in rural and urban places throughout Ireland. In 1982/83, the Arts Council's Visual Administration Officer introduced a report regarding a percent for art scheme in public places. In 1984, the Sculpture Society of Ireland held its first symposium in Arklow, Co. Wicklow and these have continued in counties in Ireland right up to the present day (Lovett, P.26, 1997).

Outdoor exhibitions of sculpture such as those held at Marley Park and Fern Hill were in evidence, although on the whole these where not really temporary public art exhibitions. In the majority of cases it was more a case of taking a permanent piece of sculpture from the studio space and placing it in an outdoor exhibition for a given time, in a way extending the walls of the gallery to the outdoor arena.

In 1991, Dublin was designated as European city of culture which encouraged the arts and highlighted their role in promoting the city. For the occassion, the Sculpture Society of Ireland produced a publication entitled, *Contemporary Sculpture in Dublin: A walkers guide*, which mentioned 60 permanent works of art in Dublin.

Temple Bar.

Throughout the 1990s Dublin hosted a number of tempoary public art exhibitions, which perhaps came as a direct result of Dublin being designated European city of culture.

Companies such as Temple Bar Properties, who are a state-owned company, wanted to play a role in promoting the city culturally.

Art Source (an independent administrative arts organisation) approached Temple Bar Properties in 1992, with a proposal for a four year programme of temporary street art, which treated the entire area as "a temporary open-air gallery", with artworks installed in sites scheduled for development, on hoardings and in informal exhibition spaces such as derelict sites, etc. (Temple Bar Properties Cultural Quarter package).
The projects chellenged the artists to engage with this drastically disrupted area, which was going through major development. The artists responded to the physical surroundings of the area and also addressed what was actually happening to the area. The idea of what public art could be was also an issue raised by the artists involved.
As part of the first *Street Art* exhibition, curated by *Art Source* in 1992, Eoin Byrne's *Something from Nothing,* (fig.8), was an apt comment on the area's rapid growth of creativity and development. It was a colourful display of a succession of images of a flower blooming, which was arranged in a grid-like pattern on the outside of a building. By the time development had progressed the following year, "the area was a maze of hoardings, and artists were offered these as ready-made canvases, inviting a number of impressive responses".(Dunne,1996, p.75).

Brian Connolly and Maurice O'Connell were the artists involved in one of the most substantial pieces of work of this programme, which was in 1993. It was a humorous project which gave the artists great freedom of movement and took place over a period of two months. O'Connell and Connolly created a series of street works, which were supposed to be in celebration of the entrances to the Temple Bar area. The two artists took a more satirical approach to the burgeoning property developments. They noticed that Temple Bar Properties created a sense of a cultural enclave by the marketing strategies they employed. Temple Bar Properties marked dotted lines around the boundary of Temple Bar, on its plan maps and aerial photographs. O'Connell and Connolly created this dotted line in reality, with red paint and stencils. They blocked off streets with tape and traffic cones making traffic wait until all the dots were dry, which caused irritation to the users of the area. They also converted a shopping trolley into a

Figure 8 Eoin Byrne's, *Something from nothing*, Temple Bar's *Street Art*, 1992.

work-man's cart by adding discarded traffic cones, confiscating road work signs, liberating lengths of tape, adding bells and various other workmanlike objects. They dressed in blue overalls, reflective jackets and knee pads. O'Connell and Connolly also developed a new street signage which was oddly placed to provoke humour (O'Connell interview, 1997).

Another interesting submission to Temple Bar's *Street Art* 1993 was Clea Van Der Grijn's *Temple Bar distorted*, which included 12 acrylic, perspex mirrors which were made to hide the construction work in Temple Bar.It was supposed to entertain the public by creating a carnival type hall of mirrors which were concaved/convexed and hung in various angles, distorting the human figure and surrounding buildings. The title *Temple Bar distorted* was to provoke the question whether Temple Bar was actually benefiting from the development of the area or not (Van Der Grijn, Artifact database, 1997). These *Street Art* projects have continued in Temple Bar up to and including 1997.

Blame God

The next major temporary public art exhibition to have been held in Dublin was Les Levine's billboard project in 1994. The project included a series of four billboard works at forty different sites around Dublin. The project was entitled *Blame God*, (fig.9), and was held in conjunction with IMMA's *From Beyond The Pale* exhibition. Some of the photographs were taken in Northern Ireland in the 1970s by Levine. Each billboard bore a phrase- *Blame God, Starve God, Kill God, Blast God* and *Execute God*. Levine was not arguing against God but against horrific acts carried out in his name, in Northern Ireland but also elsewhere. The British media has consistently presented the conflict in Northern Ireland as religious and the artist wanted to deal with this by speculating if it was possible to make 'religious work' any more (Mc Gonagle, 1997, p.53).

IMMA prepared itself very well for the exhibition by contacting various journalists, churches, politicians, religious groups, etc. prior to the show, however the posters still came under strong criticism from the Catholic Church who branded the campaign as unacceptable. A series of the slogans were replaced with Christian messages by a group of outraged Born-Again-Christians. The words were changed to slogans such as *Turn to*

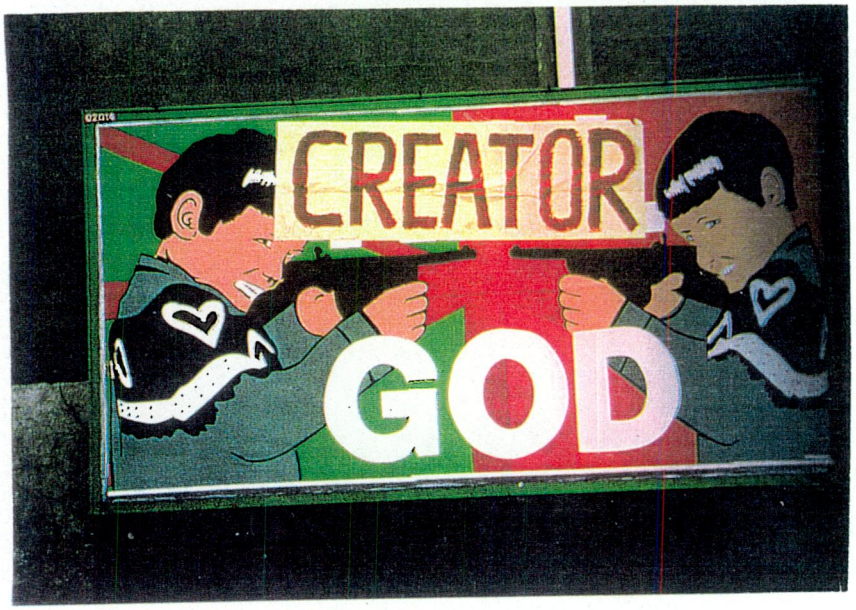


Figure 9 Les Levine's *Hate God,* altered billboard, Dublin, project seen as a whole, Dublin. 1994.

Figure 9 Les Levine's *Hate God,* south London, 1985

God, Creator God, and *Fear God.* (Irish Press, P.24, 1994).

Towards the end of the proect, a fundamentalist Catholic organisation took the Museum to the High Court fog blasphemy under Section 42 of the Irish Constitution. The case however was dismissed as nearly all the images had been taken down by the time they got to court (Mc Gonagle, 1997, p.54).

The project was first realised in 1985 in London with the ICA, the Orchard Gallery in Derry and the Douglas Hyde Gallery in Dublin. When Levine's project was installed in Northern Ireland, to provoke thought about a war fought allegedly over religion, he received a similar negative response from some communities. Levine's posters lasted approximately twenty minutes.

The project was initially intended for Dublin in the mid 1980s, but was rejected, due to this negative response it had received in Derry. The fact that it was possible in the mid 1990s reflects the change of attitudes in Irish society over the decade.

It can be dangerous for artists to impose work of this political nature on a community, especially when the artist does not come from that community. *Artangel Trust*, who "fund the unfundable" co-ordinated the project in Northern Ireland and London and have been involved in other politically-based and controversial projects, such as Krzystof Wodiczko's image of a swastika which was superimposed onto South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, London (Miles,1989, p.76). Wodiczko's swastika was supposed to commemmorate shame and hope universally. This socially aware, issue-based work lasted less than thirty minutes. Confrontational public art of this nature arouses opinion, but can also ignite resentment.

Jim Buckley

In 1995 an outdoor neon installation by Jim Buckley graced the corners of Fitzwilliam Square in Dublin (fig.10). The minimalist light work was in place in the Square for two weeks and was held in association with the Green on Red Gallery as one in a series of outdoor public art projects to be hosted by the gallery at the time. Pairs of flashing blue and yellow circles hung like targets or spy holes in an area commonly associated with

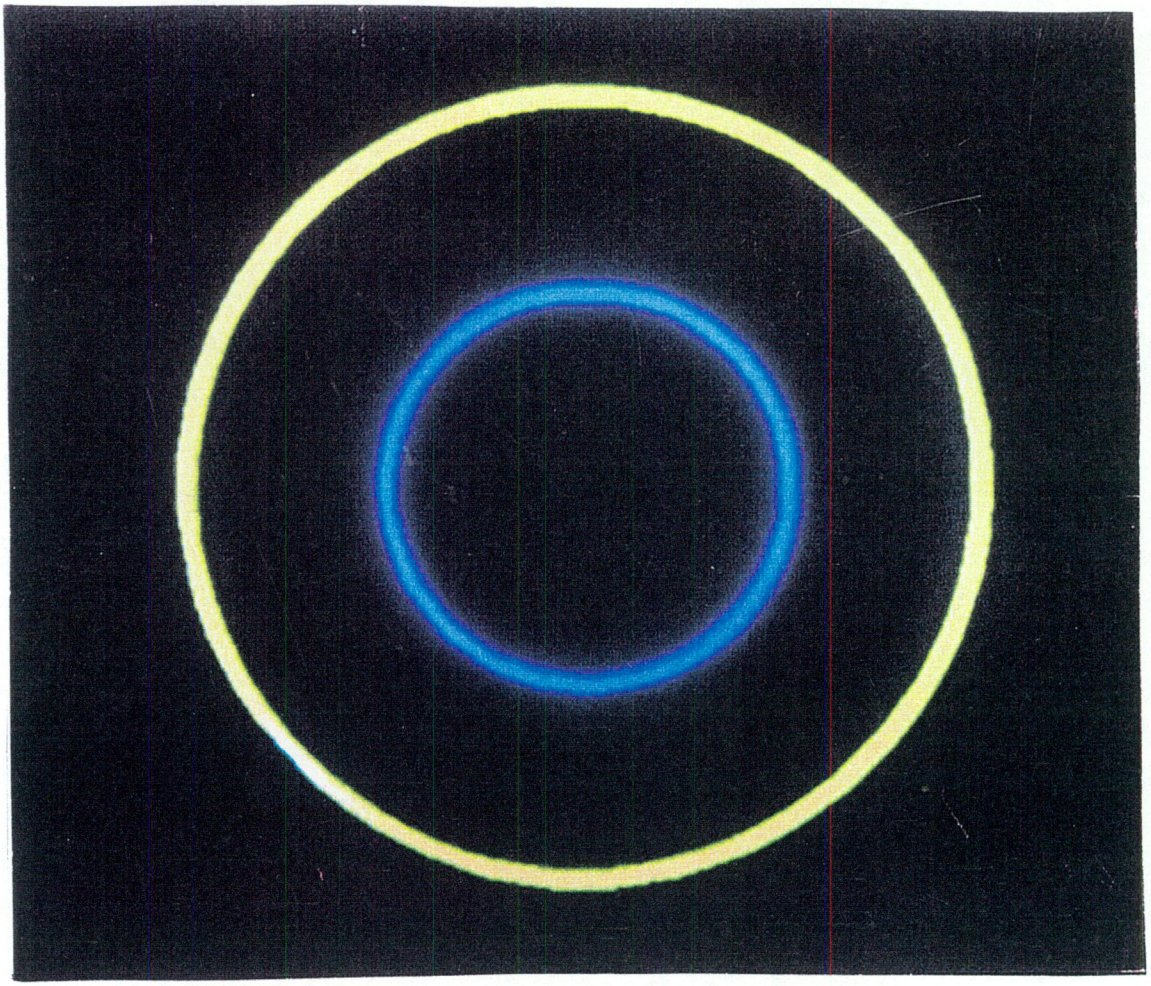


Figure 10 Jim Buckley's *Neon Installation*.

prostitution. The use of neon light created dynamic rhythmic movement.The flashing lights drew attention to the Square and the architecture where no other coloured lights were visible at night. However, residents and office people were concerned that it would attract the wrong kind of business.(Sculpture Society of Ireland's Newsletter, 1995, p.6).

National Ballroom.

The first temporary public art project to have been sponsored by Dublin Corporation was held at the old National Ballroom at Parnell Square, in December 1996 - January 1997, by Hilary Gilligan. It was an open air exhibition involving slide projections, light and sound. Slide images appeared at the windows of the old Georgian building, big band music played in the background and a woman in Georgian dress could be seen dancing ghost-like in the window. Impressions fused and disappeared together, creating a nostalgic ambience. It was an innovative and touching project, which brought back memories for a lot of people. It was also wonderful to see some of Dublin's beautiful architecture used as part of a public art project. Due to the successful response, Dublin Corporation have just commissioned a piece of temporary public sculpture for O'Connell Street, which is due to take place in 1998.

Outside

The next temporary public art exhibition which Dublin hosted was *Outside* which was held in the grounds of Trinity College from 15th January - 24th February 1997 and was held in conjunction with the Douglas Hyde Gallery and curated by Annie Fletcher (freelance Irish curator, based in Amsterdam). Although it appears to have been more of an outdoor art exhibition, it does in fact have the same attributes as temporary public art projects. Unlike the exhibitions at Marlay Park and Fernhill, whereby existing works were selected for the exhibitions, artists involves in *Outside* were commissioned to create new works that were site specific in a public space. This practice identifies itself with temporary public art.

The exhibition was concerned with being both inside and outside. Location, boundaries and interpretation were all important to this exhibition and a piece that worked very well aesthetically and conceptually was Theo Simm's *The Final Touch*, (fig.11). He was

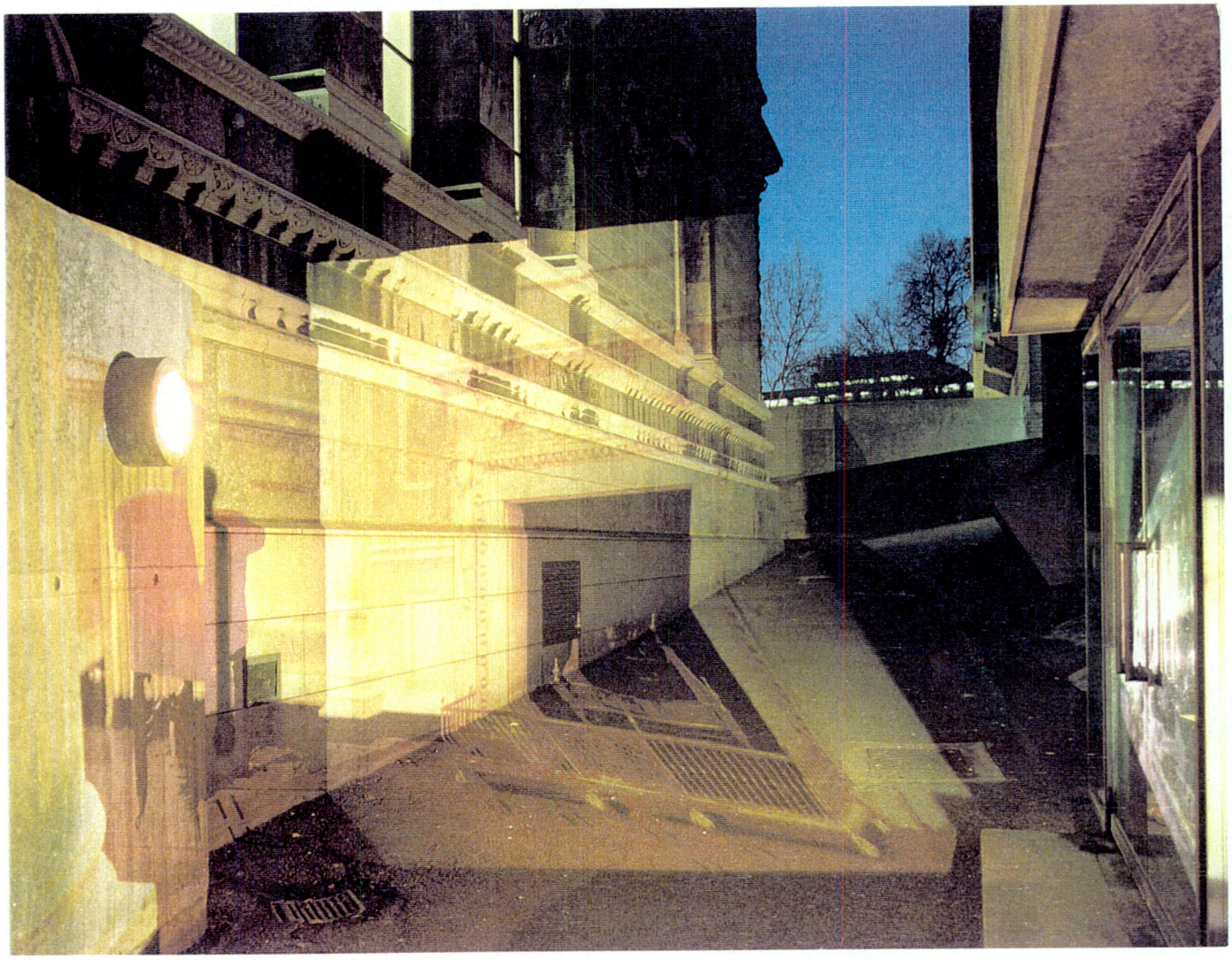


Figure 11 Theo Simm's, *The Final Touch, Outside* exhibition, 1997.

working with the idea of the familiar in an unfamiliar setting. He used projections of an interior of an elegant Dublin house on the exterior of Trinity College. He turned the inside out. Theo Simms created a dream-like world similar to that of Hillary Gilligan's at the National Ballroom.

Amplification

A similar project visually was Christain Marclay's *Amplification,* (fig12), which was part of the 1995 Venice Biennale. He filled the nave of the church of San Stae with six large translucent sheets of cotton scrim which were suspended from the ceiling. They bore enormously enlarged reproductions of snapshots of musicians. As the light changed the suspended images became transparent and the church's own architecture was visible through the scrim (Ferguson, 1996, p.81).

Conclusion.

From documenting the evolution of temporary public art as far as February 1997, it has been made aware to me that it can sometimes be difficult to differentiate between outdoor exhibitions of sculpture and temporary public art exhibitions. I have selected the main works which I believe come under the title of temporary public art. The media used and the issues involved were both varied and innovative and although not particularly noted now, the introduction and evolution of temporary public art in Dublin, demands a context in art history.

Figure 12 Christian Marclay's, *Amplification,* (Venice Biennale, 1995).

Chapter 3.

The Relative Merits of Temporary Public Art in Dublin Today.

"I shall not judge ... according to the rules of interpretation, the constraints of style anyway highly illusory ... and shall not wax lyrical concerning the rigor, the brilliance, the warmth, the respect for what is written..., but according to the image ... given me" (Barthes 1997 , P.9).

The aim of this chapter is to evaluate where Ireland has reached today as regards temporary public art. I have already traced the evolution as far as February 1997 and now intend analysing this year's four major temporary public art shows which took place this September. They were four very different organisations with very different briefs and they include Nissan/IMMA's *For Dublin* art project, Sculpture Society of Ireland's *Ireland and Europe*, Firestation's *Inner Art* and Temple Bar's *Street Art* symposium. As a result of this I intend addressing the problems and the ultimate objectives, which artists and organisers incur when undertaking a temporary public art show.

For Dublin.

One of the most successful projects was Nissan/IMMA's *For Dublin* art project. The £50,000 funded project consisted of nine neon manifestations of James Joyce's Molly Bloom, by Frances Hegarty from Donegal and Andrew Stones from Sheffield, England. Extracts from Molly Bloom's monologue in Joyce's *Ulysses* were specifically sited in nine city centre locations to stimulate humour and irony in the passer by.

The texts selected by the artists, Hegarty and Stones, include:-

- "... It'd be much better for the world to be governed by the women in it..." which was placed at the portico of the City Hall at the head of Parliament Street.(fig.13).
- At the top of the Clarence Hotel on Wellington Quay flashed, "Suppose our rooms at the hotel were beside each other and any fooling went on."(fig.14).

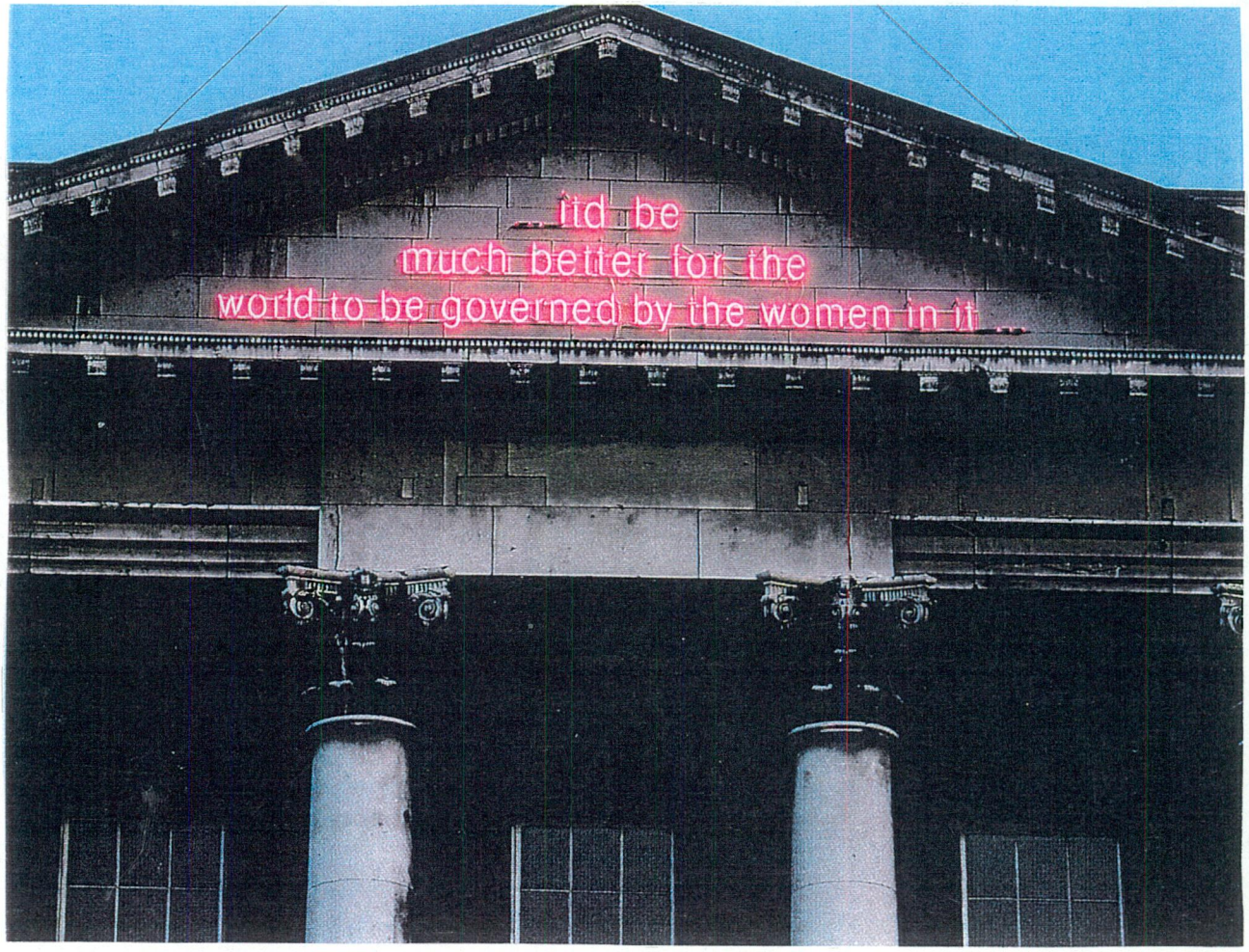


Figure 13 James Joyce quote which was placed at the portico of the city hall at the head of Parliament Street, (Nissan/ IMMA's *For Dublin*, 1997).

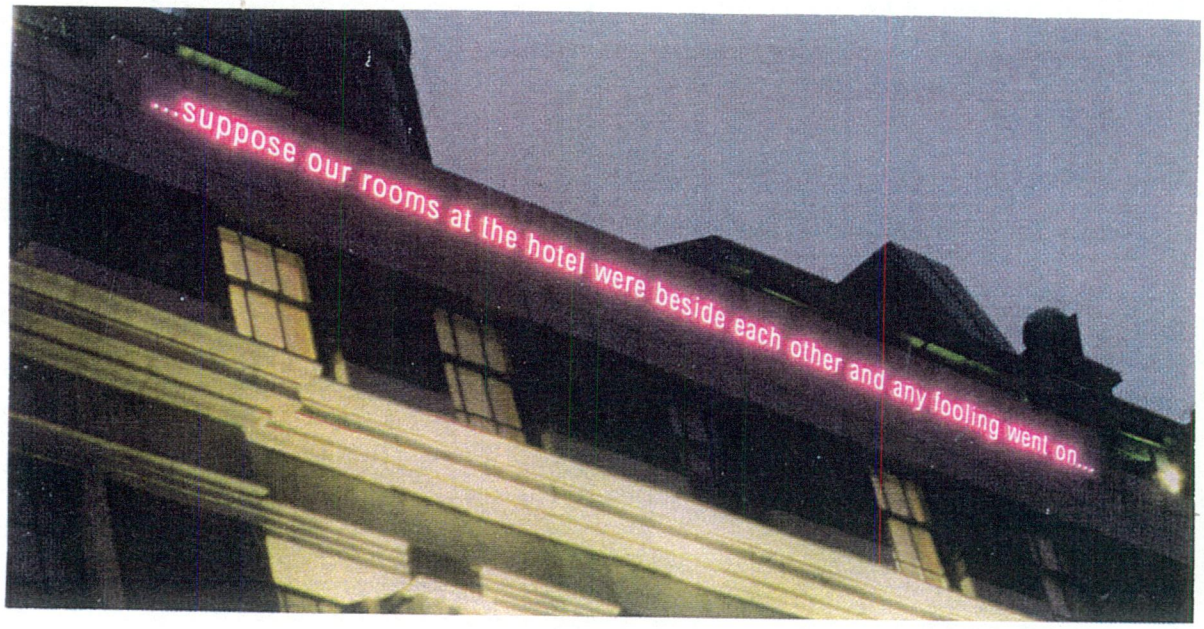


Figure 14 James Joyce quote which was at the top of the Clarence Hotel on Wellington Quay, (Nissan/IMMA's For Dublin, 1997).

Figure 15 James Joyce quote which was placed at the river Liffey, Ormond Quay lower wall, (Nissan/IMMA's For Dublin, 1997).

James Joyce quote which was placed further up the quay at Batchelor's Walk, (Nissan/IMMA's For Dublin, 1997).

- At the river Liffey, Ormond Quay lower wall, "O that awful deepdown torrent O and ...."(fig.15).
- Futher up the quay at Bachelors Walk was, "... the sea, the sea crimson sometimes like fire ..."(fig. 15).
- At Fergus, Taaffe Partner and Company Solicitors, D'Olier Street, opposite the 'Guinness Time' clock, on the corner of Burgh Quay and D'Olier Street, read, "...I suppose he died of galloping drink ages ago the days like years"(fig.16). At the first/second storey exterior above Coral Bookmakers, Fleet Street, was the statement, "...I hate an unlucky man..."(fig.17).
- Between the second/third storey windows at Trinity College student residences over-looking College Street, read, "...It'll be a change the lord knows to have an intelligent person to talk to."
- On the top floor side wall of the American Express building, Grafton Street, above the Thomas Cook sign, overlooking College Green, was the words, "...a stranger to Dublin what place was it and so on about the monuments and he tired me out with statues..."(fig.18).
- Finally, at the back wall of out buildings to the Provost's House, Trinity College, facing Nassau Street, read "...I wouldn't give a snap of my two fingers for all their learning."(fig.19).

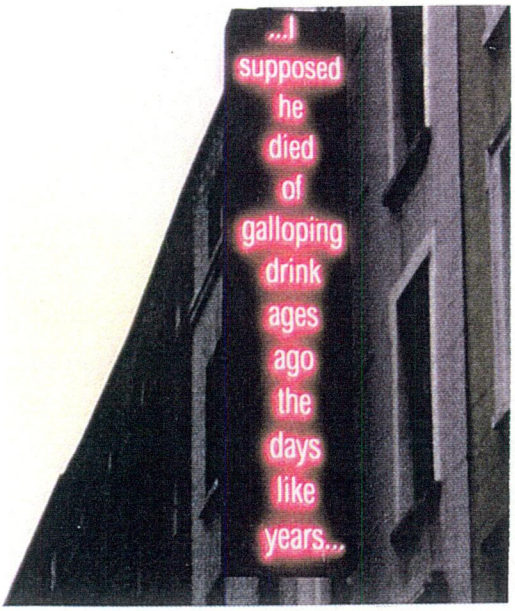
It was an engaging and challenging project, which related very well to the people of Dublin and its tourists. The passerby was confronted with these witty statements and did not need to know anything about the work to appreciate it, which made it very successful due to its accessibility. Its positioning high up on buildings meant that vandalism was practically impossible.

In an interview with Judith Findlay, Matthew Dalziel, who is a public artist said :

> **Art is a bit like meeting a person, is it not? If you do not know the person you have to learn about them and engage with them in you own way....But if you know that the person is Robert De Niro you might think that you have to behave or think in a certain way...Art in the public sphere is a purer interaction ...It is not labelled art and perhaps that is a good thing.**

Figure 16

James Joyce quote which was placed at Fergus Taaffe Partner and company Solicitors, D'Olier Street, (Nissan/IMMA's For Dublin, 1997).



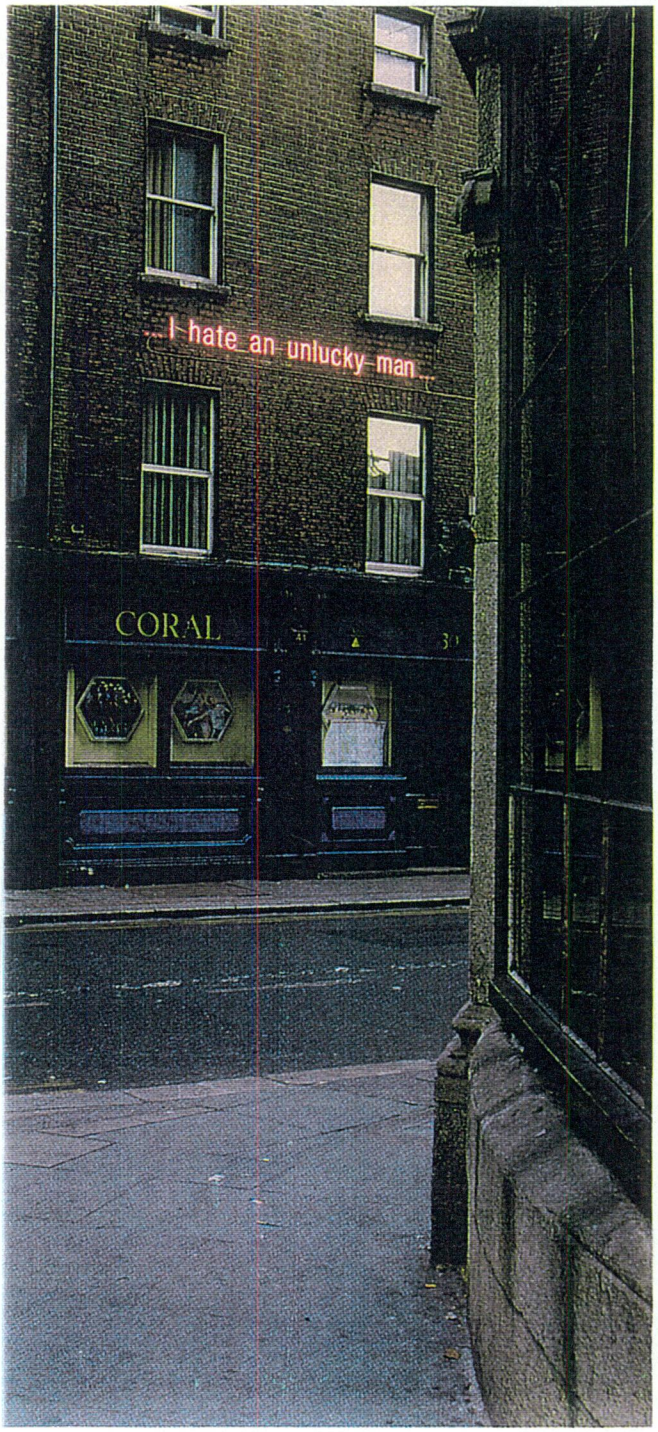


Figure 17

James Joyce quote which was placed above Coral bookmakers, Fleet Street, (Nissan/IMMA's For Dublin, 1997).

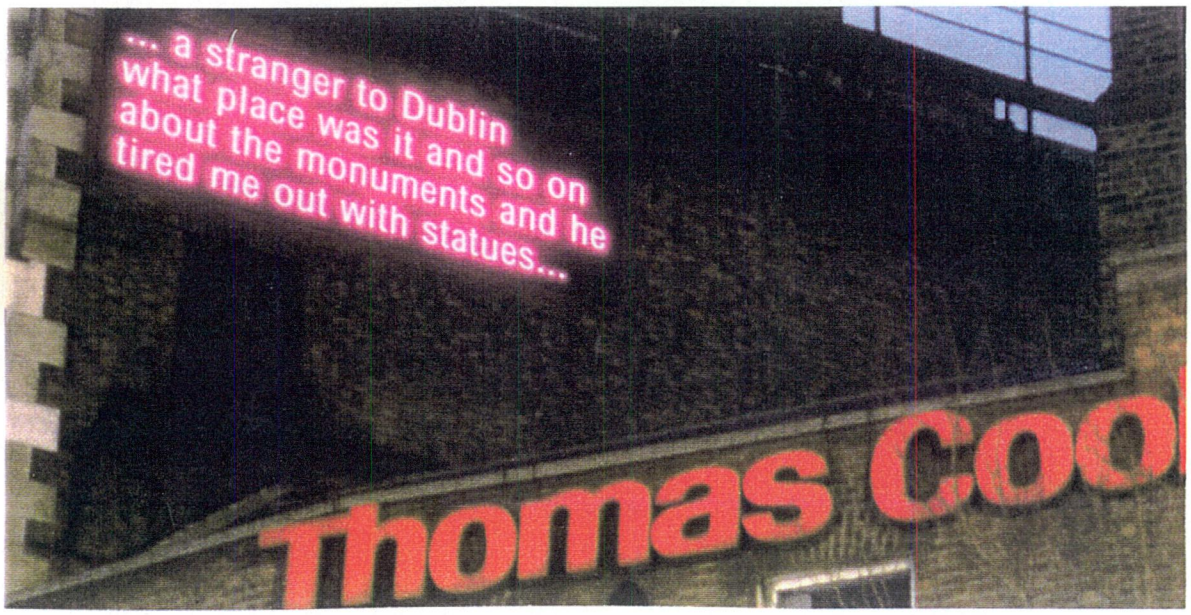


Figure 18 James Joyce quote which was placed on the American Express building, Grafton Street, (Nissan/IMMA's For Dublin, 1997).

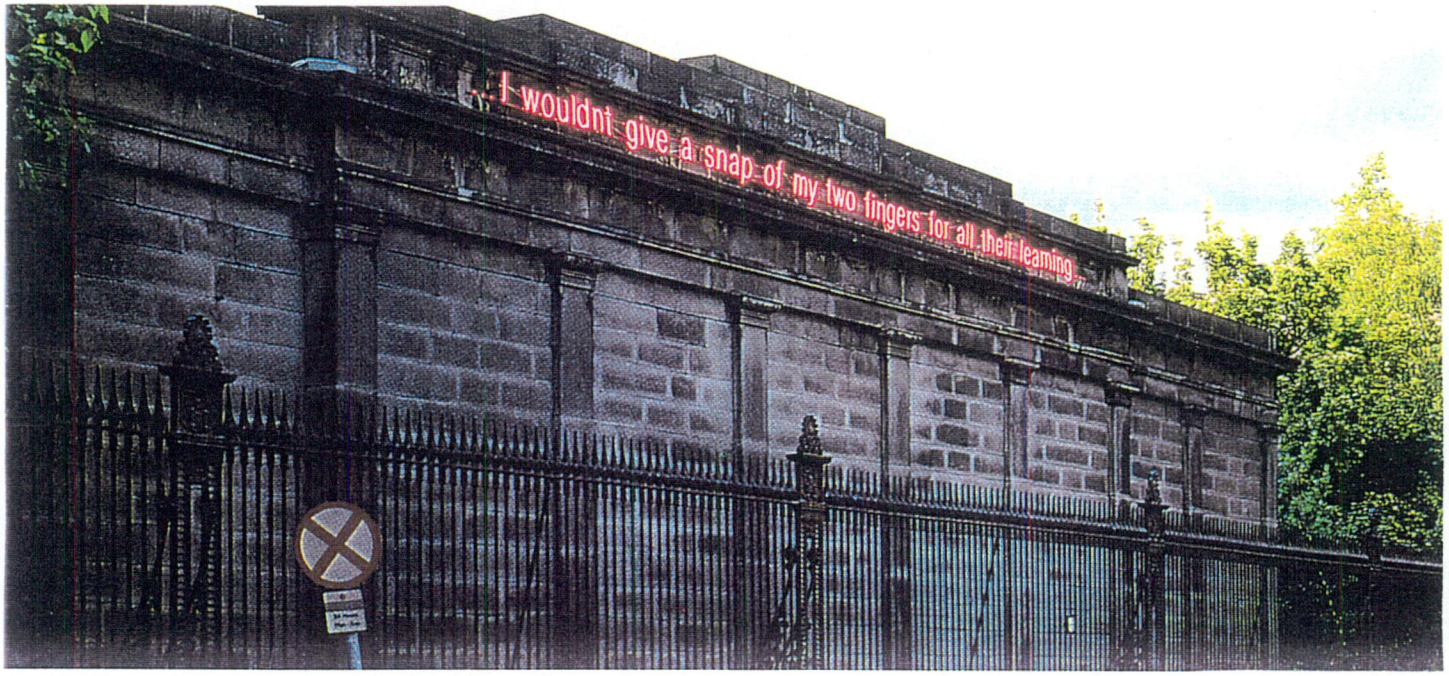


Figure 19 James Joyce quote which was placed at Provost's House, Trinity College, (Nissan/IMMA's For Dublin, 1997).

(Dalziel, 1997, p.23)

This is the way I view the Joyce text. The general public were confronted with the texts and, for some, they were not aware that they were James Joyce quotes but yet still really liked the boldness of the statements with their ironic positioning.

James Joyce's *Ulysses* was first published in Paris, "city of light", in 1922, and introduces the outsider Leopold Bloom, who works as a seller of newspaper advertising space.

> **In Ulysses the characters Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus undertake epic journeys across Dublin during the course of the day. Their movements, observations, conversations and imaginings intersect, famously constituting a map of the city at the turn of the century** (Hegarty and Stones, 1997, p.3).

Hegarty and Stones created an accessible map of the city, which mirrored the original *Ulysses* text. The fact that they created a map throughout Dublin city centre made it an enjoyable walk around the city for any individual. It was an even better surprise to have come across a text by chance, which inevitably put a smile on one's face.

The use of neon text is not a new medium for artists working in the public domain. For example, Jenny Holzer uses electronic billboards for her work, as they bring with them an immediately recognizable level of meaning. Holzer's project, *Truisms*, (1982), (fig's. 20, 21, and 22), which she refers to as "mock-cliches", make her feelings about society and culture known. She questions the value of the artist's hand by contrasting the impersonal common object- the sign or the billboard- with a message that is personal and sincere (Waldman, 1989, p.12).

One of the most interesting and successful responses to the *For Dublin* project, was the introduction of a club flier for Republica, which has a photo of the city hall on the front with the words, "... Would it now?..." superimposed in neon text (fig.23). This comes in response to the statement "...it would be much better for the world to be governed by the women in it...". In this case temporary public art was the inspiration for a humorous marketing strategy.

"To keep sane in the contemporary world one must win with wit" (Elsen, P.292, 1989).

I think *For Dublin* was a successful temporary public art project due to its, accessibility,

Figure 20

Figure 21

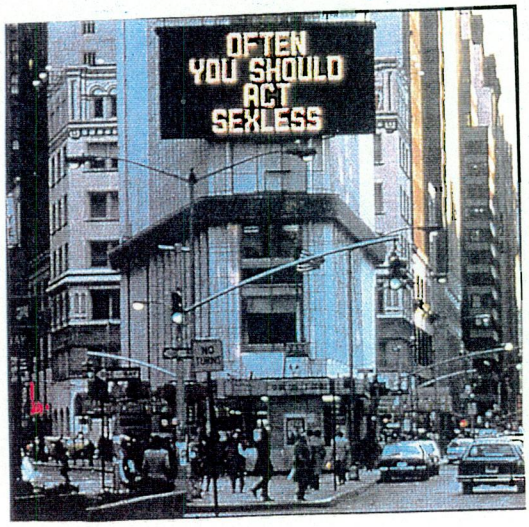
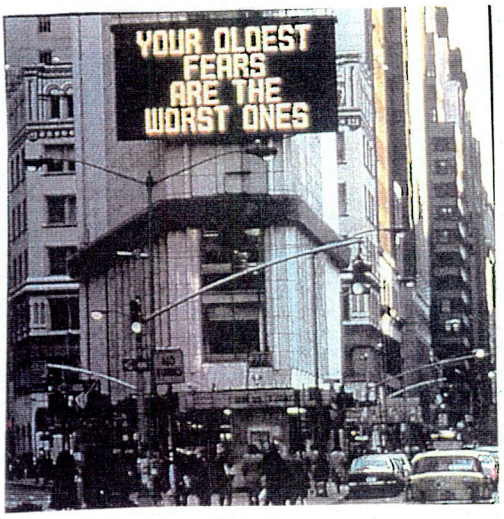


Figure 22



Selections from Jenny Holzer's *Truisms*, Times Square, New York, 1982.

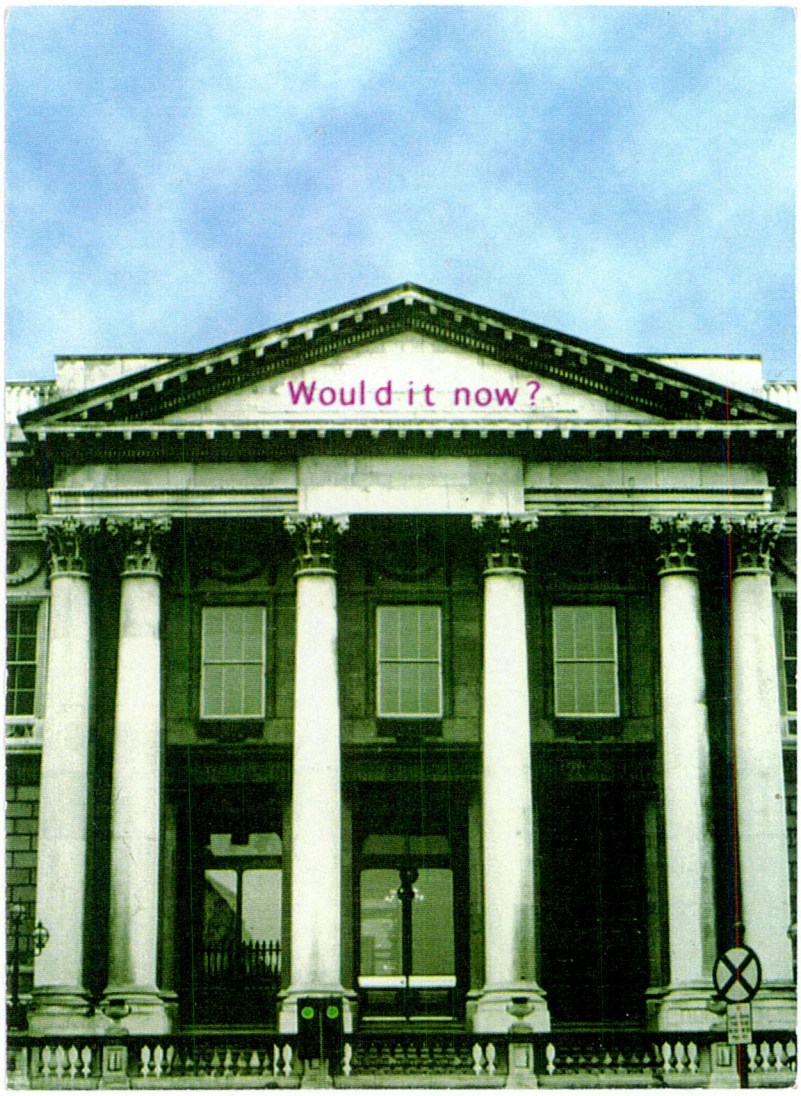


Figure 23 *Republica* club flyer, 1997.

relevant locations and light hearted wit. These thought provoking texts subtly enriched people's lives everyday, in a humorous and satirical way.

Ireland and Europe

The Sculpture Society of Ireland's *Ireland and Europe* exhibition involved eleven Irish and eleven European artists, who displayed twenty temporary public art works around Dublin city centre. The project was funded to the tune of £40,000 mainly by Kaleidoscope (European funding group), Dublin Corporation, The Arts Council and The European Cultural Foundation. The work referred to European integration and, in particular, Ireland's relationship with Europe.

The selection process was both innovative and unique, whereby Irish artists were selected by an international panel of artists and subsequently the Irish artists selected the international participants. There was also an exchange programme between the Irish and European artists which took place during May and June.

One piece which was successful in fulfilling the brief and stands out in my mind was, Pauline Agnew's *A Tapestry Of Circumstance*, a piece concerning immigration. Its location in the GPO meant that the sight was aptly chosen, as many varying nationalities pass in and out every day. Six pillows were placed on individual plinths and through headphones, one could listen to the stories of six refugees from countries in conflict in Europe. On each pillow was an embroidered flag from their country of origin. The main story relates to the artist's aunt, who was of German origin who arrived in Ireland as a war orphan. She kept crusts of bread underneath her pillow in fear of possible starvation. Each voice recounts stories of enforced emigration and this is a particularly apt topic for Dublin at the minute, considering the large influx of refugees into the country.

Daniel Jewesbury's *Exchange*, (fig.24), also stands out in my mind. It was a sound installation, cited at the Civic Offices at Woodquay. Speakers, attached to cables, were hung overhead outdoors, between two buildings. One could hear people speaking in various European languages, which reiterated the fact that Europe consists of a collection of varying nationalities.

Aaron Fowler's *Golden Calf*, (fig.25), which was sculpted from butter, was situated at

Figure 24 Daniel Jewesbury's *Exchange*, (SSI's *Ireland and Europe*, 1997).

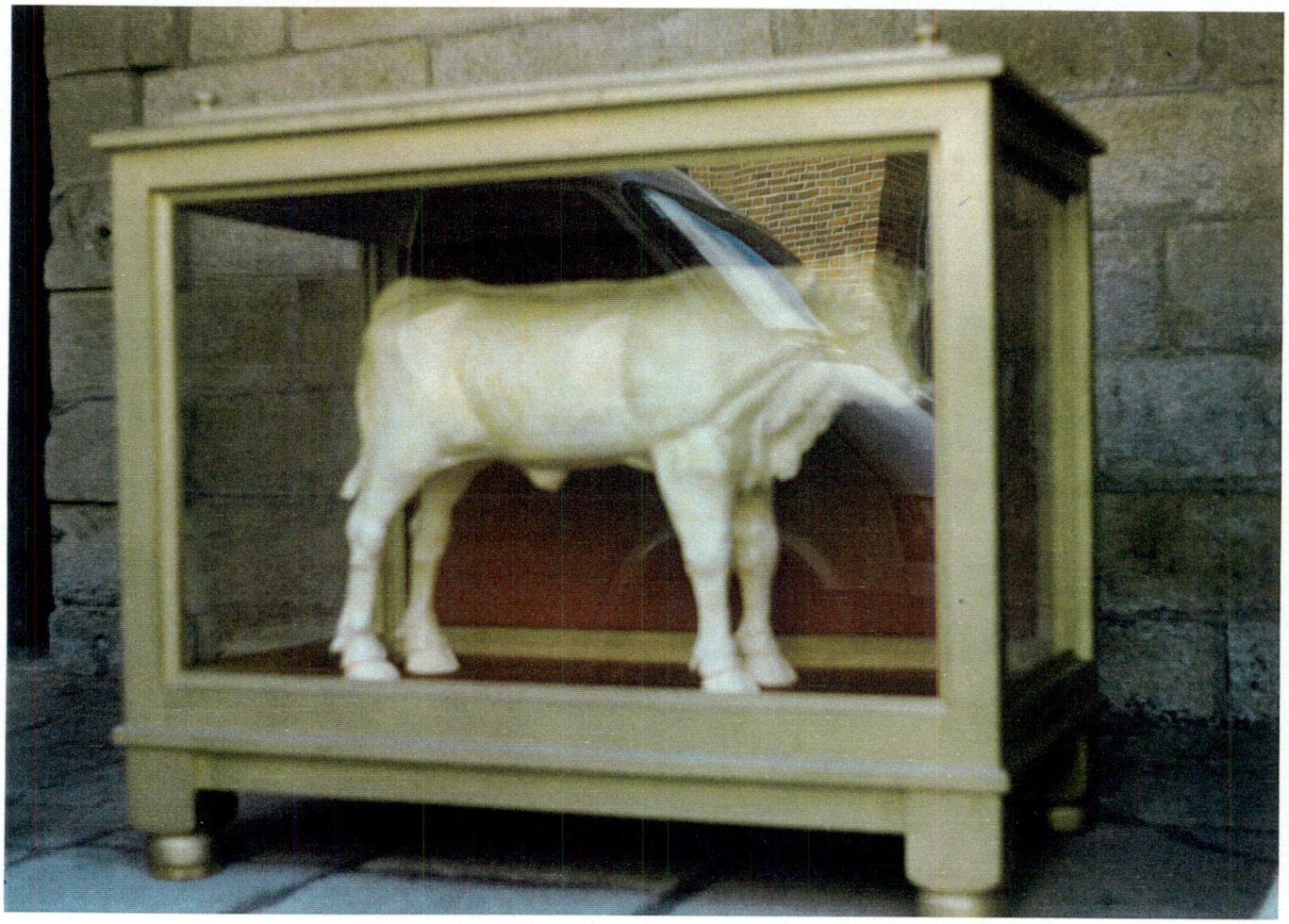


Figure 25 Aaron Fowler's *Golden Calf,* (SSI's *Ireland and Europe,* 1997).

the entrance to Dublin Castle. The work was supposed to comment on how "Ireland's alignment with European policy affects our domestic, industrial and agricultural structures".

Kevin F. Grey received some negative feedback for his performance piece, *288 hours of solitary leisure.* Inside a portacabin, Grey moved with a wooden box attached to his head, which represented torture and confinement. Local children threw stones and bangers at the windows of the portacabin and the gates of the courtyard to where his piece was, were chained and padlocked during his performance. Location was a problem for this piece and due to this negative response, the work had to be abandoned before completion (Mc Guigan, 1997, p.2).

Photography and Sound were both common media used throughout the exhibition. Aside from Jewesbury's *Exchange*, Fergus Kelly and Max Eastley (whom Kelly invited to exhibit) both displayed sound installations in the Iveagh Gardens. Kelly's installation used on-site recordings which could be heard in a wooded area of the gardens. Eastley's installation, (fig.26), was a bit more ambitious, as it was operated by wind. Kite-shaped lengths of latex were suspended between trees and were supposed to vibrate in the wind to create different pitches of sound.

A particularly succesful photographic piece was, Jerome Durand's photomontages which were exhibited overhead at the Civic Offices at Woodquay (fig.27). These images of bullet-like forms were cast into the paving stones of the steps outside.

However ambitious and complex the Sculpture Society of Ireland's *Ireland and Europe* was, due to these very traits, some pieces were more successful in concept than image. Alan Phelan's *Sports Space or a Flat Foley* was one such piece. From the description in the brochure the piece could have worked very well, but due to not being well executed, it remained obscure. The site was the Archery Lawn in the Iveagh Gardens, where sports are actually forbidden. Phelan's pitch markings were supposed to replicate marking of various play grounds. Around the banks of the archery pit Phelan included laminated photographs of men looking through scientific equipment.

The markings on the archery pit were not clearly visible at all. These lines were supposed to "... define spaces which invite the observer to play on the one hand, while simultaneously prohibiting freedom of movement" (Phelan, 1997).

Figure 26. Max Eastley's sound installation, (SSI's *Ireland and Europe*, 1997).

Figure 27 Jerome Robaard's photomontages, (SSI's *Ireland and Europe*, 1997).

Joke Robaard's *Horse, Athlete, Bird* took the format of large-scale photographs which were situated inside the civic offices at Wood Quay. Robaard, from the Netherlands was dealing with 'nostalgia and home sickness'. The work consisted of two large-scale photographs that were taken in the Netherlands and Ireland respectively. They were group portraits, with the inclusion of a horse in each one, which was "a symbol of mediation between the two countries". The location in the Civic Buildings meant that the audience was somewhat varied. Some found the location rather inaccessible, however, for others who use the building regularly, it was a pleasant surprise to discover some pieces of temporary artwork.

On the whole, the concept behind the pieces was much more impressive than the actual work. Although a variety of exciting media were used, from sound installation to performance, graffiti and light, the show itself had the appearance of being put together rather hastily, for example, Nelida Mendoza's *Contemplate*, which consisted of blinds made from wax, feathers and paper, which were draped on the windows of the Dublin Corporation Arts Office on Parnell Square. The blinds had the appearance of large sheets of crumpled plastic.

Inner Art.

On the other end of the scale comes Firestation's *Inner Art* which was under a completely different motivation. The brief was completely different to any of the other temporary public art exhibitions which were presented this September in Dublin. *Inner Art* wanted to bring "...art into a community in crisis and make connections with that community..." (Sheehan interview, 1997).

The Firestation Artist's Studios are located in the north inner city in an area of social deprivation, mass unemployment and severe drug addiction. In the past two years the area was going through a war against drugs and in excess of five people were dying from heroin each week. Grief and anger emerged from the families against the drug dealers which manifested itself through nightly street marches. Families came together to solve the problem and they did make a substantial difference. In the past six months there is a marked difference between the atmosphere then and now. People began to feel that the

situation had improved and that it was time to reflect and grieve.
The artists in Firestation wanted to see if contemporary art had anything to offer this grief ridden society. They wanted to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation.

Shane Cullen's text -based mural on the wall of Mountain View Court directly involved the community (fig.28). Cullen held meetings with the residents and took a vote on whether the mural should go ahead or not. It was a text-based piece, directly about grief and based on a message sent to Gerry Adams by a republican prisoner, after the death of hunger striker Bobby Sands in 1981. The letter was sent by the IRA's leader in the Maze prison at the time, Brendan McFarlane.The message was one of many written in tiny lettering on cigarette papers or toilet roll and commonly know as a 'comm' (communication). The letters were usually smuggled out or passed between republican prisoners during the H-Block hunger strikes. The text reads,

> **To Brownie 2:15 a.m.,**
> **Comrade Mor, I just heard the news – I'm shattered – Just can't believe it. This is a terrible feeling I have. I don't even know what to say. Comrade, I am sorry but I just can't say anything else. May God in his infinite mercy grant eternal rest to his soul. Jesus Christ guide and protect us all.God Bless.**
> **xoxo Bik xoxo**

The piece was placed in a different context to its origin but related to the people by the fact that it evoked grief in families who have lost a member of their family. The residents fully approved of the piece, with 78 flats in favour of the mural out of 102. One flat was opposed to it and the rest either did not vote or were not at home.
Shane Cullen exhibited the entire work before as part of a show in the Douglas Hyde Gallery last year, called *Fragmens sur les Institutions Republicaines IV*, which was a temporary installation of 48 panels of text documenting the history of the hunger strikes which took place in Northern Ireland in 1981.There was no need to include the additional text as the piece spoke on its own. Cullen commented on the extract he used for the Fire Station project,

> **the language in the text is language that I think everybody can identify with and understand. It is an expression of**

Figure 28 Shane Cullen's wall mural, (Fire Station's *Inner Art*, 1997).

> **sympathy and solidarity and I am interested to see if the text I am using will have the same meaning for people who live in this area as it had originally. If it works and people like it, I'll be happy**.

(Cullen,1997, p.18).

The piece received some criticism for being republican propaganda, however this was not the case. Cullen simply chose this text as it related to the grief people were feeling in the area. Cullen said the text "...seemed to provide a bridge between a community in trauma in Northern Ireland and a community in trauma in the inner city in Dublin.". (Cullen, p.19, 1997).

The use of wall murals was a popular idiom for community art in the 1970s (Miles, 1989, p.68). Artists made murals or mosaics in a community process with residents and School children. Lovett noted that a more recent development in public art has been to re-engage the artist more directly into the life of the community. (Lovett, 1995, p.68). In the 1990s these engagements have addressed themselves not to the creation of environmental decoration, but to broader social issues, such as the drug problem which Fire Station addressed.

Another piece in the exhibition which I felt related very well to the public was Valentin Torren's magical installation in St. Francis Xavier Church in Gardener Street. Medb Ruane described the piece as "a litany of silver spoons dancing under strobe light...a romantic work, aptly psychedelic, making very tidy links between capitalism/greed and the evils visited by drug barons" (Ruane, 1997, p.14). Silver spoons and fish hooks dangled from the ceiling, some of which spelt out the words *Dou Jones*. Small circular mirrors were placed on the floor, which spelt out the word Illusion. A red umbrella was hung upside down from the ceiling and this represented life and the blood into which heroin was injected. The use of silver spoons relates to heroin paraphernalia and the use of mirrors relates to cocaine. The work was a memorial to the tragedy of all those who died from drug abuse. The use of the words *Dou Jones* relates to the Financial Times Index and represents how money and greed ruin peoples lives.

Overall it was an extraordinarily confrontational piece which dealt directly with the complex social problems of the area. The use of this precious religious 18th century space

was aptly chosen as families have prayed for young drug addicts there for years. Nuala Haughey commented on its significance to being sited in a church as, "...an illusion to religion as the opium of the masses" (Haughey, 1997, P.13). Torren's piece had a huge attendance over the four weeks, partly due to its location in the Church.

This however was not the only piece to have been placed in a Church, as Pauline Cummin's video piece *Good Confession* was placed in two confessional boxes in the Lourdes Church, Sean Mac Dermott Street. Local people participated in a video installation which highlighted concerns of the residents in the area. A young woman said "... and I never took anything until my daddy died ... five days after the funeral, I was on heroin, I got off it, but the doctors don't understand what that's like - I'm climbing the walls and he's telling me to relax before bedtime in a nice, warm bath" (Ruane, 1997, p.14).

Paul O'Neill held a workshop with 4-6 year olds from the Community After Schools' project. O'Neill gave the children 50 disposable cameras and with the resulting photographs he created a mural on the facade of the After School's Project building on Buckingham Street (fig.29).

Alistair Mac Lennan presented a 12 hour outdoor vigil and performance. In front of the greek temple on Sean Mac Dermott Street (fig.30). Mac Lennan placed a dead tree over two thirty foot long benches and created a shrine, placing pieces of paper, string and memorabilia to commemorate those lost through drug abuse in the North Inner city. Eighty/ninety objects were put on the tree, along with 170 messages, by both himself and passersby. It was a potent experience with great emotional power. Mac Lennan talked and listened to the people who approached him.The work itself grew from meetings Mac Lennan had with these local groups.

Andre Stitt gave a performance of raw, immediate pysicality, which involved smoke, fire, blood, sheets, ketchup, vinegar, bangs and shouts. It was a political piece based on emotional anger at the many deaths in society which come as a result of social problems, such as drug abuse (fig.31).

Doctor Courbe's *Art Ambulance* was among the most amusing pieces of the show. Courbe examined his patients, seeing if they were able to look at art and gave out prescriptions, for example, glasses of red wine which were supposed to be blood transfusions. Medb Ruane commented in the Irish Times "...patients line up before him,

Figure 29 Paul O'Neill's wall mural, (Fire Station's *Inner Art*, 1997).

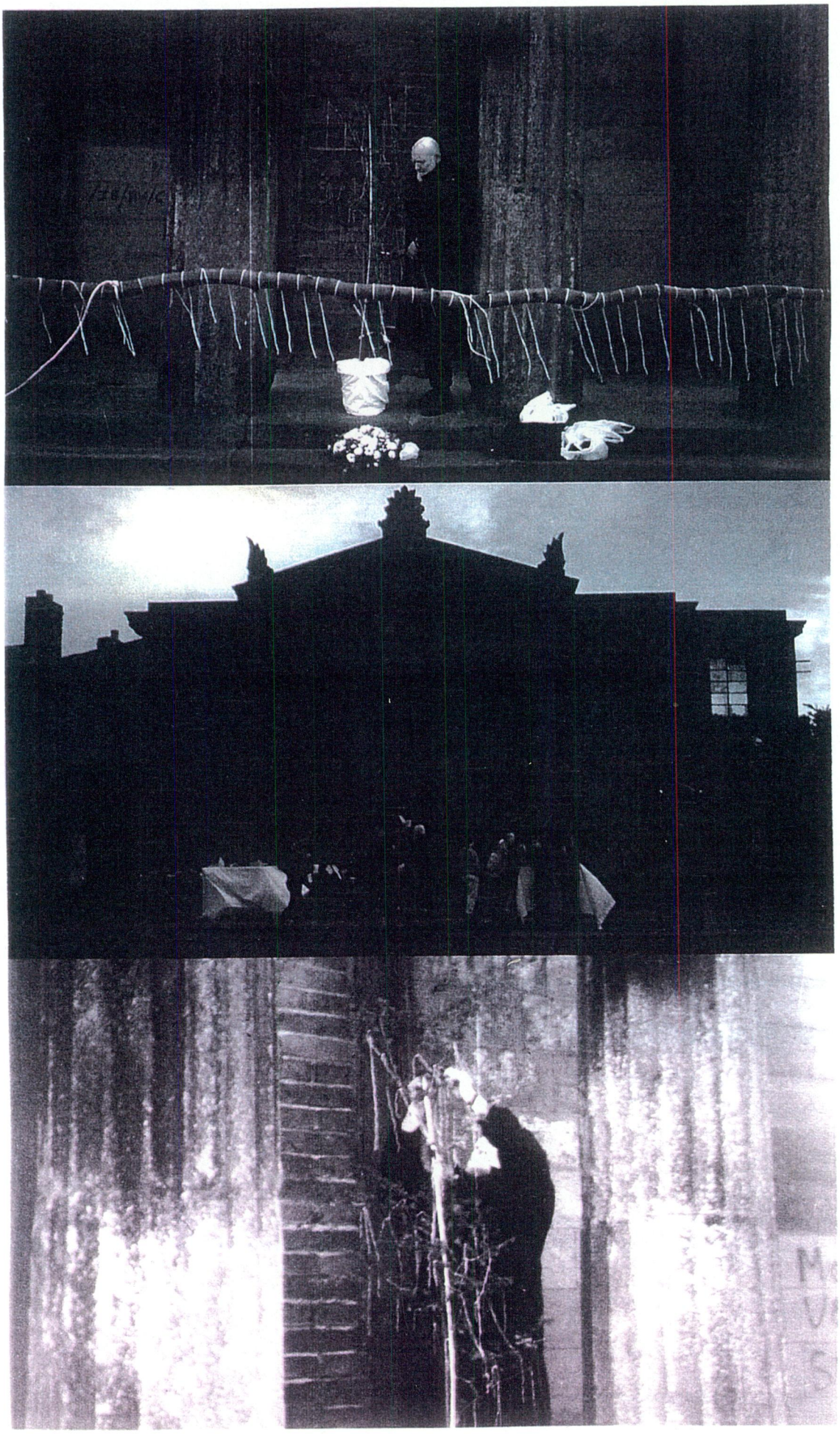


Figure 30 Alistair Mac Lennan's performance piece, (Fire Station's *Inner Art*, 1997).

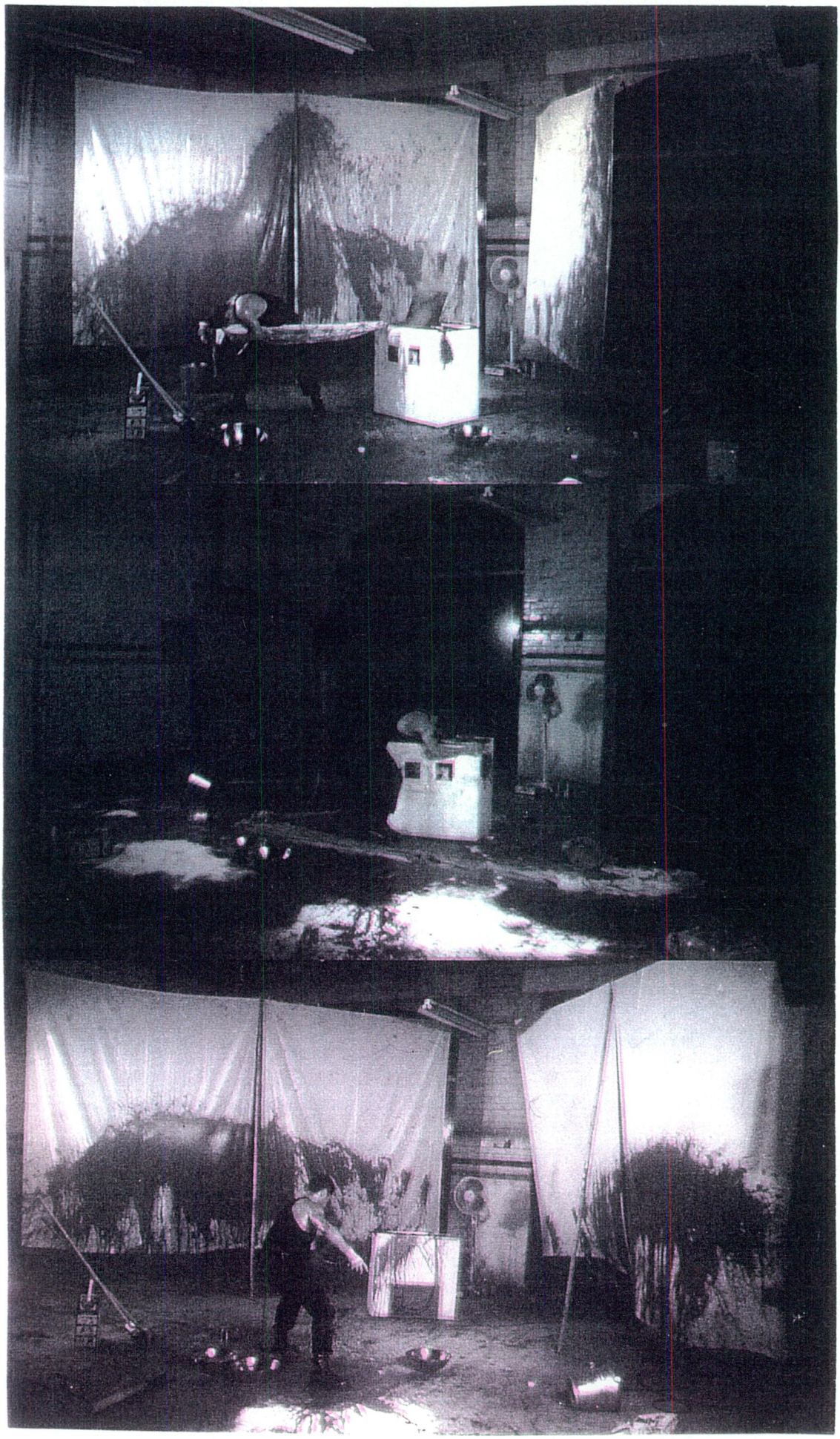


Figure 31 Andre Stitt's performance piece. (Fire Station's *Inner Art*, 1997).

sick of abstract expressionism, over-exposed to art, suffering those Picasso blues..."(Ruane, 1997, p.14).

This issue- based show dealt with universal problems, yet touched individual people personally. Through their work, many of the artists involved emphasised the role for artists in rejuvenating the community and the relevance of art and communication.

Street Art

Finally, Temple Bar's *Street Art* symposium comprised ten pieces of work sited around the Temple Bar area and commissioned by Temple Bar Properties. Temple Bar Properties brought art to the streets and aimed to

> **...provide the public who live, work, socialise and pass through Temple Bar on a day to day basis with lively, challenging, thought provoking and sometimes bizarre works of art, and to encourage artists to consider ways of working, using unusual sets and materials**.(Carmody, 1997, p.2).

Many of the pieces were humorous and playful, although few were thought provoking. Most of the artists had not worked in the public arena before and were faced with the problem of addressing a non-art audience. A majority of the artists chose to do so in a playful way, which sometimes can be a good way to enrich peoples lives visually, everyday.

Among the most visually interesting pieces were Jeanette Doyle's life size toy soldiers, (fig.32), although perhaps unusually placed at the entrance to Meeting House Square. One would perhaps question their relevance here, although the artist said that "...the soldiers are a playful, potentially flippant representation of a frightening presence, exhibited as toys in an area predominantly geared towards pleasure" (Doyle, 1997, p.5). Working from two miniature toy soldiers, Doyle created life-size toy figures which paradoxically appeared even less real and more obviously not a part of everyday life.

Clea Van Der Grijn's snapshots also stimulated interest (fig.33). Van Der Grijn displayed three hundred and fifty Polaroid shots of faces around Temple Bar onto the front of the Temple Bar Music Centre and also opposite Temple Bar Gallery and Studios. A simple idea, it was visually colourful and fun.

Sean Hillen's photo- montages which were placed along the Liffey were also visually

Figure 32 Jeannette Doyle's Toy soldiers, (Temple Bar's *Street Art*, 1997).

Figure 33 Clea Van der Grijn's wall mural, (Temple Bar's *Street Art*, 1997).

stimulating and quite thought provoking (fig.34). The reassembled cut-up montages included the juxtapositioning of familiar elements of touristic Ireland in mutant images. Hillen's collages incurred some problems as regards the existence of his work, this however stemmed from official activities rather than vandalism. Election posters interfered with his work and one was ripped down by a collector. (Whelan, 1997, p.54).

Norette Kirby's giant lego-block temple was constructed from identical plaster blocks modelled on the standard eight dot logo brick. It was hidden behind locked gates in Crane Lane and therefore had a limited audience (fig.35).

James Hayes used chairs in a figurative way (fig.36).The use of toy colours added a playful element to the work and their positioning drew attention to what goes on above eye level in Temple Bar. Hayes viewed the chair as a figure of domestic life and by their positioning in Temple Bar, he wanted to highlight the fact that Temple Bar is not only geared towards entertainment, but is a home to many.(Hayes, 1997, p.12).

Veronica Larsson, dressed in native Swedish costume, distributed cinnamon buns from a traditional Swedish style cottage near the Viking Adventure building in Temple Bar. Larsson viewed it as "a naive way of trying to make friends with new home and its people".(Larsson, 1997, p. 14).

John Power's giant mechanical machine was a fascinating piece which was enhanced by radio sounds (fig.37). It was a satirical piece based on men's enslavement to or fascination with the machine (Interview with Power,1997). Due to the successful response from the public the piece is being kept as a permanent fixture at Meeting House Square, Temple Bar.

The 250,000 beer mats which were produced for the Temple Bar Art Symposium by Douglas and Douglas was an innovative way of producing contemporary art and a good portrayal of Temple Bar's fast growing pub culture. The work explores the relationship between Dublin's thriving restaurant and pub culture by night and compares it to Temple Bar's day- time culture of small businesses, artists and galleries. Douglas and Douglas managed to involve the public by direct interaction with their work.

A problem that frequently arises with temporary public art projects is durability. A piece which had great problems in remaining in existence at all, was Simon Spain's leaves (untitled). Simon Spain scattered muddy coloured leaves with words printed on them

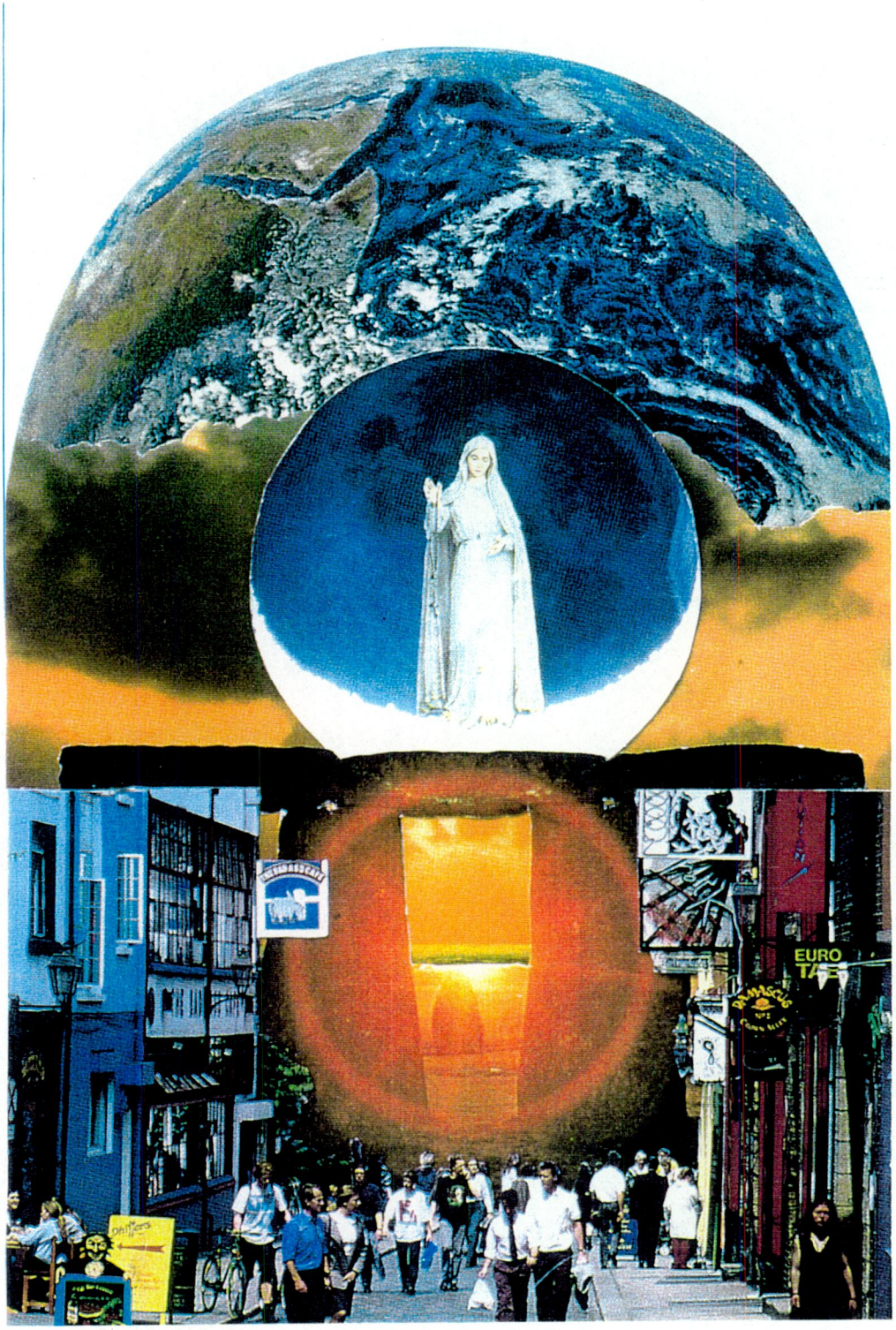


Figure 34 Sean Hillen's montages, (Temple Bar's *Street Art*, 1997).

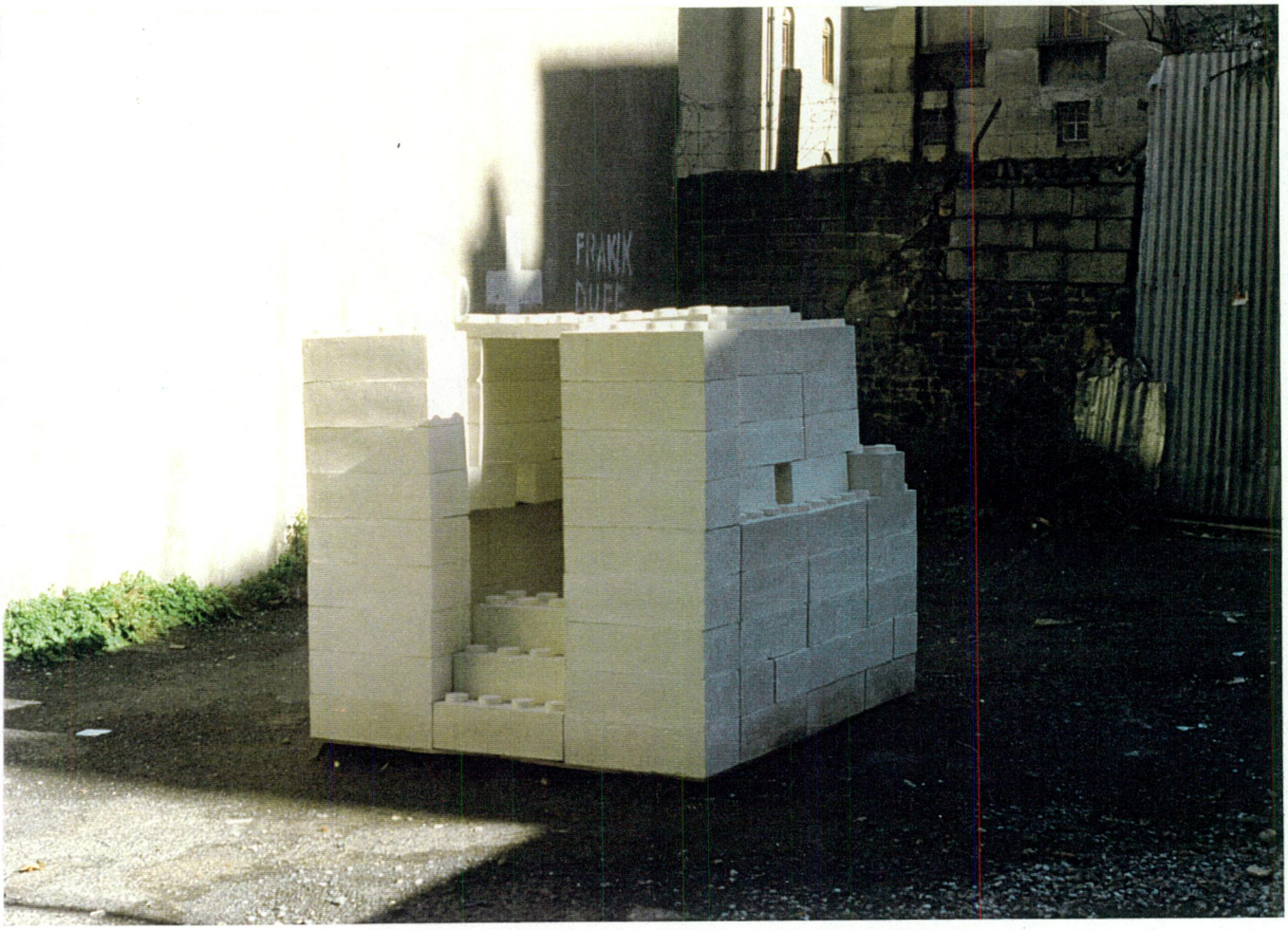


Figure 35 Norette Kirby's temple, (Temple Bar's *Street Art*, 1997).

Figure 36 James Hayes' Chairs, (Temple Bar's *Street Art,* 1997).

Figure 37 John Power's mechanical machine, (Temple Bar's *Street Art,* 1997).

around the bottom of the trees in Temple Bar. Due to undesirable weather conditions, the leaves were washed away within hours. The leaves had the appearance of messy pulp on the street.

Unaltered landscape.

Sometimes when working with a temporary material, especially outdoors, it is important to consider just how temporary that material is. If the viewer never has a chance to actually see the piece it seems to defeat the purpose. It would be different if the work was intended to have already disintegrated by the time the viewer would see it, like in Brian King's *Unaltered Landscape* , which was part of *OASIS* 1979.
King created two sea/pillars of ice, two feet square and three feet high and cut two foot square sods from the grass and surmounted the pillars of ice to make a small scale monumental piece of temporary work, which inevitably melted and the sods returned to their original place, leaving only the placard with King's name and the title of the piece on it. By the time some viewers came to view the piece there was nothing there at all however, this was the original idea. Spain's piece was a bit messier and less sophisticated than King's. Perhaps if the leaves were to have disintegrated in a more visually interesting way, the piece could have been more successful.

On the whole, Temple Bar's project was a fairly lively display with the aim of adding thought provoking pieces of contemporary art to the every day users of Temple Bar. The fact that the artists had to contend with vandalism and weather added to both the excitement and the risk, of the work, with some pieces fairing better than others.

Conclusion

One very important factor which artists who work in the public realm must consider is the need for public art to be intellectually and physically accessible to the population. If art is to be taken out of the gallery and placed in the public domain, it must communicate to that public.

Inner Arts brief was very different to the other exhibitions and they addressed social

problems in some cases, in a collaborative way with the community. This can be referred to as new genre public art. According to critic Suzi Gablik, new genre public art "takes the form of interactive, community-based projects inspired by social issues" (Gablik, 1994, p.14).

Cullen ascertained the needs and wants of the community by empowering citizens in the decision making process instead of the usual case of public art projects being foisted on the public, which appeared to have been part of the problem of *OASIS* 1977. The artists used temporary public art to raise social awareness and perhaps initiated social change. This confrontational way of working was a success for Fire Station, however this way of working is not always accepted by the public.It can be dangerous for artists to make assumptions on situations. For example, Levine's billboard project, which I spoke of in more detail in my last chapter, was not accepted by the general public. The fact that Fire Station Artists Studios are located in the north inner city meant that the residents did not feel imposed upon. Perhaps if the exhibition had been organised by outside administrators, it may not have received such a possitive response.

IMMA/Nissan's *For Dublin* show was a success and had impact due to unity, repitition throughout the city centre and site selection. Their show improved the ambience around the city for its duration. There was a professional feel to the work, which I suppose was inevitable, coming from an internationally acclaimed institution.

For a company like Temple Bar Properties, it is beneficial to receive international acclaim for projects. In promoting Temple Bar's cultural quarter, the question needs to be asked, whose needs are being prioritised? Temple Bar Properties on a national and international level, or the general public? Marketing and public relations are important tools for these organisations. Hence, publicity sometimes overrides the needs of the people.

The Sculpture Society of Ireland undertook a brave venture, with some interesting and verging on socially concerned pieces. Perhaps if the scale of the show had been lessened, it may not have incurred the problems it did, i.e. poor execution, location, and incoherence. These are common problems for temporary public art shows and because

thay have been made aware this year in Dublin, perhaps these factors will be considered more sensitively in the future.

This chapter has attempted to give an overview of the type of temporary public art that is being produced in Dublin today. It has been made very clear that Dublin certainly is at the beginning stages of reaping the full benefits of temporary public art but through addressing the problems and the ultimate objectives of hosting such shows of work, it brings one closer to attacking and solving those needs and wants of the general public, through temporary public art.

Conclusion

Temporary public art started off fairly late in Dublin and on a much lesser scale to international counterparts. While the *OASIS* team were reacting to parks in Dublin, Christo was engaging the American audience with massive open-air creations, in the form of wrapped buildings and bridges.

The *OASIS* team however did produce some interesting pieces of temporary public art with their limited budget.

Throughout the 1990s Irish artists were working more with the environment that they were exhibiting. Many artists reacted directly to the feel of the area. For example, Hilary Gilligan's piece for the old Nationel Ballroom on Parnell Square.

The use of less object-based art has become a common idiom for 1990s Irish artists, such as Maurice O'Connell, who specialises in performance art.

From the main temporary public art projects which have taken place in Dublin so far, I think the main benefit has been that artists can now address the problems incurred in dealing with a public space, for a temporary period of time. Process, communication, consultation, location, accessibility, durability and funding all appear to be the most important elements to be considered when undertaking a temporary public art project.

It has become evident that we are still at the beginning stages of reaping the benefits of temporary public art. A lot of the temporary public art projects have chosen non-political, safe agenda, as opposed to socially concerned work. I think there is a growing need for artists to contribute to the needs of society beyond that of simply improving the appearance of an environment. Temporary public art is the vehicle by which art and aesthethics and other social issues can be brought to the attention of the public.

Although I have supported temporary public art which deals directly with social issues, I am also interested in this new public art whereby process is all important. Annie Fletcher argues that the conviction that art can and in fact should be used in a socially positive or polemic way in order to heighten awareness is no longer paramount. She believes "instead artists have accepted the idea that art is part and parcel of the world- nothing

more and nothing less. Having let ourselves off the hook morally, the notion of public art has become interesting again" (Fletcher, 1998, p.2).

An interesting artist-led temporary public art in transit project has just begun on the Dublin/Belfast rail link, entitled *Connect.* This project brings art to new and unexpected places and extends the public audience for contemporary art. The project was co-ordinated by Toby Dennett, Frances Dowds, Jenny Haughton and Marian Lovett. *Connect* is about "making points of contact, forging links, discerning areas of overlap and discovering that what we have in common is usually much deeper and more profound than that which divides" (*Connect* catalogue, 1998). The project includes video artwork, poetry, sculpture and text-based installations, photography, postcards and various prints and drawings.

Platform, which is a new one-off publication dealing with the subject of public art in transit, was produced as part of the *Connect* project. It discusses and explores contemporary public art, with a focus on less traditional examples. *Platform* will automatically ignite alot of discussion regarding contemporary public art. It completely questions what public art can be and encourages different forms of public art in Ireland.

Maurice O'Connell who specialises in performance art has recently processed himself through temporary public art to become himself the object of the work. O'Connell commented, "the project *Marathon Man* is interested in developing a different form of public art, where it is not necessarily obvious what is taking place, but indirectly it would involve as many people as I would normally engage" (Morrison, 1998, p.2). O'Connell worked by himself with a group of people who were not informed and therefore had no expectations.

O'Connell had a routine of getting up at 6am and travelling on the train from Dublin-Waterford, dressed in a tracksuit and lime green runners. He ran around the city and encountered different types of people along the way. As Angeline Morrison (editor of Platform) noted "his routine became a part of these other people's routines as they seen him" (Morrison, 1998, p.2). O'Connell fictionalised himself in order to become visibly an object.

In some cases such as *Marathon Man* , the emphasis has moved away from objects and

actions towards processes. One conclusion I can make is that process can be as important as the objects made. Art practice goes a long way in determining the success of temporary public art projects.
Through this project, temporary public art has automatically leaped forward in terms of process within public art in Ireland.

Many people would question whether projects such as this are art or not. Questioning the public art object was fundamental in Chicago's Culture in Action project .

Culture in Action

A series of community based projects, which were designed in response to social concerns, was *Culture in Action*. It was conducted in 1993 and lasted for a two-year period. The work involved fourteen artists, their teams and a group of community collaborators. Among the work produced was, an urban ecology field station, a community video produced for neighbourhood youths, a hydroponics garden, public housing, to name but a few. Mary Jane Jacob, who is at the forefront of public art in America, was one of its chief organisers and commented, "...some even brought the audience into their work, extending the boundaries of the work of art, into that of social sculpture". (Jacob, 1996, p.50). Michael Brenson believed *Culture in Action* had an idealism that has always characterised the most ambitious socially based art.(Brenson, 1996, p.21). It was driven by a belief in people and a faith in the ability of art to deal with social crisis. Throughout the program, its organisers believed that discourse and dialogue around the issues of public art making were as important as the projects themselves. Jacob believes that, "...in the 1990s the role of public art has shifted from that of renewing the physical environment to that of improving society, from promoting aesthetic quality to contributing to the quality of life, from enriching lives to saving lives" (Jacob, 1996, p.56).

Temporary public art has had a short history in Dublin, although, perhaps considering some of the successful responses we saw, e.g. Firestation's *Inner Art*, Nisssan/IMMA's *For Dublin*, and the more recent *Connect*, funding bodies may support such projects again in the future.

Personally, I hope to see more temporary public art projects addressing social issues in Dublin. Perhaps, if the general publics interests are prioritized, as opposed to the organisers' and administrators', social issues will naturally come to the forefront of the agenda.

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Nora Norton (Temple Bar Gallery and Studios).	15th September, 1997.
Roisin Mc Guigan (Sculpture Society of Ireland).	25th September, 1997.
John Power (Irish artist)	2nd October, 1997.
Brian King (Head of Sculpture, N.C.A.D.).	10th October, 1997.
Michael O'Sullivan (Sculpture tutor, N.C.A.D.).	14th October, 1997.
Tony Sheehan (Fire Station Artists Studio).	22nd October, 1997.
Maurice O'Connell (Dublin-based artist).	10th November, 1997.

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