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Brian Maguire
reports on Practice, Process and

Audience

What do we want to achieve?



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Six artists from Ireland and four artists from the UK initiated and continued an intense conversation, part in private, part in public, over two days at Middlesex University and Soho Theatre, London on the 26th and 27th February. The event forms part of an ongoing bigger ‘conversation’ and initiative between NCAD, **Create** and ResCen, Middlesex University.



Top to bottom (L-R)

(1) George Higgs, Tom Creed.

(2) Shane Cullen.

(3) Ghislaine Boddington, Louise Walsh.

(4) Richard Layzell, Graeme Miller.

The overall purpose was to share understanding of individual practice and the audiences encountered, but in the process much larger philosophical issues emerged, making for a fascinating and illuminating event. An additional focus was on the role of the audience in the creative process and how these artists conceive of an audience during the creation of their work. The mix of artistic disciplines represented by the ten covered dance, film, new media, theatre, music and visual arts. The public conversations were conducted by two artists talking to each other for twenty minutes, after which they continued as a panel and the invited London audience joined in the ‘conversation’.

Alan Phelan and Rosemary Lee: Alan described his artwork *Michael Collins Should Have Blended In* noting that his work was often biographical in nature. Rosemary responded that when younger and more idealistic, she felt that movement/dance could be universal but had to acknowledge the elitism of classical ballet pointed in the opposite direction. Alan spoke of his experiments in audience participation and how over time he had retreated into himself – and the studio – to make objects. Rosemary responded with the way her audiences were smaller the more people she worked with, referencing the cast of *Haughmond Dances* which had 281 performers with an audience of 300, all from one community. She had now moved towards ‘high art’ venues and has used TV in reaching bigger audiences. The point of commonality that emerged between Alan and Rosemary was that they both centred on how local narratives could present ideas which when abstracted could reflect contemporary anxieties.

Louise Walsh and Ghislaine Boddington: Ghislaine began by describing Louise’s large public art work commemorating the women who had worked in the shirt factories of Derry. They both highlighted their inter-authorship process, the laying out of a navigation and clear lines of negotiation. It was a fluid process which could go in any direction but was always held in a context. Louise spoke of the need to find appropriate ways of commemoration. Interviewing practice became part of her working process. Local women in Derry speak of the visit of Karl Marx in 1895. Current economic realities link the Derry experience to Morocco and Bangladesh where shirts are made today. Louise needed to bridge the process to the product. Clusters of networks of knowledge emerge and influence the work. Ghislaine spoke of themes which

are ongoing in her work – body – technology – space – interculturalism. Her recent work is using large scale interactive display units that are body reactive. She has moved from the art centres to the club scene and the shopping centre to test her work with a new audience. Both artists have used audiences to create their work.



Top row (L-R): (1) Graeme Miller, Alan Phelan, Rosemary Lee. (2) Shane Cullen, Graeme Miller. (3) Lorraine Gallagher, Professor Chris Bannerman (ResCen).

Bottom row (L-R): (1) Tom Creed, Richard Layzell. (2) Rosemary Lee, Joan Fowler (NCAD).

Shane Cullen and Graeme Miller: Painting contains an element of performance albeit privately. Graeme identified Shane's piece *Fragments sur les Institutions Republicaines IV* as an epic and solitary task which was essentially devotional. Shane related this work whose context was British rule in Northern Ireland in the 80s to his recent work which references another legacy of imperialism in the West Bank in Palestine. Graeme spoke about a self entertaining comedy process. His first steps are to walk the streets. His critical edge is that of play. He sees the artist as an adult child receiving and editing information. In engaging with an audience he uses a method reminiscent of James Joyce's use of the Dublin City Council's books of rateable valuation, except Miller selects a series of points in a city based on an Islamic pattern and records at the points the available sound, then playing this back in the arts centre to produce a contemporary talking landscape. As an artist he journeys across theatre and music retaining the Self as audience with a private individual research process. While on the surface both artists seem very different this conversation produced an engagement of particular intimacy and urgency leaving me with a sense of solidarity between both practices.

Lorraine Gallagher and George Higgs: The conversation began around the use of the word 'handicapped' with Lorraine refusing to use it as a description of herself asserting that it was Dickensian, that she preferred the word 'crip' (a shortened version of 'cripple'). This led to Lorraine's ironic *Rules of Engagement* which are an exhaustive paternalistic, subservient, condescending collection of dos and don'ts for the artist. George referred to his progress backwards and forwards from an early identification with Marx to a capitalist understanding of music to a kind of nihilistic humour. Later he explained that art was property and his intention was to use exchange rates to create music. This work has an insistence on relevance to the real world of politics and economics. A practical tactile Marxism shadowed his contribution. Both artists relied on abstraction to deliver their intentions.

Richard Layzell and Tom Creed: Both artists work with performance, Richard through fine art and Tom through theatre. Tom described the live soap opera which he presented daily for two weeks. Noting its addictive effect, he found excitement in how it made the audience change their routines in order to get to each daily episode. He referred to a piece presented during the Cork 2005 European Capital of Culture in which the performers were so various and simultaneous that the individual audience member would have seen about 10% of the work. The conversations in the pub later put the whole together. Richard described his public performance as a waiter in Lillehammer in Norway which involved scripting a daily column in the local newspaper describing the event in the café. In this and his earlier work *Evangelical Thatcherite* an issue arose when the irony of the work escaped the audience.

Panel: Naturally the question of what is an artist appeared. The specific answers to this included the role of editor. The idea of fluid informality was held up as a significant process. This is where the context is identified by the artist and the outcome with the audience is fluid. The question is why do it? What do we want to achieve? To whom do we offer the work in order to test its validity? The debate got tighter – psychosis is generational judgement (over 50s may leave). A quite tiny plea for a space...can this word be said safely in 2007...spirituality?

So what happened – ten artists discussed openly their practices and debated the different processes and themes and responses that their individual stories raised. They focused on audiences. Money was seldom mentioned. Being present was a privilege.

Brian Maguire is Head of Fine Art, NCAD (National College of Art and Design) Dublin.

Welcome to Create News

This is the second edition of Create News. Create News is published twice a year in March and September. It is sent free of charge, features a guest writer and offers the latest information on Create events and services.

If you do not wish to receive further editions, please write or email us at info@create-ireland.ie. You will automatically receive copies unless you ask us to remove your details from the list.

If you would like to receive a personal copy of Create News please email info@create-ireland.ie and include details of name, address and postcode.

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www.create-ireland.ie

Create Partners Exciting Training Initiative in Arts in Health

Reflecting Create's ongoing commitment to learning development and arts in health, a consortium involving Create, The Adelaide & Meath Hospital incorporating the National Children's Hospital, and the Institute of Art Design and Technology, Dun Laoghaire, have been commissioned by the Arts Council to work together to research and develop a course which will provide training for artists wishing to work in the health-care sector. The proposed outcome is to devise and implement a course which is mutually beneficial for both artists and healthcare organisations. An extensive consultation with stakeholders from the Arts Sector, Health Service, Third Level Institutions and Voluntary Sector, as well as experienced artists in the field will take place as part of the research phase of the initiative.

Face On: Disability Arts in Ireland and Beyond ADI in partnership with Create

Create has a policy of incubating and supporting fledgling arts organisations or arts organisations in transition. Create has provided Arts & Disability Ireland (ADI) with incubation support. As an extension of this relationship Create worked in partnership with ADI in the publication of *Face On*. *Face On* contains a diverse range of contributions, opinions, artistry and creativity that will inspire and challenge the reader.

Face On: Disability Arts in Ireland and Beyond is published by Arts & Disability Ireland and produced in partnership with Create.

Face On Order Form

To order copies of *Face On*, Price €15 + €3 p+p/£10, Contact: Katrina Goldstone at Create. Tel: 01-4736600. E-mail: communications@create-ireland.ie For further information on Arts & Disability Ireland see www.adiarts.ie Tel: 01-4736600 E-mail: adi@artsincontext.com

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I wish to order copies of *Face On*. I enclose a cheque/money order for

Cheques payable to Create.

Suburbs and Cities 2:

Artists' Responses to Changing Urban Landscapes

Create in partnership with Civic Theatre and South Dublin County Arts Office

VENUE: Loose End Studio, Civic Theatre, Tallaght

DATE: Thursday 19 April TIME: 4pm

In September 2006 as part of the Arts Council Critical Voices '3' programme, Create invited artists and writers to discuss how their work is informed by the changing urban landscapes of Europe and the US.

To continue this debate, Create has asked a group of Irish artists; Jesse Jones, Mary Ruth Walsh, Michael Fortune and writer Dermot Bolger to engage with the issue of suburban development in relation to the rapidly changing environment of contemporary Ireland.

Chaired by journalist and critic Gemma Tipton, Suburbs and Cities 2 will explore how artists working in an Irish context respond to and engage with the intangible qualities of location – history, desire and identity.

The event is free but it is necessary to book a place in advance. To reserve a place please email: boxoffice@civictheatre.ie or tel: 01-4627477. The event will be followed by a wine reception. For further information on the panel visit www.create-ireland.ie



Artist: Michael Fortune

Artist in the Community Scheme Second Round 2007

Twice yearly, the Arts Council offers grants to enable artists and communities of place or interest to work together on projects. The scheme covers all art forms. The Artist in the Community Scheme is managed by Create. There are two phases to the scheme:

Phase One, Research & Development, is open to artists who wish to research and develop a project in a community context. The maximum time frame is 3 months. The maximum amount awarded in Phase One is €1,000.

Phase Two, Project Realisation, is open to communities of interest and/or place planning a project of between 6 weeks and 5 months with a maximum award of €5,000, and those who are planning a project of between 6 months and 9 months with a maximum award of €10,000. For further information, application forms or to book an advisory session, contact Katherine Atkinson, Project Support & Professional Development, 01-4736600 or email support@create-ireland.ie. For full details on the scheme visit www.create-ireland.ie

NEXT DEADLINE: 5pm Friday 29 June 2007. Applications are available in English and Irish.