

Phoenix Rising

Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane
Issue 7: January 2015

Anne Maree Barry

In conjunction with the exhibition, *Phoenix Rising: Art and Civic Imagination*, a series of films has been programmed on Saturday afternoons during January 2015. The screenings commence at 2pm and are free. Seating is limited so early arrival is recommended.

The programme includes Anne Maree Barry's film *Missing Green*, filmed on Cork Street, Dublin 8. The artist, who is currently in residence at the Liaison of Independent Film Makers of Toronto, answered some questions from Exhibitions Curator, Logan Sisley, ahead of the screening of the film at The Hugh Lane.

2pm, Saturday 31 January 2015

Anne Maree Barry, *Missing Green* (2013)
14m; Courtesy of the artist

Missing Green is a poetic journey through Cork Street, Dublin. Narrated via interviews with former City Councillor John Gallagher, architect Gerry Cahill, author and journalist Frank McDonald and sociologist Aileen O'Gorman, the viewer discovers an area in Dublin that has gradually but dramatically transformed in the last 80 years. Utilising Situationist methodologies, Barry recreates a personal *dérive** through the character Girl. Girl's journey provides a complimentary narrative by exploring the urban environment, paying attention to the smaller details, lost objects, signage, an allotment, increasing the viewer's awareness of the urban landscape of which the narrators speak. Combining traditional research with an aesthetic journey, this hybrid film creates a dialogue that reflects on a historic area in Dublin, whilst situated in the present.

Barry's previous film, *Rialto Twirlers* (2010), explored a majorette subculture in Dublin 8. Following this she then began to examine the social and psychological impact of urban voids and the process of regeneration, by combining research with an element of re-enactment/fiction.

Missing Green was supported by The Arts Council Film Project Award. The work has been screened at the Stranger Than Fiction Documentary Film Festival, the Aesthetica Short Film Festival, Indie-Cork, Les Rencontres Internationales at Palais de Tokyo and Gaîté Lyrique, Paris and Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Pallas Projects, Dublin and Open House Dublin 2014. *Missing Green* was shortlisted and nominated for a Radharc Award 2014.

An excerpt of *Missing Green* can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/88460810>

* Literally "drift" in English; a playful journey through the city that increases awareness of the specific effects of the geographical environment.



Still from *Missing Green* (2013) by Anne Maree Barry

Where did your interest in the Cork Street area stem from?

My interest in the Cork street area began in 2006 after attending a meeting concerning the St. Luke's Conservation Plan, organised by former Councillor John Gallagher (whose voice acts as one of the main narrative guides in *Missing Green*). Cork Street and The Coombe area, which were once thriving industrial areas, had become an example of what is called the 'doughnut effect'. This describes the physical form that cities take on during the decline of their historic centre, with the development of the outer ring, leaving a hollow core at the centre. The doughnut effect can also be seen in full force in the acclaimed TV Series *The Wire* (2002-2008), Baltimore being the city centre that is in decline.

How did you select the participants?

It was a process of selecting people who understood this particular part of the city and how it worked - the architect, the sociologist, the author, the long term resident.

How did you approach the editing of the interviews? Were you aiming to make a particular argument?

I conducted extensive research into regeneration, social housing and architecture so therefore my

concern was about finding a common thread within each interview. I also was interested in the Irish attitude to land and property ownership, what Dublin lost/gained with the rapid development of the Celtic Tiger Years. This topic is revealed in the difference between Cork Street 'then and now' and the 'suburban ideal' that Frank McDonald speaks about. Other themes that presented themselves were the street and the car. When I was editing the interviews what was most revealing was the manner in which Dublin was initially built - it is 'a city of houses' and as Gerry Cahill states that idea began to be disrespected. The historical Coombe area, which once was where the richest people in Dublin lived and had a thriving industrial area, subsequently became poor. It was then targeted to transport people back out to the suburbs - people living in the city centre were essentially forgotten about. Another city which suffered greatly from the decline of industry is Detroit, which is surrounded by a ring of wealthier suburbs - the classic example of the 'doughnut' effect. One of my intentions was also to reflect on the past whilst being in the present by utilising *Girl's* journey as a guide. *Girl's* journey references change and being lost, in some ways, within a city.

Why did you use the hybrid form combining the audio, which resembles a more conventional documentary, with the fictional narrative depicted visually?

I wrote the treatment for *Missing Green* in 2008 and always knew it would look and feel a certain way - the combination of a journey, a factual story and soundscape. The merging of these three elements – drama, documentary interviews and sound – however was no easy feat. I constantly questioned how they would sit together, what type of film I was making and more importantly how do I present this research in a cohesive short film? A structural influence was *Dreams of A Life* (2011, Carol Morley); it was essential to have finally found an example of the type of documentary re enactment I was interested in. Last year an article stated that this current trend in films is called Creative Nonfiction - a term referring to true stories that use literary techniques in order to share a story in a different manner than conventional journalism. Similarly, writer Larry Rohan from *The New York Times* has said that documentaries are also at the point where they're breaking from form and function, from straightforward journalism and into something diverse and wilder. Voice-over, music and narrative arcs based on real life are used in different and clever ways. Therefore to answer the question - it was an instinctual aesthetic choice however I think it is positive that the work now has a place within a genre.

Can you tell us about your residency in Toronto and how you find working in a city with which you are less familiar? Is the process different when your time in a place is limited?

The residency programme is with LIFT - Liaison of Independent Film Makers of Toronto - where I have been developing the project *No Mean City*. I had begun remote research before I went to Toronto however I discovered you cannot have a feel for a city - its problems, its success, how it operates - until you subsequently become familiar with it (I had never visited Toronto prior to the residency). Furthermore, in a city which I am less familiar, different problems arose - weather, how to navigate within my new role as producer and production manager and selecting interested interviewees to participate in my research. What was familiar was that I could utilise the learnt working methodology from *Missing Green* and adapt it to this current project. Additionally, I have found similarities between *Missing Green* and *No Mean City*, for example Frank McDonald speaks in *Missing Green* about the woonerf concept* and what that would mean for Dublin and the problem with traffic. A month before I arrived to Toronto the first woonerf was completed in the West Don Lands and similarly woonerf-like roads are appearing, one where I used to live at the west side of St. Lawrence Market. Toronto is a young city unlike Dublin. I'm quite honoured to be capturing and documenting a specific period of time in Toronto's progression.

* A Dutch term referring to a living street with shared space, traffic calming and low speed limits.



Still from *No Mean City* (2015) by Anne Maree Barry

Also screening on 31 January 2015:

Stina Wirfelt, *Monuments* (2008)
7m; Courtesy of the artist

Comprising a series of photographs shot by the artist, *Monuments* documents a series of truncated, unfinished roads and abandoned highway ramps around Glasgow. In the fictional city of Metropolis, the deadpan voiceover describes these unused thoroughfares as remnants of '...a fallen paradise that remained standing – a constant reminder of what could have been'. Wirfelt casts the towering yet destitute landmarks as referents to an increasingly forgotten, or perhaps more succinctly, criticised modernist ideal, prevalent reminders of the New Towns that were never built and neighbourhoods that were not raised. The narration is cringingly sincere, however. *Monuments* is motivated by straightforward interplay between the dialogue and visual clues in the photographs. This approach enables a functional deceit; the viewer is encouraged to believe the loosely woven audio-diary and its historical inaccuracies about the area portrayed.



Monuments (2008) by Stina Wirfelt

Stina Wirfelt, *Tame Time* (2010)
9m; Courtesy of the artist

Tame Time looks at the area of Dalmarnock, which was later transformed to house several of the sporting events and the athletes' village during the Commonwealth Games in 2014. The fictional story is told from the perspective of a woman who regularly walks her dog in the area, an activity that makes her think about the past, the present and the future. Rather than exploring the history of the area, the video is about a person's everyday relationship to a space and how it relates to her memory. *Tame Time* was commissioned by the Centre for Contemporary Art in Glasgow to commemorate the handover of the Commonwealth Games from Delhi to Glasgow in October 2010.

For further information please contact
Logan Sisley: logan.sisley@dublincity.ie
or Steven McGovern:
smcgovern.hughlane@dublincity.ie



Tame Time (2010) by Stina Wirfelt



Comhairle Cathrach
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Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane
6 November 2014 to 29 March 2015
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