

Hugh Lane Gallery

Kennedy Browne: The Redaction Trilogy

24 October 2019 - 26 January 2020

A Resource for Students



Image: Kennedy Browne, *Real World Harm*, 2018. 260-degree HD video for Oculus (5 mins 47 seconds)

How Capital Moves (2010)

The Myth of the Many in the One / The Wonder Years
(2013)

Real World Harm (2018)

and

Max Schrems' Retrieved Facebook Data (2018)



Comhairle Cathrach
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council

Welcome

The Hugh Lane Gallery is delighted to present *The Redaction Trilogy*, the first solo museum exhibition in Ireland by collaborative duo Kennedy Browne (Gareth Kennedy and Sarah Browne). This exhibition serves as a critical milestone in the career of these artists as their practice together enters its fifteenth year.

This resource is intended to provide an introduction to the exhibition and some of its themes. It offers information, ideas for discussion and activities to use with secondary level students. Some of the activities or discussion questions can be used to prepare for the visit and to complement the process of viewing the exhibition itself, while others are more suited for use after the students have visited the gallery.

Contents

- Introduction
- Keywords, background information, discussion questions, and activities
- Planning a visit to the Hugh Lane Gallery

Introduction

According to Kennedy Browne's website, their art practice, established in 2005, "seeks to address the supposedly eternal narrative of neoliberal capitalism as a fiction. They work mainly with moving image, working with collaborative processes of scripting, editing, and re-staging in locations they identify as significant within the plot of global capitalism—such as the Titanic Quarter in Belfast, at the Whiddy Island Strategic Oil Reserve in Bantry Bay, and in Silicon Valley, California."

(<https://www.kennedybrowne.com/about>).

Kennedy Browne represented Ireland at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009. Kennedy Browne has also exhibited in Ireland, France, the Netherlands, Austria, and Switzerland. Most recently, a retrospective of work since 2009, *The Special Relationship*, was exhibited in the Krannert Art Museum in Illinois, USA.

This exhibition, *The Redaction Trilogy*, is comprised of three installations: *How Capital Moves* (2010), *The Myth of the Many in the One / The Wonder Years* (2013) and *Real World Harm* (2018). *Max Schrems' Retrieved Facebook Data* (2018), also part of the exhibit, is located in the Entrance Hall.

Areas of interest and exploration in Kennedy Browne's work and exhibition:

- "The supposedly eternal narrative of neoliberal capitalism as a fiction"
 - Look and analyse each word in this statement. What do each of these words suggest to you? What do you suppose Kennedy Browne's work explores, based on this phrase?
- Redaction and scripting of existing materials to distil an abstraction
 - What do you understand by the term *redaction*?
- Technology and the interconnectedness of communication
 - Consider the wall colour of each room in the exhibition space: green, blue and white. Do you associate these colours with anything tech-related?
- Use of technology: Pervasive vs. Private
- Global capitalism and the influence/power dynamic between multinational employers and their employees

How Capital Moves, 2010, 2 channel HD video installation, Polish language with English subtitles, 26'



Keywords

- Portrait
- Avatar – an online proxy for oneself; from the Sanskrit – an embodiment/incarnation of an idea; an idea made flesh
- Redaction
- Global workforce

Background

This work was inspired by the news that a computer factory was relocating from Limerick, Ireland to Łódź, Poland. This disruption meant the elimination of 1,500 jobs in Ireland. Kennedy Browne were curious to learn more about the culture of this computer company and its impact on community employment. The artists found an online forum in which former employees of this same group, from a location in the United States, expressed their frustration about how the computer company had shut down their offices without any notice to the employees. Their redundancies were announced on pyjama day. *How Capital Moves* distils

the plethora of online comments into six avatars, or an embodiment of a set of ideas, to reflect the variety of opinions about how the former employees felt about their former employer. Kennedy Browne has redacted the name of this computer group, instead referring to it as 'The Company.'

Discussion and Activities

- What helps you to identify the six characters as different from one another? Is it the actor's intonation, the translated text on the lower screen, or how the actor is dressed? Do you think you could distinguish the avatars from each other if you eliminated one of these elements (i.e. listened to the sound and read the text, but did not look at the video)?
- Would this film be different if the avatars were not close to life size? Why or why not?
- What are the benefits of having an actor perform as six characters, as opposed to Kennedy Browne just writing a script based on comments from the online forum? Would there be a difference if there were six different actors? How so?
- Do you think the main focus is on The Company or on the employees who were made redundant? What did you see or hear that made you arrive at your conclusion?
- What do you think the impact of being laid off on pyjama day had on the employees?
- Kennedy Browne has been careful to not reveal the real name of The Company in this film. However the name of this company is shown in *Roseburg Mugs*, located at the entrance to Gallery 11. These photos were featured in a newspaper article about The Company's closure, so they are primary sources of this event. Do you think this was a deliberate non-redaction?

The Myth of the Many in the One, 2012, HD video with sound, 19'
The Wonder Years, 2013, Series of eight re-constructed artefacts from the boyhoods of technology entrepreneurs in *The Myth of The Many in The One*.



Keywords

- Entrepreneur
- Artefact
- Biography
- Myth-making
- Film-making

Background

Kennedy Browne read the biographies of many successful tech entrepreneurs (Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, Bill Hewlett, Steve Jobs, David Packard, and Mark Zuckerberg) – but stopped reading once the subject entered adolescence. Focusing on the childhood years of these entrepreneurs reveals both mundane, inconsequential anecdotes as well as the foreshadowing of habits, character, and ambition. While the re-constructed artefacts of *The Wonder Years* correspond to particular

entrepreneurs, the central figure of *The Myth of the Many in the One* is a composite of them all; he is at once his own being, but could be any one of the entrepreneurs. The film depicts a pre-history to Silicon Valley as we know it today – it was once a valley full of orchards – and to the entrepreneurs whose names are now synonymous with technology.

Discussion and Activities

- Describe each of the eight objects in this installation and how they are displayed.
- As part of Kennedy Browne's redaction practice, they do not explicitly state to whom each of the eight artefacts belong. What clues do you see in the objects themselves, and what information is revealed in the accompanying label that could help you guess which artefact corresponds to which tech entrepreneur.
- What do the labels tell or not tell us about the significance of these objects and the people to whom they belong?
- Would *The Myth of the Many in the One* be more effective if told in the first person, or does it succeed in the third person? Why or why not?
- Why do you think the boy is placed in front of a green screen when he talks?
- How is the way the boy is filmed reminiscent of a video game?
- Could these two pieces – the film and the artefacts- have been displayed on their own or rather than together? Why?

Real World Harm, 2018, 360-degree HD video for Oculus, 5.1 sound, installation environment Video: 5'47" Sound: 18'30"



Keywords

- Meta
- To moderate
- Privacy
- Technology
- Virtual reality

Background

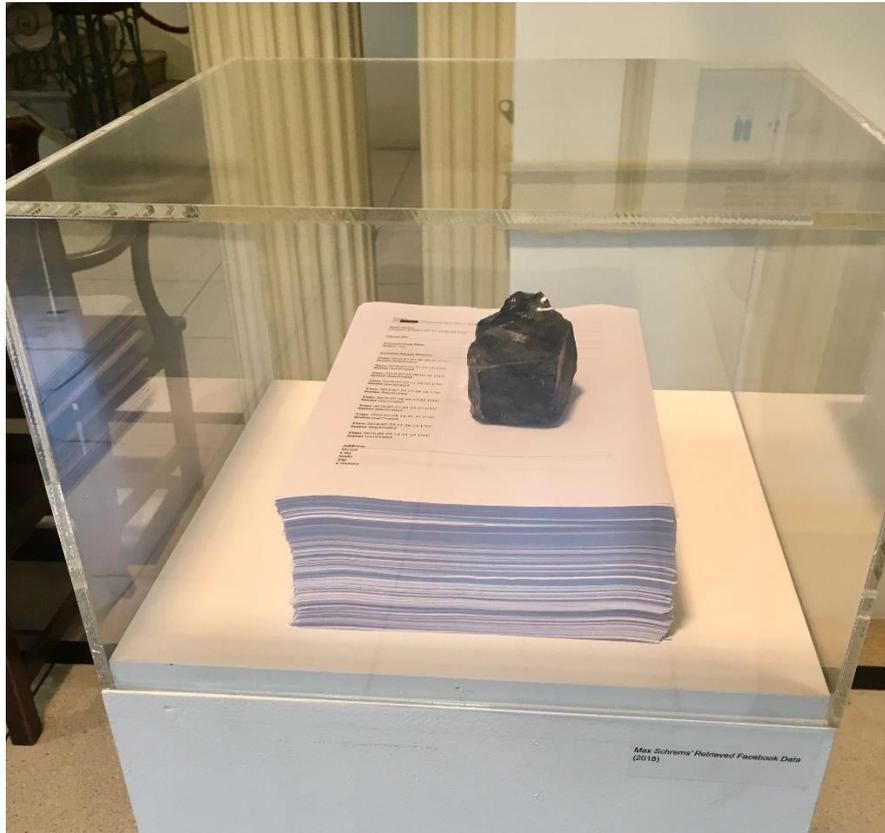
As the site of many social media platforms' EMEA (Europe, the Middle East, and Africa) headquarters, Ireland is therefore also the place where any online content that is flagged in these regions must be moderated, or reviewed, for its appropriateness. Through sound installations in this exhibition, people who have worked as content moderators reveal the tiring and traumatizing nature of their work, which includes seeing war imagery, pornography, hate crimes, and violence. The thought experiment that plays out in the 360-degree Oculus video, at the site of the Irish Data Protection Commissioner in Portllington, Co. Laois, challenges wearers to examine how they feel about their own data subsequently being stored by

questioning us to think of what we would do if no person could know our actions, but some power somewhere could. Ironically, in order to consider this idea, you are submitting your own data to Facebook, as Oculus' Terms of Service, printed on the front of the device, indicate that Facebook is collecting, storing, and distributing your data as you use this device.

Discussion and Activities

- Social media moderators spend their working days constantly reviewing thousands of questionable images and posts. However, in this artwork, we only hear the moderators' voices. Does the lack of imagery enable you to imagine the kind of content they moderate, or would you prefer to see an example alongside the sound installation? Why or why not?
- What is the effect of only hearing the voices of the moderators rather than seeing them in a film format for example.
- The name of the guide in the Oculus video is Glaucon, a reference to a character in Plato's *Republic*. Why do you suppose Kennedy Browne would invoke a Greek philosopher for this specific piece? Is there a particular theme that might connect data protection to philosophy?
- The name of this piece, *Real World Harm*, is a somewhat ironic, as some may suggest that the internet isn't the 'real world.' However, actions on the internet have consequences in the real world. Do you think this title is ironic or accurate?
- Did you read the Disclaimer/Terms of Service on the Oculus before putting it on, or did you only look at it after Glaucon suggested that you should? What do you think of these terms and conditions, after having watched the video? Has this work changed the way you think about your online habits? In what ways?

Max Schrems' Retrieved Facebook Data, 2018, 811 printed A4 pages with Californian obsidian.



Keywords

- Readymade
- Data
- Data Protection
- Reify – to consider or represent something abstract as a material thing

Austrian activist and lawyer Max Schrems developed an interest in accessing his online data after hearing Facebook's privacy lawyer lecture at Santa Clara University in Silicon Valley, where Schrems was spending a semester abroad. Under the European Union's Right to Access law, he was able to request all the data that Facebook had stored about him, which was over 1,200 pages worth. He submitted civil complaints against Facebook to the Irish Data Protection Commissioner, which led to a court case lasting from 2011 to 2015, the premise of which was that Facebook, under EU law, was not supposed to be sharing his data generated in Europe to non-EU countries. Max Schrems has graciously provided his

retrieved data to Kennedy Browne, having redacted his personal information, for inclusion in this exhibition. The piece is a striking visualisation of the amount of personal information that private companies collect each time we use online platforms. 811 pages of data are exhibited here, with an obsidian rock from Silicon Valley on top as a paperweight.

Discussion and Activities

- How did you feel when learning that this stack of papers was just a fraction of the amount of data that has been recorded on a single user?
- Max Schrems provided his redacted data to Kennedy Browne. How did Kennedy Browne change this work and make it into a new object, one that is considered art?

Questions that apply to the exhibition as a whole:

Have your thoughts on data privacy changed after having viewed *The Redaction Trilogy*? In what ways?

What role does technology and the internet play in today's society?

Which work did you find the most powerful and why?

Bibliography

The exhibition catalogue Kennedy Browne *The Redaction Trilogy* (2019) includes essays by Amy L. Powell and Jessica Foley.

Series Editor: Jessica O'Donnell

Written by Isabel Cabezas.

The exhibition Kennedy Browne: *The Redaction Trilogy* is one view at the Hugh Lane Gallery from 24 October 2019 - 26 January 2020

Planning your visit to the Hugh Lane Gallery

Guided tours of the collection and temporary exhibitions may be booked for schools and visiting groups with a minimum of two weeks' notice. Tours cost €30 per group up to a maximum of 30 people. For an additional cost, it may also be possible to book a sketching tour, or combined tour and workshop, during your visit.

For details of our public talks, film screenings and workshops exploring the exhibition *Kennedy Browne: The Redaction Trilogy* and other education programmes please see www.hughlane.ie/education.

For further information on the Hugh Lane Gallery's Education and Outreach programme, please contact:

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