

## Jealous Wall

The ancient Greek poet Sappho in her variously interpreted *Fragment 31* writes 'Neath the flesh impalpable fire runs tingling'. The verse has often been referred to as the poem of jealousy, as within each stanza Sappho describes the emotional upheaval caused by unrequited love and envy. The poem's difficulty to comprehend is confounded by its missing last lines, meaning that the contemporary version is filled with fallacy and fiction as the original continues to be lost in time for eternity. This exhibition *Jealous Wall* borrows its title from an architectural construction of the same name, which was built in the midlands of Ireland in Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, c.1760. The wall was designed as a sham ruin epitomising the eighteenth century interest in Gothic artifice and design. Like Sappho's poem its history is embedded with envy, false truths and myth. The unique history behind that wall tells the sordid tale of a family squabble, in which Robert Rochfort, resentful of his brother George, built the structure in order to conceal the view of his neighboring sibling's dwelling. The structure became both a physical and metaphorical barrier between the two men and now remains a symbol of dispute, jealousy and pride. Rather than specifically making responses to the history and site of The Jealous Wall, this exhibition brings together various artists' individual and varied practices in which metaphors, themes and connotations that the wall might suggest. In thinking of the exhibition one might consider The Jealous Wall as an anthology, a compendium made up of various chapters rather than single editions. Some of the artworks use the wall as a footnote, whilst some are more explicit and direct in their references and associations. The aim of the exhibition is to bring together works that explore the baroque, illusion, memory and site and artworks have been selected that suggest and visualize follies, fallacies and artifice in architectural, biological and neurological systems.

The site of The Jealous Wall creates a sense of unease to what we can deem real, imagined and the hidden histories and narratives contained within the fable of its origin. The enormous rivalry and tension created between the Rochfort brothers on either side of the structure, ensures that we can never fully grasp what elements of the history are fact or fabrication.

David Eager Maher's intricate paintings and drawings combine both fictional landscapes with realistic depictions of topographies and generate narratives for the inhabitants that might reside within. At once both interior and exterior, his vistas include opulent architectural features such as arches, gables and columns; domestic chairs, screens and ornate urns all treated with impeccable draftsmanship. In none of the environments can the inhabitants be observed, so the images capture liminal spaces where the time period and geography is open for interpretation, however the decadence of the scenes suggest a very particular society, that of the upper-echelon. In works such as *Veranda* (2017) the artist's hand is visible through the pencil marks where the discernible image has been formed. The act of creation is left bare for the viewer, a metaphor for our own imagined place within this scene. Ornamentation and pattern are also consistent features in Eager Maher's works, be it within the architectural components or borders to the image. Both *Courtyard* (2016) and *Balcony* (2017), feature large wall-like structures that are embellished with baroque and colourful ornate patterns.

Eager Maher's use of found paper stocks, torn from books, act as a palimpsest onto which new images are formed bearing the history of their original use. Creases and stains on the surface coalesce with the painted water-colour scenography, the artist is acutely aware that in time the images will fade, like narratives, histories and Sappho's verse as quoted above. He utilizes the particular quality of the medium, layering, what has been washed out and left bare equally as important as to what is visible. There is something akin to the theatrical in the scenes' compositions, vacant stages awaiting the players, who may never emerge from the wings into the proscenium.



David Eager Maher  
*Veranda*

Watercolour and oil on assembled found paper  
29 × 20cm  
2017



David Eager Maher

*Spring*

Watercolour and pencil on found paper

29 × 40cm

2017

In a more expanded format Miranda Blennerhassett's work also uses ornamentation, pattern and architectural tropes to create her site-specific works that draw our attention to the nuances in particular spaces. Again, like Eager Maher she uses opulent and baroque motifs to create a cacophony of references to both historical and contemporary society and environments. The folly that is The Jealous Wall is of particular interest here, in that architectures can be more than just structural, they can also be symbolic and emblematic.

Blennerhassett's site responsive installations are based on extended periods of research that are led by the complexities of particular contexts and constraints. Her choice to employ particular materials, colours and forms are suggested by the space in which the work will be eventually encountered. Her idiosyncratic practice allows for a flexible approach in terms of process, scale and media, however all generated with an obligatory mathematical accuracy and utmost precision. In this instance, Blennerhassett has been invited to create a new installation in the unique setting of the River Gallery at the Luan Gallery, with its spectacular view of the Shannon waterway.

This installation continues an interest the artist has in follies and their function, which can be described as both structural ornament and ornamental structure. Blennerhassett has literally lifted an ornate pattern from the wall's surface by twisting bands of coloured satin ribbons running along the expanse of the gallery. The pattern created has the effect of an optical illusion, the shadows, and reflective satin ever so slightly shifts in the viewer's eye as they move along the space, as the day and light passes. This work references Regency striped wallpaper and upholstery fabrics, and makes us think of familiar spaces in which dwellings, and how they are dressed and decorated, become signifiers for class, society and perhaps our aim for betterment.

The texture of the installation's materials, the consideration of colours and utilising the unique natural light of the riverside gallery all underline Blennerhassett's ability to excavate particular place, site and contexts. Pattern and shapes are simplified to the core essential elements with the aim of examining them more in a clear, concise and considered manner



Miranda Blennerhassett  
*Luan (installation detail)*

Satin ribbon  
Dimensions variable  
2017

Like Blennerhassett in utilising commonplace materials, Niall de Buitléár creates meticulous assemblages and drawings that are akin to landscapes and architectural forms, accumulated, layered and structured. Similar to *The Jealous Wall*, with its inherent mystery, his work makes reference to ancient and enigmatic architectural constructions, follies built with strata of time and material that have a distinctive hand-made aesthetic. De Buitléár's work sits in proximity to the world of manufacturing through his employment of particular materials and methods. It could be said that he is a scholar of structural functionalism, a framework and theory in which an object should be determined by its function rather than by aesthetic considerations. However, anything within this theory, anything that is practically designed and formed will be inherently appealing, which is certainly the case with De Buitléár's vision.

The sculptural work in particular exists in a dichotomy, on one hand it compliments and makes a nod to both ancient and contemporary sculpture or architecture however, through his use of the materials it also has the ability to undermine the permanence of monumental sculpture and structural architectural design. The concept of the anti-monument is particularly evident in his pyramidal cardboard works where the malleable material is fastidiously crafted into large triangular forms, weaving together to form a trio of ever increasing assemblages.

The title of De Buitléár's series of small wall based sculptures is *Triun*, a synonym for triune, meaning trinity. Triplets of geometric forms are all connected to form a single conjoined configuration. Concentric thin layers of wood are precisely layered on top of each other to create mountainous peaks. These miniature topographies are similar in appearance to acoustic cones used for amplifying sound, and it is no coincidence that sound and music have been a recent source of inspiration in the two-dimensional painting works in which the artist has placed some emphasis on language and titling as a footnote to his continued focus on materiality and form. In these works, the layering of rhythmic patterns and textures, have been repeatedly used as a strategy for exploiting the qualities of material, paint and ground. Furthermore, the lyrical titles of *I Zimbra* (2016) and *Bush of Ghosts* (2016) are borrowed from musicians David Byrne and Brian Eno known for their layered and experimental compositions.



Niall de Buitléar  
*Untitled (detail)*

Cardboard  
2010–2017



Niall de Buitléar  
*Triun*

Birch plywood  
2016

Technology and our requirement to find our voice within the tools we employ feature in Adam Gibney's multi-sensorial installations and sculptures, where reverberation and white noise may destabilize an architecture of self. Echoing against a wall of continuous feeds of information, we can peer through gaps in the structure in order to form opinions of both the other and in turn our-self. Gibney's works draw on issues related to the detachment and ennui associated with the use of technologies and the risk of failure to form a consensus whilst oppositions, obstructions or even hostilities can question truths and fiction. In the installation *Conundrum 8: I am somewhere between We and They* (2017) the artist has devised a programme in which Twitter posts that mention 'we', 'think' and 'they', 'think' are spoken through a text-to-speech system. The work ignores inflection, accents, enunciation and diction causing the acutely personal and subjective written word to become transformed into the spoken word, treated in a democratic, monotone and processed manner. The work captures a particular moment in time, in which various political, social, comical or trivial news echoes across the gallery space, capturing fleeting musings and moments like a wall reverberates sound. A direct link to the squabbling Rochfort brothers in the account of the origins of building The Jealous Wall and two opposing collective pronouns of 'We' and 'They' can be drawn, two conflicting yet similar entities, grappling for a voice amongst geographical, political and emotional disparities.

Twitter, like most social media platforms, exists as a space in which opinions are reverberations that are bounced back within a closed circle of acquaintances who usually hold similar values and beliefs, an echo chamber, like bouncing a ball against a wall only to receive what we send out. The use of 'follower' within the lexicon of Twitter is interesting, as we are led by the The Pied Piper of Opinion, who has the ability to form our personal thought process for us, rather than forming one based on our own truth. In a different strategy where chance is more at play, *Problem 5: A Space within this Place* (2015) contains a specifically designed radio with a continuously rotating aerial which attempts to receive the signal being broadcast by a separate transmitter in the gallery. This radio searches through FM broadcasts stations looking for a transmission. Amplified sound-bytes, snippets of conversations, musical score fragments, punctuated by static, creates a cacophony of noise and confusion.



Adam Gibney

*Problem 5: A Space within this Place*

Wood, speaker, fm transmission, arduino, fm receiver,  
motor, aerial, trolley, electronics

53 × 110 × 56cm

2015



Adam Gibney

*Conundrum 8: I am somewhere between We and They*

Wood, metal, speaker, arduino

Dimensions variable

2017

Janine Davidson's lens based practice uses memory and contested geographical locations to trigger ideas of commemoration, remembrance, history and place which can all be said of the site of The Jealous Wall with its very particular context. For this exhibition, Davidson is exhibiting a film with a very different location to the site of wall as its protagonist, Turlough Hill in Co. Wicklow the site of Ireland's only pumped-storage hydro-electricity plant. However, we can make similarities to the two locations as both sites explore interiority versus landscape, and the natural as opposed to the man-made or artificial. The site of hydro-electric station was originally designed to have as little environmental impact as possible, which is in total opposition to the opposing structure that is The Jealous Wall, both sites make us think of themes of concealment, artifice and obscuring.

Echoing scenes and images from Tarkovsky's infamous sci-fi picture *Solaris* (1972) Davidson's film *53012762459* (2017) unfolds in a sequence of hypnotic extended shots, where unknown territories are surveyed. Based on a cult sci-fi novel *Solaris* is essentially a cautionary tale about the dangers of venturing into the outer limits of space as a metaphor for venturing to the outer limits of knowledge. Panning shots of water's surface underline the complexities of the very particular site. The lower reservoir is formed from the existing natural basin, Lough Nahanagan formed during the Ice Age, while the upper reservoir is man-made however both are treated in a democratic way by Davidson's view.

Alongside the moving image work are a series of photographic images from the quarry in which Davidson makes use of optical devices, both existing and invented, to draw our mind's eye and pinpoint its gaze towards the interface between meaning and perception. Depicting particular topographies and landscapes at Turlough Hill, these images are framed by the repeated presence of obstructions, shadows and apertures, composed of black voids and contrasting scenic and picturesque views. The works remind us of the developing process of a printed photographic image, and traditional pinhole early photography processes. In these images the space between presence and absence constitutes an essential component of the vista. We are often invited to peer beyond the black frames through the gap, skewing, and squinting much like how George and Robert Rochfort may have peered through the windows of The Jealous Wall in order to catch a view of each other's abode.

Within this text, my aim was to give my own interpretations and readings of the works in relation to the themes that are drawn from The Jealous Wall. Through a prism, the exhibition refracts and reflects a complexity of associations and readings and will hopefully entice the viewer into making connections between the works. Rather than be set into rigid leitmotif each of the artists' works has the ability to relate among each of the many themes including memory, concealment, ornamentation and place. The fire that Sapho mentions in her poem referenced above 'neath the commissioner of The Jealous Wall, Rochfort's flesh must have burnt so greatly that he felt the need to create this colossal obstruction, a symbol of his grudge, a partition built of envy.

Séamus McCormack  
Exhibition curator



Janine Davidson

*Kettle*

Digital Pigment print on Hahnemühle paper, 280gms

38 × 57cm

2017



Janine Davidson  
*53012762459*

HD Video Projection with audio

Variable

2017

## Artists' Biographies

Adam Gibney is a Dublin based artist who graduated with a First Class honors from IADT Dun Laoghaire in 2010. He was the recipient of the IMOCA Graduate Award, the Aileen MacKeogh Award and the Siamsa Tíre Emerging Artist Award. Solo exhibitions include 'Limbo-Excavated' (2011), 'RE:definition' (2012), 'Exercises of an Audionaut' (2014) and 'Euclid, I miss you...' (2016). Group exhibitions include 'Deep Inside' (V Moscow Biennale for Young Art, 2016), 'Futures' (Royal Hibernian Academy, 2014), 'The Reverberatory' (Queen Street Studios, 2013) and 'Around a Volta' (Château de Servières, 2011). In 2017, Adam will have exhibitions and residencies in Ireland, England, France, Latvia and South Korea.

David Eagher Maher is an artist based in Wicklow. Solo exhibitions include, 'Paper Tress', Pallas Projects Dublin, 2016. 'Inheritance', Galerie Drei Ringe Leipzig, 2015. Group exhibitions include 'Exploration Landscape', Jarmuschek + Partner, Postdamer Str Berlin. 'Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire', Galerie Drei Ringe, Leipzig. 'Paper Works II', Galerie Martin Mertens, Berlin. 'In Residence II', Oliver Sears Gallery, Fitzroy Square, London. 'Innenstabil, Galerie Drei Ringe Leipzig', 2015. 'MOON FARK', RAKE Visningsrom, Trondheim, Norway, 2014. 'Savage State', two person exhibition with James Barry, Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane. In 2017 he has solo shows at Galerie Drei Ringe, Leipzig and Oliver Sears Gallery Dublin.

Miranda Blennerhassett is a Scottish artist based in Dublin. She received her BA from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee, and MFA from the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. Recent projects include: 'The Headless City', TULCA, Galway, 'Evident Care', Suttie Art Space, Aberdeen, 'What Is and What Might Be', Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda, Facebook Artist in Residence, Facebook EMEA Headquarters, Dublin, 'Temple of Psychic Youth', Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, Dublin, 'Drawn Away Together', Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh, Dublin Art Book Fair, Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin, 'Questions to ask yourself before building your first house', Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop, 'It Is Not On Any Map; True Places Never Are', Youghal, Cork, 'Pattern Language', Black Mariah, Cork.

Janine Davidson (b.1974, Belfast) completed an MFA at NCAD Dublin, 2012. Recent solo exhibitions include 'Into the Gravelly Ground', The Mermaid Arts Centre Bray. Selected group exhibitions include, 2017, RHA 187th Annual Exhibition,

Ely Place, DPI, dots per inch, Cork Printmakers, Print Show Room 'Attitude Precedes-Form', The Library Project, Dublin. 2016, RHA 186th Annual Exhibition 'Anti-room', 3-person show, Artbox, Dublin, RHA 185th Annual Exhibition, 'The Starry Messenger', Experimental Film Club, IFI. In 2014 Davidson completed an Art, Architecture and Politics workshop at the Fundación Botín, directed by Carlos Garaicoa in Santander, supported but the Arts Council.

Niall de Buitléar graduated from DIT with a BA in Fine Art in 2006. Solo exhibitions of his work have been held at Pallas Projects, the Wexford Arts Centre; 126, Galway; and twice at the The Lab, Dublin. He is currently preparing for a solo exhibition at the Ashford Gallery, RHA. Recent group exhibitions include, 'The Black and White Project' at Transmitter, NYC; the 2017 RHA Annual Exhibition, and 'Approaching the Landscape' at RUA RED, Tallaght. Previous group exhibitions include 'Futures 10', RHA, Dublin; 'Dawning of an Aspect', Green on Red Gallery, Dublin 2009 and 'Book-ish: When Books Become Art', Lewis Glucksman Gallery, Cork.

## Curators Biography

Séamus McCormack is a curator and artist based in London and is originally from Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. He currently works as Programme Manager of New Contemporaries and previously he was an Assistant Curator: Exhibitions at the Whitechapel Gallery, London and has held various positions at the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) including Assistant Curator: Collections and Project Coordinator: Exhibitions. At IMMA he has curated group exhibitions including 'Traces' (2009); 'Roadkill' (2014) and was co-curator of 'Mobile Encounters' (2014) and 'Primal Architecture' (2014). He has worked on solo exhibitions by artists including Christopher Williams, Harun Farocki, Willie Doherty, Leonora Carrington and Haroon Mirza and many group exhibitions including 'Electronic Superhighway'; 'The Kibbo Kift Kindred'; 'The Moderns'; 'Post War American Art' and 'Analysing Cubism'. He was co-edited numerous publications and written on the work of artists including Haroon Mirza, Wolfgang Tillmans, Paul Sharits, Jonas Lund, Ulla Wiggen, Janine Davidson and Elaine Leader. As an artist he has exhibited his work in both solo exhibitions and group exhibitions. He has been awarded the Gold Medal for Academic Excellence from the Dublin Institute of Technology; Best Fine Art Student and also won the Westmeath Emerging Artist Award. He completed a BA in Fine Art at Dublin Institute of Technology; a H-Dip at Limerick School of Art and Design and an MA at NCAD, Dublin. In 2016 he curated 'Sausage Fest – Sheila Rennick and Jemma Egan' for ArtBox, Dublin.

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## Colophon

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Featuring artists: Miranda Blennerhassett, Niall de Buitléar, Janine Davidson,  
Adam Gibney and David Eager Maher

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Luan Gallery by Athlone Arts and Tourism Ltd

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