



representations

New work by

DEIRDRE O'MAHONY

at the BURREN COLLEGE OF ART Gallery

Launch By Jenny Haughton Public Arts consultant for the Arts Council at 3 pm on Saturday 16th May 2009.

Location: BCA Gallery, The Burren College of Art, Ballyvaughan, County Clare.

Dates: May 16th to June 12th.

Opening Hours: Monday –Friday: 10.30 – 17.00. Saturday and Sunday: 12.00 – 17.00.

The exhibition shows work made during O'Mahony's PhD through practice research into the theory, function and unique nature of visual arts practice in rural contexts.

The work is site specific to the West of Ireland; an exploration of regionality that contributes to the discourse within contemporary international art practice concerning the rural as a new site of artistic experimentation and action in relation to the ecological imperatives of the twenty-first century. O'Mahony's enquiry into location and her interrogation of the mechanics of belonging became a reflection upon the polarities between the local/rural and the national/global.

The outcome of this research is representations which takes the form of the archives and documentation of the X-PO project alongside the artist's other public artworks and personal practice. The exhibition incorporates documentary videos, paintings photographs and found objects that provide a critical account of the role of a socially engaged 'activist' arts practice in the unique and specific site of the Burren, County Clare.

X-PO was opened by the artist in December 2007. The artist set out to reactivate the former post office in Kilnaboy, Co Clare and give space and time to review, recall and renew the core values and priorities of the community. Kilnaboy is a scattered parish of a few hundred households in the West of Ireland. A national school and a church are all that it possesses in the way of civic amenities: no pub, no shop. Once there were a couple of shops, a blacksmith, and a Post Office. But, like much in rural Ireland today, that was once upon a time. The changing face of farming and the necessity for many of a long daily commute to and from

work have presented a challenge to rural communities like Kilnaboy. How to retain a sense of belonging, how to include incomers, how to provide for the youth? These are all questions faced in villages and townlands all over Ireland.

The artist and members of the various Kilnaboy communities; longstanding groups, newcomers, artists and interested parties, spent last year looking at ways of answering such questions. In re-activating the post office; a space with a history of being a site of exchange and social contact, the artist sought to enable the collective articulation of community history: facilitating groups in visualizing the representation of their history, and curating a programme of exhibitions by contemporary artists that addressed some of the key issues in rural areas. Contested historical representations and events, the loneliness and isolation experienced by many, relationships between locals and newcomers and the social and ecological effects of changes in agricultural policies have all been the subject of the curated programme at X-PO.

The project was generously funded by the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíonn under Once-Off Projects awards and SuperValu during the first year. The X-PO is now being run, funded and programmed by local volunteers. Four archives have been created through the project and will be exhibited as part of the exhibition.

The artist will also present other work that informed and resulted from this PhD research that reference traditional notions of aesthetic beauty and landscape representation.

X-PO is exhibiting work by artist Michael Fortune from 3rd May to 12th June.

NOTE Opening Times: Thurs 2- 5pm, Fridays 10.30 – 12.30 and Sunday 2-5 pm. Reflecting the voluntary nature of the project and the business of agricultural life in the summer months, the X-PO will close on the 12th June for the Summer months and re-open in September.

Artist Biography

Deirdre O'Mahony was awarded a BA in Fine Art, (Painting) at St Martins School of Art, London and MA (Fine Art) the Crawford College. She is currently completing her PhD through practice at the University of Brighton. Selected solo exhibitions include Local News, Siamsa Tire Gallery (2008), Viscaux, Galway Arts Festival (2006), WALL, Context Gallery Derry and Limerick City Gallery of Art, Limerick, (2002) and Wrap, Galway Arts Centre (2000). Group exhibitions: 10,000 to 50, IMMA Dublin (2008), Eire/Land McMullen Museum Boston, (2003). Awards include Pollock-Krasner Foundation fellowship and the Arts Council of Ireland/An Chomhairle Ealaíonn, Awards/bursaries in 1997/2001/2006 and 2007. Public art projects include Once-Off funding from the Arts Council for X-PO (2007/8) and Cross Land (2007) for Clare County Council's Ground Up public art in rural contexts programme. She is a full time lecturer in Fine Art at Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology and joint co-ordinator of the Shifting Ground Partnership project and conference on Cultural Strategies for Rural Contexts, between GMIT and Clare County Council in 2006.