

TRANSITOPIA

A Public Art project exploring the transitory identity of a modern commuter town

**Michelle Browne Dominic Thorpe Jo Anne Butler Elaine Reynolds
Carl Giffney and Dara McGrath**

20th – 24th August 2008, Naas, Co. Kildare

Curated by Mary Jo Gilligan and Mark Durkan

Parking Meter Arts and Kildare County Council Arts Service presents **TRANSITOPIA**, a contemporary public art project created specifically for Naas, Co Kildare. Six artists have been selected to create new work in response to strategically important sites and locations in the socio-cultural trajectory of this modern commuter town.

The size, nature and identity of Naas has shifted in line with changes in town-planning, and in new and old architectural structures. According to curators Mark Durkan and Mary Jo Gilligan, *'TRANSITOPIA is a contemporary art project examining the negotiation between people and place and how the development of one directly influences the transformation of the other. The project engages with social infrastructure, architectural planning and the historical trajectory of industrial, commercial and public space.'*

They explained that TRANSITOPIA has three points of focus :

The first involves four artists commissioned to engage with specific sites in producing new work - Michelle Browne working at Sallins/Naas Train Station, Dominic Thorpe working at Sallins/Naas Train Station and Áras Chill Dara, Jo Anne Butler in Áras Chill Dara and Elaine Reynolds in Donnelly Mirrors factory.

The second focus involves two artists working in a research capacity, developing the project from a longer-term perspective. These artists are Dara McGrath and Carl Giffney.

*The third and final element of the project culminates in a publication that documents and expounds upon the work of **Transitopia**. This publication will be launched in October.*

The programme also includes the screening of a classic silent film in Town Hall, Naas, with live music accompaniment.

The goal of this project is to explore new and innovative approaches for the production and dissemination of contemporary art in alternative contexts. Using non-art spaces, such as civic buildings and industrial facilities as potential spaces for the exploration and presentation of the art activities **PARKING METER ARTS LTD** aim to reinvigorate an understanding of Naas' everyday cultural dynamics.

CONTACT: Mark Durkan / Mary Jo Gilligan; parkingmeterarts@gmail.com
Kildare County Council Arts Service; Tel: 045-448318, E: arts@kildarecoco.ie

WEB: <http://transitopia.wordpress.com>

Information Point:

Town Hall, Naas, Wed 20th – Sun Sun 24th Aug 2008

Preview Night / Launch: Áras Chill Dara 6.30pm, Wed 20th Aug 2008

Michelle Browne - Border-Border

The artist offers to transport commuters from Sallins/Naas Train Station to their destination in Naas via a lift on the back of a bicycle. In exploring the in-between spaces that exist in our lives, the performance references an informal transportation system in Africa and borders of neighbouring countries. A unique sound piece created from commuters in New York, London, Galway and Belfast will accompany each participant's journey.

Sallins/ Naas Train Station. 16.45–19.30, Wed 20th, Thurs 21st, Fri 22nd Aug

Dominic Thorpe – Terrain

The artist worked closely with an individual commuter to create this artwork. Thorpe sought a local participant when forming his project. He presents the results of his exchanges with local man Chris O'Neill and his own mimicry of O'Neill's habitual journey to work. The work is presented as a video installation.

Kildare County Council Offices/Áras Chill Dara.

Office opening hours, Thurs 21st – Sat 23rd Aug

Elaine Reynolds

Reynolds investigates the secret life of street lamps and how they relate to the commuting population of Naas. The work is sited beside a relic of Naas's industrial past and a main commuter gateway. The artist creates a heightened experience of an everyday transient moment through a poetic mirrored video projection.

Donnelly Mirrors forecourt

Access from 20.00 – 00.00, Wed 20th – Sun 24th Aug

Jo Anne Butler – The Folly

The artist's construction is a witty intervention in the Civic Garden in Naas. Her scale model housing estate sets up a deliberate tension with the oblique lines of the celebrated Áras buildings that is at once both playful and inquisitive.

Civic Garden, Kildare Co.Co. Offices/ Áras Chill Dara

Wed 20th – Sun 24th Aug

Carl Giffney

Giffney is undertaking a mobile research project on the commuter lines N6, M4, N7 for the Academy of future history in conjunction with Parking Meter Arts. The artist is focusing on the N7 Naas-Dublin road for Transitopia. Giffney will present current findings at the launch event and in the forthcoming Transitopia publication.

Áras Cill Dara.

6.30pm, Wed 20th Aug

Dara McGrath

McGrath is producing site-specific photographic research in conjunction with Parking Meter Arts, focusing on the documentation of a disused industrial space. His work will be featured in the forthcoming Transitopia publication.

Parking Meter Arts *encourages the public to utilise this page as a **space for engaging in discussion** and debate about public art and the ideas brought up by the Transitopia project.*

Artists Biographies and Statements

Michelle Browne

Michelle Browne is an artist based in Dublin. She has a BA in Fine Art Sculpture and History of Art from the National College of Art and Design, Dublin and a Postgraduate Diploma in Arts Administration From University College Dublin. She has exhibited both nationally and internationally, most recently taking part in Urban Wasanii, Kenya, Art@work. Roscommon, Documenta Urbana, Kassel and TULCA 07 in Galway. She is the recipient of the NCAD Student Prize, The RDS James White Art Award 2006 and has recently been awarded an artist's bursary by the Arts Council of Ireland. Michelle is the founder and curator of OUT OF SITE, a festival of live art in public space in Dublin.

Michelle's work is predominantly performances based and much of her recent work considers the role of the viewer in the performative act. Her practice fundamentally explores how we engage with our environment and the people around us. Her work touches on urban planning, regeneration and social structures. She is interested in looking at the frisson that is created in our engagement with the world. She looks at how the individual exists in contemporary society: where we live, how we get from one place to the other and the obstacles that present themselves. How do we negotiate and fit into the world that we live in? Her work highlights, tugs at, and pulls apart these intersections to see what can be revealed.

Jo Anne Butler

Jo Anne Butler graduated from NCAD, Dublin in 2005 with a joint honours degree in Fine Art: Sculpture and History of Irish Art and Design. She then worked for two years as assistant arts project manager with Breaking Ground, the Ballymun Regeneration Limited percent for art scheme. In late 2007 she returned to full time study to study Architecture in UCD. She has maintained an art practice throughout, and has exhibited in Ireland, Poland and New Zealand as well as undertaking a number of collaborative projects with artist Eilis McDonald. In October 2008 Jo Anne Butler will curate a series of artworks across Dublin city with artist Tara Kennedy. This pilot project, in conjunction with the Architecture Foundation's Open House event, will investigate the way in which the artist can both playfully and provocatively stimulate debate on architecture, planning and the built environment in Ireland.

'I make work that is both playful and inquisitive – a seeming innocence masks a deeper unrest or uneasiness. A recurring theme in my work is that of the "landscape" and its inhabitation, as mediated to us through art history, tourism campaigns and property development. I delight in the freedom and space for creativity afforded in choosing low-tech responses, processes and methods. I enjoy simplicity and immediacy in line, colour and pattern.

As an artist studying architecture I am increasingly aware of the value of the position of the artist. Architecture shapes the social spaces we live in while at the same time making physical our desires, ideologies and politics. Our history is written in our buildings. But sometimes we are too close to see what that history is. Right now, at a time of sharp downturn in the construction industry, is an excellent opportunity for reflection and inquiry. For if the architecture of any period in time tells us the story of the values and aspiration of a people, what does the recent building boom reveal about the values held by contemporary Irish society.

In a recent interview by Gemma Tipton, artist Jesse Jones describes the drudgery of a daily commute as each morning she watched “25 cranes on the horizon, producing nothing. And I was thinking about the futility of the sort of production that happened during the Celtic Tiger. It had these huge mechanisms of potential behind it, but no one was thinking about what the production of social space was actually meant to achieve”. “Art”, Jones continues, “should work as an intervention, a critique, to remind people that there is another prism to look at a situation through”.’

Carl Giffney

In 2007 Carl Giffney graduated from the NCAD Sculpture Department with a first class honours degree. He has studied and exhibited in Ljubljana, Slovenia and undertaken publicly funded projects on Cork Street in Dublin, in Castlecomer in Kilkenny and in rural areas of East Offaly. In 2005 he co-founded Bluebricks, a public interventionist group based in Dublin and in 2007 he co-founded *The Good Hatchery*. *The Good Hatchery* is an artist led initiative that is based in a building sourced for free via the internet (www.thegoodhatchery.wordpress.com). Carl Giffney holds a permanent studio here and is currently completing a one month residency at Arigna coal manufacturers as part of Roscommon Arts Offices Art@Work program. Recent exhibitions include Art Horrific in Dublin, the Excursions performance festival in Limerick and a solo installation entitled *Kavaliers Triadic Propitiator*, in Westport.

“I am fascinated by belief structures, methods of explaining our surroundings, taxonomy and history. I attempt to understand how, why and when we engage with such topics on a daily basis through my art practice. By initiating such research, in as many different contexts as possible, I hope to explore notions of personal and social identity, and ultimately the greater social cohesion that does, or does not, link us to our fellow man. Accessibility is very important to me. I believe that all audiences are unique and intelligent and that an artist's approach to any group of people must be equally unique and intelligent. The outcomes of my practice often involve dead pan humour, large scale physicality, aspects of performance or interactivity and bizarre mis-truths.”

Elaine Reynolds

Elaine Reynolds studied in the National College of Art and Design and the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. She is currently based between Dublin and Leitrim. Since August 2007, Reynolds has been involved in ‘*New Sites-New Fields*’; an ongoing experimental research project at the Leitrim Sculpture Centre. In 2008 she exhibited in the ‘*Excursions*’ performance festival, Limerick, ‘*Never Ending Telescope*’ in the Back Loft Gallery, Dublin and attended workshops at National Review of Live Art, Glasgow. Upcoming shows include a site-specific installation on the shores of Lough Allen, Co. Leitrim (as part of ‘*New Sites-New Fields*’) and a group show ‘*The Dock*’ arts centre, Carrick on Shannon.

Reynolds’ practice is strongly research and process driven, investigations often include the use of live action and video. Carefully selected sites are central to the resolution of such enquiries, repetition and cyclical patterns are recurring themes in her work. Recent activities have been informed by an interest in social and economic theory, exploring industrial processes and the idea of labour as a commodity. In the past, Reynolds has made concrete blocks by hand and used cement mixers for preparing dough and washing clothes. She has toiled endlessly at impossible tasks and performed underwater for an audience of one.

Dominic Thorpe

Dominic Thorpe, a native of Kildare, graduated with an MA from the National College of Art and Design in 2006. He works in various media: audio/visual recording, performance, installation as well as employing strategies of intervention and collaboration. He has shown at many art exhibitions and has recently completed a number of public projects including commissions from the Irish Youth Justice Services, Darndale Community Services in North Dublin and the Finglas Suicide Network. He has awards from the Kildare County Council, CREATE and the Arts Council of Ireland. He is currently working on a public art commission for the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council for which he has been invited to present at an international conference in Berlin titled 'Migration in Museums'.

"In the making and presenting of work I use various media including: photography, video, performance and object based installation. Continuing on from ideas of performance in my work I employ methods of engagement and collaboration. I am interested in ideas of place as a catalyst for conceiving and developing ideas. I continue to bring ideas from 'context to studio' and 'studio to context'."

Daragh McGrath

"In his book, Experiencing Architecture, Steen Eiler Rasmussen describes an empty space as being a "cavity between the solids". It is these 'cavities' that have become the focus of my work over recent years.

My interest lies in exploring the transitional lives of spaces, those in-between places where architecture, landscape and the built environment often intersect, and where a dialogue – of absence rather than presence – is created. My work takes as its starting point Foucault's observation that spaces are "saturated with qualities" and are neither lifeless nor neutral. My practice is driven by explorations of these charged, shifting entities – buildings that have come to the end of their functionality, the changing functionality of a landscape, human interruptions in the landscape - that exist in urban, rural and suburban contexts. The process is then opened out further through an examination of how artistic intervention into these spaces informs, or even transforms them, restoring to them a new or different reality.

The resultant photo works are realised both within the structure of the gallery space and as site specific interventions/installations and collaborations."

Recent exhibitions/interventions include: The Lives of Spaces, Irish Pavilion (Palazzo Giustinian Lolin) 11th International Architecture Biennale, Venice 2008, European Night, La Nuit de l'Année, Rencontres d'Arles, Arles, France 2008, Home/Visitant, Priorat Centre d'Art, 2008 Barcelona, Let Go RHA/Monster Truck Gallery 2008 (Ireland), EV+A, Limerick City 2008 (Ireland) curated by Hou Hanru, Two Minds (artist+ architect collaboration), GT Gallery 2007 (Belfast), Beyond the Country, Lewis-Glucksman Gallery 2007 (Ireland), Thru Irish Eyes, Beijing Institute of Art & Design, (China) 2007, Kaunas Photo Days 07, (Lithuania), Idensitat '07, (Barcelona), E.U. Eyes on Japan, Iwate Museum of Modern Art (Japan) 2006. Boundaries, Uberbau Gallerie (Düsseldorf) 2005. Making Things Better, East05 (U.K.)

Awards include: New Work Award, Arts Council of Ireland (2008). ACNI Artist Bursary (2006) and a Travel Award, (2005). The AIB Arts Prize (2004) (Ireland). Pепенieres pour le Jeune Artistes du Europe (France) 2004.

