ISSN 1753-2396 (Print)
ISSN 2753-328X (Online)

Journal of
Irish and Scottish Studies

Articles

On the move between shore and shore': Scotland and Ireland's History-Makers, Artists and the 'Future State'

Author: Craig Richardson

Volume 10, Issue 2
Pp: 93-113
2020
Published on: 1st Jan 2020

1 4 9 5

ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY PRESS

‘On the move between shore and shore’: Scotland and Ireland’s History-Makers, Artists and the ‘Future State’

Craig Richardson

History Makers

The new constitutional framing which seemingly developed during the weeks leading to the Scottish Independence Referendum in 2014 involved an examination of Scottish and British institutions, as well as national emblems and archetypes. Scotland *might* change, but positions and understandings would change whatever the result, sometimes explicitly through public discourse, including T. M. Devine’s observation of the place of Scottish culture in the emergent national identity:

> There has been an enormous increase in a sense of Scottishness and pride in Scottish identity which has itself been sustained by an explosion in Scottish writing and creative arts since the 1980s, especially in relation to my own subject [history]. We now have a proper modern history of Scotland which we didn’t have until as late as the 1970s and 1980s.[1]

As Devine suggests, the historiography of Scotland’s post-war arts is becoming convincingly diverse and Scottish artists are an important presence in the strengthening of national identity in contemporary Scotland. Just months before he wrote, Rachel Maclean’s exhibition of recent digital films at Glasgow’s Centre for Contemporary Art, *Happy & Glorious*, used ‘green screen’ digital backdrops and real locations, including a former hunting residency in the Scottish borders, to enmesh the emblems of the United Kingdom with re-enacted speeches and arguments made by media and political figures as they argued for and against Scottish Independence.[2] In *The Lion and The Unicorn* (2012) a sinister black oil was consumed by the work’s protagonists and one gleefully plunged a knife into a cake decorated with the Union Jack.

---

[1] Tom Devine, http://theconversation.com/tom-devine-why-i-now-say-yes-to-independence-for-scotland-30733 (2014) [Accessed 19 August 2018].

[2] Rachel Maclean, *Happy and Glorious* (Glasgow: 2014).

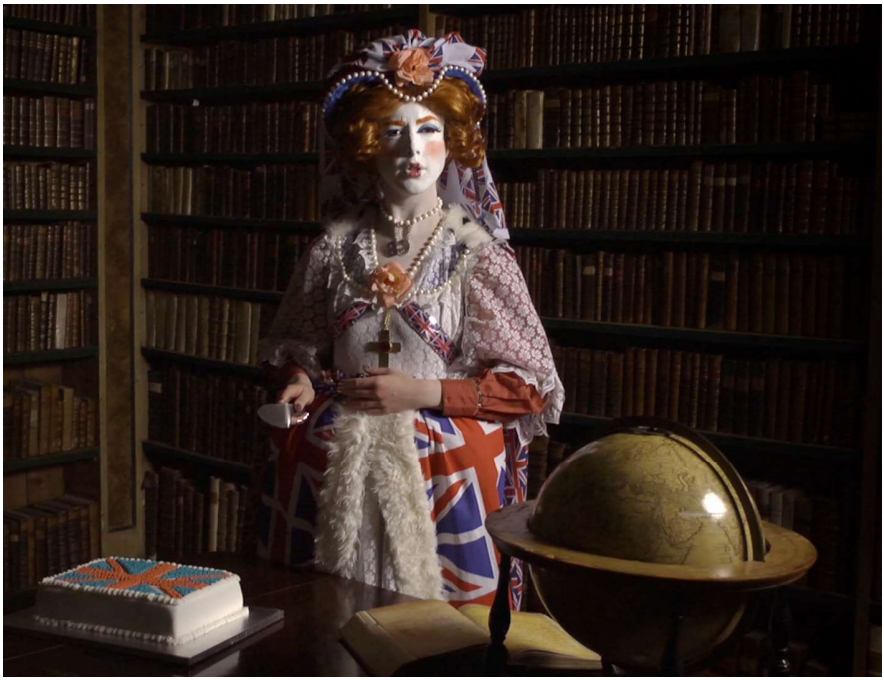

Figure 1. Rachel Maclean, *The Lion and The Unicorn* (2012).
Commissioned by The Edinburgh Printmakers.
Photo credit: courtesy of the Artist.

Scottish art, both history and contemporary practice, is taught at a number of Scottish universities and specialist art schools and much of the same conditions pertain to Irish art. In terms of significant monographs, Bruce Arnold's *A Concise History of Irish Art* (1969) appeared a generation before Duncan Macmillan's *Scottish Art 1460–1990* (1990) and Murdo Macdonald's *Scottish Art* (2000). It is as if Arnold's reflective monograph on Irish art signalled the desire for unified nationhood itself as it concerned 'the idea of an Irish art, developing, changing and enriching itself in spite of history rather than because of it'.[3] 'Of history'? Arnold can only mean Ireland's uncertain autonomy and the refutation of its wholeness in the twentieth century. Later,

[3] Bruce Arnold, *Irish Art: A Concise History* (London, 1969), 10.

bridging the shores, Fintan Cullen and John Morrison implicated Ireland and Scotland jointly as countries evolving within an undesirable equilibrium. In their collection *A Shared Legacy: Essays on Irish and Scottish Art and Visual Culture* (2005) they analysed the 'ways in which the visual operates within the context of two communities with related experiences of lost statehood yet retained nationhood.'[4] But in general terms, properly developed support for art scholarship investment is at different stages in Ireland and Scotland. With archival resources, post-war Scottish art lags behind Ireland – as if the idea of a Scottish national art reflects its devolved, not independent, state.

In Ireland, the National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL) in Dublin has almost achieved its aim in becoming the primary Irish visual art library; to contain all existing books, catalogues, slides and videos of contemporary Irish art. Its art historical complement, the Trinity Irish Art Research Centre (TRIARC), was founded in 2003 in response to international interest in Irish art. These have no exact Scottish counterparts. The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art's Library, containing over 50,000 items, is somewhat comparable to NIVAL. Other significant resources, such as the archive and collection of the Scottish Arts Council, are dispersed. The current state of Scottish investment in visual-cultural archives is possibly indicative of Devine's implicit observation, regarding the late development of a modern history of Scotland. The absence of a specialist research centre for Scottish Art does not mean the Scottish universities regard Scottish art as a subsidiary theme within British art, although further research needs to define Scottish distinctiveness within what is, on the whole, an English meta-narrative. Meanwhile, in museums, applied research is underway and probing scholarship has been translated as accessible output in the professional sector.

And yet, a Scottish Art Research Centre, let's call it SARC, would form an important cultural index in support of resident museum collections, especially as the Centre would operate independently of the historiography of The National Galleries of Scotland or other national institutions which continue to insist that 'Art in Scotland cannot readily be defined with the aid of a series of identifiable and distinct movements … particularly within modern art of the twentieth century.'[5] An example of why a Scottish Art Research Centre, replete with a national archive, is needed is the largely forgotten Maryhill-born

[4] Fintan Cullen and John Morrison (eds), *A Shared Legacy: Essays on Irish and Scottish Art and Visual Culture* (Farnham, 2005), 2.

[5] https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/features/movements-scottish-art [Accessed 12 July 2018].

John McHale (1922–78).[6] Returning to the comment above, 'Art in Scotland' is not the same as 'Scottish art', the latter term includes McHale, a founding member of the Independent Group along with fellow Scottish-born artists William Turnbull and Eduardo Paolozzi. McHale is contestably the originator of the term 'Pop Art'. Within the friendships of his resettled fellow Scots, these artists have a claim as much as any other national group to have led the formation of an easily 'identifiable and distinct movement.' SARC could investigate connections between those who have worked, lived and arrived in Scotland, and those who went elsewhere.

Numerous Irish and Scottish artists are seemingly inhabited by multiple pasts. Indicative of a shared narrative of travel, migration and diaspora which figures prominently in both Ireland's and Scotland's art history and contemporary practice, the Irish-based resources NIVAL and TRIARC provide ample source materials from which to begin a serious discussion of *Scottish* art. For instance, the twentieth-century artist William Scott (Scottish-born, Ulster- and London-trained, variously resident in Southern England and France), has an influence which extends beyond his early biography. Today, one of Scott's paintings, *Blue and White* (1963), adorns the walls of Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane Gallery, exhibited in close proximity to paintings by Barry Cooke (the English-born Irish painter) and Francis Bacon (the Irish-born English painter). Their parenthetical biographies refute any straightforward national identification.

In addition to museum collections, various monographs on Scottish and Irish art implicitly discuss this complexity of Scottish-Irish-English lineages. For instance, on contemporary Irish art, Liam Kelly's Ulster perspective, *Thinking Long: Contemporary Art in the North of Ireland* (1996), which is the author's deeply embedded reading of Ireland's artworld (academic and curator at The Orpheus Gallery, Belfast, 1986–92 and then The Orchard Gallery, Derry, 1996–99), he finishes with an appendix of seventy-seven potted biographies which includes six Scottish artists, seven English artists and three Northern Americans. Irish art history entails an uncomplicated comprehension of repeated visits, settlement and return to recognise the difficulty of biographical fixity in the age of contemporary art's transnationalism.

But this is just a beginning. While the historiography of Scottish art is ongoing and often reads as unchallenged, scholarly discourse within the

[6] John McHale was an influential writer on technology, mass communications, architecture and design, including *R. Buckminster Fuller* (New York, 1962) and *The Ecological Context* (London, 1971).

Republic of Ireland concerning Irish art visual during the last two decades includes those who extol the urgent necessity of new interpretive methods, including a post-colonial method.[7] Lucy Cotter in 'Art Stars and Plasters on the Wounds - Why Have There Been No Great Irish Artists?' (2005)[8] argued the whole Irish nation must effectively decolonise before a more meaningful discussion of Irish culture can take place. Cotter's key point is stated as follows:

> Irish colonisation involved a deliberate stamping out of all aspects of pre-colonial culture, the 'national' could never 're-emerge' in a postcolonial era without a decolonisation process and one involving a thorough deconstruction of 'Irishness' and 'Irish culture' at the foundations of that nation.[9]

Here, the place of decolonisation is the imagination, in much the same spirit that recent writers from the Middle East have charged. In the course of the discussion, Cotter revisits Mainie Jellett's (1897–1944) vision of modern Irish painting, whose project was 'to form a national visual art and … to lay new foundations by advocating an art which would fuse Celtic and religious sources with a European modernist style of painting'.[10] But this was initially met with Irish public disinterest, even as it concurrently held considerable international modernist appeal. Cotter contends the public disinterest in Jellett is indicative of the cultural alienism towards Modernism in Ireland, but also a deference in Irish visual art to its international acclaim, which meant Jellett's validation as an artist would only be found elsewhere. Validation of a national art can only come from outwith the source if there is no methodology for understanding a nation's art. Cotter's argument also provides a comparative context for understanding the historical success of Scotland's visual artists in London, often preceding any recognition in Scotland. She concludes a particularly striking paragraph with an observation 'that subsumption of Irish identity is the price of artistic success in Britain', referring to Mary J. Hickman's observation that historical assimilation of Irish emigrants in England was based upon 'strategies of denationalisation'.[11] Is it possible that the subsumption of Scottish identity had also been the price of artistic success for resettled

[7] See Luke Gibbons, 'Unapproved Roads: Ireland and Post-Colonial Identity' in idem, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork, 1996): 171–80.

[8] Lucy Cotter, 'Art Stars and Plasters on the Wounds', *Third Text*, 19 (2005), 581–92.

[9] Ibid., 583.

[10] Ibid., 583.

[11] Ibid., 591.

Scottish artists? And is their place within the Scottish meta-narrative somehow diminished? Ultimately the core problem which Cotter addresses is the future conception of Irish art within the troubled context of institutional oversight of a colonised past. Is it pertinent to raise the comparative absence of a post-colonial debate in Scotland's contemporary visual culture research and in Scotland's contemporary artworld? Cotter writes of Ireland:

> Given its contemporary implications, I would suggest that the potential for any institution to radically advance Irish art rests on its willingness to grapple with Ireland's colonial past and confront some of the most crucial questions underpinning Irish art history and contemporary practice.[12]

Without such grappling there are many obstacles to furthering the argument for a shared identity within Scots-Irish visual art while noting separable distinctiveness. The problem of foreign/familiar is discussed in 'Celtic Connections: Colonialism and Culture in Irish-Scottish Modernism' (2002), Ellen-Raïsa Jackson and Willy Maley's consideration of 'how language and identity are figured, forged and fused between two countries that are at once foreign and familiar'.[13] They raise the difficulty of an easy comparison in the context of an overarching experience, the two cultures are 'intimately estranged by precisely what ties them together – colonialism'.[14]

Interlocutors might interject here and refer to the cultural importance of Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull's paradigmatic *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture: Inferiorism and the Intellectuals* (1989). Its general mien has its uses, the strength of their argument is in its insistence of the specific specialness of Scottish cultural and educational practices and the realised threat of its loss within a homogenised British regime. But its value to Scottish visual arts is overstated. The authors discuss no artists, nor artworks from any period. Cinema, photography and other media do not appear, nor is there discussion of any prominent architecture of the modern period. Beveridge and Turnbull's development of Franz Fanon's concept of inferiorism in a Scottish historical context, and in particular their critique of the Anglicisation of curricula in

---

[12] Ibid., 591.

[13] Ellen-Raïssa Jackson and Willy Maley, 'Celtic Connections: Colonialism and Culture in Irish-Scottish Modernism', *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies,* 4 (2002), 68.

[14] Ibid., 77.

Scottish Universities, contains no references to Scotland's art schools. It could easily have included The Royal Scottish Academy, The National Galleries of Scotland and Glasgow's Empire or International Exhibitions during the Twentieth Century along the way. Where they lightly touch upon visual culture it is as secondary sources, for instance Tom Nairn's discussion of national Kitsch symbols or with regard to the critical responses to Barbara and Murray Grigor's 1981 exhibition *Scotch Myths* (and Murray Grigor's 1982 film of the same title). Their later *Scotland After Enlightenment: Image and Tradition in Modern Scottish Culture* (1997) returns to the philosophical and educational theme of their 1989 publication, but this time supplemented with a variety of easy pickings, visual references such as C. R. Mackintosh and The Glasgow Boys.

Returning to Jackson and Maley (and treating Beveridge and Turnbull, 1989, as unfinished business), the transposition of Cotter's Irish-based strategy of decolonialisation to Scotland's visual art could be to ignore the subtle differences between Irish and Scottish culture, or rather the specificities (often originality through hybridity) of their distinct cultures. Still, Scottish cultural decolonisation, through the recognition of such a necessity and the inclusion of creativity and imagination, is underway. Murdo Macdonald's paper 'Reflections on the Neglect of the Visual Art of the Scottish Gàidhealtachd', presented at The Scottish Highlands: an Historical Reassessment? (2012), notes that from the outset that its author's research into the visual art which originated from and related to the Scottish Gàidhealtachd, showed how the art's 'frequent repudiation was indicative of a desire to ignore the visual aspect of an entire culture.'[15] Macdonald imagines a disregarding voice, 'there's really nothing visual to speak of'. Faced with a negation of a region's visual culture, the ignorance of which Macdonald writes: 'is not lack of knowledge *per se*, but an attitude to such knowledge that classifies it as of little importance, classifies it as something about which it is acceptable to be ignorant.'[16] Macdonald offers an analogy with the historiography of the art of the Indian sub-continent and the opinion expressed by colonialists, that Indian art was comprised only of 'borrowings' in sharp contrast with the cultural nationalists who had identified Indian art's autonomous features.

As Cotter and Macdonald demonstrate, a re-evaluation of the institutional narratives of Irish and Scottish visual art requires a methodology of

[15] Annual Conference of the Economic and Social History Society of Scotland, Glasgow, September 2012.

[16] Murdo Macdonald's published version is 'Finding Scottish Art', bellacaledonia.org.uk 16 February 2013. [Accessed 18 August 2018].

decolonisation. At the same time, Scottish art has other urgent needs, including a revitalisation of its gendered history. Scottish art, institutional decolonisation of the imagination and a gendered art history is heady mix. In 2003, while Head of the History of Art at University College Cork, James Elkins' article 'The State of Irish Art History' pointed to a relative absence in the teaching of Irish art history of 'multiculturalism, representations of gender, forays outside the canon, and explorations of new interpretive methods'.[17] Arguably, this is not comprehensively applicable any longer to Irish and Scottish contemporary art, where 'representations of gender' have since been evidenced in Katy Deepwell's *Dialogues: Women Artists from Ireland* (2005), including interviews with sixteen contemporary women artists whose work was exhibited in Ireland in the 1990s. In Scotland, Sarah Lowndes' 2012 exhibition *Studio 58: Women Artists in Glasgow Since WWII* and Sarah Smith's 2012 article 'In Celebration of Grassroots and Grass Widows: Women's Art Collaborations in Glasgow' also shine their light on this often neglected aspect.[18]

Of gendered art history, of practice developed through mobility and settlement, and a shared culture, an exemplar is Cathy Wilkes. Born in Belfast and resident in Glasgow since 1985, Wilkes' works are often assemblages which remain detrital, with a fragmented ordering which mean the boundaries of the works are difficult to establish. Yet in terms of their materials they are mostly relational. These are not didactic or conventional works; their elements hold uncanny qualities which are reminiscent of surrealism, such as a shop-display mannequin or the presence of a urinal in *Pool Reflections* (2007), unfamiliarly anchored in their semblance of domestic life. Their recreation of intimate or everyday social scenes, such as the washing of a child or the psychological vacancy sometimes sustained while shopping, resists easy stipulation. In recent exhibitions, including an untitled installation in 2014 at Glasgow's Tramway, poverty looms. In 2014 the overall effect was transcendent, redolent of another period in Scottish art, of the 1970s, of visiting artists Joseph Beuys, and Tadeusz Kantor. We are asked to witness the aftermath of tragedy and a theatre of the dead. As Michael Stanley describes, Wilkes selects 'the most abject and awkward of domestic and everyday objects; a widescreen Sony television, a Maclaren's pushchair [resulting in installations which] tend to

[17] James Elkins, 'The State of Irish Art History', *Circa*, 106 (2003), 57. See also James Elkins, 'The State of Irish Art History, Revisited', *Circa*, 116 (2006), 48–56.

[18] *Studio 58: Women Artists in Glasgow Since WWII*, Mackintosh Museum, 7 July 2012 – 30 September 2012**;** and S. Smith, *Map* magazine (2012) http://mapmagazine.co.uk/9607/celebration-grass-roots-and-grass-widows-womens-ar/ [Accessed 11 February 2020]

open out in a chain reaction of interconnectivity rather than close down to a linear, singular interpretation.'[19] And yet, it seems nearly impossible not to learn something of gendered experience when visiting these works, too. Their titles, including *Teenage Mother* (2006), *We Are Pro Choice* (2007) or *She's Pregnant Again* (2005), are immediately recognisable as gendered social commentary.

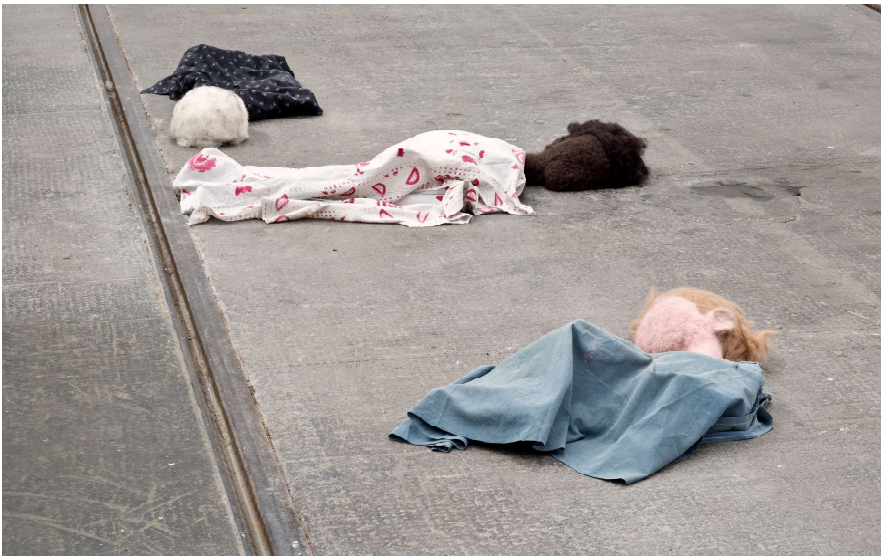

Figure 2. Cathy Wilkes, *Untitled* (2014),
Installation view Tramway, Glasgow, 2014, commissioned by Tramway, Glasgow.
Courtesy of the artist, Tramway, Glasgow, and The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow.
Photo credit: Keith Hunter.

Artists

Scottish-Irish art involves a complex culture centred on a diversity of dislocated, adaptive, marginalised or hyphenated identities, and high-profile diasporic artists. Some of the more prominent artists have an approach which moves towards a theorised practice, and this implicitly addresses Lucy Lippard's lamentation for a paucity of interaction between the cognate disciplines of literature and philosophy as the 'unfulfilled promise of conceptual art'.[20]

[19] Michael Stanley, *Cathy Wilkes* (Milton Keynes, 2009), 10.
[20] Brenda Moore-McCann, *Brian O'Doherty / Patrick Ireland: Beyond Categories* (Farnham, 2009), 11.

James Coleman's works are established within the canon of conceptual art, although assigned towards its awkward periphery. Arguably, Coleman belongs the global community of conceptual artists ahead of exemplifying Irish art but there is a high degree of nomadism and alienation at work, as an artist and in terms of his relation to the art of his time. Art critic Jean Fisher has identified how 'Coleman's early projections paralleled Conceptualism's self-reflexive preoccupation with the nature of art and its institutions, but unlike Conceptualism they did not ignore art's relation to the socio-historical sphere'.[21] Catalogues and critical essays, including an Irish Museum of Modern Art publication in 2009, acknowledge the influence of his video-works and slide projections on a later generation of video artists. These include the nostalgic solicitudes of Scottish artist Douglas Gordon. Gordon's seminal work is *24 Hour Psycho* (1993), an appropriated but slowed down version of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). Before this work's inception, Gordon visited an exhibition of the much heard of, but rarely seen, James Coleman's video and slide projections at Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London. A key work was Coleman's transposition of individual frames which make up less than half a second of James Whale's *The Invisible Man* (1933) into a new work; the slide projection *La Tache Aveugle (The Blind Spot)* (1978-80). Here, Whale's film-frames imperceptibly dissolve, one into the next, which Coleman stretched over a number of hours. If Coleman's projection requires an act of interpretation while peering into the murky imagery, it is profoundly alienating, for who can 'remember' less than half a second of a black and white feature film. Gordon's work, meanwhile, has a well-known source but now made alien in much the same way that the darker side of Pop Art exposes its subject to its viewers.

The comparison between these artists continues. Gordon has increasingly reconfigured Scottish iconography to reveal less discussed histories. His work's Scottish foci seems to follow a pattern of migration from, and return to, local themes. Recently, in his museum intervention *Black Burns* (2017), comprising a black marble recreation of John Flaxman's statue *Robert Burns* (c.1828) in the same museum – the Scottish National Portrait Gallery – Gordon solidified and cast asunder the unwelcome spectre of Burns' near emigration to Jamaica to become a slave driver. Similarly taking issue with national heritage, James Coleman's performance *guaiRE: An Allegory* (1985), has been argued as a critical stance towards Irish historicism. The performance, which took place within Dun Guaire Castle in County Galway, contested the 'illusion of communion

[21] Jean Fisher, 'So Different… and Yet' in *James Coleman* (Dublin, 2009), 39.

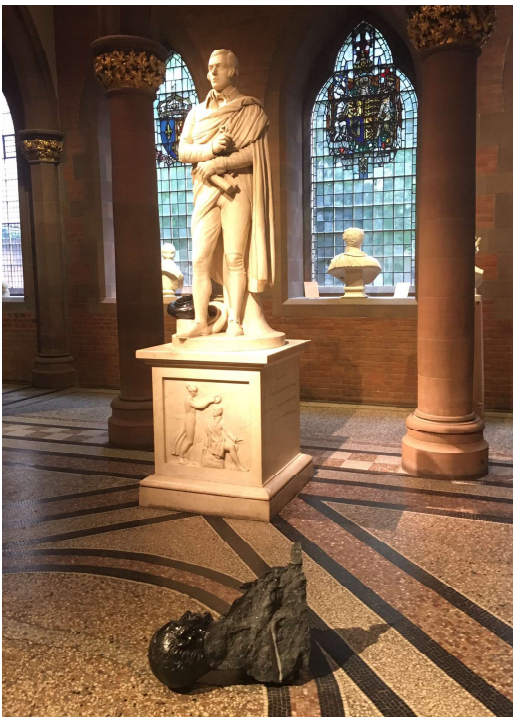

Figure 3. Douglas Gordon, *Black Burns* (2017)
Installation view Scottish National Portrait Gallery.
© Studio lost but found/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019
Photo credit: Studio lost but found/Francesco Paterlini/Andy McGregor for Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

with the medieval past' as perpetrated by the Irish heritage industry.[22] The critic Luke Gibbons notes that while Coleman's work is normally situated within the tradition of conceptual art, there is a recalibration of other traditions, and '*guaiRE* reveals it as deeply informed by its Irish context and situation.'[23] Gibbons' and Jean Fisher's examination of Coleman's recalibrated historicisation, locates it within a practice which is both late-modern and postmodern, but awkwardly so. Much the same can be said of Gordon's similar but distinctive work.

---

[22] Luke Gibbons, 'Narratives of No Return: James Coleman's guaiRE' in idem, *Transformations in Irish Culture*, 130.

[23] Ibid., 129.

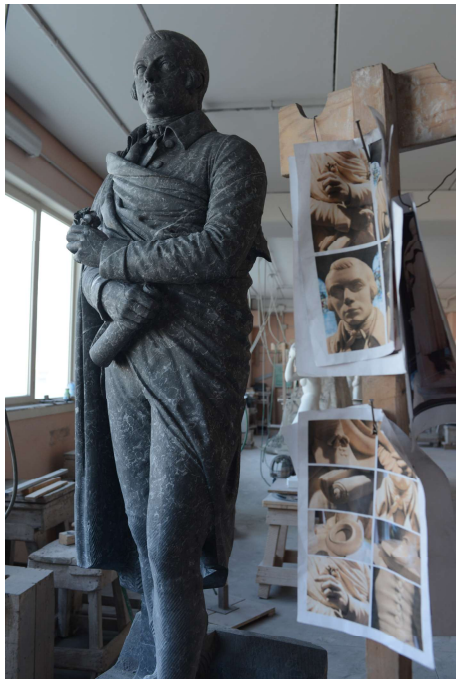

Figure 4. Douglas Gordon, making of Black Burns (2017).
© Studio lost but found/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019.
Photo: Studio lost but found/Franco Padel

The historical remaking present in both *Black Burns* and *guaiRE* is redolent of Yvonne Scott's (TRIARC's Director) reading of Jack B. Yeats' early works; 'combining a Modernist idiom with local and personal themes to create his own idiosyncratic imagery'.[24] Syncretic modernism, a combining of the universalism of modernism with idiosyncrasies of localised practice, is reminiscent of Mainie Jellett's fusion of religious sources with a European modernist approach, and such a fusion haunts works by Coleman, Gordon and Wilkes. To fix any of these artists as purely 'Irish' or 'Scottish' would be to mischaracterise the trans-nationalism of these artists' practice. At the same time, geographic mobility enables individuals to enhance or nuance what is otherwise a localised art practice. Such hybridity certainly features in contemporary Scottish art, with Tom Normand recently maintaining that

[24] Yvonne Scott, 'Introduction' in idem (ed.), *Jack B. Yeats - Old and New Departures* (Dublin, 2008), 9.

Scottish art's core condition of modernity recognises 'that hybrids of the global and the local were not simply a function of geography'.[25]

In more recent years, a new generation of Scottish and Irish artists have portrayed the unreliable economics, cultures of intolerance, and illusion and myths which are sometimes thought to flow over Scotland and Ireland. Representing Scotland in The Venice Biennale 2013,[26] the Dublin-born, Ulster and Glasgow educated Duncan Campbell, whose films *Bernadette* (2008) and *Make it new John* (2009) reprised key moments in the lives of Irish politician and activist Bernadette Devlin and the car producer John DeLorean respectively, utilising archival sources to 're-imagine the histories and legacies' which memorialise facets of national hubris.[27] In *Bernadette* he unfolds a portrait of a highly articulate but now marginalised Irish historic figure. Then at the centre of tense events, responding to these tensions with her satisfyingly precise powers of reasoning, Devlin appears in Campbell's film as a less retrospectively considered damaged figure and more as a galvanising presence. The 'unfolding' nature of *Bernadette* eschews documentary conventions but retains an archival patina, beginning with filmic scratches, scarred images and their sonic equivalent. In Campbell's similarly constructed DeLorean portrait *Make it new John*, the subject is noted for his great falsifications, and Campbell reruns modern Northern Irish history by conveying the film-star jet-set presence of DeLorean, later revealed as a product of Irish wishful thinking. This is further, imaginatively, enacted in the film's rueful conversation carried out between redundant DeLorean factory workers.

Campbell has developed a nuanced approach to documentary that takes the cultural archive as a starting point, and this approach is shared with the Scottish filmmaker Luke Fowler whose elliptical work *All Divided Selves* (2011) has as its subject R. D. Laing. Campbell and Fowler's films are as unbound objectively from their subjects as any such films in the 'documentary' idiom can be. Illusions here represent delusions. A precursor is found in the work

---

[25] Tom Normand, 'Re-thinking "Provincialism": Scotland's Visual Culture in the 1960s' in E. Bell and L. Gunn (eds), *The Scottish Sixties: Reading, Rebellion, Revolution?* (Amsterdam, 2013), 303.

[26] Duncan Campbell's representation in Scotland's Venice Biennale was noted in Scotland's Culture Minister Fiona Hyslop's in a speech in 2013, 'Past, Present and Future: Culture & Heritage in an Independent Scotland', stating 'the Scotland + Venice Exhibition at the Venice Biennale is represented by artists … not Scottish by birth but representing this nation by choice'.

[27] For his articulation see: http://www.afterall.org/online/artists.at.work.duncan.campbell.in.conversation.with.stuart.comer [Accessed 19 August 2018].

of Irish artist Gerard Byrne. Suspicious of national traditions and, above all, suspicious of images, Byrne's *Towards a Gestalt Image – Loch Ness & Fact* (2000 – ongoing) represents photographic pictorial conventions as highly subjective, enabling fiction or hoax. *Loch Ness & Fact* continues Byrne's earliest contact with Scotland through his participation in the 1991 pan-European exhibition *Windfall '91* in Glasgow, during which his photographic accounts of heroin-use along the nearby River Clyde via detritus and ephemera were collectively presented as unmarketable traces of social decline and economic recession in what was recently a European Capital of Culture.[28]

James Elkins' previously discussed essay further contended that 'art history has developed regional and national strains that are measurably different from one another.'[29] 'Measuring difference' is a methodology that is at variance with the nebulous realities found in the 'shared legacies' discussed in Cullen and Morrison (2005) and very much alive in the works of the artists discussed above. An outstanding exemplar in contemporary art of shared legacies following the Troubles, Roderick Buchanan's *Legacy* (2011) shows Scotland and Northern Ireland as interwoven cultures. Buchanan's video installation energises the effect of two Scottish flute bands, actively and normally separately involved in the cultural expression of British Loyalism and Irish Republicanism in Northern Ireland. Both bands are part of a living legacy that grew during and after the Troubles, when bandsmen from Northern Ireland would travel to support Scotland's parades and vice versa, enabling their shared ideals to develop as fraternal links between the shores. Buchanan documents practise rehearsals and the highly skilled public parades as customs. The edited film then represents Loyalism and Republicanism in alternating modes of performance, and he has it as one group receiving the other in an acquiescent and respectful silence. This had the effect of representing both flute bands as mutually understood and accepted expressions of community. More than any work, viewing this video evidences how the impact of Irish contemporary culture on the Scottish artistic community and vice-versa has been to emphasise cross-nation sharing, in a movement which sidesteps an increasingly unconvincing meta-narrative of British art.

---

[28] *Windfall '91* exhibition has since become narrated as one legacy of Glasgow's 1990 European Capital of Culture Festival. *Windfall '91* was an attempt by Glasgow-based artists to introduce Glasgow's artist-run structure to their European counterparts.

[29] Elkins, 'The State of Irish Art History', 57.

Future State

The contemporary artists discussed herein retain their distinct national identity while migrating for specific reasons or on a temporary basis, in seeking opportunities or financial support. The degrees to which they have assimilated is less important than the resulting levels of cultural exchange and transfer. They are, as Michael Longley writes in *Leaving Inishmore* (1966), 'folk on the move between shore and shore'. Longley's evocation of transience and threshold recalls an over-painting on a broadsheet newspaper entitled *Passive with the Idea* (2006).[30] Painted by Lisburn-born Tony Swain, who represented Scotland at the 2007 Venice Biennale following training at The Glasgow School of Art, the clouded seascape is of the coast as a point of arrival and resembles both the Irish and Scottish island peripheries.

Such pictured seascapes and landscapes provides spaces for psychological projection.[31] In the Ireland of 2011, while stories of banking insolvencies and depleted property values continued to fill newspaper columns, newly-built 'ghost estates' which littered the Irish landscape were photographed by Irish artist Anthony Haughey; unaffordable overbuilding and now a blight. But these unwanted homes did not lend themselves to a simple comparison with other historical examples resulting from forced migration, such as the wounding Scottish Highland expulsion known as The Clearances.[32] While the ghost estates in Anthony Haughey's photographs captivate as images of abandoned landscapes and resonate with war photography, this was a

---

[30] Swain's subtle work was exhibited in *Interlude* (*Aspects of Irish landscape painting)*, 2011. Dublin: The Douglas Hyde Gallery.

[31] Just as in Scottish art, the prominence of landscape and seascape painting in Irish art cannot be overstated. Paul Henry's modest *Landscape* (c. 1923) are of small stacks of bog turf under a cumulus sky. Henry's later works were met with critical mistrust, pandering to the growing market for his paintings. Yet his 1932 landscape is seemingly faithful to an otherwise incidental feature found on the brow of a slope, a homely detail. Less authentically, in Dublin's National Gallery of Ireland, the mood permeating the Anglo-Irish maritime painter Edwin Hayes' *An Emigrant Ship, Dublin Bay, Sunset* (1853) is easily reproached. The date follows Ireland's Great Famine, but the representation contains little abjuration of the known horrors. The painting is dated the year of Hayes' move from Dublin to London and represents a type of retreat from the facts. The pale light which falls on the ship's sails sets it in a pensive cast but there is no sense of urgent flight. The stance of the depicted passengers ferried to a ship, as if to embark upon the chance of a new future, is not one that conveys a reason for emigration; eviction, infection, starvation or other urgent causes.

[32] This expulsion of the Gaels during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from traditional land tenancies in the Scottish Highlands is known in Scottish Gaelic as 'Fuadach nan Gàidheal'.

rendering of how Ireland's 'traces of recent economic prosperity, cultural cosmopolitanism, and particularly property investment were now overlaid by the trauma of unemployment, negative equity and the death of a dream'.[33] By 2011, the 'ghost estates' were becoming an exhausted metaphor/metonym and Ireland's present-day economic collapse could not be simply merged with the grievances of the past. Haughey's chastening images were of self-inflected greed and this was an artist who looked towards the need to change failing economic structures.

What was Ireland becoming after the implosion of the Celtic Tiger model, battered by the events surrounding the banking collapse? This was a question which informed debates among Irish visual artists as the Republic regained its prepense state. *The Future State* examined the crisis through a study of visual culture. Originating in an academic and cultural conference at Goldsmiths, University of London (November 2012) this sought an ethical framework for a future Irish culture within changing global paradigms. The consequences of Ireland's economic collapse were discussed in other ways, particularly what it meant to be Irish at a time of a social un-seaming. Public feelings were surmised in late 2010 by Joseph O'Conner in his op-ed piece. 'The Irish are angry. We feel frightened, alone and unled' he wrote, and yet he marshalled a means out of the catastrophe; leadership from within the creative community:

> We have important things now that we will still have then: a generation of tough entrepreneurs; the work of our artists and writers; a beautiful landscape; a supportive diaspora; a painfully acquired insight into what happens when an entire society gets hypnotised by its own wishful thinking.[34]

Ireland's recent economic collapse was structural, and solutions continue to be found in international arrangements, predominantly through the European Union and with the United Kingdom. However, placing to the fore Ireland's cultural power, and in light of its newly-awakened sense of reality, has many advantages. Proposals have been published and ethical

---

[33] Cian O'Callaghan, 'Ghost Estates: Spaces and Spectres of Ireland after NAMA' in Caroline Crowley and Denis Linehan (eds), *Spacing Ireland: Place, Society and Culture in a Post-Boom Era* (Manchester, 2013), 23.

[34] Joseph O'Connor, 'The Irish are angry. We feel frightened, alone and unled', *The Guardian* (Friday 19th November, 2010), 44.

stances voiced, contributing to national cultural policies centred on the role and value of the artist. Artists are part of a living culture and require and receive state support.

Ireland's population continues to grow at a rate higher than most other European nations, from just under three million in the late 1960s to today's number, reaching five million.[35] 2016/17 saw a large population growth and this is increasingly urbanised. The population of the republic is currently less than Scotland but there are more people on the island once Northern Ireland is included. Just as Joseph O'Conner's holds up for praise 'the work of our artists', we also know the number of artists who live and work in Ireland.[36] Membership of specific artform organisations in Ireland and other sources have previously provided broadly indicative data, as detailed in the The Arts Council / An Comhairle Ealaíon and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's 2008 *Joint Research Project into the Living and Working Conditions of Artists in Ireland: Context Paper*. The Joint Research Project has measured a substantial increase in numbers of creative practitioners (visual artists and writers) in Ireland since 1979, from around 400 to nearly 2,000 by 2008. [37]

Statistical methods have more accurately deduced the number and Ireland has a national baseline. The final report *The Living and Working Conditions of Artists in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland* (2010) concurred with the Context Paper's methodology but updated the tabulated population of purely visual artists to 2,087. This figure is contextualised by the observation

---

[35] See http://www.cso.ie/en/ [Accessed 19 August 2018].

[36] The census classifications in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland do not cover all artforms and related occupational categories within the remit of the Arts Councils.

[37] Leigh-Doyle and Associates, *Joint Research Project into the Living and Working Conditions of Artists in Ireland – Context Paper* (7 March 2008), 2–3: *Size of the artist population in Ireland.* There is no official agreement on the size of the professional artist population in Ireland. Published census occupational classifications that include artists are too broad. The census classifications in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) or Northern Ireland (NI) do not cover all artforms and related occupational categories within the remit of the Arts Councils … In 1979 it was estimated that the ROI had a professional artist population of 1,451 (Arts Council / An Comhairle, 1979). This number was based on a range of Membership lists (e.g. Equity, Federation of Music) or names of Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon funded applicants (playwrights, painters, sculptors, authors). Over two-thirds (72 per cent) of this population was considered to be 'interpretive' artists (music and drama) and under one-third (28 per cent), approximately 400, was classified as 'creative' (painting, sculpture, literature) artists. If this latter group of 400 is comparable with the group claiming artists tax exemption in 2004 (1,970) it would suggest a substantial increase in the number of professional artists over the twenty-five years.

that Ireland's 'growth in artistic employment has outpaced growth in general employment in recent decades.'[38]

In an earlier audit with a focus on Scotland, commissioned to provide the Scottish Arts Council and others with accurate information about individual artists working across the country, Andrew Patrizio, Amanda Catto and Wendy Law found not so much a number but a professionalised sector. Over one third of artists responding to a questionnaire had postgraduate degrees and more than quarter were represented by galleries in the United Kingdom and abroad. However, the report also describes a somewhat perilous existence; the majority of respondents 'believe that their contribution to culture, society and the economy is not fully recognised.'[39] But basic data is lacking in a Scottish cultural context, even at a local level. Glasgow does not have adequate 'records of the artistic and creative outputs and achievements of the cultural sector in the City', wrote John Myerscough in his *Glasgow Cultural Statistics Digest* (2011).[40] A quantification and an economic context would contribute to the argument for enhancing the working conditions which support Scotland's professional artists. The problem posed by the unknown number of artistic practitioners in Scotland also means there is no agreement on the appropriate national level of support accorded to creative industries, including visual artists.

John Myerscough's earlier pioneering study, *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain* (1988) – a prelude to Glasgow's year as a European Capital of Culture – argued that artists have a role in emerging economics and narratives concerning overcoming decline. In recent years the Scottish Artists Union has campaigned against low paid work in the sector, and improvements in Scottish artists' working conditions have been actively politicised. This contextual approach has, in a piecemeal fashion, succeeded in Ireland. At the same time any forward-thinking plan should be authentically narrated, one which artists agree with, to avoid what Lucy Cotter has warned of in an Irish context, namely notions of a cultural 'industry' and treating audiences

---

[38] *The Living and Working Conditions of Artists in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland* (Republic of Ireland Version) (2010). Commissioned by The Arts Council (Ireland) / The Arts Council of Northern Ireland. Report prepared by Hibernian Consulting and Insight Statistical Consulting with Clare McAndrew, Cathie McKimm, 69.

[39] Andrew Patrizio, Amanda Catto and Wendy Law, *Making their Mark: An Audit of Visual Artists in Scotland – Summary Report* (Scottish Arts Council / Bonnar Keenlyside, 2003), 10.

[40] John Myerscough, *2011 Cultural Statistics Digest* (2011), 4. http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/policy-research/Documents/Glasgow%20Cultural%20Statistics.pdf [Accessed 19 August 2018].

as 'consumers'.[41] Indeed, the controversy surrounding the Creative Scotland funding arrangements in 2012 showed effectively how art communities can resist instrumental manipulation, even forcing new policy directions on Creative Scotland.

Artists' conditions in Scotland and Ireland includes poor levels of income. This necessitates a discussion of ethics and social justice, not just economics. President Michael D. Higgins, whose earlier cabinet position was Ireland's Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, made an important speech at the 2015 Aosdána General Assembly acknowledging the ongoing problem for Irish artist's 'precarious position in terms of the basics of life and participation'.[42] Higgins declared his 'view that the importance of cultural expenditure, facilitating as it does citizenship and participation in the public space and world, should be regarded as basic for the structure of society'[43] and 'a good and democratically structured cultural policy is an essential part of being human.'[44] Higgins examined this structure in contemporary Ireland, positing the idea that recent cuts to Irish arts funding were indicative of the arts' peripheral place in Irish society. He argued:

> It is essential to have a national cultural policy, and to have one that recognises the fundamental role of cultural access in citizenship while respecting the integrity and independence of the personal artistic inspiration. Any balanced discussion about public funding for the arts must derive from that principle, rejecting as a starting point any uninformed populism which sees the arts as a residual, as something we do when we can afford it.[45]

Higgins' demand for an essential national policy chimes with aspects of Joseph O'Connor marshalling of cultural resources, in support of Ireland's national renewal – 'Tough entrepreneurs',[46] a 'supportive diaspora' and working artists

[41] Lucy Cotter, 'Globalisation, Cultural Baggage and the Critical Direction of Irish Art Practice', online archive of Circa (2004), https://circaartmagazine.website/articles/globalisation-cultural-baggage-and-the-critical-direction-of-irish-art-practice/ [Accessed 11 February 2020]. .

[42] President Michael D. Higgins, 2015 Aosdána General Assembly, The Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, Dublin, 5 March, 2015. http://www.president.ie/en/media-library/speeches/speech-at-the-2015-aosdana-general-assembly [Accessed 19 August 2018].

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Barry O'Leary, Head of Ireland's Industrial Development Authority noted in 2011

as a group of specialists who hold important cultural capital – in a time of rapid global changes.[47] Evidence of Ireland's tough 'entrepreneurialism' are found in the stacked boxes of Megs Morley's self-initiated *Artist-led Archive – Sustainable Activism and the Embrace of Flux* (2006 – ongoing).[48] These include documents from seventy-six artist-led initiatives in Ireland (North and South), from the 1970s to the present day, and mark significant change in Ireland. The archive evidences independent approaches, and sometimes these small groups lead developments in Ireland's visual arts. Noreen Byrne, Bridget Carroll and Michael Ward's 2006 complementary study of seven Irish artist-run organisations, highlighted 'the valiant nature of these organisations' as well as their professional values in terms of gaining skills and gaining career footholds.[49]

Such self-improvements are often a result of benighted circumstances; positively modelling artistic-collectivism is often the only means to sustain a practice in unpropitious circumstances. Galway's 126 Gallery and others throughout Ireland have benefitted from the theorisation and popularisation of such artist-led models and 126 Gallery partly organised its constitution on Glasgow's artist-led Transmission Gallery. They have integrated with their better funded partners to enable infrastructural developments, for example Galway's annual TULCA Visual Arts Festival or Galway's county-wide bid as a European City of Culture in 2020. While such small organisations' innovativeness may await recognition many years ahead, they are nevertheless often 'where the real pulse of the visual arts lies.'[50] Their fundamental place in an arts ecology, despite very little residential market presence in terms of dealers and collectors, requires greater acknowledgement and higher levels of

---

that his international business travels as a form of national diplomacy and that Ireland could not find solutions to its current crisis through economic strategies alone. O'Leary later had to respond to claims that Ireland is a tax haven. See Henry McDonald, 'Reviving the Celtic Tiger: The Man who Sells Ireland to the World', *The Guardian*, 7 January, 2011, 29.

[47] For a related discussion in contemporary Irish visual arts see Kim Levin, 'Poetics, Politics and Irish Art: Thirteen Questions' *Irish Art Now – From the Poetic to the Political* (London, 1999). Levin raises the effects on creativity of diaspora in the post-industrial age. Dislocation, displacement, migration and diaspora, not welcome economically, nor a strategy for national sustainability, are nonetheless triggers to creativity.

[48] www.theartistledarchive.com. Currently housed in the National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL) in the National College of Art and Design (NCAD) Dublin.

[49] Olive McCarthy and Ian MacPherson (eds) *Review of International Co-operation*, 99 (2006), 34.

[50] Ibid., 34.

support. Meanwhile, the stacked boxes comprising Morley's Artist-led Archive is short on the individual sacrifice made by artists, and one can expand this out across the shared ecology of Scottish and Irish art, characterised by low wages, sporadic access to support and of uncertain career patterns.

Loughborough University