

ISLAND: NEW ART FROM IRELAND Press Release

Curated by Fiona Kearney. At Palazzina dei Giardini from 20th June to 15th September

This 20th June at 9pm the Palazzina dei Giardini in Modena will host the opening of the exhibition entitled 'Island. New Art from Ireland', curated by the director of the Lewis Glucksman Gallery of the University College Cork, Fiona Kearney, and financed with a contribution from Culture Ireland. The group show constitutes the second step in an international collaboration project which witnessed the arrival in Ireland of 80 photographs selected from the Galleria civica di Modena Photography Collection ("The Artist's Eye", on show until 7th July at the Glucksman). The exhibition features the work of five contemporary artists resident in Ireland, with some 20 works including photographs, paintings, drawings, sculptures, films, videos and installations, all produced post-2000, thus covering a crucial period for Ireland and for Europe, throughout which the exuberance and optimism for the new millennium led into global economic crisis.

The chosen artists – Dorothy Cross, Damien Flood, Mark Garry, Martin Healy and Niamh O'Malley – are called upon here to investigate the theme of the island, with particular reference to Ireland: a task which they go about by picking up on various aspects of island culture, and examining how it may grow and thrive once again in years to come.

The exhibition opens with 'Drift' (2013), a film by Mark Garry featured on this occasion as a world preview; the artist also presents two sculptures: 'Where oil meets water' and 'To say a psalm for now'. Niamh O'Malley is represented by two drawings, a video entitled "Island" (2010), and a sculpture created especially for the exhibition. Martin Healy contributes with shots of industrial archaeology, which the artist approaches as if his lens were aimed at dolmens and menhirs, "Fata Morgana" (2010), a neon work citing the coordinates of a non-existent island, invoking the notion of the mirage, and "The Last Man", a film shot in 2011. Dorothy Cross displays sculptures and photographs: "Udder Chair" a chair which reflects the traditional values of island culture, and "Poll na bPeist (Wormhole)" (2008), the photograph of a hole cut out from the stone near the coast which fills up like a natural swimming pool at high tide. Damien Flood investigates the theme of the island through a number of paintings: "Smoke Ring" (2012), "Dig" (2012), "Glass Mountain" (2013), "Sunflower" (2012), "Bench" (2010), "Cyclical Mountains" (2011), and "Dome" (2009). These works will converse with a painting by the famous 20th-century artist Paul Henry portraying rolling hills and traditional thatched cottages: a popular image of the Irish

landscape, yet at the same time a depiction of the harsh reality of everyday life in poor rural communities.

In the words of the curator, Ireland is quick to capture artists' imagination with its lush green meadows, its ever-changing skies and the beauty of its coastline. But this image is also marred by duller shades, the dark shadows cast across it by the many waves of invaders, and by the exodus of entire generations of emigrants. For many Irish artists, in these landscapes there is a rich thread of inspiration which cannot be unravelled without a certain degree of tension. It is through this tension that we may uncover the story of a genuinely insular culture.

The visual language is closely bound up with its own sense of place, yet without being disconnected from art in the more global sense. Dorothy Cross, Damien Flood, Mark Garry, Martin Healy and Niamh O'Malley are artists who celebrate the beauty of Ireland, yet who refuse to let it serve as a mere romantic frame of expression, for there is always a shadow cast across their work.

The exhibition, open from Thursdays to Sundays from 7pm to 11pm, closed on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, will remain open to the public until 15th September 2013, which is also the last day of the festival *filosofia* (Modena, 13–15th September). It will also be accompanied by a bilingual catalogue (English/Italian) documenting the works on show, along with texts by the curator, Fiona Kearney.