

Talks

After-images: On Ghost Story and other recent works

Wednesday 6 May, 6.30pm. Free.
Declan Long (Course Coordinator, MA Art in the Contemporary World, National College of Art and Design, Dublin).

The Grain of the Image:

A poetics of future history in some 'new' photographs by Willie Doherty

Wednesday 13 May, 6.30pm. Free.
Alison Rowley (Senior Lecturer in History and Theory of Art, School of Art and Design, University of Ulster).

Belfast Exposed: History and Place

Wednesday 20 May, 6.30pm. Free.
Pauline Hadaway (Director of Belfast Exposed).

Out of Position:

The video and installations of Willie Doherty

Friday 29 May, 6.30pm. Free.
Jean Fisher (Tutor, Royal College of Art, Professor of Fine Art and Transcultural Studies, Middlesex University).

Artist's Talk: Willie Doherty

Wednesday 17 June, 6.30pm. Free.
The artist in conversation with Fiona Bradley, Director of The Fruitmarket Gallery.

Willie Doherty and Seamus McGarvey

Thursday 18 June, 6.30pm. Free.
Venue: Filmhouse, Lothian Road
The artist in conversation with award-winning cinematographer, Seamus McGarvey (*Atonement*, *The Hours*), Doherty's collaborator on several of his films. *This event is part of the 2009 Edinburgh International Film Festival. For information or to book go to www.edfilmfest.org.uk*

Workshops

Film-Making Workshop

Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 May, 10am–4pm.
6 places for adults. Tickets £40/£30 concession.
Booking essential.
Film-maker Douglas Flockhart leads a practical workshop in which participants collectively shoot and edit a short film exploring themes from the current exhibition.

Youth Group Workshops

Free. Booking essential.
A series of one-hour workshops in which young people work in groups to discuss their response to the work, touching on issues of territory and sectarianism. Workshops are offered to youth groups in flexible evening slots. Contact Johnny Gailey at optinfoart@fruitmarket.co.uk

Tours

'Ways of Seeing' 60+ Gallery Tour

Thursday 14 May, 11.30–1.30pm. Free.
Refreshments provided. Booking essential.

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Willie Doherty Buried

Exhibition **25 April – 12 July 2009**

Mon–Sat 11am–6pm, Sun 12–5pm

Always free

Willie Doherty (b.1959) makes photographs and video installations rooted in the political landscape of his native Derry, Northern Ireland, where he continues to live and work. Doherty's practice is shaped by and responds to the specific context of Northern Ireland's long history as a contested land, but his work explores universal concerns: the capacity for any place to be contested, the way all places retain traces of past traumas, and the persistence of that past in individual and collective memory. **Buried** at The Fruitmarket Gallery is Doherty's first solo exhibition in Scotland.

The Fruitmarket Gallery

Market Street, Edinburgh
www.fruitmarket.co.uk

This exhibition brings together a double-screen video installation and two single-screen video installation – ***Ghost Story*** (2007), first shown at the Venice Biennale in 2007, and the newly commissioned ***Buried*** (2009), made especially for this exhibition and inspired by *Ghost Story* – alongside a selection of early and more recent cibachrome and black and white photographs.

Since the early 1980s, Doherty's subject has been the landscape of Northern Ireland, and specific sites of conflict in the context of the Troubles. Both *Ghost Story* and *Buried* were filmed in Derry, on or near the same disused railway line, now a footpath. The narrator in *Ghost Story* is haunted by his memories of Bloody Sunday, the incident in which 13 civil rights protesters were fatally shot by members of the British Parachute Regiment during a civil rights demonstration in Derry on 30 January 1972. By contrast, *Buried* incorporates archival audio sound from Bloody Sunday mixed in with ambient sound recorded during filming.

More obviously urban, the setting for the double-screen video installation ***Re-Run*** (2002) is the double-decker Craigavon Bridge which divides the Catholic and Protestant communities in Derry. Bridges are important elements in Doherty's work, as literal and metaphorical representations of union and separation, forms that are supposed to bring together different communities but actually further divide them. In ***Footbridge, The Westlink, Belfast*** (2008), the footbridge, with its scaffolding and barbed wire, looks more like a cage or prison than a passage.

Doherty's persistent interest in binary oppositions involves him setting them up only to dismantle them. In *Re-Run*, the actor desperately running back and forth across the bridge may be a perpetrator or a victim. Doherty's occasional use of actors anthropomorphosises these oppositions: the actor can represent both the individual and the group, and individual and collective subjectivity.

Likewise, oppositions are entangled in Doherty's landscapes. Vacant pathways and narrow roads can look like access routes or boundaries; a woodland clearing can appear simultaneously full of beauty and dread. Uninhabited landscapes elicit fears of isolation, entrapment, or of the unknown, anxiety and suspicion. A close-up shot of an eye or of a figure standing in the shadows can represent both suspect and victim, empowered and disempowered.

Traces of human activity and memories of traumatic events haunt Doherty's work. Doherty returns to the same locations, structures and subjects: sites in Derry and Belfast, roads and alleyways, waste ground, detritus, ruins of actions. In Doherty's video installations, techniques and narrative structures also incorporate repetition in the retracing of steps or repeating of events. Searching shots of vacant sites, together with the blurring of real, imagined and remembered events and environments encourage closer looking. The perpetual loops of *Re-Run*, *Ghost Story* and *Buried* lead to an endless quest for complete resolution, but also offer an expanded vision that comes with repeated viewing.

Doherty presents his videos as installations, in soundproofed spaces that immerse the viewer in the work. He uses techniques and elements from the genres of mainstream and documentary film-making to produce an experience that seems simultaneously real and fictional. The relationship between Doherty's images, words and sound – in the titles, as a voice, or as ambient sound – is critical to this experience. The narrator in *Ghost Story* brings to life the ground he walks on through the memories he recounts. In *Buried*, Doherty slows down and muffles the archival audio material, burying it into the background.

As an artist whose practice developed inside Northern Ireland during the Troubles, Doherty has always explored problems of representation and perception. As the journalist Susan McKay conveys in her book *Bear in Mind These Dead* (2008), for the witnesses and survivors of incidents such as Bloody Sunday, and more recently the Omagh bombing in 1998, media images and reports frequently failed to represent the full complexity of events and situations. Reportage was often badly researched, inaccurate and uncritical, incomplete without the necessary number of perspectives.

By contrast, Doherty's works are not simple or one-sided, even when the subject is a single actor or there is a first-person narrative voice-over. They explore the ongoing problems of postcolonialism embedded in 'post-conflict' Northern Ireland, where vision and the visual automatically reference issues of territoriality and surveillance, opening

up potential meanings rather than purporting to represent the whole truth, or one side rather than another.

Literal visual representations of any conflict often fail to adequately address or express past events or present situations. As McKay notes in her book, memorials to those killed in the Troubles are themselves contested and problematic, because they attempt to draw a line under conflict, but continue to signify it. Doherty's focus on place, on the landscape which can no longer contain its histories and memories, avoids simple resolutions, acknowledging instead that long histories never die. In Doherty's work, the past is buried but ever present.

A new publication featuring video stills from *Ghost Story* and *Buried*, a new essay by Fiona Bradley, and words by Willie Doherty, accompanies the exhibition and is available from the Gallery bookshop.

A limited-edition print, featuring a still from the new work *Buried*, has been editioned by the artist on the occasion of this exhibition. The prints, in an edition of 50, are signed by the artist and are available from the bookshop price £100 unframed, £175 framed.