

Art Forum
Clarke & McDevitt Present, Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane
August 2006

Dublin

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15 APRIL - 19 JUNE

'Almost all' the work in this group show was created in the week leading up to the exhibition explain the event's artist-curators, Clarke & McDevitt, from the repose of their collapsing brand name. The pair, who are busy exploring the notion of curator-as-artist, were also behind the *Play it as it Lays* show of LA art, so it should not come as a shock that the work here is in a scrupulously chilled out vein.

This time the work is by a group of European artists well capable of creating confusion as to whether they are being diligently laid-back, or whether endemic relaxation has simply let the work get away from them. Short timelines seem to push the artists - if they needed a push - towards low-cost materials and the literal/metaphorical bricolage that accompanies their use. But given the importance of process here, it is not at all certain that the work would interest itself much more in presentational polish had the time available been infinite.

Sophie von Hellermann has contributed some paintings on a scale that might suit an exhibition of nineteenth-century academic art, but created in a style (sketchy, preparatory-looking) that empha-

sizes their intimate, autobiographical subjects. Cornelius Quabeck adopts a similar tone for his large canvases featuring Cork-born guitar hero, Rory Gallagher, rendered with a tie-dyed halo, which again seems to centre on adolescent experience, as well as on an uncomfortable moment when religion re-emerges in the form of rock hagiography.

Quietly wandering into deep waters is Ian Kiaer, who has chosen some pleasant pictures from the Hugh Lane collection to hang in his space along with a few objects of his own. But from the evidence of the couple of desultory sheets of grey-green acoustic baffling material, abandoned on the floor in one corner of the room, it is hard not to imagine that the show somehow got away from him.

Björn Dahlem has been most successful in laying down a trace of the hours he spent in the gallery with his installation, *Hyper-psyche*, which features two large, skeletal wooden constructions (using the gallery's fitted benches as a plinth) around which orbit a haze of satellite works forging an unexpected link between hobbyist and astronaut.

Matt Calderwood's *Screen* wins the competition - there is a

competition going on here, right? - for most bang per euro. Creating something that adroitly engages with the gallery's architecture by all but ignoring it, Calderwood's conceptual capital is healthy enough to overcome the minimal means of an empty room and a large projection.

On entering, visitors see only a glowing white projection filling one wall. Take a little time and two scratchy forms appear to disturb the pure field, nibbling dark shapes into the white. The sound of an engine also registers, unsurprisingly as we soon see that a tractor with a fork-lift attached has made the holes and is now proceeding to lift the white wall away, leaving behind another sort of field, a huge video image of a bucolic country vista.

While the others may be picking away at the gallery and its claustrophobic classical stylings and baggage - one thing *Clarke & McDevitt Present* certainly reinforces is quite how much assistance an artist can receive from a naked white cube of the sort that is pointedly not on offer here - it is Calderwood's demolition of the space that finally seems to succeed in offering a realistic challenge, all the more so since it is a demolition that leaves the building intact. LC