



Overlook

Eamon O'Kane



THE SIGN

inevitably attracts attention to itself as it attracts attention to the sight. But it is also what comes to fill a deficiency intrinsic to the sight. For without the marker, the sight cannot attract attention to itself, cannot be seen, and therefore cannot be a sight...as each marker stands for the other, indecisibly replacing it and adding to it. A chain of complementarity is established in the inevitable proliferation of markers.

Overlook

Eamon O'Kane

Selected lense based works 2000-2004

Orchard Gallery, Derry

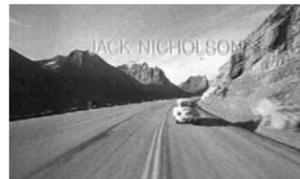
Triskel Arts Centre, Cork

Galerie Schuster + Scheuermann, Berlin

Overlook
DVD projection, 3 mins
2002-2003



Overlook



As Berlioz's menacing *Symphonie Fantastique* plays out over the opening sequence of *The Shining* (1980), director Stanley Kubrick pursues his subject (the writer Jack Torrance and his family) towards their mountain retreat. Despite the spectacular Montana scenery, surf filmmaker Greg MacGillivray denies the spectator a sublime or omnipotent viewpoint, choosing instead to sweep behind, up and over Torrance's car as it makes its way along the mountain road and towards their fateful destination – The Overlook Hotel. Isolated at the foot of the mountain, the hotel appears both imposing and imposed upon. It is of course central to Stephen King's original novel – a brooding presence which seems to detach the writer from civilisation, engulf him in its empty, labyrinthine interior, and ultimately leads him to his death. The establishing shots of Kubrick's film serve then to introduce the film's nemesis and to place us firmly within its grip and he draws upon the rich literary associations of the 'house in the woods', to create a sense of the uncanny from the start.

It is this conjunction of isolated beauty and impending danger that lies at the heart of the work of Eamon O'Kane. His tribute to The Overlook is most clearly embodied in *Monday Through Sunday*, a looped video sequence of still images of the exterior of the hotel from the film, inter-cut with the names of days of the week. Echoing *The Shining's* screen titles (which progress from months to days to hours as Jack nears his catastrophic descent into psychosis), here the days are rolled out week-by-week-by-week, the days and nights marked by exterior shots of the hotel one-after-the-other-after-the-other. The sequence mimics Kubrick's device of repetition: from Jack's denouement (the revealing that his 'novel' is simply

an endless duplication of the phrase "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy") and the circuitous route around the hotel, filmed using Kubrick's notorious steadicam – through identical corridors and doors and lifts and finally around and around the hotel's frozen maze.

Monday Through Sunday is not simply a compliment to Kubrick, however, but rather an embodiment of the dichotomies which run throughout O'Kane's entire practice: the utopia and dystopia of the rural retreat; the distant view which resists closer inspection; civilisation and its antithesis; artifice and the natural order. O'Kane employs a diverse range of media, playing one material or technique off against another to explore the full potential of these concerns.

The mental and physical process of disorientation, the oscillation between subject and object and the implication of death, surge vividly through O'Kane's recent videos for example. These works seem located somewhere beyond sleep, between fiction and reality. They encourage viewer, physical context and represented space to draw near to one another and move apart. Their subject is estrangement, unease – the Uncanny.

The Uncanny or unheimlich, according to Freud's definition of 1919, is invoked through the recognition that something is missing, something familiar that has suddenly become de-familiarised, as if in a dream. This nightmarish quality is heightened in O'Kane's video work through the propensity of the double. For example, in *Overlook* (filmed whilst O'Kane was on residency in Tilburg, Holland), he records a mundane journey from entrance to apart-

ment via an antiquated lift. By mirroring the image, not once but twice, O'Kane disorients us, so that the image literally folds back into itself and we are thrown from one point of entrance to another.

"The building I was staying in," O'Kane recalls, "was occupied mainly by elderly people who seemed trapped within the building and were confined to going up and down in the lift either to the common room, laundry room or to get rid of rubbish". O'Kane's evocative accompanying soundtrack of jangling keys, doors sliding opening and banging shut and laundry turning around-and-around is also heard to fold back into itself, so that this sense of confinement is heightened by reoccurring sounds heard backwards and forwards. The viewer is faced with a barrage of multiple entries and exits and the confusion engendered by the multiplicity of partial views seems to suggest a potential occupant's/prisoner's psychological condition.

Architectural historian Anthony Vidler has described such an effect in relation to the architectural uncanny, comparing it to the condition of schizophrenia. Here he suggests, in response to the question "where are you?", the schizophrenic response would be, "I know where I am, but I do not feel as though I'm at the spot where I find myself." The absence of 'anchors' in O'Kane's work (whether human figures or legible exit points) thus induces a condition similar to that of schizophrenia or spatial phobia.

Certainly O'Kane's exploration of the panorama through works such as *Panorama Spectator* and *Panorama Interface* explore this further through the formal possibilities/impossibilities of the two-

dimensional representation of the viewer in three-dimensional space. Again, we don't exactly feel as though we are at the spot where we find ourselves. It seems especially in his exploration of the Bourbaki Panorama (a 19th century panoramic painting housed in Lucerne), O'Kane is less intrigued by the formal accomplishment of the painting and more by the experience of the visitors in relation to the painting in its own museum. In turn, by layering the images and creating a cacophony of sound, he denies an omnipotent viewpoint. Here O'Kane is pointing to the artifice or illusion of representation. Just as the interiors of The Overlook Hotel was constructed at Elstree Studios in England, the establishing shots filmed in Montana and the exterior shots filmed in Oregon, so the panorama of Bourbaki and O'Kane's representation of the panorama are constructed fictions.

Whilst these works certainly indicate O'Kane's sheer enjoyment of the formal acrobatics of stereoscopic filming and digital manipulation, and link his practice most closely with the cinematographic accomplishment of *The Shining*, it is perhaps his work made in Co. Donegal that reveals the true nature of O'Kane's persistent interest in Overlook.

The House in the Trees and *Plantation* document his family home, a 17th century plantation house owned by an officer in the English army. Just as the 'Overlook' in the hotel name might be read metaphorically as referring to the 'overlooking' of the site's guilty past (it was built over an Indian burial ground), so the O'Kane house is cast as a place of mystery, of possible fear and confrontation through the figure of the soldier, the frantic movement through the wood and the mirroring of the exterior of the building.

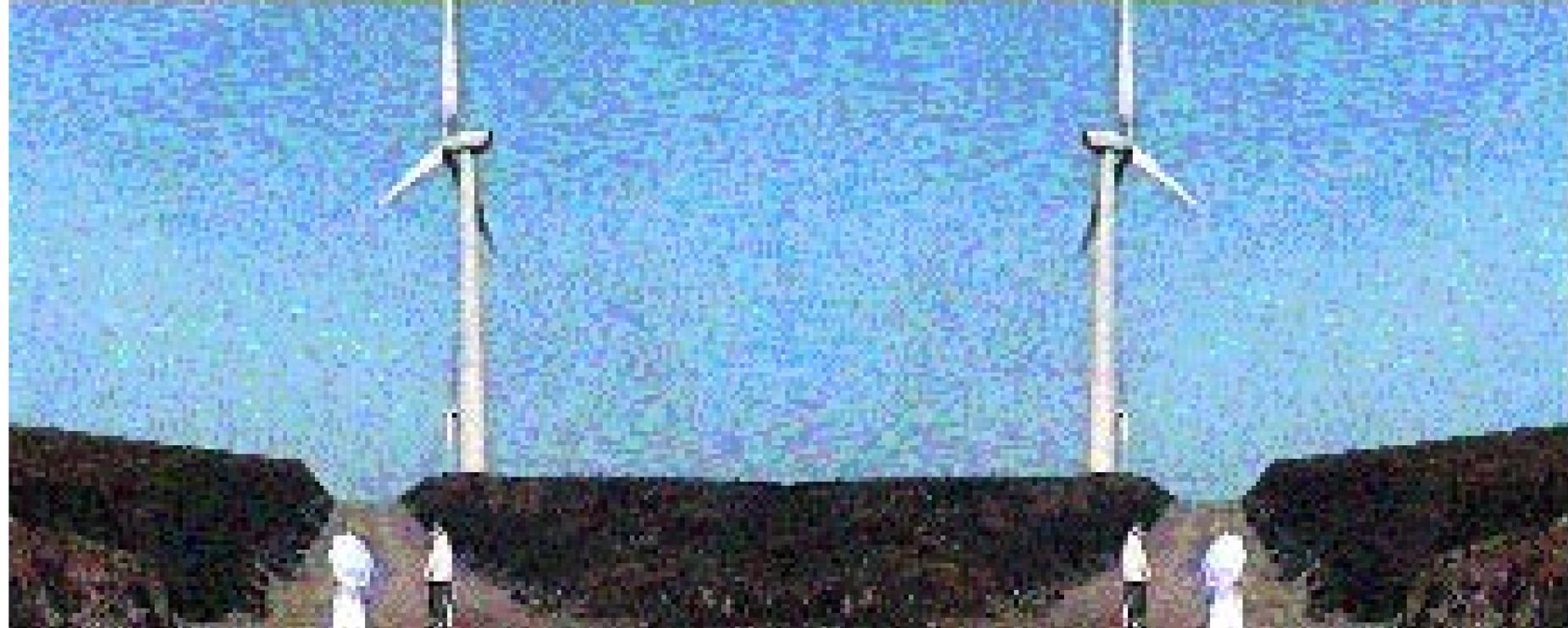


Facing page:
Stills from *The Shining* by Stanley Kubrick

This page:
Stills from *Overlook* 2003

Detail from Jeff Wall's *Restoration*, transparency in lightbox, 1993

The House In The Trees
DVD projection, 25 mins
1994-2003





O’Kane recognises the forest or wood as a space which has been historically formulated as a place of mystery, outside culture, and thus, a figment of our imagination. Cultural theorists have long recognised the forest as a potent metaphor for the antithesis of civilisation. In Grimm’s Fairy Tales, it is the forbidden territory. In Marx, it is the politically contested boundary between the lords and the common Volk. As A.S. Byatt recently suggested, “The fairy tale journey into the woods is a movement inward, into the lands of the soul. The dark path of the fairy tale forest lies in the shadows of our imagination, the depths of our unconscious. To travel to the wood, to face its dangers, is to emerge transformed by this experience... Italo Calvino has made the inevitable connection between storytelling and the forest... “He sees a light in the distance, he walks and walks; the fable unwinds from sentence to sentence, and where is it leading?”

O’Kane’s series of large-scale oil paintings *Studio in the Woods* oscillate between this fiction and reality. The architectural visions of Wright, Alvar Aalto and Elam & Bray are glimpsed through the trees, the buildings’ lights flickering in the dim distance. Most recognizable is Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater, an iconic American retreat, built in 1936 for Pittsburgh department store magnate, Edgar Kaufman Sr. Owned and now by Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (a US state-run version of the National Trust). The house is of course now dominated by tourists. In O’Kane’s vision, however, these real and invented buildings are devoid of occupants. His soft brushwork, the unnatural skies and picture-postcard framing serve to heighten the sense of the buildings as models or stage-sets, devoid of inhabitants and set outside society. Since the founding of artists’ colonies in the

19th Century such as Barbizon in the Forest of Fontainebleau, the notion of Villegiature (literally meaning ‘deprived of the city’) has impelled artists and writers to seek out the rural idyll as a site of creativity. Worpswede can be understood as a sequel to Barbizon, as can the Academy Schloss Solitude: a Baroque castle which houses an academy on the edge of the Leonberg Forest. The association of rural isolation with creativity has persisted today with models such as the established Banff creative residencies in the Rocky Mountains and even the conversion of the Taransay pods from the BBC *Castaway* TV series into an artist retreat park.

Seen alongside his unnerving, video compositions and digital invocations of the uncanny, however, O’Kane’s paintings of the ‘ideal studios’ seem to resist the romanticism of the rural residency movement or artists’ colony. The forms of the architecture cut across the trees and vegetation suggesting an unwelcome and unyielding intervention. They recall that first glimpse of The Overlook Hotel: the brooding presence of an exterior, emptied of its human occupants.

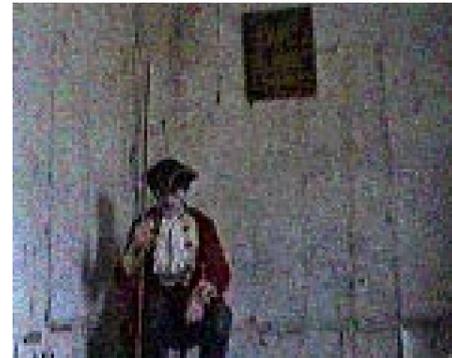
As an accumulation of modernist propositions or hallucinations, the paintings (like O’Kane’s manic sequence of *Monday Through Sunday*) suggest the tension that underlies Jack Torrance’s own psychosis in *The Shining*. They reside at the uneasy encounter between artifice and nature. Far from being the ‘ideal studio’, such places are isolated from the social environment, suggesting a stymied creativity - the ultimate gothic nightmare of the unremitting writer’s block.

Claire Doherty, Bristol 2004



Facing page: Ideal Studio series

This page: Installation Views
Galerie Schuster + Scheuermann,
Berlin 2004
‘Studio in the woods XI’ oil on canvas,
244 X 244cm 2003



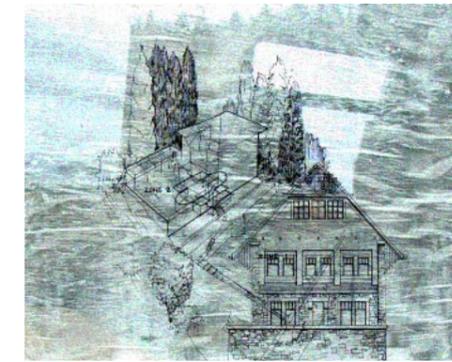
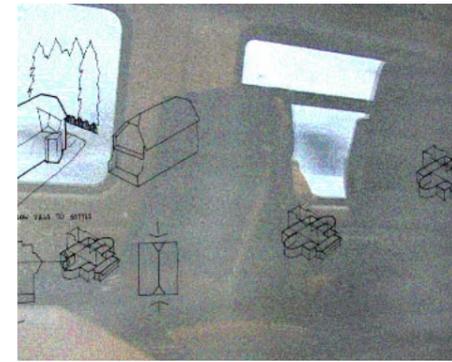
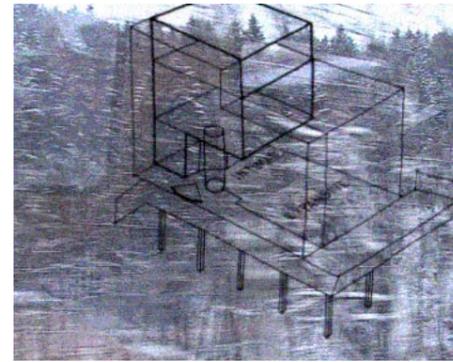
The House In The Trees
DVD projection, 25 mins
1994-2003



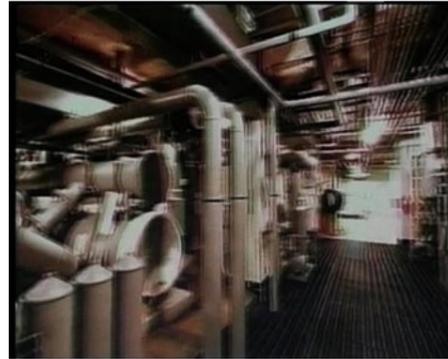
Panorama Spectator
4 DVD projection installation, 14 mins
2004



Monday Through Sunday
DVD monitor installation, 4 mins
2004



Intimate Expansive
DVD projection, 4 mins
2004



BUNKER: Biological, Under, Nuclear, Knowledge, Enemies, Rumour
DVD projection, 3 mins
2000



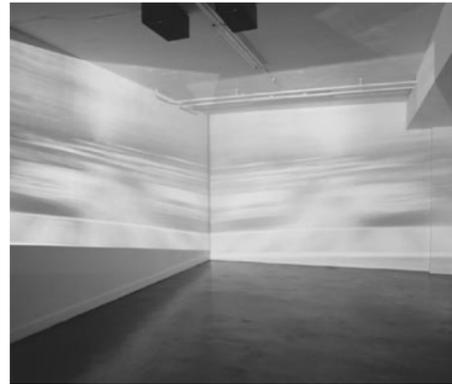
Avatars
DVD projection, 20 mins
2003

'I have a fantasy about an ideal vacation in which I can stay at home and be kept asleep with drugs for about two weeks.'

Travel Survey, 43 year old woman

STAY: *Simply To Authenticate Yourself*
Photograph, DVD projection, 3 mins
2000





Tourist Interface
Installation views, Orchard Gallery, Derry
2000

Eamon O'Kane's *Tourist Interface* looks set up as an examination of surroundings- both his own negotiation of particular surroundings, (a whistle-stop tour of fourteen states of America), and a supply of visual information relating to his journey which implicates viewers into a similar relationship with what is presented. *Tourist Interface* is certainly a lot to look at. The images are heaped up like ham and eggs, pancakes and syrup, free refills of coffee. O'Kane, having presented himself with America, presents us with series of photographic visuals culled from an enormous source of images taken there. His itinerary is planned, and therefore his surroundings at any minute are expected to be new, but then unfurl themselves in their particularity as constant stimulants. This is pretty much what we meet too. Encapsulated within someone else's voyage, some carefully selected particulars dislodge themselves from the generality of their framing and allow us to examine how they exemplify the difficulties of adequately representing an experience.

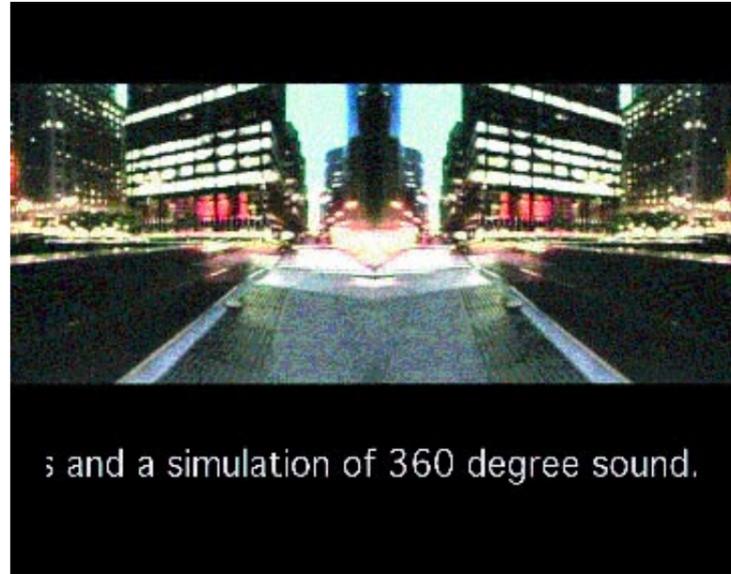
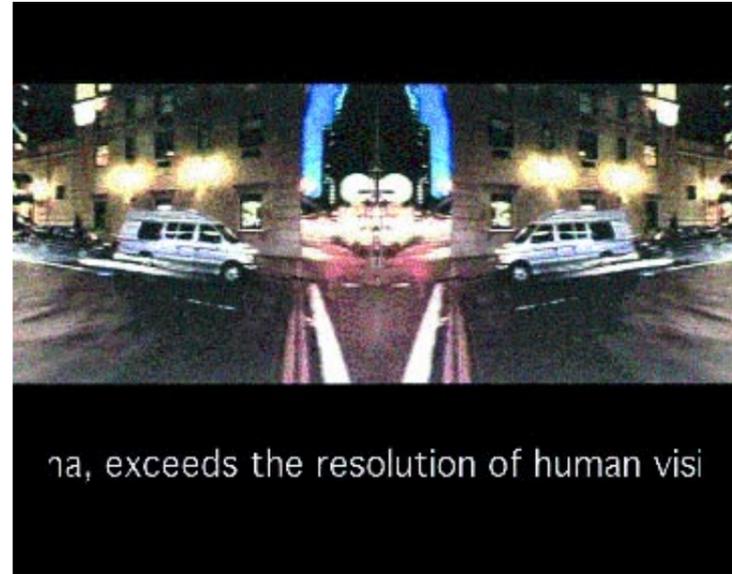
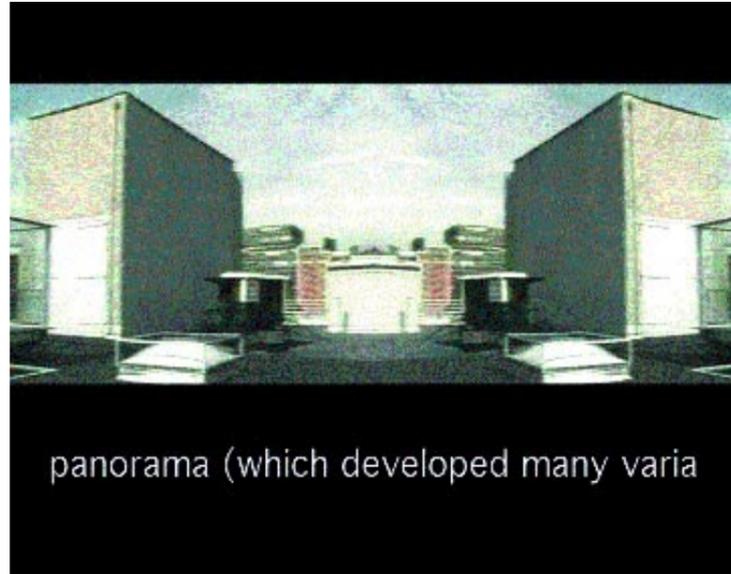
Our own version of the reality which surrounds us everyday is fictional- taking sensory processing as representation, as being fundamentally of a different order from what prompts it, then our idea of reality is based on this first operation. Which is always going to give an indication of surrounding as codified. Any notation of experienced reality is precisely that- notation, like a score in music, a symbolic shorthand allowing the reconstruction of an original, but no more than what the information is capable of. It is the exercise of the score which prompts additional impulses in whoever hears it. Complete in itself, the reconstructive information can be arranged to skim the gaps, approximating or offering standard navigational points or markers, across areas which it cannot describe. In this case, unable to fully reconstruct the

whole passed experience of journeying in America, O'Kane indicates a score of general surroundings and particular perceptions, precisely within the symbolism of a representation as seemingly straightforward as photography. In reporting the experience of reality, of which the American trip is a forced example, this light-capturing lens-based photography is deployed in several different modes of formal organisation. There are large colour prints, carousels of projected slides, back-lit transparencies, video panorama, and images shrunken into the massive memory of cd roms.

The series of large prints is titled *After Kafka's America*. The reader of this unfinished tale, of the American debuts of its immigrant protagonist Karl Rossman, is immersed in descriptions of surrounding of which more always seems to be just over the horizon than present. Perhaps this is somewhat more representative of the author, in that Kafka had never visited America, and his description of place and objects, and likely or unlikely situations seems to be wholly worked up from brochures, tales, and illustrations of the New World that made their way back to Europe; the authority of the piece comes from a writer with no first hand experience or truth of the place described, but a skill in making it fictionally tight, and sending young Rossman there in his place. Kafka uses the character's mannered naiveté as a way of identifying surprise and suspicion of the arbitrary surroundings: this writer's typical territory is the impingement of situations upon the membranes of an identity, and the struggles to maintain that identity in the face of these effects, usually leading to a crisis.

O'Kane's young man in tourist interface with real situations is examined as being both the description and the inner workings, the voracity of the eye and the constructiveness of the author. Fleshing out the

Tourist Interface



Panorama Interface
DVD projection, 11 mins
2000-2003

young man and his experience with the back-stored capability of making the whole thing fully significant in a comfortable and familiar medium is at the core of O'Kane's project and results, and the work makes us aware of our need to be the in-experienced authors of our own stories about O'Kane as our adventuring stand-in. If we are not party to the original situation, can the potential fixedness of the presented fragments, an experience with supposedly less variables, elicit a directed or steered response?

This photographic series initiates an awareness of the distinctive complexity with which this project is characterised. Their every reading is complicated in a series of relationships which set the artist against the nominal tourist, the special against the mundane, the artist's mundane against the tourist's special. At first glance, what settles these pictures into place as different to traveler's snapshots is the lack of a confrontational human presence as the focus of the frame. The typical tourist photograph usually positions a person significant to the photographer in front of the 'site' or 'sight'. The meaning of the instant is person surrounded by place. Resultant photographs don't so much show the natural beauty of say, Yellowstone, but, our Doreen in the wonderfully beautiful but slightly obscured Yellowstone: obscured by presence. As if to make this change in meaning apparent, the type of place usually chosen by O'Kane is not exactly 'photo-opportunity'. Payphone with a concentration of cigarette butts, leaning out from the picture plane to disturbing effect. Quoting the words 'contemporary art', from a hyper-reflective museum sign. The grand admonishment to STAY, a poppy legacy from the sixties, just an advert for itself, and just as clearly, an address to the individual. What order of things are stood in for Doreen, as it were? Signs, brandnames, free newspaper stands- a subject always creeps its

way into these selected prints- even if it ends up as the clouds over the Canyon. As there's nothing much else there, of *differentiation*, that must be what the photograph is *of*. We make it subject because we perhaps want a figure and ground, a perceptual taking of stance. If we are not getting the tourist eye, then are we looking for the artist's eye, to frame and reveal something special? It is not clear if O'Kane courts this meaning. However, it must be said that if you've just got a hammer, pretty soon everything begins to look like a nail. Are these images differentiated sufficiently as examples of something to warrant printing them up to exhibition size? Is there any thread to the images? Possible links include the focus on structured visibilities that make themselves prominent, as does the emphasis on surroundings- gas-tanks functioning as supports for massively painted Pepsi ads; the airy tunnel of a wire-covered walkway, the wire surrounding with an insistence and a patterned repetitiveness that has no truck with a natural versus artificial dialog, but is just a succinct method of signifying enclosure. Given its formal tunnel-like shape, it implies progression forwards and also that vision may pass through it but the body cannot. This also implies that O'Kane, at any point on his journey, is located not only in space but in a duration of time, suspended there by the logic of carrying through the itinerary. Suddenly STAY makes more sense.

Then viewpoint and scale are manipulated to produce a confusing shot of the SKY sign, which makes the whole side of a building read as something attached to a lamppost. Immediately this illusion is steadied, you realise that its occurrence was due to a combination of viewpoint and the single-lens compression of space- a particular which the viewing eye is quick to corroborate. The flatness of these images carries its own warning- scale and space may be distorted, or



the inspirational impulse to make a photograph may not translate so well when printed. It is the possibility of such loss of verisimilitude to the original, or failure to embody any of that reality that hints at the range of idea which *Tourist Interface* is dealing- images of expectation translated into concrete examples of how it is a failure, as well as being a valuable lesson. If these images are not modes of transport, then what else is there about them? They are failures only if we believe in some kind of approachable reconstruction, some way in, some virtuality. As they are, with fantasy pragmatically exposed, they are more real than anything.

There's a painted sign for water, attached to a pole in what looks like a desert truckstop. This would probably be snapped by anyone coming across it- a contextual irony everyone would enjoy- irresistible and pure pop because of that. A little irony for the future, a little amusement, but also something that would prioritise the picture-taker as recognising the combination of things that makes it slightly out of the ordinary. So O'Kane admits that this image is a container of some slight amusement, i.e., it would have a function which is transparent to all. But not everybody would take a photo of a convex security mirror at some bus station with themselves reflected in it, or a phone leaning towards us- the inevitable connection with our self-conscious subject, reporting back to the homeland or the parents, or simply making itineraries work.

The differing visual approaches, print, projection, lightbox, video, all identify presence in other ways. The artists' eye, as it frames the subject, is visually acute, educated; impossible to eradicate its trace in the images. Then the presence is implied, the eye, the why, the person behind the camera, the chooser

and presenter. The image is caught between standard guidebook definition and a 'work of art'. A tourist making a guide book. And the images are held somewhere between an artist's project and a person as a tourist- responsibility to the project and to the self as slightly confused.

Take the many cityscapes, usual photo-opportunities from tall buildings. These are stores of visual information to pore over later, while the itinerary hurries on, like the slide projector. The height of the vantage point is noteworthy- somehow definitively American. There are a lot of skyscrapers. Like the photographer, they are a great vantage point to see out from, but equally, and most deliberately, signifiers of presence, in that everything visible from them is also a position from where they are visible. They are presence epitomised, whatever way you read it along the straight lines that light travels.

But we are aware of America through mediation- something of its very nature has in one form or another become part of ourselves. We might still cling to our ideas of local beauty of the corner of the world we come from- but the American landscape is similarly packaged- Vermont, the deserts and monument Valley, the LA mountains, the flatlands of Nebraska, the swamps of Louisiana, and the small island of Manhattan. It is surprising how much information from these dripping mediations is stored in our heads, and how impossible to trace are the paths by which we can reason out a possible location from O'Kane's images, from the look of a city, its river and bridges, its weather. Or where we put the photographer from the aridity of what is a desert, or a national park, the Half-Dome rock of Yosemite still there in colour as familiar from black and white prints by Ansel Adams. There are the slides, projected from two different





projectors, one shows only vertical format, one only horizontal. Any old slides, repeating a familiar slide-show coda to the meaning of holiday? Some, if studied closely, reveal a grain which is not as wet and gelid as others- a grain which is made of printer's rosettes of cyan, magenta, yellow and black. These slides are photographs taken of images in books, the sort of books, usually also without people, which are a compendium of Christmas-gifty glosses to the American landscape. O'Kane's copied photos tend to be mainly of natural scenes, which gives them a petrified and airless sense, while the urban scenes actually photographed by him are wetter, more alive, from the world. So *Tourist Interface* photographs these things he hasn't seen, places he hasn't been. But might have been, what's the difference? If we're solely looking for authenticity, then it implies that our relationship to his experience negotiated through first-hand photos is somehow predetermined, and liable to disappointment when the play of images is doubled. It is as if the personal stake we have endowed O'Kane with has been compromised- we were following him, an assumed known quantity, through the journey. Now here we are, spun off from that intimacy by artificiality, as we realise he is not specifically in need of such attention, but an attention that will bear with him through each version of complicating representation. To look at our own expectations, and what the representations had already made us think. The voices of O'Kane and his girlfriend Anja reading their journey diaries seem endearingly naïve: almost as if something is hidden- something like a real response, beyond the probably totally accurate humdrumming of the diary: a counterpart to what is seen, as if the voice, writing to itself and to its own memory, is silenced by the experience, and that the *went here...did this...* is just a metonymic skeleton for the experience, sounding basically exhausted. When

linked, non-synchronised, with the slide projections, the piece assumes the familiarity of an end -of -holiday gathering, the telling of a story. But as it is from a diary, it presents as voice writing the mnemonics of an episode to itself, allowing itself to fly off on wings of memory at the mere reading of these words. Of course, this is a key to the project's dialog on representation- the original totality is denied to us, as it is to O'Kane, and the different diary accounts do not consolidate it too much, but introduce different responses even from the same original. All we have are images and arrangement, all he has are images, words, and memories. Neither of us have the full story present, but we have indications of it, and memory, like perception, is shown as a representation of something now historical, or passed.

To some extent, the trace of the biographical, with us this far, has set the standard by which we view these, and that biographical is revealed as necessarily complicated enough to become its own subject, suspicious even, and redefining a more familiar territory- how the complications of experience and experience transcribed and what it does to remembering is a completely fluid systematic, and how the notation results that an artist is also circumscribed by his or her own territory and history, their work *a priori* contextualised by something pre-existent. O'Kane alludes to this position by being careful to list, in his diary, artworks he sees in museums, of which he takes no photos- that for all their universal reproducibility, it takes physical work to go and see them, and they have a geographical location. This then feeds into the slides- once this kind of interest is admitted by O'Kane, every American flag seen in the corner of some slide becomes a quotation of Jasper Johns, etc. The choice of format is clarified, by the expedient of

'The word panorama was first coined in London in 1792, nine years after the Montgolfier Brothers' first flight in a hot air balloon.'

Shelley Rice

'This display technology projects images directly onto the human retina, exceeds the resolution of human vision, and is widely used regardless of visual impairment.'

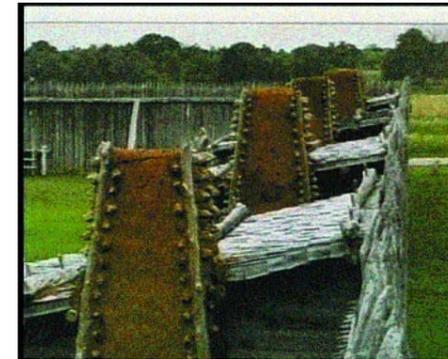
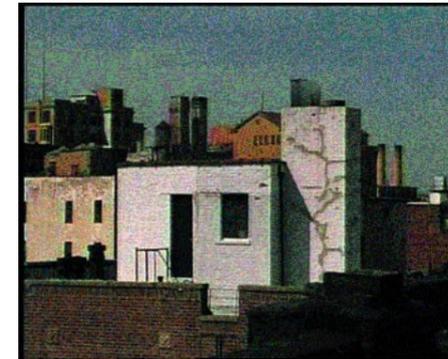
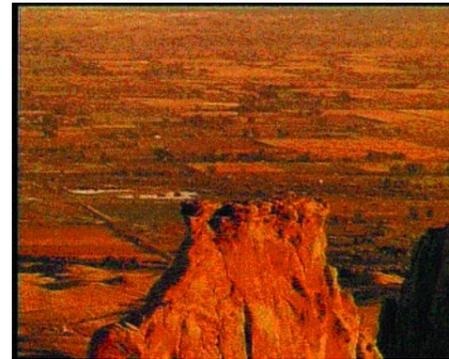
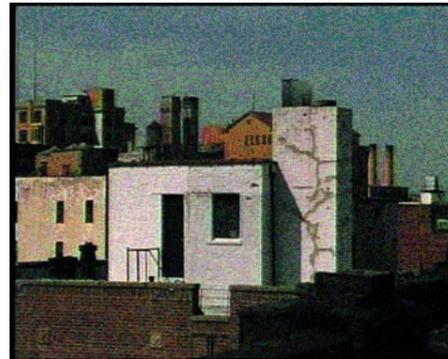
Ray Kurzweil

'In a rich VRE, single or multiple users are immersed in an environment comprised of data and can interact and operate in real time with the aid of a dataglove, full body suit, 3D eyephones and a simulation of 360 degree sound.'

Luciano Floridi

'...an experimental response to a deeply felt need, a need for a medium that could surround the spectators and plunge them into a spectacular illusion.'

Jeff Wall on panoramas



AKA: After Kafka's Amerika
Slide projection, audio installation + DVD projection,
2000



Tourist Interface

Photograph on pvc, 122 X 183cm
2000

horizontal or vertical projection, as a rectangular convention suiting the subject within terrific constraints. Representations seen as doing their best to significantly condense a totality. This leads onto the video work, which, try as it might, ends up doing the same thing, the same loss-in-excellence, ultimate scopic ability leaving out so much. The ghost of virtual reality is mentioned as one other way of duping ourselves with a possible total reconstruction. A reconstruction of a time spent looking- but isn't that what we been doing all along?

Video loops projected on the walls take the panoramic as their theme; 360 degree rotations showing city streets, rooftops, at night and day, quick and slow. Original painted panorama's, dating from the late 18th century, surrounded the central viewer with a huge cylindrical canvas, perhaps of landscape, cityscape, or historical event such as a battle. The size of the illusion and lack of referentiality (the painting being in total occupation of the gaze) was one of the first steps in total immersion of the viewer, an attempt to surround them with a seamless representation.

Significantly for the development of illusion, towards the truly virtual, the next step was the diorama, which was usually set of rectangular scenes which rotated around the viewer. The critical difference between the panorama spectator physically moving and the scene moving is something that has persisted through the history of illusion, to film and video.

Tourist Interface's panoramic work remains, in essence, planar visual sequences, where the view is not literally scoped by the viewer; it is brought past them, through a set rectangular frame. Only with a total virtuality is the prospect of a physical orientation significantly altering the experience coming back to recognition. O'Kane's video camera stands in for

the rotating eyes. Played back with a double projection and some text linking the panorama to virtuality and modernist theories of the gaze, these loops are forced to surround the viewer, at least on three sides- or maybe four, including the projecting apparatus as subject. The emphasis, as with original painted panoramas, is not the feeling of being in an actual place, but of being confronted by marvelous representation, which is a flatness, blocking the view. But also, by being representation, attracting the natural rove of the eye and its curiosity. The meaning seems to be not in the nutshell, but the shell itself. This time the curve of vision is convex, not concave.

There's a clue to this 'inverse retinal' of the panorama on the photograph that was chosen for the invitation card. It shows O'Kane on the roof of some NY building, video camera on tripod pointed at the distant Empire State Building, with, in the foreground, a bag containing a globe. Globes spin- the examiner usually stays in the same place- all the information can be brought past them. In a geometrically inverse appropriation, O'Kane's video panoramas bring all the information past us, through a flat screen. At times, moving too fast to be much except a blur, a shorthand for surroundedness, located beginning and ending on the image of some fixture- the recognition of a full 360. But there is with each a deliberate starting and finishing to the sweep, a speeding and slowing, as if to make us recognise that we have come full circle. When not physically moving, we are quite helpless to make spatial sense of the length of panorama we have seen. The starting and stopping point is a coordinate of the plane, recognised through its reappearance. What we know to be a surrounding patently fails to feel like one. We are forced to see an attempt to locate us, through representation, as not even requiring the suspension of disbelief. As all the superb information passes us, with its intimation of



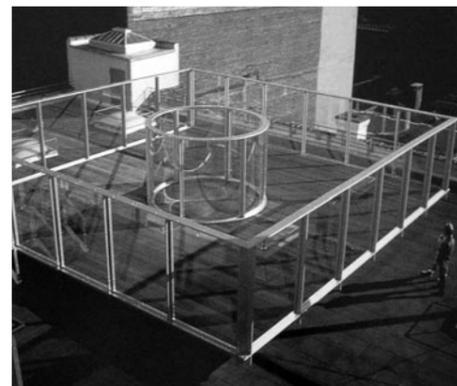
LOW: Prophet
DVD projection, 3 mins
2000



Clouds + Contemporary Art

Photograph on pvc, 122 X 183cm
2000

Dan Graham, Rooftop Park for Dia Center for the Arts, 1981-91
Collection, Dia Center for the Arts, New York



unlimited capability for capture of visual treasure, it still looks like the totality of information necessary to totally recreate experience through a flat rectangle is exponentially incapable of catching up.

The levels of play are, as everywhere, overlapped, as when an existing painted panorama is itself taken as the subject of a centrally pivoting video recording- a massive 360 degree painting of Neo-Classical Europe in America. The curves of vision are flattened out to produce what seems like an impossible return to the beginning along a flat path. To muddy the waters further is effortless; a place for viewing included in the sweep; quoting Dan Graham's contemporary artwork, a rectangular glass viewing pavilion, set up on top of a New York arts building, (transparency caught in its necessity like a window pane at night) and you allude to conditions for seeing- for that as a sufficient subject in itself, that doesn't offer closure, but opens at least the process of particularised and circumscribed viewing as a potential subject to think about. The idea of the privileged rectangular frame, as producer of a single authoritative place of meaning, is broken open and scattered by the implication of a limitless and non-hierarchical way of seeing, at once whimsical and also attentive, and popular enough to recognise an easily significant situation when it sees one. Like Karl Rossman's view of the streets of New York from a high balcony, as a dazzling glass surface being constantly smashed from one moment to the next.

O'Kane's project is an implication of the ubiquitous normalcy of representation, and how this display uses that but is aware of it; as being the first refuge of someone with their own story to tell. Very quickly, it becomes apparent that the story being told is as much about its own constructedness as anything

that happened. Normal representation is not ridiculed, but it is set up as something that is worthwhile paying closer attention to. Is this normalcy protected, even though criticised, for its own benefit, inoculated against taking itself too seriously? Perhaps, within the maintenance of systems of representation as a continuity, as much as getting the surface content, we also desire to know the mechanics of it, the privilege of the inside story. O'Kane makes it impossible in a way to pass on, or to assume from that outlook that it is 'Just another examination', historically limited, with all the results expected found. The generosity of his display, and some of its personality-based whimsicality, is another way of just shifting the emphasis of a certain situation's obviousness- even the Statue of Liberty holds the torch of freedom above its head, i.e. where you cannot reach.

Padraig Timoney 2000



HOME
 is also the ultimate point of destination, the site in which the trip must be authenticated. The tourist's accountability of the experience resides in the souvenir, the snapshot or videotape-irreducible pieces of portable evidence of the sight having been seen. The camera is the ultimate authenticating agent.

This page and opposite:
Home, Real, Fatherland, Virtual sex, Nanobot Swarm, The Sign
 Lambda prints 122 X 91cm
 2001-2002

Virtual sex
 Sex in virtual reality incorporating a visual, auditory, and tactile environment. The sex partner can be a real or simulated person.



Things are never expected to be real; rather things are read as signs of themselves, idealized and often frustrated...

Nanobot Swarm
 In the last half of the twenty-first century, a swarm comprised of trillions of nanobots. The nanobot swarms can rapidly take on any form. A nanobot swarm can project the visual images, sounds, and pressure contours of any set of objects, including people. The swarms of nanobots can also combine their computational abilities to emulate the intelligence of people and other intelligent entities and processes. A nanobot swarm effectively brings the ability to create virtual environments into the real environment.



A great part of the pleasure of travel lies in the fulfilment of early wishes to escape the family and especially the father.

THE SIGN
 inevitably attracts attention to itself as it attracts attention to the sight. But it is also what comes to fill a deficiency intrinsic to the sight. For without the marker, the sight cannot attract attention to itself, cannot be seen, and therefore cannot be a sight...as each marker stands for the other, indecidably replacing it and adding to it. A chain of supplementarity is established in the inevitable proliferation of markers.



The 'Sign Series' that followed on from the postcard paintings also reflect on the phenomenon of modern travel and cultural tourism. The 'Sign' works investigate the growth of tourist attractions. By adding text panels under existing directional or informational signs he created a new interpretation of these objects. Likewise he has used re-positioning of found signs and the resultant work functioned as both site specific or as photo documentation. Using found signs, the added texts panel put forward the suggestion that even the use of a 'sign' itself creates a 'thing' to be looked at. In this manner the found 'sign' and its commentary text are joined in an uneasy self-reflexive engagement for the viewer to grapple with.

Mike Fitzpatrick, Diector, Limerick City Gallery of Art



Overlook

Installation views, Triskel Arts Centre
2004

Overlook

Installation views, Triskel Arts Centre
2004



A gallery is constructed along laws as rigorous as those for building a medieval church. The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light. The wooden floor is polished so that you click along clinically or carpeted so that you pad soundlessly, resting the feet while the eyes have a look at the wall.

This page and opposite:
Medieval church, White Cube, Political art, Picture plane, Ideal gallery, Colonial space
Lamda prints 183 X 122 cm
2003-2004

The difference between the picture plane and the underlying wall is very pertinent to the esthetics of surface. The inch of the stretcher's width amounts to a formal abyss.



When we talk about art exhibitions, sometimes someone mentions "The White Cube." It comes up in conversation more often when we talk about events that happen outside art galleries, a suggestion that these shows are somehow different, somehow more difficult, or somehow stand in opposition to the systems of exhibition we find in museums and typical galleries. These beliefs, whether accurate or not, shape how we approach one exhibition venue or another. They are also there always ready when we visit an art gallery; when we go inside the white cube.

The ideal gallery subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is "art." The work is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself.



Political art placed within the domain of the white cube will lose its political aspects and gradually become a collection of objects with a specific aesthetic and commercial value.

The White Cube is a colonial space, absorbing anything, accepting everything, and changing all of it into commerce. It is the commercial dimensions that determined this transformation and guided the rejection of everything which interfered with the ability to reconfigure the space into the vacuum we think of as a gallery today. It is a vacuum filled with ideology; the groping, reaching monolith of a consumerism where everything can be converted into a neutral commodity with real commercial value.



Biography

1974 born in Belfast
 2001 MFA (Design Technology) Parsons School of Design, New York, USA
 1998/99 Research Fellowship (Painting), Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education
 1998 MFA, University of Ulster, Belfast
 1996 BA Fine Art, NCAD, Dublin

Eamon O’Kane lives and works in Bristol

Solo exhibitions

2004 Galerie Mikael Andersen, Copenhagen
 Millenium Arts Centre, Portadown (catalogue)
 Galerie Lutz & Thalmann, Zurich
 Cavanacor Gallery, Co. Donegal
 Studio in the Woods, Galerie Schuster & Scheuermann, Berlin
 Triskel Arts Centre, Cork (catalogue)
 Studio in the Woods, Campus Galerie, Bayreuth (catalogue)
 2003 Lead White Gallery, Dublin
 Galerie Lutz & Thalmann, Zurich
 Das Atelier im Wald, Galerie Schuster, Frankfurt
 Devine Gallery, Louisville
 Hildesheim Kunstverein, Hildesheim (catalogue)
 2002 Galerie Schuster & Scheuermann, Berlin
 Bildermacher, Galerie Schuster, Frankfurt (catalogue)
 Studio 91, 011 Podium, Tilburg
 Neuffer am Park, Pirmasens
 2001 AKA II, Belltable Arts Centre, Limerick
 Photographs, Fenderesky Gallery, Belfast
 After Kafka’s America, Hallward Gallery, Dublin
 Proportion, Galleri Lisse Bruun, Copenhagen
 2000 This Indenture, Donskoj + Co. Gallery, Kingston, NY
 Extension Irish Arts Centre, New York City

Tourist Interface Orchard Gallery, Derry
 An American Cross Section, Butler Gallery, Kilkenny (catalogue)
 1999 HTML, Javascript, The USA etc, Galleri 21, Malmö
 Postcard Cities , KoRaw Gallery@Bankside, London
 KOORDINATER MCMIC, Overgaden, Copenhagen
 America, Cavanacor Gallery, Co. Donegal
 1998 Galleri Lisse Bruun, Copenhagen
 Occupation MCMXCVIII, Basement Gallery, Dundalk
 Invisible Cities, Letterkenny Arts Centre, Letterkenny
 New Works, Hallward Gallery, Dublin
 Grid Reference, Blackstaff Mill, Belfast
 1997 RESTORATION MCMXCVII, Foyle Arts Centre, Derry
 1996 KUNST I,II,III,IV,V..., University of Ulster, Belfast
 1995 One Person Exhibition, Europoint, Rotterdam

Selected group exhibitions

2004 RE-JOYCE’ Temple Bar, Dublin
 The Bigger Picture, Cornerhouse, and Manchester
 R.H.A. Annual Exhibition (invited), RHA, Dublin
 Travelogue, Butler Gallery, Kilkenny
 Scope Art Fair, New York City
 Art Forum, Berlin (+ 2003)
 Frankfurt Art Fair, Frankfurt (+ 2002, 2003)
 ARTfutures 2004, London
 Iontas Award Winners Exhibition, Sligo Art Gallery
 2003 Dreams, Sligo Art Gallery, Sligo
 6X6 for Ireland, Shanghai
 Art Cologne, Cologne
 From Bahia to over by yer, tactileBOSCH, Cardiff
 Works from the collection, Kunsthaus, Gelnhausen
 The National Gallery, Goethe Institute, Dublin
 Robinson Building Exhibition, Bristol
 Shanghai Film Festival
 EV+A 2003 (+ 2002, 2001, 1999), LCGA, Limerick
 Referenz, Galerie Lutz & Thalmann, Zurich
 54 Degrees North, Hull
 2002 Tabula Rasa, Croydon

Curio, Brick Lane, London
 Straylight: Digital Art Exhibition, Darklight Film Festival, Dublin
 MOSTYN OPEN 12, Oriol Mostyn Gallery, Llandudno
 Tabula Rasa, video projections in Croydon city centre
 SCA-ART Awards exhibition, Mannheim Kunstverein
 Invited Artists, Hallward Gallery, Dublin
 On Board, Sligo Art Gallery, Sligo
 VII, Lead White Gallery, Dublin
 Sommerudstilling, Galleri Lisse Bruun, Copenhagen
 Cavanacor Gallery, Co. Donegal
 R.H.A. Annual Exhibition, RHA, Dublin
 Recent Acquisitions, Bank of Ireland Arts Centre, Dublin
 EV+A 2002, Limerick City Gallery of Art, Limerick
 AKA III, Stockholm Art Fair, Stockholm
 2001 Crawford Open, Crawford Gallery, Cork
 Articulate, Station, Bristol
 Victor Treacy Award Exhibition, Butler Gallery, Kilkenny
 Vacationland, Art House, Dublin
 Rondout Sculpture Biennial, Kingston, NY
 Focus on Drawing, LGCA, Limerick
 2000 PERSPECTIVE 2000 (+ 1998), Ormeau Baths Gallery, Belfast
 Iontas 2000 (+ 1997, 1994), RHA, Dublin and touring
 Snapshot, Contemporary Museum, Baltimore
 Refresh: Dystopia + identity, Tribes Gallery, New York
 Extracts, Engine Room Gallery, Belfast
 Irish Art Exhibition, Vine Gallery, Louisville
 Self Portraits, Deep Dale, New York City
 Irish Arts 2000, Studio 1019, Washington DC
 Florence Biennale of Contemporary Art, Ashford Gallery, Dublin
 1999 Florence Biennale, Florence
 Eamon O’Kane, Niamh O’Malley + Joanna Fursman, Context Gallery, Derry
 Documentation etc, Pitville Gallery, Cheltenham
 ArtLink @ Sotheby’s, Tel Aviv, Israel and Chicago
 1998 M2 Fax Box Project, Banana Factory, Bethlehem, PA
 Forest, The Bull and Last, London

Hardline, Catalyst Arts, Belfast
 Connect, Drogheda and Newry train stations

Awards / commissions / residencies

2005 Cill Rialaig Project, Kerry
 2004 Artist’s Work Programme, IMMA, Dublin
 2002 Imagine Belfast Panorama commission, Belfast
 Residency, Tilburg Art Academy
 2000 Media-Play-Off, Bertelsmann Pavillion, Planet M, Hannover Expo, Hannover
 Artflight Award, Aer Lingus & Arts Council of Ireland
 General Art Award, Arts Council of Northern Ireland
 KPMG Award, Oireachtas 2000 Art Exhibition, Dublin
 Text/Context, collaborative web site with Jack Sal for Hannover Expo 2000, Hannover
 1999 Fulbright Award, Brian Burns Scholarship (visual arts)
 Ireland-U.S. Com. for Edu. Exchange
 1998 Tony O’Malley Travel Award for Painters, Butler Gallery & Waterford Crystal
 Emerging Artist Award, Donegal County Council
 Arena Hoarding Project, Letterkenny
 1997 Panorama Project, Athens, organised by ELIA, Hogeschool Ghent, Athens School of Fine Art, Athens, University of Plymouth, Exeter.
 Connect, Public Art in Transit Project, Belfast-Dublin
 Joint Best Drawing Prize, IONTAS, Dublin
 Joint Best Student Prize, IONTAS, Dublin
 Artsite, site specific billboard, Belfast
 1996 Postgraduate Bursary, D.F.E., British Council
 Taylor Art Award, Royal Dublin Society, Dublin
 Thomas Damman Jr. Award for Travel and Study Abroad
 1995 Artflight Award, Aer Lingus & Arts Council of Ireland
 Rotterdam Project’ sponsored by CBK, Rotterdam
 Erasmus Award to Academy of Fine Arts in Rotterdam
 1994 Elizabeth Fitzpatrick Scholarship for Travel & Study Abroad, RHA Dublin
 International Student Artist in Residency Award, Koninklijke Academie voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent
 Aer Lingus Art Competition, Winner



SOAP
DVD projection, 7 mins
2000

Hog
DVD projection, 3 mins
2002

Selected bibliography

2003 McNally, Brenda 'Building a successful career' The Sunday Tribune, Sept 7
 'Grand Tour' Tages Anzeiger, Aug 21-27
 Drinkwater, Ros 'Gambling on art's young talent' The Sunday Business Post, March 16
 Dunne, Aidan 'Opening Irish gallery doors' The Irish Times, March 15

2002 Ewart, Mark 'Crawford Open 2' SSI magazine, July/August
 Stafford, Mark + Musiat, Anja 'die bildermacher' catalogue, May
 Musiat, Anja 'Making a living from art' Studies Quarterly Review, Summer issue
 Poshyananda, Apinan 'Concerning Heroes + Martyrs', EV+A Catalogue
 Dunne, Aidan 'A rewardingly obsessive attention to artistic detail' The Irish Times, Jan 2

2001 Dunne, Aidan 'Maintaining classical calm in life's flux' The Irish Times, Sept 19
 Cassai, Mary "Kingston Biennial changes 'beat'" Daily Freeman, July 20
 Kiberd, Declan 'Millenium Box Set' Hot Bed Press, Limerick, July
 Dunne, Aidan 'Cautionary Tale of a Gallery Guide' The Irish Times, May 9
 Beazley, Eric 'AKA (After Kafka's Amerika) by Eamon O'Kane', www.entertainmentireland.ie, May 1

2000 Cassai, Mary 'Art Beat' (Review) Daily Freeman, Sept 15
 Kearney, Fiona 'An American Cross Section' Catalogue, May
 'Nord Kunst' Television Interview, Malmö, March
 Nelson, Brid 'Anything Irish' television interview, Woodstock, USA, March

1999 Roberta Reeners, (Editor) 'A Buyer's guide to Irish Art' Foreword by Dorothy Walker, Ashville Media Group Ltd, Dublin
 Brophy, Richard 'Who's Who in Ireland?' Dublin

Arnold, Bruce 'Florence Biennale' catalogue, Florence, Dec
 Jones, Ruth 'Niamh O'Malley, Eamon O'Kane, Joanna Fursman' SSI magazine, Nov
 Greenberg, Jeanne 'EV+A: Reduced' Catalogue, Limerick, May
 Currah, Mark 'Sean Hillen, Eamon O'Kane: KoRaw' Time Out, London, April 28 - May 5
 'Sean Hillen, Eamon O'Kane: KoRaw' Evening Standard, London, April 26
 Reitov, Ole 'Kulturnyt' (Cultural News), Danmarks Radio P1, Feb 23
 Morgenavisen Jyllandsposten, 'Eamon O'Kane Udstiller' Feb 15
 'The Ida Branson Bequest' exhibition catalogue, Feb
 Jørgensen, Susanne 'Eamon O'Kane', BT, Jan 29
 Schierbeck, Ole 'Irsk kulturfremstød i Danmark, Politiken, Jan 8
 Olsen, Mette 'Irerne kommer til byen' Jyllandsposten, Jan 8

1998 Danai, Tal 'International Young Art '99' ArtLink @ Sotheby's, Tel Aviv, Chicago, Jan
 Libens, Daniel & Diggle, Jeremy 'Panorama Athens', publication & CD-ROM, Nov
 Dompierre, Hedge, Sverakova 'Perspective '98', catalogue, Oct
 Hendry, Matthew 'Artist of the month' Profile, Arts Link
 FitzGerald, Derval 'Art on the line', CIRCA, Summer
 Sverakova, Dr. Slavka M.F.A. catalogue
 Sverakova, Dr. Slavka 'Eamon O'Kane - Selected work 1997/98' catalogue

1997 Weston, Gavin 'Museum of The Twentieth Century', The Sunday Times, Nov 23
 O'Cuiv, Ruairi, Iontas '97, catalogue, Sligo

1996 Fallon, Brian '250 years of Irish Drawing', The Irish Times, 21 Nov
 Sheridian, Noel NCAD 250 Drawings 1746-1996, catalogue, Dublin
 Fallon, Brian 'The RHA comes back to life', The Irish Times, April 24

1995 Vermeulen, Eveline Manifestatie Laurenskwartier, Centrum Beeldende Kunst, catalogue,

Rotterdam Collections

- Dundalk Institute of Technology (commission)
- Belfast City Council (commission)
- Hillsborough Castle (commission)
- Mary McAleese, President of Ireland, Aras An Uachtarain (commission)
- Dublin 98FM, Microsoft
- Bank of Ireland Collection
- Irish Contemporary Arts Society
- Office of Public Works
- PMPA and Guardian Insurance
- Donegal County Library
- Letterkenny Institute of Technology
- Country Bank, New York
- Unibank
- NKT
- HK
- Den Danske Bank

Works in private collections in Ireland, England Scotland, Denmark, United States, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain and Germany.

SIBS
 DVD projection, 4 mins
 2002



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Nanobot Swarm

In the last half of the twenty-first century, a swarm comprised of billions of nanobots. The nanobot swarm can rapidly take on any form. A nanobot swarm can project the visual image, sound, and pressure waveforms of any set of objects, including people. The swarm of nanobots can also control their computational abilities to create the intelligence of people and other sentient beings and processes. A nanobot swarm effectively has the ability to create virtual environments for the real environment.