



Selected Installations
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'In a recent solo show at the Regional Cultural Centre in Letterkenny, *The House and the Tree*, O'Kane re-created an attic from his family home into which he placed a short film recording the vernacular architecture of Co. Donegal which is accompanied by a soundtrack of proverbs in the Gaelic language. The installation is completed by a large-scale wall drawing of an sycamore tree that once sheltered King James II, also from his homeplace, together with the sawn up trunk of the tree which was killed by lightning. In other words the personal and the public, past and present, royalist and peasant, the real and its representation, nature and culture are all combined in this single installation, through the accomplished use of new and traditional media.'

Catherine Marshall, Senior Curator, Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2008

'O'Kane's *The House and the Tree* takes as its starting point a story about his family home, Cavanacor House near Lifford. It is said that King James II stopped off at Cavanacor en route to the siege of Derry in 1689. A dining table was laid under the canopy of a sycamore tree. Subsequently, as the monarch's forces retreated and laid waste around them, James spared Cavanacor because he had enjoyed its hospitality. In 1999, the sycamore was hit by lightning, and it forms the centerpiece of the Cultural Centre show, together with a reconstruction of an original part of Cavanacor House that was demolished a half a century ago. It could well be O'Kane's most ambitious project to date and that's something for an artist who usually thinks big.'

Aidan Dunne, Chief Art Critic, *The Irish Times*, 2008

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The House and the Tree

Installation views, RCC, Letterkenny

700 x 700 x 400 cm

Slated roof structure with video and audio installation,
sycamore tree, charcoal wall drawing and vinyl text

2008







'At Draíocht, O'Kane uses a Panorama to draw the focus of these ideas to Blanchardstown, one of three planned towns built to serve as satellites to Dublin (the other two are Lucan-Clondalkin and Tallaght). Blanchardstown is an intriguing mix of dream, reality and cultured nature. Through the spy holes of the Panorama, we see the relationship between nature and architecture creating a fantasy world where nothing is quite as we are used to it being. Distortions and juxtapositions show us the familiar view from Draíocht's plate glass windows disrupted by trees, while another spy hole shows a different vista, an alternate landscape like a little jewel box of discovery. Walking around the Panorama, lured into peeping through all the apertures, the rewards are constant surprise (and delight), tempered by the realisation that while you can look at these mysterious and wonderful worlds, you can never reach them, never truly inhabit them yourself.

Umberto Eco describes in his essay, *Travels in Hyperreality*, how the Diorama is used in museums to re-present reality. "Primarily," says Eco, "the Diorama aims to establish itself as a substitute for reality, as something even more real." The Panorama also presents a different order of reality. Like the Diorama, the Panorama presents a hyperreal environment where the viewer is lured into a world through a view not usually possible in 'real' life. O'Kane's fascination with the Panorama comes from his enquiries into both art and architecture. Initially planning to study architecture, he became sidetracked with a year at Dublin's National College of Art and Design (NCAD). "I got really into the process of making art," he says, "so I stayed on." One of the results of this fusing of interest between art and architecture is, however, an interest in context and place "whether it's landscape, or cityscape, or different realities," as well as in "how buildings get into the city network or map, and then how they function there." Both Diorama and Panorama present the possibility of a bird's, or God's-eye view of the city network, and equally, both can interpolate extra elements into the scenes they depict.'

How we live, essay by Gemma Tipton, 2006

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Panorama: 'I like shopping centres and shopping centres like me'

Installation views, Economist Plaza, London

Wooden structure with 2.4 x 30 metre painting, models and lenses

2006-2009







'Coming from a museum/exhibition culture in which large tends to trump small, and industrial usually wins out over domestic, it was something of a surprise to discover that Eamon O'Kan's Mobile Studio, which comes with it's own industrial container (built on site) was a perfect, if snug, fit in what was once a drawing room.'

Dan Cameron, EV+A Catalogue, 2005

'In a sense, what O'Kane does is to turn the process of artistic production and consumption inside out. The subjects of the exhibition are the familiar art world categories of the gallery, the studio and the work of art.

The first thing we encounter is the "studio", which resembles a huge packing crate deposited in the middle of the floor. As noted in the show's explanatory leaflet, it looks almost as if this is the crate that the rest of the exhibition came in. But go inside and you find that it is indeed equipped to resemble a functioning studio. The walls are densely lined with images of various kinds, including original drawings plus photographs and photocopies, many of buildings, some of O'Kane's *Sign* series.

Some of his signs, featuring quotations relating to aspects of culture, are sited around Craigavon. Elaborate architectural models are laid out on tables, and e-mails, a casually placed book and other material surround a computer. All of which creates something like a Marie Celeste atmosphere: a sense that the space has been vacated suddenly.'

'Eamon O'Kane's portable studio, approximating in size to a shipping container, its walls lined with finished pieces and works in progress, seems to have materialised by magic, a room within a room. It is eerily effective and could well be titled A Portrait of the Artist as a Studio.'

Aidan Dunne, Chief Art Critic, *The Irish Times*, 2005

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Mobile Studio

Installation views, EV+A, Limerick

488 x 244 x 244 cm

Models, drawings, lightboxes, signs and video

2005







'A third group is composed of works stemming from a playful, lighthearted and humorous attitude towards the making of art and the occupation of space, a stream of imagination in relation to creativity, like Eamon O'Kane's *Bildermacher*. Here the artist has completely covered a room, set up like a studio, with dozens of canvases in process and all kinds of objects, utensils and tools, plus his night-helpers in all colours and sizes, including a video animation in which these helpers are fully at work.'

Virginia Perez-Ratton, EV+A catalogue essay, 2003

"As you work you prepare a reading of the show for the spectator and as I did that it became more difficult to eliminate certain pieces. There was a logic to their being there." Her reading of the show begins in its traditional nerve centre, the City Gallery on Pery Sq. There is a great deal of quietly good work there, and a couple of real show-stoppers, including Eamon O'Kane's extraordinary installation *Bildermacher*, an entire fantasy world.'

Aidan Dunne, Chief Art Critic, *The Irish Times*, 2003

'He has decided to treat his compulsion and productiveness with irony and self-deprecation. In contrast to a search for demons or angels to represent the artist's divisions and fragmentations, Eamon O'Kane has given us figures that combine a gentleness to the spirits of creation with a stubborn adherence to their commands. The simplicity of the "ani-mates" form evokes a nostalgia for a form of play which inspired his first attempts to make images. In the re-discovery of a childhood passion to invent, the "ani-mates" also mark the anguish of accounting for the identity of the artist. They are avatars of earlier struggles of the artist, but their smooth surfaces and impenetrable gaze suggest that the distortions and incongruities have been largely removed. The "ani-mates" are an alternative to a guilty secret for having so many uncertainties and still producing so much.'

Mark Stafford, *Die Bildermacher* catalogue essay, 2002.

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Animates: Die Bildermacher

Installation views, EV+A, Limerick

Dimensions variable

Paintings, models, drawings, signs and animations

2003







'O'Kanes paintings have always had a strong sense of form and spatiality – ideas and structures that lend themselves easily to the three dimensional into sculpture and installation. The painting *Drive Through* (2007) which depicts the back of a disused drive-in movie screen, could be seen to correlate with the 2007 installation work *Untitled (Seasons Blockbuster)* in which a stop frame animated painting is projected onto a structure made from discarded wood collected from the farmland where Christmas trees grow. As in *Drive Through*, the structure mimics that of the drive-in movie screen – an object onto which dreams and aspirations are to be projected and which, when we look more closely, reveals itself to be makeshift and unglamorous. It is an antidote to our fantasy, the grime behind the glamour of Hollywood where starlets die of overdoses and spend very public stints in jail or rehab. O'Kane draws attention to the artifice of the fantasy that is projected in which a building used as the bookshop at the Venice Biennial, materializes from a simple line drawing and through a series of painted layers travels throughout the seasons before dematerialising once more.'

Jacqui McIntosh, *Better is Something You Build* catalogue essay, 2008

'Eamon O'Kane's *Regeneration* (2006) presented a series of paintings in stop-motion animation, which documented the ongoing development of a rural area outside Dublin, the layers of paint recording the sequence of man-made interventions in the area.'

Zoe Gray, *Contemporary* magazine, 2007

'...Eamon O'Kane's stop-motion paintings on video record the changes inflicted on Blanchardstown, a fastgrowing area outside Dublin and the site of Ireland's biggest shopping centre, and illustrates his ongoing concerns with art and architecture.'

Klaus Ottmann, *EV+A* catalogue essay, 2007

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Untitled (Seasons Blockbuster)

Installation views and stills from animation

Projected animation on wooden structure

2007

> bottom

Regeneration

Stills from animation

Animation on plasma screen

2006



Eamon O’Kane (b. 1974) is a practicing artist who has studied in Dublin, Belfast and New York. He has exhibited widely and is the recipient of many awards and scholarships including the Taylor Art Award, The Tony O’Malley Award and a Fulbright Award. He has shown in exhibitions curated by Dan Cameron, Lynne Cooke, Klaus Ottman, Salah M. Hassan, Jeremy Millar, Mike Fitzpatrick and Apinan Poshyananda. He has taken part in EV+A, Limerick, Ireland six times including 2005 when he received an EV+A open award from Dan Cameron. In 2006 he was short-listed for the AIB Prize and received a Pollock Krasner foundation grant. O’Kane has had over forty solo exhibitions including shows in Berlin, Frankfurt, Dublin, Zurich, New York, London and Copenhagen. He was short-listed for the Jerwood Drawing Prize in London in 2007. His artwork is in numerous public and private collections worldwide including Deutsche Bank; Burda Museum, Baden Baden, Germany; Sammlung Südhausbau, Munich; Limerick City Gallery; FORTIS; DUBLIN 98FM Radio Station; Microsoft; Bank of Ireland Collection; Irish Contemporary Arts Society; Country Bank, New York; Office of Public Works; P.M.P.A. and Guardian Insurance; Donegal County Library; UNIBANK, Denmark; NKT Denmark; HK, Denmark; Den Danske Bank, Denmark; Letterkenny Institute of Technology; University Of Ulster, Belfast; Aspen RE, London; Rugby Art Gallery and Museum Collection. Eamon completed a three month residency at Centre Culturel Irlandais in Paris in 2008. O’Kane is currently Visiting Research Fellow in Fine Art at UWE in Bristol, UK.

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The House and the Tree

Stills from video (in roof installation)

Total running time 10 mins

2008



