



The Untold Want

Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, 2015

William McKeown, *The Dayroom*, 2004-2010

Installation view of *A certain distance, endless Light A Project by Felix Gonzalez-Torres
and William McKeown*, mima, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, 2010.

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THE UNTOLD WANT
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© Kerlin Gallery, Dublin

FOREWORD Patrick T Murphy

*The untold want, by life and land ne'er granted
Now, Voyager, sail thou forth, to seek and find*

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (1871-72)

To get to conceive of an exhibition, not based on chronology, or, a thematic argument but as a sensibility is a rare opportunity. It is a decade since the RHA presented "I not I", that combined three films of Samuel Beckett plays with the paintings of Philip Guston and the sculpture and video work of Bruce Nauman. The exhibition collapsed culture, media, generation, to point to the existential status shared by the three artists.

Our intention here is somewhat similar, to combine artists of different ages, media and cultural backgrounds to probe a poetic and spacious sensibility. The immensity of space, the beauty of nature, the vulnerability of humanity and the isolation of mortality are all orchestrated here into three stanzas (both in the Italian sense of room and in the sense of poetic verse).

Caroline Hancock has been my co-curator on these compositions. It was her concept to create an exhibition from the thoughts and works of the late Willie McKeown. It has been a privilege and an education to work so closely with her on realization of this project.

While some loans were difficult to secure and some unattainable we are deeply indebted to those collectors, gallerists, artists and colleagues who did respond so positively to our requests. And would like to thank Claudia Carson, Helen Simpson and Lieven van den Abeele for their assistance in securing the loans of some important pieces in the show.

The exhibition would not have been possible without the support of the Joseph F. McCrindle Foundation, NYC, the William McKeown Foundation, and the behind the scenes commitment of Dominic Echlin and Andrew Martindale.

My continued acknowledgement to my colleague, Ruth Carroll, without whom this project and indeed most productions here would not take place so seamlessly.

We are indebted to the Friends of the RHA for their support of the organization which demonstrates how we are valued within our community. And to the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon for their important annual funding.

William McKeown, *The Morning Room*, 2010
Installation view of the exhibition *William McKeown. Five Working Days*,
Ormeau Baths Gallery, Belfast, 2010
© The William McKeown Foundation and Kerlin Gallery, Dublin





William McKeown, Hope Painting, White White, 2006
oil on linen, 48 x 45.5cm
Courtesy the Kerlin Gallery, Dublin and the William
McKeown Foundation

The untold want,
by life and land ne'er granted
Now, Voyager, sail thou forth,
to seek and find.

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (1871-72)



THE UNTOLD WANT Caroline Hancock

One of William McKeown's last projects was part of The Golden Bough exhibition series at The Hugh Lane in Dublin in 2011. He called it a Willie McKeown readymade, though the process to arrive at that illusion demanded considerable exactitude and effort. This elegant oval room, Gallery eight, was not an original part of Charlemont House but reconstructed in the early twentieth century in classical Georgian-style. It is therefore partly a fake structure which McKeown went to great pains to strip back to its purest state, painting it entirely an exquisitely profound dark brown. The intervention appeared minimal but came as a violent surprise to familiar visitors. The only light came naturally from a glass ceiling in such a way that it took centre stage in this room. *The Waiting Room* was named with reference to previous "rooms" he had constructed. This title evokes McKeown's interest in existential questions. His rooms often attempted to relay the feeling of being an outsider or separate, of being in a state of expectancy or dwelling in memories rather than in the present moment. Constructed from scratch or adapted within an existing room, these rooms were quiet spaces in which every detail, opening and placement were established with absolute subtlety and mastery. All materials utilised were chosen with care from the basic building materials on the outside to the pristine interior painted with high quality Farrow & Ball paint on which drawings, watercolours and/ or paintings are seamlessly hung and lit by neon strips or old-fashioned bare lightbulbs. The rooms allowed a controlled demonstration of the wider implications of his two-dimensional work, in terms of their meaning and complementary functions, including observations concerning human psychology and art's liberating power. McKeown invites the viewer to transcend certain fixtures that one can be trapped in. It is paramount to actually experience these rooms or artworks since reproductions or written accounts can never convey this fully.

In the text to accompany this exhibition, McKeown wrote: "In 'The Waiting Room' I wanted to turn the focus of the space onto the apparently emerging light, the dawn, the vertical path leading out of the seductive trap of the room, the cockcrow warning of the unfurling of a space in the heart, a place of freedom and happiness, a place to breathe in the sky and to dance."

As was his wont on occasion, he also quoted "The Untold Want", a short poem by Walt Whitman. *Leaves of Grass*, the collection in which it appears, was an attempt to reach out to common readers. Plain grass grows anywhere, and the author wrote in plain verse. At the time, in the nineteenth century, some thought it obscene for its openly egalitarian views and sexual references as in a very contemporary fashion it bridged between transcendentalism and realism. Another famous poem from this collection "We Two Boys Together Clinging" inspired David Hockney in 1961.

The experimental quest to which this poem calls gave the tone to this exhibition and catalogue; which seeks to create dialogues with the late William McKeown's art and sensitivity! Some artists present here are his lifelong friends, others are his stated heroes, but others still were probably mostly or entirely unknown to him. At

William McKeown, *The Waiting Room*, 2011, The Golden Bough, Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane, Dublin
© The William McKeown Foundation and Kerlin Gallery, Dublin

once intimate and public, inward looking and open, comforting and frightening, constrained and free, the artworks brought together here share a tendency to consider nature, light, and relations with other human beings with immense care and concern. Some profound affinities and some gross disjunctions are likely to transpire in this contextual exercise. As encouraged by the curator Helen Molesworth in a conversation with artist AA Bronson: “Preserve, not in amber, but to preserve in a way to make sure that the dead still have their say. The logic of the present is only made possible by so much absence.”²

It appears essential to pursue a conversation started during McKeown's lifetime in an exhibition curated by Gavin Delahunty. “A certain distance, endless light A project by Felix Gonzalez-Torres and William McKeown” took place at mima, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, in 2010. Indeed as one of the installation views reveals, on this occasion, Felix Gonzalez-Torres's single string of light bulbs, “Untitled” (*Leaves of Grass*), from 1993 was presented in a room next to William McKeown's *The Dayroom* (2004-2010). The exhibition text indicates that “inside, the room is plastered to a smooth finish and then painted in a heritage colour called 'Dayroom Yellow'. There is an insincerity to the sophistication of the room, amplified by the sickly yellow of the walls and the sodium light emitted by the double fluorescent tubes. The room sits between elegance and artifice. Inside the room is hung a colour pencil drawing and a painting, representing respectively a single snowdrop and an expanse of sky. These offer a glimpse of a potential outside that can be imagined by the viewer. They are metaphorical windows that stand in lucid contrast to the actual door and window of the room, which serve to remind the viewer of the illusion in which they are involved.”

The viewer's participation and empathy are at the core of Felix Gonzalez-Torres's art, and he engaged with the community through his involvement with Group Material. Mass-produced sweets and printed sheets of paper in forever replenished stacks are left for organic dissemination over the course of an exhibition, as endless counterpoints to finitude. Often based on his personal experience in New York City in the 1980s and 1990s, his choice of imagery and objects convey love, freedom, togetherness and separation or loss, in reflecting the contexts of devastating battles with AIDS.³ Using actual or portrayed floating curtains, surfaces of water, or empty soiled pillows and bed-sheets. His artworks are inextricably tied to the human body, its presence or its absence. “Untitled” (*Portrait of Dad*), 1991, is composed of an endless supply of white candies individually wrapped in cellophane. The overall dimensions vary with each installation but an ideal weight of 175 lbs is indicated as a starting point. The extraordinary generosity that exudes from his work is linked to his embodiment of the social as a mirror and the self as a referent. Joseph Kosuth wrote: “The conceptual 'virus' (as Gonzalez-Torres has described his role) that inhibits the corporal presence of his Minimal form is, of course, that of supplanted meaning. The corpus of his work is beyond the form his 'host' takes. The basis of conceptual practice is not what you see but what you understand. It is this process of coming into understanding that links the viewer/reader with the work and concretizes that experience as part of the same event that formed the work, as meaning. The viewer/ reader then becomes part of the meaning-making process, rather than being put in the role of passive consumer.”⁴

A leitmotiv was the hundreds of photographs of birds soaring in the sky which

1. William McKeown passed away at the early age of 49, in October 2011. A fledgling foundation is in development, in tandem with the Kerlin Gallery who has represented his work since the late 1990s, in the hope to carry William McKeown's art beyond the islands where he practiced and attempt to get beyond a certain isolation. This project receives a great accolade from Patrick T. Murphy at the Royal Hibernian Academy in Dublin by accepting to collaborate on and host “The Untold Want”.

2. “Queer Spirits and Other Invocations: AA Bronson & Helen Molesworth”, conversation at Frieze Art Fair, London, 16 October 2014.

3. “I had just buried Dan. And the extraordinary thing about this was that there was nothing extra ordinary about it at all. If people aren't themselves sick, they know someone who is, or they are struggling to assimilate the loss of someone who was. For me, death has temporarily overtaken life in New York City. And most of the artists I know are fumbling for ways to express this.” Robert Gober, “Cumulus from America”, *PARKETT*, no. 19, March 1989, p. 169.

“AIDS had entered our world in 1981. By the mid 80s a number of our friends had died, and others were HIV-positive and working hard to survive. The glamour of self-destruction had worn off with real death among us. We have been through so much and have lost so many close friends. I still believe in sexual liberation,

that sex is an affirmation of life. That desire for intimacy and connection is fully positive and AIDS has not destroyed my belief in that. It's just that now one needs to practice safe sex”. Nan Goldin, Taka Kawachi (eds.), *Couples and loneliness / Nan Goldin*, Korinsha Press, Kyoto, 1998, p. 75.

4. Joseph Kosuth, “Exemplar”, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1994, p. 56.

5. Thelma Golden, “What's White...?”, in the 1993 Whitney Biennial catalogue, reprinted in NYC 1993: *Experimental Jet Set, Trash and No Star*, New Museum, New York, 2013, p. 66.

6. For instance, *Prison Window* (1992, plywood, forged iron, plaster, latex paint and lights) was reproduced in McKeown's 2008 Irish Museum of Modern Art catalogue and referenced in the hang of the exhibition “De l'émergence du Phénix”, CCI, Paris, 2011. Connections could be developed with numerous other works and constructions such as *Door with Lightbulb* (1992, paper, twine, metal, lightbulbs). We had hoped this exhibition would be the occasion to speculate on connections with the work of Absalon (1964-1993) and his *Cellules habitables* [Inhabitable Cells]. Circumstances made this impossible but it is an avenue to explore at a future point.

7. Robert Gober, in Theodora Vischer (ed.), *Robert Gober, sculptures and installations*, 1979-2007, Schaulager Basel / Steidl, 2007, p. 24.

Gonzalez-Torres took over the years. Despite this persistence, actual images of birds appear in only eighteen of his artworks: puzzles, paper stack works, a sculpture, billboards, or classically framed black and white photographs, fourteen of which were hung on the wall in his last exhibition at Andrea Rosen Gallery in New York, “Untitled” (*Vultures*) in 1995. These are significantly also present in “Untitled” (*Passport #II*) in 1993 which consists of 12 page booklets. “Untitled” (1991-1993), two billboard-sized photographs of ominous clouds and a lone bird, covers a dark corner in the gallery with the evocation of infinite space and travel.

An artist's quest to allow us, the viewer, to experience the world with renewed attention and ponder life and death in imaginative ways, desire and otherness, is at the heart of this exhibition. It celebrates the extraordinary capacity of art – even with the most minimal form – to conjure up infinity and wonder.

Robert Gober's individual idiosyncratic strangely illusionistic sculptures tend to be re-creations and amalgamations of domestic equipment such as sinks, drains, urinals, doors, windows, dog's baskets, wallpapers. Childhood memories emerge as tight enclosures such as cribs and playpens. These generic industrial objects, as well his famous cast body-fragments, are expertly hand-crafted and painted to resemble and exaggerate the originals and become artworks with multilayered and open-ended meanings which accumulate throughout his oeuvre. In this transformative process, Gober arrives at life-like sculptures which nevertheless, on closer inspection, glare as off-kilter and altered. Spatial, physical and time-related boundaries are blurred. Equivalence and the act of looking are challenged. Everyday things are revisited via a highly subjective yet detached prism which questions authoritative notions of truth and certainty. In the catalogue of the controversial 1993 Whitney Biennial in New York which included his work, Thelma Golden indicated that: “Revisionist approaches to history and received information are at the heart of the discussion of diversity. Our understanding of culture is mediated by the presentation of 'fact' in print or media or 'object' as presented in museums. The recontextualisation of such data is explored in the work of Renée Green, Fred Wilson, and Robert Gober.”⁵

Rather like Gober's memories of growing up in American New England in the 1950s and 1960s, William McKeown's presbyterian upbringing on a farm in County Tyrone in Northern Ireland is portrayed in works relating to the local lane, the well, the meadow, birdsong or wild flowers. References to religion, guilt, psychological tensions and constraints are described in the various texts he wrote. Gober's rooms and installations seem to have been highly influential to McKeown's own constructions⁶.

Gober's incongruous combination of a tissue box placed on a child's plastic chair above a drain in *Untitled* (1994-95), modeled with cast plastic, painted bronze, silver-plated steel and wood, carries anxious connotations of tears and hints at human vulnerability. A commentary by Gober points to his conscious use of common devices which act as conduits between the known inside and the unknown outside, the protected interior and the unpredictable but therefore exciting exterior: “I thought of the drains as metaphors functioning in the same way as traditional paintings, as a window into another world. However the world that you enter into through the metaphor of the drain would be something darker and unknown, like an ecological unconscious.”⁷

The reality of an unconscious ecology is central to Dorothy Cross's work. Transforming the very real residues of the ebb and flow of life and nature into newly meaningful propositions is the principle of her quasi alchemical art. With exquisite impertinence, she appropriates what is already beautifully elemental in the world and transcends it into surreal or supremely real gems. Her curiosity for flora and fauna, science and history is without bounds as she operates often phenomenally simple metamorphosis through taxidermy, gilding, or assemblage. What appears to be in a state of decay is revitalised through her touch and care. Found objects, natural spaces or organic bodies are some of her primary sources of inspiration as she repeatedly breaks through institutional frames and their controlling limitations. Cross's sculptures and larger scale projects, such as the operas and *Ghostship* in the bay of Dublin, seek to ignite a sense of wonderment, a temporary collective belief in the improbable and an inquisitive trust in the unknown.

Cross made the cast bronze sculpture called *Foxglove* (2003-2014) following a commission for a web-project by DIA Foundation in New York in 2005. All the visual, botanical and symbolic data about this flower are merged into this hybrid form that sprouts into the world directly and forcefully from the floor with no standardising art plinth. Some of the bell flowers have morphed in the process into human fingers pointing to the plant's Latin identity as *Digitalis purpurea*. The domain of touch and delicacy is given centre stage through the lost wax transferral; the relationship with the artwork is physical. The erotic suggestiveness highlights the reproductive potential of nature, openly ranging from ecstatic delights to darker undertones. Guber's plumbing fixtures are not far off and the same could be said of some of McKeown's seemingly abstract paintings. "Merleau-Ponty makes these unconscious effects visible in his description of chiasm as a complex landscape, a 'topological space as a model of being'. In his philosophical system, each subject constitutes a 'landscape' that participates with 'other landscapes', caressing and interpenetrating each other: '[these] landscapes interweave, their actions and their passions fit together exactly' with 'an intimacy as close as between the sea and the strand.' In her version of chiasm, Cross enhances this sensual and erotic aspect of Merleau-Ponty's geographical metaphor." ⁸

Dorothy Cross and William McKeown's friendship was deeply rooted in their passion for nature and their aspiration for human beings to better connect with it. In 2010, they worked together towards an exhibition called *Pool*, at the Kerlin Gallery, Dublin, which combined Cross's gilt shark and McKeown's *Ocean* painting and a series of fifteen watercolours, *Connemara*, now in the Hugh Lane collection, for instance. Cross suggests that "It was our affinity to water that provided common ground: from sitting in a bath, drinking a glass of water, diving into a pool or sitting on the shore looking at the ocean. This elemental relationship was at the heart of both our work. His work was close to the air we breathe." ⁹

These allusions to "ecological unconsciousness" and pulsating breath lead to the ephemeral and intimate earth-works by Ana Mendieta. At the University of Iowa in 1973, she made a series of work in rooms with reference to, and protesting against, violent acts against women such as *Untitled (Rape Scene)* and *Door Piece*. Between 1973 and 1980, in Iowa and Mexico, silent Super-8 films document the short ritualistic interventions of the *Siluetas* [silhouette] series. Her own body, or its trace, works within the

landscape, merging and dissolving into it in performances which are filmed or photographed. She seeks to transmit the charged energy and expressivity of her own self, her belief in Santería and the life force of matriarchy. The positions she gives her arms, either poised alongside her torso like a corpse, or extending outwards (sometimes upwards) in what could either transpire to be a welcoming, submissive or triumphant gesture are complex variants to decode or empathise with. They could convey permission, openness or closure. The land and all its elemental constituents are the source materials with which she connects: earth, water, feathers, ice, sand, rocks, wild flowers, grass. The action of breathing, bleeding, sweating, moving, swimming, show this basic corporeal involvement in nature. Rather than object-oriented, Mendieta's work highlights the high value of the site and the moments of one's life enhancing or deadly inevitable special relation with it. Analogies for a willed return to the womb, the ecstasy of being in the present, explosive destruction, extinction, or burial are compressed in her fleetingly poignant performances that toy with modest sensationalism and use precisely orchestrated yet muddy subversiveness. In 1976 a raised bonfire repeating the outline of Mendieta's body burns then disappears in a puff of smoke in *Anima, Silueta de Cohetes* [Soul, Silhouette of Fireworks].

Abigail Solomon-Godeau notes that : "Significantly, many of these photographs are specifically about the absence or disappearance of the subject. As imprints or traces of the body, they make allusion to the semiotic status of the photographic image; more importantly, however, they indicate a lacuna, an evacuated presence. And although the *Siluetas* make reference to other themes and issues (...), it is nonetheless a significant part of the series' collective meaning that the lady indeed vanishes. For all the markers or evocations of the artist's specific circumstance, or even her adherence to a 'Mother Goddess' mythology, there too one cannot locate an individualized and authentic self able to affirm unambivalently its distinctive selfhood." ¹⁰

The emotional power of Mendieta's bodily imprints resemble William McKeown's series of watercolours in which the infinitesimally slight nuances of colour, tone, brightness are retained in instant processes, or washes, that are akin to photography and its impressions. *Waiting for the Corncrake* (2008, now in the Ulster Museum collection in Belfast) is composed of thirty (a significant numerical reference to a monthly cycle) works on paper; it relays memories of anticipating the arrival on the farm of this bird; rare and elusive then and now nearly extinct due to the effects of modern farming. The minimal nature of these rectangles of light and non-white washes focuses the eye and the mind of the viewer on the infinite variations.

The land of Ireland and its representation is one of the subjects of Vivienne Dick's otherworldly 1985 16mm film *Rothach*. The camera pans across the boglands of Kerry and the lunar landscape of the Burren. Maeve Connolly writes that: "The word 'Rothach' can be translated from Irish to mean cycle or wheel and the film closes with a recitation of Seán Ó Riordáin's Irish-language poem, 'An Roithleán', which evokes a moment between sleep and wakefulness. Despite the relatively conventional nature of the images, this use of oral narration (particularly in the Irish language) seems to work against a 'tourist' perspective. In the process, the film seems to mobilize the landscape as a text to be read. So while *Visibility Moderate* foregrounds the difficulty of finding a vocabulary adequate to the representation of the landscape, *Rothach* seems to privilege

10. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "The Woman Who Never Was: Self-Representation, Photography, and First-Wave Feminist Art", Lisa Gabrielle Mark (ed.), *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2007, p. 344.

11. Maeve Connolly, "From No Wave to National Cinema: The Cultural Landscape of Vivienne Dick's Early Films (1978-1985)", in John Hill, Kevin Rockett (eds.), *National Cinema and Beyond*, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2004, pp. 61-73.

8. Robin Lydenberg, *[Gone] Site-specific Works by Dorothy Cross*, McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, University of Chicago Press, 2005, p. 56.

9. Dorothy Cross. *Connemara*, Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, 2014, p. 98.

an historical relationship between image, language and landscape.”¹¹

Picture postcard traditional scenes of cows in a field, countryside work and farming machinery are disrupted by the moody electronic soundtrack composed by Martin Sheller which lends an ominous feel to the film, completed by a recited poem which alludes to the exploration of space and the fear of never being able to return. A boy plays the fiddle and repeatedly appears in various settings punctuating the elusive narrative. In 2012, Paul Nesbitt curated a posthumous exhibition of William McKeown's work on one floor of Inverleith House in Edinburgh, while simultaneously screening Agnes Martin's 1976 film *Gabriel*, about a boy's relation to nature and abstraction in the mountains of the American West. The catalogue of the 2006 Douglas Hyde Gallery exhibition *A Dream of Discipline (and Other Works)* that grouped work by Kathy Prendergast, Dorothy Cross and McKeown, reproduced a 1913 photograph by Marguerite Mespoulet of a man cutting turf on a bog in County Galway that references some of the traditions which are praised and questioned in *Rothach*.

Vivienne Dick's work was included in a project in London in 1988 which was introduced in the catalogue by James Coleman and Declan McGonagle as follows: “Our intention in this exhibition has been to show a selected number of artists within whose work imaging is an important part of narrative structure. The exhibition is representative of their work in a range of disciplines – drawing, painting, performance, language, film-making and photowork. Particular idea/processes are present in the work which link the artists and their activity to a continuum from Armagh to America – beyond expectations of categorisation or nationalistic identities.”¹² This publication includes a still scene from *Rothach*, a photograph credited to B. Rival which could practically have been taken by Mespoulet, as well as a portrait of the artist by her great friend Nan Goldin.

Part of the radically independent No Wave scene in the late 1970s and early 1980s in New York, Vivienne Dick developed her style and experimented filming in Super-8, with all the freedom and simplicity this technology implied. The use of hand-held cameras allowed for close, intimate and realist documents of her own environment and of the avant-garde artistic and musical scenes, including such personalities as Goldin and Lydia Lunch.

Nan Goldin has famously photographed her entourage in Boston, Provincetown, New York City and during her travels worldwide since the early 1970s – a very personal visual diary of daytime and night life. Human beings, including herself, are the centre of her radical project influenced by Velvet Underground and the Beat Generation. In the short film *I'll Be Your Mirror*, made for the BBC in collaboration with Edmund Coulthard in 1996, Goldin explains that “I have never believed in a single decisive picture of someone but in a variety of pictures that record the complexity of a lifetime.” She has incessantly recorded the simple truths of daily gestures, glamour and parties, intimate sexually-liberated encounters and absolute openness, but also drug addiction, decadence and death due to the AIDS epidemic. With tender empathy, her snapshots capture high pitched excitement as well as moments of total release in bathtubs or during sleep for instance. The photographs document preparations for going out and being out, cross-dressing, living on the margins of society, domestic violence and therefore point to her strong belief in freedom and honesty, gender equality and fluidity, qualities of acceptance and tolerance. What might habitually have been experienced

12. James Coleman and Declan McGonagle, “Introduction”, *selected images*, Riverside Studios, London, 1988 (unpaginated).

13. Declan Long, “Open Frequency 2014: Seamus Harahan”, *axisweb.org*, April 2014, viewed February 2015: <http://www.axisweb.org/features/profile/open-frequency/seamus-harahan/>

behind the scenes is no longer hidden but comes out of the closet through her obsessive lens. “My goal was to put my queens on the cover of *Vogue*”.

Goldin's photographs have been merged into various slide shows (often accompanied by a highly evocative music selection) and books such as *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (1986), *The Other Side* (1993), or *Couples and Loneliness* (1998) that all chronicle a certain generation, relationships with her family, friends, and lovers. From the classical black and white *Christmas at The Other Side*, Boston (1972), to the contemplative portrait of *Anthony by the sea, Brighton, England* (1979), a confrontationally raw reminder in *Nan one month after being battered* (1984), and the dazzlingly baroque Cibachrome of *Joey at the Love Ball, NYC* (1991), Nan Goldin self-consciously endeavours to fix her memories and control how her existence is depicted and memorialised.

As a photojournalist, Abbas has traveled the world to document its people, their habits and conflicts. He is renowned for his regular reportages in Iran, his native country, during the revolution in the late 1970s and periodically ever since, as well as for his major photographic essays on the great religions and beliefs. The caption for one of his striking black and white photographs during the Troubles is: “G.B. NORTHERN IRELAND. Belfast. A wall crumbles down after having been set on fire, presumably by the IRA. 1972”. The word ‘presumably’ assembles the uncertainties and necessary prudence. The fully flung action shot of this firefighter could seem puny compared with the formidable counter forces of water and collapsing brickwork. The sky is threatening. Violence and beauty converge. Suspense is at a peak. Somehow it reminds me of Yves Klein's 1960s *Leap Into The Void* photomontage – but this imagery is real.

William McKeown's faint coloured pencil drawings of delicate and plain local wild flowers are set against blinding explosive white paper grounds. Their gregarious resistance, growing from apparent nothingness and amid apocalyptic environmental disruption beyond their page, emerge from, or survive, the general context of devastation or disillusionment. Ironically realistic, they are an essential complement to the abstraction of McKeown's paintings. He drew them throughout his career as realist companions to the paintings, creating a fragile painterly balance also sought out by the likes of David Hockney or Gerhard Richter. They were sometimes called *Open Drawings*.

Experimental filmmaker Seamus Harahan has primarily recorded and responded to the Northern Irish context. He was one of the artists to represent Northern Ireland at the Venice Biennale in 2005 with McKeown and Mary McIntyre. *Before Sunrise* (2008) appears to be an illicit early morning walk through Alexandra Park in North Belfast. There is at once something romantic and sinister about this scene. The Super-8 camera leads the viewer to the “peace” line constructed to separate neighbouring communities after the 1994 IRA ceasefire. One graffiti chillingly states: “DON'T PLAY MY... GAME, EVER AGAIN”. Borders and emotions are highly strung. Harahan's experimental sound-mixes add to the confusion by conjuring up potential shifts in meaning and thus enhancing an atmosphere of uncertainty. The footage is also often fidgety due to the hand-held camera. The only constant is unpredictability. By mixing-up the conventions of singular versus plural perspectives, Harahan questions the veracity of filmed documents and received truths.

Declan Long writes: “Where we do gain corner-of-the-eye glimpses of Belfast’s damagingly ‘important’ territorial delineations – as in the film *Before Sunrise*, which charts a stroll through a public park divided by a ‘peace-line’ fence – the distracted drifting of the camera renders the authority and significance of such structures surprisingly negligible.”¹³

Harahan’s films are evocatively anti-heroic compared to *Hunger* by Steve McQueen, or even films by Willie Doherty. But they share shots, such as incessant rain on a window pane, insignificant encounters with birds, insects, or flowers which are simple releasing moments of humility, connection and hope.

Frédéric Bruly Bouabré’s extraordinarily prolific storytelling and archiving of the world and its ways survive his recent bodily passing. The titles of his series – often hundreds – of small drawings with texts give an idea of the scope of his pedagogical, spiritual, anthropological and artistic recording method. For instance ‘The Book of Divine Laws Revealed to the Order of The Persecuted’, ‘Knowledge of the World’, ‘Museum of African Faces’, ‘Symbols and Myths’, ‘The Universe’, ‘Stars From My Dreams’, ‘High Diplomacy’. Inspired by a solar vision in 1948 in Senegal while he was working on the railway line from Dakar to Niger, he began to depict and therefore memorialise the nearly extinct, non-written language and culture of his fellow Bété people. He famously researched and invented (or re-invented, since he is sometimes compared to Champollion who discovered the Rosetta Stone) ‘African Writing’, comprising 448 monosyllabic pictograms, and put it to use through writing and translations. Théodore Monod published the alphabet in 1958 in the bulletin of IFAN (French Institute of Black Africa), which he directed. Bruly Bouabré was born around 1923 in Zéprégüé (then in the centre of French West Africa, now in Ivory Coast since the independence in 1960). He charted the expressive influence of patterns and forms of sacred volcanic rocks located in the forests in the region. He ceaselessly gave expression to his daily study of human customs, world affairs and ecology, as well as to chance encounters with symbols he found in scraps, peel, stains, cola nuts, or clouds. Both abstractions and realities were ‘imaged’ for the sake of transmission, and he became known as Cheik Nadro – the revealer.

A vibrant repetitive grid of 194 pen and coloured pencil drawings on cardboard constitute *La venue au monde de l’humanité chérie* [The coming into the world of dear humanity], 2011, expresses the sap of life, the nurturing mother figure producing human beings for the sake of posterity and heritage. The handwritten texts in the margins systemically run on to indicate *Les enfants XX courent vers la mère patrie* [Children from XX run towards the mother land] and chart the whole world by indicating approximately each country (as it was then), along with his signature star and sun symbols. The generous dynamism of these women’s wombs and the keenness of their offspring turns into a quasi automatic country-building machine which deserves decoding beyond the apparent naïvety of the drawings. Make love, not war.

William McKeown has a history with the Royal Hibernian Academy in Dublin. In 2002, the Director, Patrick T. Murphy invited him to curate “The Holiday Show”. Andrew Vickery, one of the artists he presented then, was included in the exhibition *In Praise of Shadows* curated by Paolo Colombo at the Irish Museum of Modern Art based on Junichirō Tanizaki’s eponymous book which very aptly coincided with McKeown’s solo

exhibition there in 2008. In 2012, Vickery’s *Arcades Ambo* paid homage to his relationship with McKeown. A series of paintings depicting a road trip become slides which are projected onto a model theatre stage. The soundtrack, a waltz followed by birdsong, further emphasises an ideal pastoral paradise. Country dwelling, camping, tea and Hobnob biscuits by the sea, but a Parisian train station hints at departure or arrival. The title translates from Latin as “both Arcadians” or sweet innocents, in connexion with the apparent splendid utopia of the imagery. Nicolas Poussin’s classical seventeenth century painting *Et in Arcadia ego* in the Musée du Louvre in Paris equally deals with the hardships of mourning and mortality. Yet it is life that is praised, despite its absence.

In the 1942 film *Now Voyager*, Bette Davis responds “Oh, Jerry, don’t let’s ask for the moon. We have the stars.”

Vija Celmins’s highly detailed drawings are all to do with perception, the personal experience of looking and recording, the impossibility of representation and its challenges. She transfers and compresses the intensity of staring at the night sky (or rather images thereof) onto paper. The microcosm of the drawing allows our mind’s eye to shift back to the infinite macrocosm of the universe. The first photographs available of the moon in the media at the end of the 1960s inspired her to choose the Milky Way galaxy as one of her subjects, leading to her studies of great expanses such as oceans, deserts, night skies, clouds and later cobwebs. These works are constructed with repetitive painstaking slowness creating the dense layers that form an allover drawing except for the white edges of the paper that remain visible to insist on the fact this is an object, a reproduction. These serial fields transcribe a unique relation to time and place. *Untitled no. 10* (1994-95) is a charcoal drawing of night sky in which the stars and the comet have been rubbed-in with an eraser; the white paper ground becomes the light source which shines through the thick black surface. Incidentally, Celmins had dedicated *Untitled no. 9* (1994-95) to the memory Felix Gonzalez-Torres.

In an interview in 2011, Celmins mentioned that “when you look at the work, you have that double thing you *should* have all the time, where you’re looking at the making and a kind of a re-describing of the surface, and the image is interwoven with that surface. (...) Retold, remade, in another context. So it’s like I really got to know the image, and it sort of unfolded along with, like, the drawing, the image, the surface, the scale; everything, like, was made together. (...) I wanted somehow to have both things, an image that was in your mind, that was vast, and the reality which was very restrained and flat and made, and that was actual.”¹⁴

In the year 2000, the exhibition curated by Patrick T. Murphy and Richard Torchia called *The Sea & The Sky*, presented at the Royal Hibernian Academy in Dublin and at the Beaver College Art Gallery in Philadelphia, included a 1982 drawing of the sky *From China* by Vija Celmins and two watercolour *Sea Drawings* by McKeown, as well as an endless paper stack work by Gonzalez-Torres.

Mary McIntyre’s 2014 framed colour giclee photograph taken in an empty art college studio during a holiday period is part of a new series and is given a viewing platform like a controlled growing facility to learn to look at what appears to be nothing once again. The eye is being trained to observe the minutiae of all things; the viewer

14. Betsy Sussler, “Interview with Vija Celmins”, The Museum of Modern Art Oral History Program, 18 October 2011. Transcription viewed February 2015: http://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/learn/archives/transcript__celmins.pdf

15. Quotes from William McKeown’s annual Winter Lecture, delivered at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin in 2008. Unpublished.

is being told to scrutinise this interior detail and all its light, texture and tone variations. White on white. The spaces, walls, edges, ridges, corners, surfaces, shelves, wires, emphasise the emptiness. *The Path to the Distribution Point of Light* speaks of a certain urge to find something. A human feeling within this geometrical abstraction. The near central switch calls to mind the electrical devices painted by Celmins in the 1960s, or Gober's fixtures.

This constructed space by McIntyre and her previous built interventions such as a floor for *Silent Empty Waiting for the Day* at Belfast Exposed in 2011 have tight connections with the forced physical viewing experience in McKeown's rooms. They could refer to the relative security and comfort of domestic interiors. But something sinister or claustrophobic exudes from these structures however sublime the associated artworks are. What is this absurdly Beckettian endless "waiting" they speak of?

The in-between status of the outsider who never feels he or she quite belongs is one of the tropes of modernist painting which William McKeown sought to undo in his own work. He was critical of what he termed "international, white, Western, patriarchal, corporate Modernism"¹⁵ and progressively moved away from what he perceived as an excluding flat surface. He developed his unprimed roughly woven canvases resembling a skin. At the beginning of his career he painted monochromes, very few of which survive today due to the artist's iconoclastic self-criticism. With a profound respect for simple, traditional but fine materials (first working in acrylic and then linen and oils) and crafts (reflecting his influential prior experience as a weaver), his painting practice moved from flat highly subtle tonal gradations to more expressive brushstrokes. The edges opened up and became porous for the eye and air, showing areas of canvas.

"I try to create a painting that feels concave, and this concave space is a mirror of the space I find in nature. You can cross the proscenium of the edge and enter the painting as you would step onto a beach into the light."¹⁵

His abstraction seeks to invite and include the viewer. He went to great pains to make his art open and life enhancing like taking in a breath of air. His engagement with beauty was classical and inevitably composed with complementary elements of darkness, light and colour. But in addition he transferred his deepest experience of pure pleasure, hardship and pain to attain near ecstasy through art and allow hope and humanity to emerge. Indeed some of the paintings are reminders of the exaltation one can feel being in a particular moment, in a specific place, with a special person.

McKeown stated that "When the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery in its visionary wisdom purchased this Agnes Martin *Untitled No 7* from the 1980 ROSC people queued to laugh at the Pyjama painting. It is now widely recognized as being one of the most beautiful works of art in an Irish public collection."¹⁵ The work referred to is Martin's gesso, acrylic and graphite painting of subtle horizontal bands.

Having exhibited in New York City at Betty Parsons Gallery from 1957, Martin's work was included in the seminal 1966 exhibition *Systemic Painting* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and was therefore celebrated as representative of Minimalism. She herself preferred the association with the Abstract Expressionist legacy and thus related to the 'heroic' stature of classic American postwar abstraction but her strength lay in her separateness and independence. Her interests and beliefs merged

a presbyterian background via her grandfather's teachings, with Eastern philosophies and code of ethics.

In her 1979 *October* journal essay "Grids", Rosalind Krauss wrote: "The grid's mythic power is that it makes us able to think we are dealing with materialism (or sometimes science, or logic) while at the same time it provides us with a release into belief (or illusion, or fiction). The work of Reinhardt or Agnes Martin would be instances of this power. And one of the important sources of this power is the way the grid is, as I said before, so stridently modern to look at, seeming to have left no place of refuge, no room on the face of it, for vestiges of the nineteenth century to hide."¹⁶

Her abstraction was luminous, subdued but bold and intentional, put forth with humility and an increasingly clear mind. Her quest for perfection, mutuality and positivity sometimes, and increasingly, took on a spiritual dimension. The simplicity of each composition has a meditative quality. Titles veer from being non-specific (untitled) to relaying particular times, places, things, animals, plants or weather conditions such as for her only series of screenprints, *On a Clear Day*, in 1973.

Byron Kim's 2011 large Night Paintings shown here – *Untitled (for B.L.)* and *Untitled (for P.B.)* – have personal dedications and are stated as inspired by Manhattan. Kim describes them as "... paintings from my head of the night sky in the city. Not really romantic sky with very deep space and lots of stars, but that ceiling that is mostly reflected light from pollution."¹⁷ His dialogue with abstraction unashamedly integrates his own subjectivity, his family and friends, daily life (in the diaristic weekly Sunday Paintings, for instance). Rather like Nan Goldin, he allows for the surrounding urban and contemporary beauty, or grit and grime for that matter, to enter his art. The series of bulging latex Belly Paintings are one case in point. They resist any habitual rigorous modernist reductiveness while establishing other very distinct strict or somewhat ironic protocols. Kim repeatedly wills the redefinition of the canons of Western abstract painting and comments on the persistence of certain issues of racial and other inequalities. His famous ongoing series of paintings grouped under the title *Synecdoche* (that is to say that a part signifies the whole) dwells on the infinite diversity of the colours of human flesh. Each variation is shown in a small monochrome painting then assembled into a large modular chart. In fact the work apparently includes "portraits" of artists he admires, such as Vija Celmins.

This painting was shown in the aforementioned 1993 Whitney Biennial in relation to which Thelma Golden argues that "Everyone has 'identity' – if we acknowledge that the state of whiteness is a definitive category as different (or as specific) as those we label 'other'. Artists in the 90s have begun to fully deconstruct the marginality-centrality paradigm. Marginality, in effect, becomes the norm while the center is increasingly undefinable and perhaps irrelevant. Although many may call this Biennial the 'multicultural' or 'politically correct' Biennial, it should be read as a larger project which insists that decentralization and the embracing of the margins have become dominant. Indeed, margins, as they once existed, even seem inappropriate because they indicate a hierarchical relation that belies the importance of their position in relation to the center. 'Boundaries', used to describe this condition by theorist Homi Bhabha, seems more applicable."¹⁸

William McKeown hoped that "Culture is shifting into a new space out of an old

17. Daniel Kunitz, "Byron Kim", *Modern Painters*, November 2011, p. 36.

18. Thelma Golden, "What's White...?", in the 1993 Whitney Biennial catalogue, reprinted in NYC 1993: *Experimental Jet Set, Trash and No Star*, New Museum, New York, 2013, p. 67.

19. William McKeown. *The Sky Begins At Our Feet*, Belfast, Ormeau Baths, 2002, unpaginated.

16. Rosalind Krauss, "Grids", *October*, vol. 9, Summer 1979, p. 54.

room. The old space was the room of Western, Christian, patriarchal culture. Secondary categories within this culture – women, other cultures, gays, nature and otherness – were separated and contained by the patriarchs in annexes to the main room, but the walls to these annexes have dissolved. We have entered a totally new space; a space where issues of gender, sexuality and identity no longer function as mechanisms of separation and difference. This is the most exciting thing to happen for two thousand years.”⁹

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[Ana Mendieta](#)

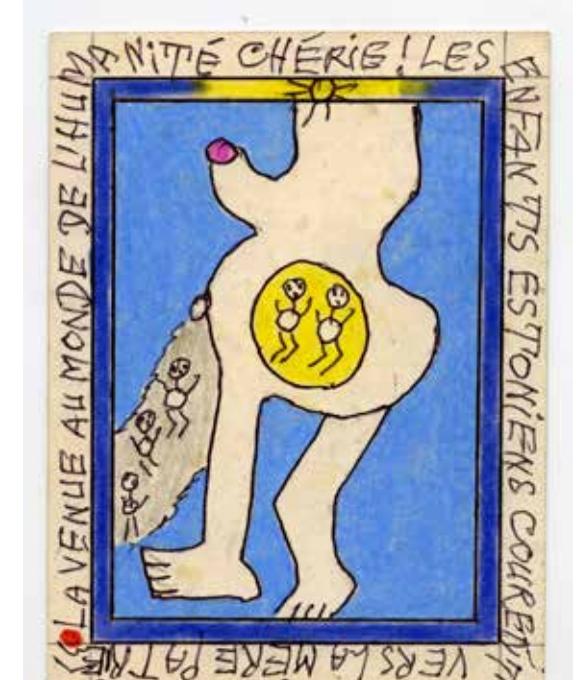
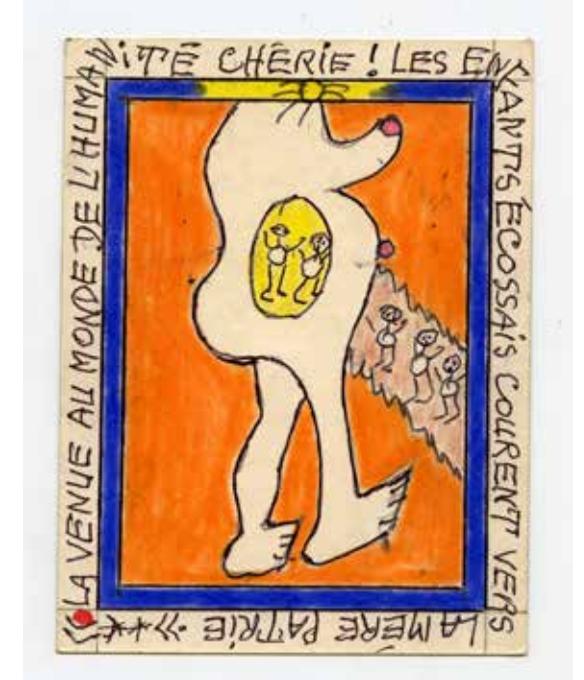
[Andrew Vickery](#)

Abbas

Belfast, 1972
silver gelatin print on fibre, 40.5 x 30.1cm
Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art,
Purchase 2006



Frédéric Bruly Bouabré



La venue au monde de l'humanité chérie (from The coming into the world of dear humanity), 2011
pen and pencil on card, 194 works, each 14.2 x 10.8cm
Courtesy Magnin-A Gallery, Paris, France

Vija Celmins



Reverse Galaxy, 2010
mezzotint, edition of 30 +10 AP, 41 x 30cm
Courtesy McKee Gallery, New York



Untitled #10, 1994-1995
charcoal on paper, 43.2 x 55.9cm
Private Collection, New York

Dorothy Cross



Foxglove, 2012
bronze, 124 x 44 x 41cm
Private Collection
Image courtesy of the artist and Kerlin Gallery, Dublin



Vivienne Dick



Rothach, 1986
16mm transferred to DVD, colour,
9' duration
Courtesy of the artist and LUX, London



Robert Gober



Untitled, 1997
cast plastic, painted bronze, paper, silver-plated steel,
wood, 43.8 x 33 x 33cm,
Private Collection
Image courtesy of the artist, Photography Erma Estwick

Prison Window, 1992
Plywood, forged iron, plaster, latex paint and lights
48 x 53 x 36 inches with 24 x 24 inch opening
Image courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery,
New York, Photography Geoffrey Clements



Nan Goldin



Anthony by the Sea, Brighton, 1979
cibachrome, 76 x 102cm
© Nan Goldin, Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York



Joey at the Love Ball, NYC, 1991
cibachrome, 76 x 102cm
© Nan Goldin, Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

The Hug, NYC, 1980
cibacrome, 102 x 76cm
© Nan Goldin, Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York



Felix Gonzalez-Torres



"Untitled" (Portrait of Dad), 1991
White candies individually wrapped in cellophane, endless supply.
Overall dimensions vary with installation
Ideal weight: 175 lbs
© The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation
Courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York
Installation view of: artranspennine98: an exhibition of international contemporary art. Tate Gallery Liverpool, England. 23 May – 16 Aug. 1998. Dir. Lewis Briggs. Catalogue.

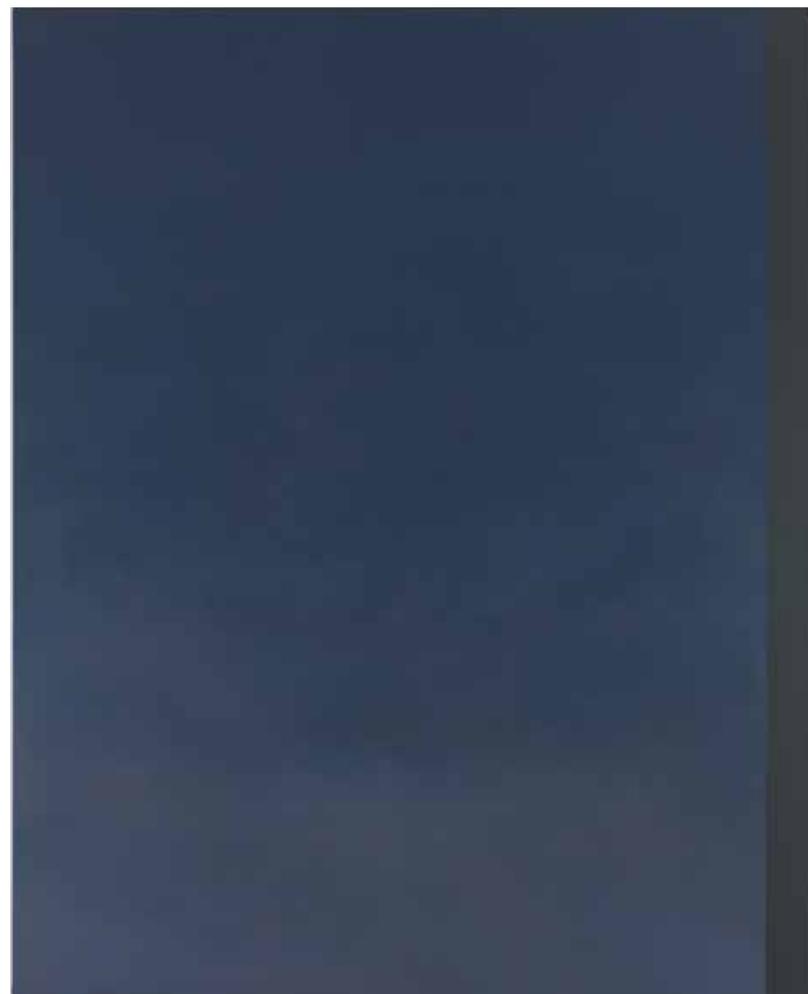
"Untitled", 1991-1993
Billboard
Two parts: dimensions vary with installation
© The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation
Courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York
Installation view of: Felix Gonzalez-Torres.
Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York. 24 Apr. – 29 May 1993.

Seamus Harahan



Before Sunrise, 2007
S-vhs, 3' 45" duration, Courtesy of the artist
and Gimpel Fils, London

Byron Kim



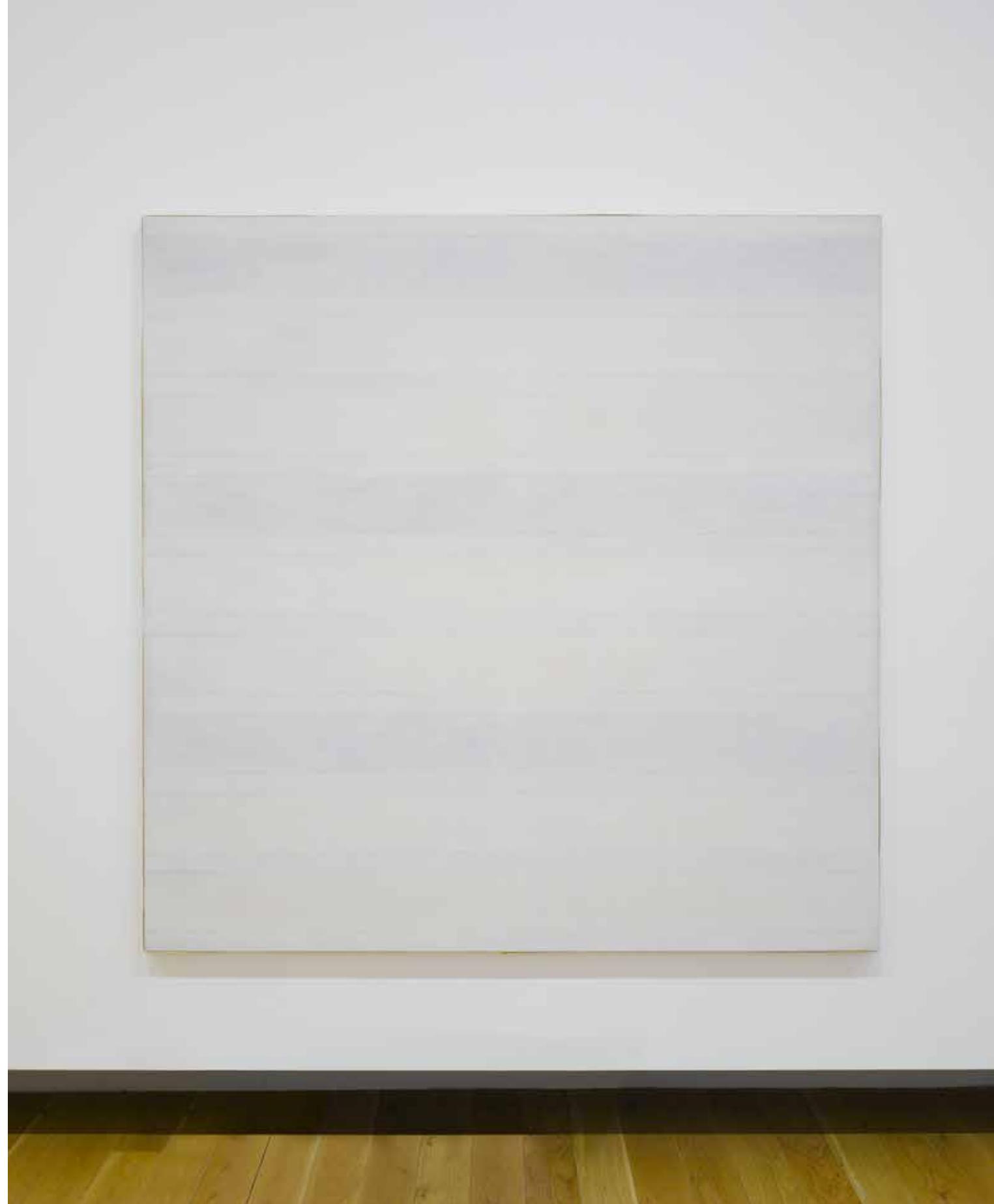
Untitled (for B.L.), 2011
acrylic on canvas, 228.6 x 182.8cm
© the artist and James Cohan Gallery New York/
Shanghai, photography Christopher Burke

Untitled (for P.B.), 2011
acrylic on canvas, 228.6 x 182.8cm
© the artist and James Cohan Gallery New York/
Shanghai, photography Christopher Burke



Agnes Martin

Untitled No. 7, 1980
gesso, acrylic and graphite, 184 x 184cm
Collection Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane
© Estate of Agnes Martin/ ARS, NY and IVARO, Dublin, 2015



Mary McIntyre

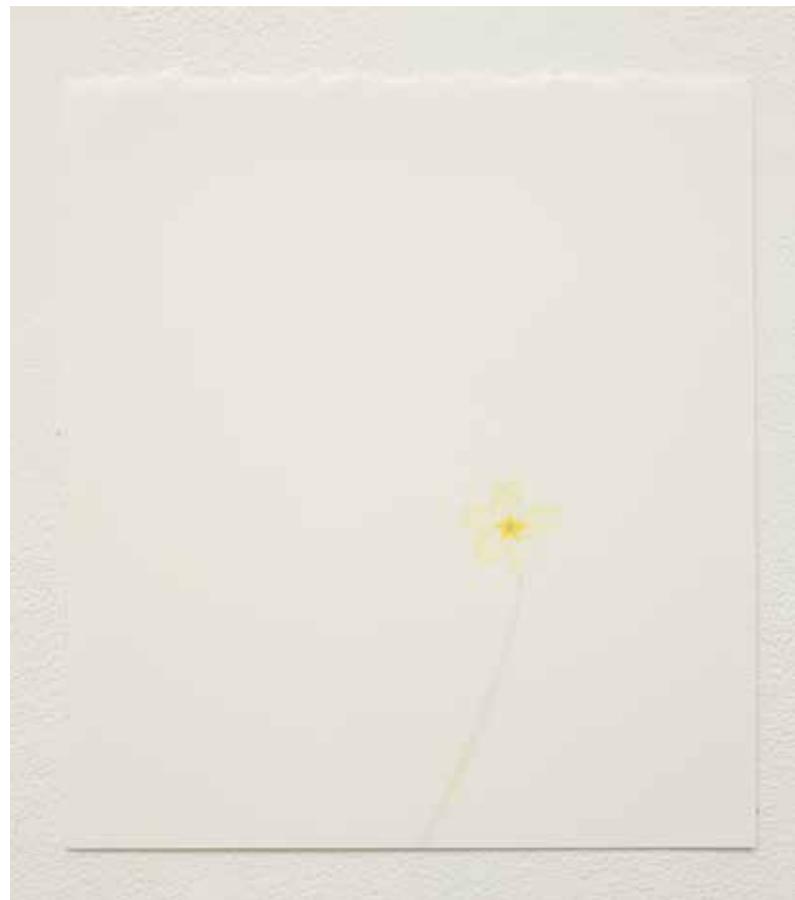


A Complex Variety of Greens (from Emerald to Viridian), 2011
colour lightjet photographic print, 122 cm x 152 cm,
Courtesy of the artist



The Path to the Distribution Point of Light, 2015
colour lightjet photographic print, 110 x 130cm,
edition of 3,
Courtesy of the artist

William McKeown

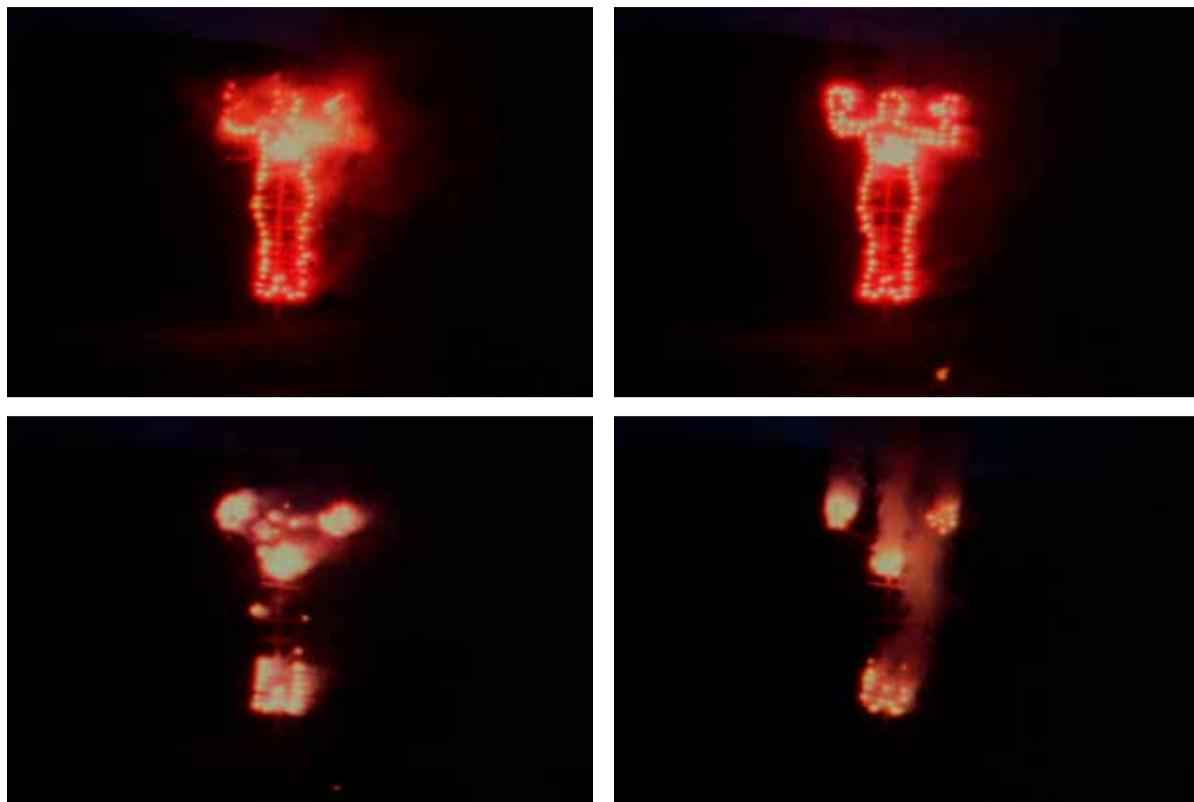


Open Drawing, Narrow Lane, 2005
colouring pencil on paper, 28 x 25 cm
Image courtesy of Kerlin Gallery and the
William McKeown Foundation

Ocean, 2009
oil on linen, 182 x 168cm
Image courtesy of Kerlin Gallery and the
William McKeown Foundation



Ana Mendieta



Anima, Silueta de Cohetes, 1976
Super 8mm, colour, silent film transferred to DVD,
2' 22" duration
© the Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC, Courtesy
Galerie Lelong, New York

Birth, 1981
Super 8mm, black and white, silent film transferred
to DVD, 2' 03" duration
© the Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC, Courtesy
Galerie Lelong, New York

Andrew Vickery



Arcades Ambo, 2012
mixed media and slide projection, 66 x 76 x 32cm
Collection of the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon





Installation view of William McKeown's solo exhibition at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, 2008. From left to right: *Untitled*, 2008; *The Meadow*, 2008; *The Meadow*, 2008 (oil on linen)
Photograph: Denis Mortell
© The William McKeown Foundation and Kerlin Gallery, Dublin

ARTISTS

Abbas (or Abbas Attar)

born in Iran, 1944; lives in Paris, France

"I am not interested in religion as faith. A person's relation with God is not my problem. What I am interested in is how religion affects societies – politically, socially and economically."

Abbas quoted in Graziano Scaldaferrri, "Documenting Iran: Revolution, Religion and Magnum Photographer Abbas", viewed 5 February 2015:

<http://theculturetrip.com/middle-east/iran/articles/documenting-iran-revolution-religion-and-magnum-photographer-abbas/>

Frédéric Bruly Bouabré

born in Zéprégühé, Ivory Coast, 1923; died in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, 2014

"The existence of a universal kinship, the unity of the world, and the necessity of cultural crossbreeding constitute the foundation of the artistic project Frédéric Bruly Bouabré holds dear."

Yaya Savané quoted in Lynn Cooke and André Magnin (eds.), *Worlds Envisioned: Alighiero e Boetti, Frédéric Bruly Bouabré*, DIA Center for the Arts, New York, 1994, p. 79.

Vija Celmins

born in Riga, Latvia, 1938; lives and works in New York City, USA

"I see drawing as thinking, as evidence of thinking, evidence of going from one place to another."

"Many words for things still seem best in Latvian. Words that don't have a proper translation into English, like ācgārni, which means you're doing things the most awkward way; it's more than a word, it's a cultural concept that is inside of me. Or words like pļava, which means field or meadow. It has totally different images connected for me than the English word field. Or a word like mežonīgls, which means fierce or from the forest; beast-like. I think, in some essential way, Latvian words shaped how I saw images."

William S. Bartman (ed.), *Vija Celmins*, Interviewed by Chuck Close, A.R.T. Press, New York, 1992.

Dorothy Cross

born in Cork, Ireland, 1956; lives and works in County Galway, Ireland

“In 2005 the DIA Foundation, commissioned her to create a web-based project. The resulting artwork, Foxglove digitalis purpurea, included a series of images of a young girl inserting her fingers into foxglove blossoms. The piece is accompanied by a soundtrack on which the same child recites the scientific characteristics of the drug digitalis, derived from the foxglove flower, effects of which are paradoxically curative (stimulating the heart) and negative (seeing only in blue). The dangers of touch and its efficacy are both part of the plant’s mythology.

In her recent work Cross has cast the foxglove flower’s delicate form in bronze. At first these sculptures appear to be typical botanical specimens, but a closer examination reveals that five bells on each stem are cast fingers that mimic the flower’s petals. Moving away from the technological medium in which touch is mediated, Cross achieves here a more direct connection in which the hand becomes part of the plant itself.”

Robin Lydenberg, Dorothy Cross. Connemara, Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, 2014, p. 9.

Vivienne Dick

born in Donegal, Ireland, in 1950; lives and works in Dublin

“I continue to be interested in exploring possibilities of relationship based on reciprocity, negotiation and respect for difference. I am interested in different experiences of being in the world. (...) I am interested in how the world we live in continues to be structured and led by a masculine (and western) point of view. It is becoming more and more necessary to challenge this emphasis on ‘having’, or we risk destroying all life.”

Vivienne Dick in “Interview with Treasa O’Brien” in Treasa O’Brien (ed.), *Between Truth and Fiction: The Films of Vivienne Dick*, LUX, London and The Crawford Art Gallery, Cork, 2009, p. 68.

Robert Gober

born in Wallingford, CT, USA, 1954; lives and works in New York City, USA

“At the time that I made this sculpture my psychiatrist was a child psychiatrist. The waiting room or hallway was borderline crummy but also wonderful because there were an equal number of adult-sized chairs and child-sized chairs, evoking an equanimity that frequently moved me.

As is often the case, I didn’t realize this sculpture’s real life source until well after its completion. I am convinced that for me the visual decisions or ideas happen in oblique, semi-conscious ways. This image or object was the silent companion of my talking cure. Sometimes the tissues were on a side table or the couch, but the chair, a small wooden one, was always there next to me. In putting the two objects together I thought I was placing adult-sized burdens on a child, magnified yet again the large drain underneath. One time in San Francisco someone asked me what the piece meant. I responded that he should understand what it is physically before worrying about meaning. When you know that the painted tissue box is bronze, you know that it is unnaturally heavy and then the meanings start to flow from the physical thing itself.”

Robert Gober, in Theodora Vischer (ed.), *Robert Gober, sculptures and installations, 1979-2007*, Schaulager Basel / Steidl, 2007.

Nan Goldin

born in Washington D.C., USA, 1963; lives and works in New York City, USA, Berlin, Germany, and Paris, France

“My work is about letting life be what it is and not trying to make it more or less, or altered. What I am interested in is capturing life as it is being lived, and the flavour and the smell of it, and maintaining that in the pictures. It really is about acceptance. I am a participant and witness at the same time, and live very much in the moment. I preserve the present so I don’t have to dwell on the past because the photographs are there to make that past concrete for me. Photographing started as a way for me to be free to experience everything without having to neurotically write it all down. It really is my visual diary.”

Nan Goldin, Taka Kawachi (eds.), *Couples and Loneliness* / Nan Goldin, Korinsha Press, Kyoto, 1998, p. 9.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres

born in Guáimaro, Cuba, 1957; died in Miami, USA, 1996

“The first stacks I made were some of the date-pieces. Around 1989 everyone was fighting for wall space. So the floor space was free, the floor space was marginal. I was also interested in giving back to the viewer, to the public, something that was never really mine to start with – this explosion of information, which in reality is an implosion of meaning. Secondly, when I got into making stacks – which was the show with Andrea [Rosen] – I wanted to do a show that would disappear completely. It had a lot to do with disappearance and learning. It was also about trying to be a threat to the art-marketing system, and also, to be really honest, it was about being generous to a certain extent. I wanted people to have my work. The fact that someone could just come and take my work and carry it with them was very exciting. Freud said that we rehearse our fears in order to lessen them. In a way this ‘letting go’ of the work, this refusal to make a static form, a monolithic sculpture, in favor of disappearing, changing, unstable, and fragile form was an attempt on my part to rehearse my fears of having Ross disappear day by day right in front of my eyes. It’s really a weird thing when you see the public come into the gallery and walk away with a piece of paper that is ‘yours.’”

Tim Rollins, “Felix Gonzalez-Torres, (interview)”, in Lucinda Barnes, Miyoshi Barosh, William S. Bartman, Rodney Sappington (eds.), *Between Artists: Twelve contemporary American artists interview twelve contemporary American artists*, ART Press, Los Angeles, 1996, pp. 82-101.

Seamus Harahan

born in London, UK, 1968; lives and works in Belfast, Northern Ireland

“There is a poetic quality in the way that Seamus Harahan’s camera turns to the furry head of a dandelion, or the wind blowing a can along a road. These scenes are captured as part of the incidental texture of urban life. Seamus references nature within an urban environment, but it is often introduced as something at odds with the subject matter of his video work. Frequently, this is about marginal and marginalised lives. Whereas he might be considered

to act in some sense as a voyeur on other people’s lives, what prevails in his work is an observation on the way state structures marginalise those who lack power. It communicates an empathy with individuals who operate on the edges of society, and a criticism of a lack of social provision that is prevalent in Northern Ireland. People whose lives fall outside of narrow, economic definitions of productive norms are neglected, such as those in residential care. Seamus can include references to nature in a way that doesn’t sentimentalise his subjects, and his identification with his subjects retains sight of the concrete material conditions that arbitrate our lived experiences.”

Hugh Mulholland, *The Nature of Things*. Artists from Northern Ireland, published by The British Council Northern Ireland and Arts Council Northern Ireland on the occasion of the 51st Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, 2005, p. 151.

Byron Kim

born in La Jolla, California, USA, 1961; lives and works in Brooklyn, New York, USA

“I want to lessen the exclusive connotation of abstraction by divesting it of its purest pretensions.”

Byron Kim quoted in *Face-to-Face, Recent Abstract Painting*, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1996, p. 14.

“Each piece also includes a border, running along one, two or three edges – never all four. These suggest window, cornices, and crests, and as such allow the picture plane to evoke the negative space between the buildings.”

Suzanne Hudson, “Byron Kim”, *Artforum*, February 2012.

Agnes Martin

born in Maklin, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1912; died in Taos, New Mexico, USA, 2004

“I would like [my pictures] to represent beauty, innocence and happiness. I would like them all to represent that. Exaltation.”

Agnes Martin, Interviewed by Irving Sandler, *Art Monthly*, no. 169, Sept. 1993.

“My formats are square, but the grids never are absolutely square; they are rectangles, a little bit

off the square, making a sort of contradiction, a dissonance, though I didn't set out to do it that way. When I cover the square surface with rectangles, it lightens the weight of the square, destroys its power."

Agnes Martin quoted in Lucy Lippard, "Homage to the Square", *Art in America*, vol. 55, no. 4, July-August, 1967, p. 55.

Mary McIntyre

born in Coleraine, Northern Ireland, 1966; lives and works in Belfast, Northern Ireland

"I often use titles like Reverie, which convey that idea of being lost in one's own thoughts and the notion that a lot of the time when we should be concentrating on something in particular, we're not really seeing what is in front of us at all. Instead, we're actually caught up in our own thoughts. I think that has become a very strong element in the work. I would hope that there is a space in my work for people to indulge their own particular viewpoint."

Jacqui McIntosh, "Interview with Mary McIntyre", *Circa* magazine, no. 116, 2006, p. 37.

William McKeown

born in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, 1962; died in Edinburgh, Scotland, UK, 2011

"There are two types of art – open and closed. All closed art is negative and anti-life. Art which is open accepts without judgement, is expanding, positive, and life enhancing."

William McKeown, *The Holiday Show*, Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, 2002, p. 6.

"My work is not about nature. It is about a response to a particular type of space. A space where there are no rules, no morals, no laws, no judgements, no systems. A space that is unconditional, all embracing, and free. This space, of course, is found in nature, but it can also be found in someone-else's eyes."

William McKeown. *The Sky Begins At Our Feet*, Belfast, Ormeau Baths, 2002, unpaginated.

Ana Mendieta

born in Havana, Cuba, 1948; died in New York, USA, 1985

Press release statement for the exhibition "Silueta Series 1977", Corroboree, Gallery of New Concepts, University of Iowa, Iowa City, December 1977

"The first part of my life was spent in Cuba, where a mixture of Spanish and African culture makes up the heritage of the people. The Roman Catholic Church and 'Santeria' – the culture of the African divinities represented with the catholic saints and magical powers – are the prevalent religions of the nation.

It is perhaps during my childhood in Cuba that I first became fascinated by primitive art and cultures. It seems as if these cultures are provided with an inner knowledge, a closeness to natural resources. And it is this knowledge which gives reality to the images they have created.

It is this sense of magic, knowledge and power, found in primitive art, that has influenced my personal attitude towards art-making. For the past five years I have been working out in nature, exploring the relationship between myself, the earth, and art. Using my body as a reference in the creation of the works, i am able to transcend myself in a voluntary submersion and a total identification with nature. Through my art, I want to express the immediacy of life and the eternity of nature."

Stephanie Rosenthal (ed.), *Ana Mendieta: Traces*, Hayward Gallery, London, 2014

Andrew Vickery

born in Devon, UK, 1963; lives and works in Berlin, Germany

"Taking the scenic route

Driving to the Mourne's ('where the mountains sweep down to the sea'); making coffee in the back of the Land Rover on a beach on the Antrim coast; Mrs. McKeown's cherry madeira cake. Daring to stand too close as the approaching waves crash onto the rocks. ('By the sea, by the sea, by the beautiful sea. You and me, you and me...'); looking for the longest beaches so that walks and conversations could go on and on. Walking in the Wicklow mountains; stopping to explore woodlands and ruined buildings; photographing each other on the cliffs in County Waterford. The bedroom, an oasis in an austere Presbyterian farmhouse; the lane; on the hill, drinking too much wine on a summer night.

Two in one nature."

Andrew Vickery, *The Paradise [39] – Arcades Ambo*, The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, 2013.

EXHIBITION WORKS

Abbas

Belfast, 1972
silver gelatin print on fibre, 40.5 x 30.1cm
Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art,
Purchase 2006

Frédéric Bruly Bouabré

La venue au monde de l'humanité chérie
(The coming into the world of dear humanity), 2011
pen and pencil on card, 194 works, each
14.2 x 10.8cm
Courtesy Magnin-A Gallery, Paris, France

Vija Celmins

Falling Stars, 2010
mezzotint, edition of 30 +10 AP, 41 x 30cm
Courtesy McKee Gallery, New York

Vija Celmins

Reverse Galaxy, 2010
mezzotint, edition of 30 +10 AP, 41 x 30cm
Courtesy McKee Gallery, New York

Vija Celmins

Divided Night Sky, 2010
mezzotint, edition of 30 +10 AP, 41 x 30cm
Courtesy McKee Gallery, New York

Vija Celmins

Untitled #10, 1994-1995
charcoal on paper, 43.2 x 55.9cm
Private Collection, New York

Dorothy Cross

Foxglove, 2012
bronze, 124 x 44 x 41cm
Private Collection

Vivienne Dick

Rothach, 1986
16mm transferred to DVD, colour, 9'
duration
Courtesy of the artist and LUX, London

Robert Gober

Untitled, 1997
cast plastic, painted bronze, paper, silver-plated steel, wood, 43.8 x 33 x 33cm
Private Collection

Nan Goldin

Christmas at the Other Side, Boston, 1972
gelatin silver print, 41 x 51cm
Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks
Gallery, New York

Nan Goldin

Jimmy Paulette and Tabboo! undressing,
NYC, 1991
cibachrome, 102 x 76cm
Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks
Gallery, New York

Nan Goldin

Joey at the Love Ball, NYC, 1991
cibachrome, 76 x 102cm
Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks
Gallery, New York

Nan Goldin

Joey dressed for Wigstock, 1991
cibachrome, 76 x 102cm
Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks
Gallery, New York

Nan Goldin

C putting on her make-up at Second Tip, Bangkok, 1992
cibachrome, 76 x 102cm
Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks
Gallery, New York

Nan Goldin

Couple in a Bed, Chicago, 1977
cibachrome, 76 x 102cm
Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks
Gallery, New York

Nan Goldin

Anthony by the Sea, Brighton, 1979
cibachrome, 76 x 102cm
Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks
Gallery, New York

Nan Goldin

Trixie on the cot, NYC, 1979
cibachrome, 102 x 76cm
Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks
Gallery, New York

[Nan Goldin](#)

Heart-shaped bruise, 1980

cibachrome, 51 x 61cm

Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

[Nan Goldin](#)

The Hug, NYC, 1980

cibacrome, 102 x 76cm

Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

[Nan Goldin](#)

Nan one month after being battered, 1984

cibacrome, 76 x 102cm

Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

[Felix Gonzalez-Torres](#)

"Untitled", 1989/1990

print on paper, endless copies, two parts, 66cm at ideal height x 142.2 x 58cm

Courtesy Carlos and Rosa de la Cruz Collection

© The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Collection, Courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York

[Felix Gonzalez-Torres](#)

"Untitled" (Portrait of Dad), 1991

white candies individually wrapped in cellophane, endless supply, ideal weight 175 lbs

Courtesy Carlos and Rosa de la Cruz Collection

© The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Collection, Courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York

[Felix Gonzalez-Torres](#)

"Untitled", 1991-1993

billboard, two parts, variable dimensions
Courtesy Sammlung Hoffmann

© The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Collection, Courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York

[Byron Kim](#)

Untitled (for B.L.), 2011

acrylic on canvas, 228.6 x 182.8cm

Courtesy of the artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York/Shanghai

[Byron Kim](#)

Untitled (for P.B.), 2011

acrylic on canvas, 228.6 x 182.8cm

Courtesy of the artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York/Shanghai

[Agnes Martin](#)

Untitled No. 7, 1980

gesso, acrylic and graphite, 184 x 184cm

Collection Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane

[Mary McIntyre](#)

The Path to the Distribution Point of Light, 2015

colour lightjet photographic print, 110 x 130cm, edition of 3

Courtesy of the artist

[William McKeown](#)

The Meadow, 2008

oil on linen, 182 x 168cm

Private Collection

[William McKeown](#)

The Barley Field, 2008

oil on linen, 43 x 43cm

Courtesy the Kerlin Gallery, Dublin and the William McKeown Foundation

[William McKeown](#)

The Barley Field, 2008

oil on linen, 182 x 168cm

Courtesy the Kerlin Gallery, Dublin and the William McKeown Foundation

[William McKeown](#)

Hope Painting #26, 2005

oil on canvas, 48.2 x 45.8cm

Courtesy the Kerlin Gallery, Dublin and the William McKeown Foundation

[William McKeown](#)

Open Drawing, Narrow Lane, 2005

colouring pencil on paper, 28 x 25 cm

Courtesy the Kerlin Gallery, Dublin and the William McKeown Foundation

[William McKeown](#)

Hope Painting, White White, 2006

oil on linen, 48 x 45.5cm

Courtesy the Kerlin Gallery, Dublin and the William McKeown Foundation

[William McKeown](#)

Snowing, 2008

oil on linen, 48 x 48cm

Courtesy the Kerlin Gallery, Dublin and the William McKeown Foundation

[William McKeown](#)

Ocean, 2009

oil on linen, 182 x 168cm

Courtesy the Kerlin Gallery, Dublin and the William McKeown Foundation

[William McKeown](#)

Untitled, 2009-2011

oil on linen, 168 x 168cm

Courtesy the Kerlin Gallery, Dublin and the William McKeown Foundation

[William McKeown](#)

Untitled, 2009-2011

oil on linen, 182 x 168cm

Courtesy the Kerlin Gallery, Dublin and the William McKeown Foundation

[William McKeown](#)

Untitled, 2009-2011

oil on linen, 48 x 48cm

Courtesy the Kerlin Gallery, Dublin and the William McKeown Foundation

[Ana Mendieta](#)

Anima, Silueta de Cohetes, 1976

Super 8mm, colour, silent film transferred to DVD, 2' 22" duration

Courtesy of the Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection and Galerie Lelong, New York

[Ana Mendieta](#)

Birth, 1981

Super 8mm, black and white, silent film transferred to DVD, 2' 03" duration

Courtesy of the Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection and Galerie Lelong, New York

[Andrew Vickery](#)

Arcades Ambo, 2012

mixed media and slide projection, 66 x 76 x 32cm

Collection of the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon



RHA



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