

Oatfield: Temperance

Abigail O' Brien

As part of the Oatfield Commission, Internationally renowned Irish artist and photographer Abigail O' Brien was chosen from an open competition to work in residence in the sweet factory. Her time spent there resulted in '**Oatfield – Temperance** a specially commissioned, limited edition hard bound photography book and multi-media exhibition which was launched on Saturday 14th November 2009 and continued until 16th January 2010 in the main gallery of the Regional Cultural Centre, Letterkenny.

The residency ran in the Oatfield Sweet Factory from October to December 2007. These remarkable resulting photographs are a unique and striking 'behind the scenes' insight into the work that goes on inside Oatfield Sweet Factory.

This project resulted in an incredible amount of excitement, goodwill within Oatfield Factory at a corporate level, amongst the individual employees, current and past. For the local community, the work of Oatfield has been recognised and celebrated. The place of the Oatfield Company within the heart of the community has been enhanced.

Oatfield Confectionary (extract from introductory catalogue essay by John M. Cunningham, Curator, Regional Cultural Centre).

'As a subject for an art project, 'Oatfield' is both brilliantly fertile and utterly contradictory. Sweet factories hold a rich fascination for us as a sort of modern-day fairy tale. Like Roald Dahl's 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory', where we sometimes lose ourselves like children in a universe of ephemera, myth and nonsense. Looking back on our younger selves, we see a world where anything seems possible and whatever we wish for is ours for the taking. Surely every child feels this way, filled with youthful optimism that is only ground down once the realities of adult life begin to make themselves known. It is only when we see ourselves truly as struggling adults can we fully appreciate the significance of our early years, and confront our humdrum reality with the lost magic of childhood.

What makes Abigail O' Brien's photographs of the 'Oatfield' factory so remarkable, is her uncanny ability to turn these childhood myths into reality in such a way that the ordinary factory floor turns out to be just as magical as the extraordinary. When she shows us the staff and workings of the plant, our sense of wonder is increased, not decreased. When we learn how a Chocolate Éclair comes into existence, do we think them less tasty; or that the reason that O'Brien's work vacillates between the peaks of movement and rest, of luxury and emptiness. One can also see this symbolised in the delicious, baroque folds of a sugar-mass collapsing into smooth flat forms.'

The Sweet Revelations of Abigail O'Brien (*extract from essay by Dr. David Galloway*).

'The remarkable series of photographs that Abigail O'Brien produced at the Oatfield Sweet Factory at Letterkenny in County Donegal can be read on many levels. The most prosaic interpretation would focus on the documentary nature of these works, which record the equipment and materials and processes involved in the making of traditional candies, but which also introduce us to the men and women who perform the necessary alchemy of sweet making. Mixing and kneading and pouring and extruding and pressing and tempering and slicing and wrapping, flow together into a sort of candy-choreography. Even outsiders can perceive the concentration, but also the rhythmic sureness and ease with which individual gestures are carried out. What transpires here is a kind of laying on of hands, and the workers, like the dwarfs in the film Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, have an air of witchcraft about them. But we do not just see employees going about the practiced routines of work. We see them in repose as well – as in 'Breaktime' or in 'Time Out', which conveys a sense of fundamental separation and weariness that seem to place the viewer in the role of voyeur. The men and women depicted here might be actors glimpsed backstage after a performance, their masks dropped.

In summarising this sequence under the title 'Temperance', O'Brien suggests the search for balance and harmony, for a middle ground. Aristotle saw temperance as the summit between two chasms – the chasms of intemperance and insensibility. The artist explores these extremes in the rituals and processes of the factory floor, but also reminds us as viewers that our hunger may be bigger than our stomachs. Hence, a state of balanced moderation may be possible only after swinging into extremes ('Good Girl 1' and 'Good Girl 2') or trespassing into excess ('Fools Gold'). It is for this

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The Per Cent for Art Scheme has funded many exciting and ambitious Public Art Projects in Donegal over the years and can be seen on our website www.donegalpublicart.ie.

Abigail O' Brien

Biography

Abigail O'Brien has won many awards for her work and her work is represented in both private and public collections, including The Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, The European Central Bank, Frankfurt, Goldman Sachs, London, The Caldic Collection, Rotterdam and the Volpinum Collection, Vienna. She has shown extensively, including Haus Der Kunst, Munich, The Gemeentemuseum, Holland, and Centro National des Artes, Mexico. Born in 1957, she received a first class honours BA Fine Art Painting in 1995 and an MA Fine Art Painting in 1998, from The National College of Art and Design, Dublin. Abigail O'Brien lives and works in Dublin.

Solo Exhibitions

2008

Bella, 2008, Galerie Bugdahn und Kaimer, Düsseldorf.

2007

Bella, 2007, Rubicon Gallery, Dublin.

2006

Confirmation- Martha's Cloth, 2004, Galerie Bugdahn und Kaimer, Düsseldorf.

2005

Fortitude, 2005, The John David Mooney Foundation, Chicago.

Garden Heaven - Holy Orders, 2001 - 2003, Centre Culture Irlandais, Paris.

The Seven Sacraments, 1995 - 2004, The R.H.A. Gallagher Gallery, Dublin.

Vita Activa, The Rubicon Gallery.

2004

The Seven Sacraments, 1995 - 2004, Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany.

The Seven Sacraments, 1995 - 2004, The Kunstverein, Lingen, Germany.

2003

The Rag Tree Series, Rubicon Gallery, Dublin

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The Rag Tree Series, Galerie Bugdahn und Kaimer, Düsseldorf.

2001

How to Butterfly a leg of Lamb, a collaboration with Mary Kelly, Galerie Bugdahn und Kaimer, Düsseldorf.

2000

from The Ophelia Room - Extreme Unction, Galerie Bugdahn und Kaimer, Düsseldorf. .

from Baptism, The Sculpture Court, Edinburgh College of Art, Edinburgh.

How to Butterfly a leg of Lamb, a collaboration with Mary Kelly, Edinburgh Arts Festival.

1999

Kitchen Pieces - Confession and Communion, Galerie Stadtpark, Krems, Austria.

How to Butterfly a Leg of Lamb, a collaboration with Mary Kelly, The Concourse, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, County Dublin.

1998

Kitchen Pieces - Confession and Communion, Galerie Bugdahn und Kaimer, Düsseldorf.

1996

Baptism, Old Museum, Belfast.

Man Eating Cream Bun, installation, Habitat, Dublin.

Baptism, Häagen Dazs/Temple Bar Gallery Solo Award, Dublin.

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Selected Mixed Group Exhibitions

2009

Altered Images, 19th June - 5th August, 2009, County Museum, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, in association with The Irish Museum of Modern Art.
Another Island, Contemporary Irish Art, March 2009, The American Historical Society, New York.

2008

Summer Interval 08, Galerie Bugdahn und Kaimer, Düsseldorf.
RHA 178th Annual Exhibition, February 2008, Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin.
Obra Nabarmenenak /Obras Fundamentals, Oct 2007 - Jan 1008, Sala Kubo-Kutxa, San Sebastian.

2007

RHA 177th Annual Exhibition, Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin.
Gestures of Infinity, Kultutzentrum bei den Minoriten, Graz, Austria.

2006

Einfach So, Galerie Bugdahn und Kaimer, Düsseldorf.
RHA 176th Annual Exhibition, (invited Artist) Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin.
Ten Years in the Making, an Exhibition of Art from the State Buildings, 1995 - 2005, Farmleigh, Dublin.
National Self-Portrait Collection, University of Limerick, Ireland.
Pulse Contemporary Art Fair, New York.
Art Rotterdam, Holland.

2005

Happy Holiday, Rubicon Gallery, Dublin. 2005
Bread Matters, West Cork Arts Centre, West Cork, Ireland.
The Eye of The Storm, The IMMA Collection, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin.

2004

Tir na nOg, new works from the I.M.M.A. Collection, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin.
Banquet Exhibition, RHA Gallagher Gallery, Dublin.
From a Collection - For a Collection, Galerie Bugdahn und Kaimer, Düsseldorf.
In the time of Shaking, Irish Museum of Modern Art.
Art Brussels, Paris photo. Fiac Paris, Art Cologne.

2003

Paris Photo
Child in Time, The Gemeentemuseum, Helmond, Holland.
Art Cologne, The Basil Art Forum.

2002

Lerse Kunst uit de Collectie van het Museum Modern Art Te Dublin, Stedelijk Museum, Belgium.
Stories, Haus der Kunst, Munich.

Paris Photo, Basil Art Forum, and Art Cologne.

2001

From the Poetic to the Political, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin.

“Zwischenraum # 4” Arbeiten mit Fotografie, Galerie Bugdahn und Kaimer, Düsseldorf.

Basil Art Forum, Art Cologne.

2000

Series, Elke Dröscher Galerie, Hamburg.

Art Cologne, Basil Art Forum.

Der Monokulare Blick, Kunstverein Lingen, Lingen, Germany.

Zwischen - Raum, Galerie Seitz und Partner, Wielandstr, Berlin.

Zwischenraum # Editionen und Multiples, Galerie Bugdahn und Kaimer, Düsseldorf.

Unschärferelation, Kunstverein Freiburg im Marienbad, Germany. Travelling tour to Kunstmuseum Heidenheim and Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken.

1999

Irish Art Now: From the Poetic to the Political, 1999 - 2001, travelling U.S. exhibition (organised by I.C.I. New York and I.M.M.A. Dublin)

Silent Presence: Contemporary Still-Life Photography, Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden- Baden and Bielefelder Kunstvere, 2000.

1999

The Challenge of Power, Limerick City Gallery, Limerick, November.

Berlin Art Forum, Basil Art Forum.

Perspective 99, Ormeau Baths Gallery, Belfast.

EV+A 99, Limerick City Gallery, Limerick.

Les Fleur du Mal, Galerie Seitz von Werder, Wielandstr.34, Berlin.

1998

EV+A 98, Limerick City Gallery, Limerick.

Art Forum Berlin.

Novisimos, Cortometrajes Mexicanos, Recientes en Cine y Video, Sala Luis Buñuel CCC/Centro Nacional de las Artes, Mexico, (a collaboration with Javier de la Garza).

Passport Exchange; (Ex) Change, National Polish Museum of Contemporary Art, Zacheta, Warsaw, Poland.

N.C.A.D. Postgraduate Show, Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery, Dublin, June.

1997

Passport Exchange, (Ex) Change, Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin.

Banquet Exhibition, RHA, Dublin

Figuration, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin.

1996

Arts Council of Ireland Materials Award, 1996

Artists Work Programme (residency), Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, 1996

NCEA National Student of the Year Award, N.C.A.D, 1995

Temple Bar Galleries and Häagen Dazs Solo Award, Temple Bar Gallery & Studios, 1995

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Collections

National Self-Portrait Collection, University of Limerick, Ireland.

Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland.

Office of Public Works, Ireland.

University College Limerick, Ireland.

The Caldic Collection, Rotterdam, Denmark.

Volpinum Collection, Vienna, Austria.

European Central Bank, Frankfurt, Germany.

Goldman Sachs, London, UK.

Private Collections, Europe and North America

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Selected Publications

The IMMA Collection, editor Marguerite O'Molloy, published by The Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, 2005

Artist Notes, Some thoughts on The Seven Sacraments, by Abigail O'Brien, January 2005.

Abigail O'Brien, The Seven Sacraments and The Ritualised Daily Life, essays by Stephanie Rosenthal, Ciaran Benson and Pater Friedhelm Mennekes, published by Haus der kunst and Steidl, 2004.

Some Trees, Published by Paul Andriessse for the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin 2004.

Currents, published by The Office Of Public Works, 2004.

Career Development, Abigail O'Brien, The Visual Arts News Sheet, page16, issue 5, 2004.

Stories, Text by Stephanie Rosenthal and essays by Söke Dinkla, Christoph Hochhäusler, Thomas Jäger and Matias Martinez, pub. by Haus der Kunst, Munich, 2002.

Unshärferelation, Fotografie als Dimension der Malerie, pub. by Hatje Cantz, text by Peter FitzGerald, Das Weltliche ins Sakrale, (p.21), 2000.

Installation Programme 1999, pub. by Dunlaoire Rathdown, essay by Abigail O'Brien And Mary Kelly.

The Challenge of Power, essay by Siun Hanrahan, pub. by Adapt, Limerick 1999

Lautlose Gegenwart, Das Stilleben in der Zeitgenossischen Fotografie, Staatliche Kunsthalle

Baden-Baden, catalogue essay by Dr Jessica Mueller 1999

Irish Art Now - From the Poetic to the Political, essays by Declan McGonagle, Fintan O'Toole and Kim Levin, published by Independent Curators International, New York, in association with the Irish Museum of Modern Art, 1999

MA Fine Art Degree Show 1998, National College of art and Design, cat. pub. by The Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, text by Peter FitzGerald, Kitchen Pieces - Confession and Communion, (p.19), 1998
Figuration, Works from the Collection of The Irish Museum of Modern Art, text by Catherine Marshall, Curator of the Collection, 1997
Representing Women: An Interview with Kiki Smith, by Abigail O'Brien, in Thought Lines, ed. by Sue McNab, pub. by National College of Art and Design, 1996
Baptism, Häagen Dazs/Temple Bar Gallery Solo Award catalogue, essay by Medb Ruane, 1996
EV+A 96, EV+A 98 and EV+A 99, catalogues

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Selected Reviews

2008

Bella, Abigail O'Brien, Galerie Bugdahn und Kaimer, Art News, Review by David Galloway, December 2008, p132/133.

2007

At 177 years old, the RHA's annual show is a picture - and even sculpture - of health, The Sunday Times Culture, June 3, 2007, article by Cristin Leach,

2006

Splendor at the Market, by Alison B Levy, August, 2006

2005

Corks Lost Opportunities, Visual Arts 2005, article by Aidan Dunne, The Irish Times, 15/12/05.

Vita Activa, article by Sara Keating, In Dublin Magazine, February 2005.

RTE 'The View' Arts show review 1/2/05, [click here to download the review in real media format.](#)

The Seven Ages of Woman, article by Aidan Dunne, The Irish Times, 1/2/05.

An Artist who uses her loaf, article by Cristin Leach, The Sunday Times Culture, 30/1/05.

2004

Die Sieben Sakramente, Abigail O'Brien und der ritualisierte Alttag, article by Cornelia Gockel, Kunst Forum, vol nr 169, page 60, 1/02/04.

Frauenarbeit auf irish: "Die Sieben Sacramente", article by Michael Dultz, Die Welt, page 68, 24/02/04.

Die Bastion der starken Frauen, article by Matthias Kuhn, GO München, page 31, March, 2004.

Munich: Abigail O'Brien at Haus der Kunst, article by Birgit Sonna, translated by

Peter FitzGerald, page 94, Circa 108, Summer, 2004.

Statements of Intent, article by Aidan Dunne, The Irish Times, page 16, 14/05/04.

The Seven Sacraments, Abigail O'Brien, article by Roberta McGrath, Source vol 40, page 70, Autumn 2004.

2003

The Rag Tree, article by Aidan Dunne, Irish Times, 10/11/03.

Abigail O'Brien; The Rag Tree Series, The Sunday Times Culture, article by Catherine Leen, 16/11/03.

Marking Time, article by Marianne O'Kane, Irish Arts Review, page 84, vol 21, no 1, Spring 2003.

2002

Wie Tarzan im Geschichten-Dschungel, article by Roberta De Righi, Abendzeitung München, 28/03/02.

Das Ende ist offen, Die Ausstellung "Stories" im Haus Der Kunst, article by Annette Krauß, Donaukurier, 02/04/02.

Das wahre Abenteuer findet im Kopf statt, article by Charly Prestele, Allgäuer Zeitung, 03/04/02.

Auf der Suche nach verlorenen Geschichten, article by Stephanie Krawehl, Berchtesgadener Anzeiger, 04/04/02.

2001

Views from the Margin, article by Medb Ruane, Sunday Times Culture Ireland, 25/11/01.

Düsseldorf, Abigail O'Brien, Bugdahn und Kaimer, article by Magdalena Kröner,

Flash Art, vol XXXIV, January - February.

Re-Enter Ophelia, article by Stefanie Grebe, translated by Andrea Lange, Source, issue 26, Spring.

2000

Tod und Aufbruch, (Death and Rebirth), article by Magdalena Kröner, Rheinische Post, 10/11/00.

Das eisige Ende Von Ophelia ,(Ophelia's icy ending), article by Helga Meister, Westdeutsche Zeitung, 7/11/00.

How to Butterfly a Leg of Lamb: Abigail O'Brien and Mary Kelly, article by Susanna

Beaumont, The Scotsman, 8/8/00.

1999

Playing in the Ruins of Western Culture, article by Aidan Dunne, The Irish Times, 11/08/99.

Still Leben im Stilleben, (Still Life in Still Life), article by Ronald Berg, Tagesspiegel, Berlin, 22/05/99.

All about EV+A, article by Dorothy Walker, The Sunday Times Culture Ireland, 23/05/99.

Limerick's mini-marathon, article by Aidan Dunne, The Irish Times, 27/05/99.

The Silence of the Lamb, article by Aidan Dunne, The Irish Times, 10/03/99.

A Women's Work, article by Ciaran Owens, The Event Guide, March.

Abigail O'Brien, Düsseldorf, article by David Galloway, Art News, February.
Fotografie in Düsseldorf, article by Uta Maria Reindl, Eikon International Photo Journal, issue 26/27, 1998/1999.
Das eisige Ende Von Ophelia ,(Ophelia's icy ending), article by Helga Meister, Westdeutsche Zeitung, 7/11/00.
How to Butterfly a Leg of Lamb: Abigail O'Brien and Mary Kelly, article by Susanna
Beaumont, The Scotsman, 8/8/00.

1999

Playing in the Ruins of Western Culture, article by Aidan Dunne,
The Irish Times, 11/08/99.
Still Leben im Stilleben, (Still Life in Still Life), article by Ronald Berg,
Tagesspiegel, Berlin, 22/05/99.
All about EV+A, article by Dorothy Walker, The Sunday Times Culture Ireland,
23/05/99.
Limerick's mini-marathon, article by Aidan Dunne, The Irish Times, 27/05/99.
The Silence of the Lamb, article by Aidan Dunne, The Irish Times, 10/03/99.
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Abigail O'Brien, Düsseldorf, article by David Galloway, Art News, February.
Fotografie in Düsseldorf, article by Uta Maria Reindl, Eikon International Photo Journal, issue 26/27, 1998/1999.

1998

Highlights and Classic Flops of the Gallery Year, article by Dorothy Walker,
The Sunday Times Culture Ireland, 20/12/98.
Das Tägliche Brot (The Daily Bread), article by Klaus Sebastian, Rheinische Post, 30/10/98.
Ein Düsseldorf Photoprogramme - Pioniere und Experimente (A Düsseldorf Photoprogramme - Pioneers and Experimenters),
article by Ina Weinrautner, Handles Blatt, 03/11/98.
Heile Küchenwelt (Healthy Kitchenworld), article by Susanne Henle,
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 28/11/98.
Altes Licht auf Neue (An Old Light on New Things), article by Helga Meister,
Westdeutsche Zeitung, 30/11/98.
There is no house style, article by Aidan Dunne, The Irish Times, 03/06/98.

1997

R.H.A. Banquet Exhibition, article by Elaine Hartigan, Mary Kelly and Peter FitzGerald, Circa no 82, Winter.
Passport Exchange; (Ex) Change, review by Alannah Hopkin, The Sunday Times Culture Ireland, 21/12/97.
Waiting Spaces, article by Marian Lovett, Circa No. 79 Spring.
The Eighth Mostyn Open, article by Caoimhin Mac Giolla Leith, Circa No. 79 Spring.

1996

The Culture Ireland review of 1996, article by Medb Ruane,
The Sunday Times, 29/12/96.
Baptism, article by Nicholas Allen, Source, Vol. 3, No. 2, Summer

Front Cover, Circa No. 76, Summer.

Public Understatement, article by Marian Lovett, Circa No 76, Summer.

Abigail O'Brien, Temple Bar Gallery, article by Luke Clancy, The Irish Times, 22/05/96.

Broadening the Canvas, article by Aidan Dunne, The Sunday Tribune, 05/05/96.

Abigail the Baptist, article by Medb Ruane, The Sunday Times, 28/04/96.

Diversity of Talent and Approach, article by Brian Fallon, The Irish Times, 27/03/96.

The Guy who Made a Joke of EV+A, article by Dunne, The Sunday Tribune, 17/03/96.

Subversion by the Shannon, article by Medb Ruane, The Sunday Times, 17/03/96.

1995

Degree Showdown, 'vox pop', Circa, Autumn 1995, Vol. 73, p. 42.

Arty Students, article by Aidan Dunne, The Sunday Tribune, 11/06/95.

N.C.A.D. Degree Shows, article by Medb Ruane, The Sunday Times, 11/06/95.

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