

17 October 2017

******* Press Release for Immediate Attention *******

Opening at Void, Derry

Where History Begins

Kader Attia | Duncan Campbell | Ali Cherri | Christodoulos Panayiotou |

Curated by Mary Cremin

Exhibition Launch - Saturday 28 October 2017

The Paradox of Acting: An Archeology of Our Spectacles

Performance by Christodoulos Panayiotou 5pm

Curators's Talk 7pm; Launch 7:30-9pm

Exhibition continues until 16 December 2017

Where History Begins explores the complex relationship between material culture and historical truth. The development of archaeology in the early 19th Century is closely associated with the categorisation of material culture, preoccupied with the construction of a timeline through which artefacts determine the culture of a society in a space and time. These materials have become indexes within the field of research and when placed within a museum context have become valuable evidence or artefacts evoking a history. This interest in history or preservation has been traced back by historians to ancient art collections that predate the museum at the end of the third century BC. The museum as collector or preserver of culture has become a contested site for artefacts. The collection of these pieces is often associated with the colonial project, the construction of the Nation State and a symbol of capitalism.

The nature of culture is to be dynamic and constantly shifting, with a multiplicity of histories. This exhibition questions how we construct historical narratives, how there is no one historical truth, and in what way histories have been constructed through the colonial project and particular ideological contexts. The writer Édouard Glissant observed that museums have become more like continents and that they should be more like an 'archipelago', he called for a global dialogue that does not erase local cultures but finds the commonality in difference.

Artefacts that demonstrate the complex history of Derry City and its surrounding area, from the early Neolithic period (c.4000 – 3500 BC) to the Ulster plantation period of the 17th Century are exhibited with national and international contemporary artists revealing comparative histories with other cultures. The artists address the difficult relationship between destruction, conservation, appropriation and collective memory.

Ali Cherri's film work *Petrified* (2015) questions the fetishisation of historical artefacts, by looking at the value we place on provenance and authenticity. The current prevalence of looting and the trafficking of artefacts, especially in conflict zones in the Middle East, open a timely debate on the reconstruction and restoration of demolished heritage. How does this alter the notion of authenticity? What historical traces are deemed valuable and why? Filmed between Sharjah's Arabian Wildlife Centre and an excavation site in Northern Sudan, *Petrified* takes a journey into the life of dead objects.

Christodoulos Panayiotou, *Real Fakes* (2015) questions this notion of authenticity, and what becomes part of the historical lexicon. The work is made from stones that were discarded from archaeological excavations in Cyprus; they become ready made, sculptures that are formed through a process of creation and destruction. Within the act of digging in archaeology there is the act of revealing and hiding, as often times the site is covered over once excavated and in its becoming it dies returning again to this idea of the dead objects.

Duncan Campbell's, *It For Others* (2013) is an essay film that examines how we understand certain histories through objects and how we assign value on material goods. The piece takes as its starting point the 1953 film by Alan Resnais and Chris Marker called *Statues Also Die*, which asserts that colonialism is responsible for the demystification and commercialisation of traditional art from African culture. The film moves from the appropriation of traditional art from Western Africa, to the death of purpose of these objects from the colonial classes from here Campbell moves to popular culture and the construction of historical narratives through images and objects.

Kader Attia's film *Reflecting Memory* (2016) splices interviews with academics and medical professionals with footage of individuals engaged in solitary pursuits: contemplating nature, sitting in a church pew, and admiring urban monuments. The subject discussed is the phantom limb pain experienced by amputees. This pain is aligned to cultural trauma, the history of colonialism and the appropriation of territories, people and objects and the repairing of the past pains or traumas of colonies. In film theory 'suture' refers to the phenomenon by which the mind produces a narrative whole from the fragments combined through cinematic cuts, creating a semblance of totality even when we should know better than to expect one. Attia's film deftly exposes how the desire to perceive a whole subject can itself operate as an act of erasure.

The works reflect on regimes of knowledge both past and present. Questioning perceived notions and casting a critical eye on accepted canons. Where does one position oneself when looking at an artefact, what does it reveal, what does it have in common with other contemporary propositions in the world? In Glissant's theory of relation, what brings things together is first of all the connection between differences, as they meet one after the other. The basis for which cause ideas, identities and intuitions to meet, revealing to us the common grounds that we share. It is within this commonality that one finds the universal and where history begins.

Void would like to thank the Tower Museum for their support of this exhibition and for the loan of pieces from their collection.

Note to Editors:

- **Additional Events**

- The Paradox of Acting: An Archeology of Our Spectacles - The Paradox of Acting:
Live performance by Christodoulos Panayiotou

Saturday 28th October, 5-7:15pm

This is a once-off event and booking is advised. Admission free.

Please email hello@derrvoid.com to reserve your space today.

- The Story of Derry - a 90 Minute Walking Tour conducted by Mark Lusby, Coordinator of the Friends of the Derry Walls - **Saturday November 4th, 1:30pm**

The tour will take place in the Merchant Quarter in which Void Gallery is located and it will proceed through the Bogside to Double Bastion on the Derry Walls. Mark will discuss how the Story of Derry is memorialised in streetscapes, buildings, and monuments of the city from the sculpted heads on the former City Factory to the engravings on the 17th ordnance on the Walls.

Mark is currently undertaking post graduate research at Queen's University Belfast, looking at how contested narratives inform regeneration. The Friends of the Derry Walls is a charitable organisation with the mission of being the voice of the Walls, raising ambitions for their care and presentation, driving public engagement with the Walls and ensuring that the Walls are fully exploited as a resource for educational, cultural and economic development.

- Film screening as part of Foyle Film Festival - **November 21st, 7pm**

Ali Cherri

The Digger, 2015

Video - 30 min

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Imane Farès

Alan Resnais & Chris Marker

Statues Also Die, 1953

Video - 30 min

For further information go to <http://www.foylefilmfestival.org>

- 'Archaeology and the Troubles: Researching the Past of a Divided City.' Talk with Brian Lacey - The Process Room, Void Derry. **December 13th, 6pm**

In this talk Brian will reflect on his career as an archaeologist and museum director in Derry, particularly his role in excavating centre-city sites at the height of the Troubles, and researching the fascinating but politically controversial history of the city as both an author and a creator of museum exhibitions.

Dr Brian Lacey is a historian and archaeologist specialising in the early medieval period in Co. Donegal and Derry city. He lectured at Magee College, Derry, (1974-86) and later set up Derry's Heritage and Museum Service having directed a series of salvage excavations at 'Troubles' bomb-sites in the city. He directed the pioneering archaeological survey of Co. Donegal (1980-3) and headed the Discovery Programme, an institute for advanced research in Irish archaeology (1998-2012). He is the author of many research papers and about 12 books, including *St Columba: His Life and Legacy* and *Medieval and monastic Derry: sixth century to 1600*. His most recent published Derry research dealt with what happened in the city during the Easter Rising of 1916.

- For further information on Void Derry or to arrange a tour or interview, please contact: Tansy Cowley, Press & Marketing Coordinator, Void Derry marketing@derryvoid.com / 028 7130 8080

Void Gallery:

- Void is a contemporary art space located in Derry, Northern Ireland. With up to 5 exhibitions per year showing the work of established international and Irish artists, Void has established an international reputation for its wide-ranging and challenging exhibition programme. Void exists to present the contemporary visual arts and to support artists, through a programme of exhibitions, related educational and outreach activities from a national and international perspective. A key element to the gallery is the Void Engage programme, which places participation, engagement and learning at the heart of Void, making contemporary visual art accessible to visitors of all ages.

- Mission statement: Void exists to present the contemporary visual arts and to support artists, through a programme of exhibitions, related educational and outreach activities from a national and international perspective.
- Void are open Tuesday - Saturday, 11am - 5pm. Admission is free. Void Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council Northern Ireland.
- For the latest news and events follow @derryvoid of Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.
- Void Gallery, City Factory, Patrick Street, Londonderry, Derry, BT48 7EL .
028 71308080 / www.derryvoid.com.

***** ENDS *****



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