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**12 August 2020**

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

**Alan Phelan**

***echoes are always more muted - at Void Gallery, Derry***

**8 September - 31 October 2020**

**Preview 5 September, 6-8pm**

Alan Phelan's exhibition *echoes are always more muted* is part of an expanded series of exhibitions that encompass his continuing research into the intersections of history, sexuality, material culture and politics which have evolved through sculpture, participatory events, and photography.

The genesis of this new body of work is the photographic process invented by John Joly (1890s) that created colour via a red, green and blue screen to create the full colour spectrum. The two-layer photograph consists of the striped colour screen and black & white sheet film, which also creates a unique colour shift upon viewing. The process was used into the early 20th Century and abandoned for colour without stripes.

John Joly, the inventor of the process, provides the biographical background to the 15-minute film *Folly & Diction* (2020). Instead of a detailed documentary, the music video format provides the structure with a narrative taken from a Samuel Beckett short story and narration in the form of song lyrics, culled from a poem by Jean Genet. The video tells an oblique story of loss, a forgotten history, and a failed relationship with his collaborator Henry Dixon. It brings Joly's photographic process into a contemporary sphere with audio responsive animated stripes that pulse to the music and crude video layering that draws on multiple music video tropes.

Red, green and blue form the basis of how video screens present colour and how we experience colour in all electronic devices; this provides the background for other works in the exhibition. The centre piece of Gallery 1 is an installation of various props and parts which further expand the idea of a photograph as a multi-sensory object moving into an augmented reality and fragrance as a memory trigger. A small RGB hyacinth flower is enlarged via a mobile phone AR app and the sweet scent of the flower pervades the gallery. The mattress, pot, and plant notebook connects to the film, referencing an earlier script - elements that were eliminated in the final cut. The flower has persisted, however, as a memory trigger, as in the film, just like a fragrance, to a different sensory connection with the past.

The recurring use of this trio of colours shift to gels on spotlights, onto a new wall work comprised of screen-printed page layouts, from a zine dealing with images and texts that delve into a wider art history of stripes. The wall is punctuated by a single Joly screen photograph of a headless self-portrait, shot from behind, in red, with red roses, pushing bathos that bit further.

Five new Joly screen images hung close to this are the most recent photographs. They have dense compositions made of dots, with holes in the screen that reflect onto circular mirrors, creating monochrome gaps in the striped screen, overlapping into the objects photographed. Works by John Baldessari and Sigmar Polke provide more recent histories as reference points here.

Ten Joly screen images in Gallery 3 traverse different art histories relating to the pre-photographic photo realism of 17th Century flower paintings; moving through cinematic references, advertising, 1950s ikebana Japanese flower arranging, queer photography, and more. The inherent ambiguity of the images ghosts a history the process never had a chance to image or imagine. Convoluted titles attempt to navigate possible interpretative paths but they only leave echoes of a past that never happened and a present that has still more to achieve or reveal.

This series of works expands on Phelan's preoccupation with re-imagining history in a contemporary guise, he appropriates histories, deconstructing others to make a mélange of humorous imagery that references the gamut of art and photographic genres. It is an exercise of storytelling that is at once all-encompassing but ultimately a story of invention, failure and love.

## **Biography**

Alan Phelan (b.1968) is an artist based in Dublin whose practice began in photography and has extended into many different media and mediums with a focus on interpretation, language and collaboration. He studied at Dublin City University and Rochester Institute of Technology, New York. Recent exhibitions and projects include RHA, Dublin; The Dock, Carrick-on-Shannon (2020); *Company of Others*, CCA, Derry (2020); TBG+S Atrium (2019); The LAB, Dublin (2019); and Glucksman Gallery, Cork (2019). *Our Kind*, commissioned by Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane for 2016/1916 was also screened in Oslo, Bergen, Derry, Belfast and Carlow where it won the Hotron Éigse Art Prize. Internationally he has shown at Dada Post, Berlin; Loop, Barcelona; Videonale.15 Bonn Kunstmuseum; Detroit, Stockholm; Bozar, Brussels; Treignac Projet, France; Eastlink Gallery, Shanghai; Oksasenkatu 11, Helsinki; Mina Dresden Gallery, San Francisco; Galería Del Infinito Arte, Buenos Aires; ŠKUC, Ljubljana; SKC Gallery, Belgrade; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Public art commissions include works for Dublin City Council, Dublin South County Council, St Michael's House Special National School Raheny and the Dept of Communications. He is currently the NCAD School of Fine Art Artist in Residence for 2019-20.

For more about Alan's work please visit [www.alanphelan.com](http://www.alanphelan.com).

## **Additional events**

Due to COVID-19, Void will have a soft opening on Saturday 5th September, where limited visitors will be invited to attend either individually or in social groups. Please note there will be no refreshments served in the interest of health and safety. Please RSVP by booking through Eventbrite or email hello@derryvoid.com or phone 028 7130 8080.

### ***The RGB Hyacinth***

This autumn Alan Phelan will present *The RGB Hyacinth* as part of Void Offsites. Phelan's project is a crowd-sourced sculpture made by individual participants in isolation, then assembled together to create the final artwork. This collective making process acknowledges and commemorates the COVID-19 crisis. The sculpture will be of a hyacinth flower; using the red, green and blue colours with petals made in papier-mâché, based around a small similar work due to be exhibited at Void Gallery as part of Phelan's exhibition *echoes are always more muted* which launches on 5 September. It is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and

Trade. The launch of this sculpture will take place this autumn - please stay tuned to our website for further details.

- For further information on Void Derry or to arrange a tour or interview, please contact: Tansy Cowley, Press & Marketing Coordinator, Void Gallery, 100 Patrick Street, Derry-Londonderry, BT48 7EL, [marketing@derryvoid.com](mailto:marketing@derryvoid.com), or by phone on 028 7130 8080.
- *echoes are always more muted* is kindly supported by the Arts Council, Ireland; Creative Ireland; Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris; Demeter Fragrance Library; Dublin City Council; Fire Station Artists' Studios, Dublin; Meath County Council; National College of Arts and Design, Dublin; the Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin; Solstice Arts Centre, Navan; Small Night Zine; Temple Bar Gallery and Studios, Dublin; The Dock, Carrick-on-Shannon.

**Void Gallery:**

- Void Gallery is a contemporary art space located in Derry-Londonderry, Northern Ireland. With up to 5 exhibitions per year showing the work of established international and Irish artists, Void has created an international reputation for its wide-ranging and challenging exhibition programme. A key element to the gallery is the Engage programme, which places participation, engagement and learning at the heart of Void, making contemporary visual art accessible to visitors of all ages.
- Void Gallery is open Tuesday - Saturday, 11am - 5pm. Admission is free. Due to COVID-19, we have put a range of health and safety measures in place to ensure the welfare and peace of mind of our visitors and staff, including hand sanitiser and disposable face masks. Please see our website for details or contact us.
- Void Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council Northern Ireland, Derry City and Strabane District Council, Enkalon Foundation, Ragdoll Foundation, COVID 19 Charities Fund, Art Fund, and Garfield Weston Foundation.
- For the latest news and events follow @derryvoid on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram - #voidartgallery - or visit our website at [www.derryvoid.com](http://www.derryvoid.com).
- Void Gallery, 100 Patrick Street, Derry-Londonderry, BT48 7EL.  
+44 (0)28 7130 8080 / [www.derryvoid.com](http://www.derryvoid.com).

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