

Aideen Barry
Everything Changes, Nothing Perishes

31 May - 20 July

The world has always laughed at its own tragedies, that being the only way in which it has been able to bear them

Oscar Wilde

Omnia mutantur, nihil interit, verse from Ovid's *Metamorphose*, is a metaphoric image of immortality, not referred here to the enjoyment of youth or eternal life but to the continuity of spirit, in some way. With a historical approach, it could be applied to our unavoidable predisposition to repeat over and over again mistakes and nonsenses from the past; Furthermore, to extrapolate to the boom of ultra conservative ideologies in the political body and the everyday sphere, and to our own failures and incapacity to prevent disaster, what becomes in a kind of vicious cycle, condemned to repetition *ad infinitum*, like Sisyphus.

Thomas Hobbes, in his mechanistic thinking frame, considers that man is a type of machine, enunciating the concept of *political body*, in relationship with the Estate, as a result of a political power acceptance deal on the part of those natural machines that are humans, who are situated in an intermediate position between that body and robots. Any existence is also armed with movement; Being that movement the effect or cause of others, it is the final responsible for all reality. In the same way, it is human motor force what enables mutual coordination and feedback between the cognitive, the imaginative and conceptual, from which the "mechanical" subject can produce and reproduce images and, through them, build or rebuild the world.

Aideen Barry is attracted by this mechanistic notion of the bodies in their creative practise. Also, deepen in the fascination about what is normal and what extraordinary in daily life; how anxiety, humour, horror, banality and boredom converged in daily routine, with their repeated chores ad nauseam. Even more, it creates its connection with the absurdity of endless repetition and lack of sense of tasks, useless very often, of acts and behaviours. All these automatic gestures, within a sterile, anodyne and alienating routine, integral part of contemporaneity, whose best image is, paradoxically, the myth of Sisyphus.

In these terms, our daily life reduced to a total absurd results hard of explain. However, Albert Camus, based on Greek mythology, in the *Myth of Sisyphus* states that is certainly the absurd what holds the hope for the future, since neither the reason nor the science can reveal the truth of Universe. To assume this statement implies accepting contradiction between reason and desire, and the following understanding of the world and its truths, which are not necessarily true. The third chapter of this philosophical essay, alludes to art and creation as the media to scape from the absurdity of existence.

The banality of the task and the absurdity of its repetition, together with theorize about anxiety and the multiple ways and circumstances in which they are manifested, constitute the premises and the discursive axis of all Aideen's work, especially materialised through drawing and video, very often finding an interaction between the two, and, to a small extent, of sculpture.

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The empathy that propitiates her female condition, leads her to elaborate narratives about how women live in a present continuous of routine and anxiety, letting her go to nowhere, once she has reached the negation of her own condition as autonomous subject. Lack of empathy, knowledge and freedom; with the consciousness extinguished, which is impossible without imagination, sensation and memory, she becomes a kind of robot. It is a metaphoric image of the working women, at the same time recipient of reproduction, involved in an endless work overload. The pitch joins the hilarious with the pathetic, relating the narrative to the strictly personal and the everyday domestic, with a feminist coding. With these elements she sketches a phenomenological reasoning embedded with an enigmatic black humour. For that purpose, she does several and continuous investigations in the performatic and material fields, invoking ridicule or, at least, shocking situations, that develop her videos. In her audiovisuals, in which she embodies the protagonist role, reference to Jan Svankmajer's stop motion and silent cinema are unavoidable, where movement is impulsive, convulsive and compulsive. The scenes seem to be the outcome of a repetition of moments; result of the return to an already lived time or the coming back to that time because of the curvature produced in this dimension, until it creates circles, at the mercy of which our existence would be similar to the protagonist of *Groundhog Day*. Here, Einstein's theory about the curvature or folding of space-time, would come into play, what explains those shortcuts called Warm Holes, through which distant positions of one and other are connected.

When we face these videos, it is also unavoidable the reference to Hammer Horror B serie Gothic films, which evokes the influence of Irish Gothic; Barry feels responsible for the influence of Bram Stoker, *Dracula's* author, and for the less well known although precursor of the genre and character, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. There is an intention of revealing what is the contemporary gothic and how to detect it in its more obvious manifestations, where, nevertheless, inextricable things happen, contextualised in a mainly feministic discourse.

Together with the audiovisuals, we can see several drawing and animation Works that reinforce the idea of change, evolution and return, apart from feminist reflection. In *Windmills (The sleep of reason produces windmills)* she refers to *Los Caprichos* de Goya and to *Don Quijote*.

This banality that the artist alludes in her work contrast with the deepness of her philosophical and scientific references -Time Bends, site specific installation, with an evident reference to the Theory of Relativity, that we have referred before, is the title of the interactive drawing and video mapping installation, in which a sinuous lines, that evokes the ringed body of annelids, in huge proportions, cover at an angle most of the two big facings of the gallery, also occupying this floor area-. At the same time, the concept collides with the technical complexity of her installation, in which we can see the high technology and limited edition gadgets. Under this counterpoint, encouraged by the apparently innocent language, a strong ludic sense and certain practise linked to the field of Pataphysics arises.

Thus, she develops a discourse on absurdity, that the images of her pieces communicate. Not for nothing, humour is the best tool for rebellion, used as stimulus to create debate about gender roles and questioning a heteronormative world, independently, the recognition of its subversive potential dates back to remote times, also to transmit the memory of events. Philip Roth, Gunther Grass y others, have coincided in humour and laugh as the best vehicle to runaway from inherited traumas.

I began this text with one of the verses of Ovid's *Metamorphose*, that, translated into English, is the title of this exhibition: *Omnia mutantur, nihil interit / Everything Changes, Nothing Perishes*. As some of this piece's exegetes have interpreted, it is an image of the creator's continued existence in his work, and even more, in his message, the spirit

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contained within, once it loses its validity. Ultimately, it would refer to his fame, conceived by the people and communicated by himself. Spirit and fame *-pars melius-*, are owners of a bigger movement capacity, and to be transmitted, than the body of the artist or his work, also corporal.

Aideen Barry, as a creator, has a great capacity to build images that catalyse change. Her interpretation of certain facts, ordinary, to a lesser or greater extent, to all contemporary societies, is sustained in the propositions that endorse the discursive axis of this project: everything changes but everything stays the same. Like the famous sentence of Lampeduse in *The Leopard* (1963): If we want that everything remains the same, it is necessary that everything changes, it remits to a situation advocated by a political body and a conservative society. We don't need to check the library archives to remember the sentence of the famous leader that aim to bearer revolutionary changes en both bodies: that nothing changes so that everything can really change.

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Aideen Barry (Cork, Irlanda, 1979)

Aideen Barry is a visual artist who's work has been widely exhibited in solo and group exhibitions and commissions in Ireland and internationally. Significant projects include: residencies at IMMA (2016) The Headlands Centre for the Arts (2011), Art OMI, New York (2013), Oklahoma Contemporary/Marfa Contemporary (2021), NASA Kennedy Space Centre (2008), Skaffell, IS (2007), Banff Centre, CA (2007), Centre Cultural Irlandaid, Paris (2003).

She has been selected in several Solo and international projects at: Matucana 100, Chile (2018), Ch ACO, Chile (2019), The Katzen Centre at the American Museum (2019), Wexner Centre, OH (2010), Moderna Musett, SE (2008), Musée des Beaux Arts, Lyon (2009), Louise T. Bloudin Gallery, UK (2007), Galeria Isabel Hurley, ESP (2012) Artscene, Shanghai (2005) and Project 304 Gallery, at Bangkok Thailand (2007), BAC Geneva, CH (2011), Liste Art Fair CH (2010), in Catherine Clarke Gallery, CA (2011), Elephant Gallery (UK 2019) CHANGING TRACKS EU (UK, ESP, IRE) 2014, Crawford Municipal Gallery (2009 & 2010), Project Art Centre (2010), Temple Bar G&S (2007), Limerick City Gallery (2009 & 2016), The RHA (2009, 2011 & 2016), Visual Carlow (2010), Mothers Tankstation (2011), The Butler Gallery (2009).

Recently the artists was elected to Aosdána, which was established by the Arts Council of Ireland, to honour artists for their contributions to Irish society and to support them in their artistic endeavours. She was this year awarded the The Myron Marty Lectureship at Drake University (Iowa USA 2019) and later this year will give a lecture on her work as an invited speaker to NYU Glucksman House. She will show in a two person museum show at the Katzen in Washington DC in November 2019 with Alice Maher in Fair is Foul and Foul is Fair. Her collaborative film 6SKIN will also be shown at Oxacana at the Mexico Film Festival in the Autumn, and was shown at the Alchemy Film Festival in Harwick in Scotland in early May 2019. Other significant awards include: The Claremorris Open Award (2004), The Silent Light Film Award (Cork Film Festival 2005), The Project New Work Award from the Arts Council of Ireland (2008, 2009, 2010, 2017), Bursary Awards from the Arts Council of Ireland, Culture Ireland Award (2007, 2010, 2011, 2018, 2019), Local Authority Awards, Travel and Training Award from the Arts Council (2007, 2011), IGNITE awards in 2014 & 2015 and in 2010 shortlisted for the prestigious AIB prize.

Barry's work is in several important Art Collections including Art Omi, New York, The Frances Greenberger Collection, Trinity College, Dublin, Department of Education & Skills, Office of Public Works, Centre de l'Art Contemporany, Malaga, ESP, The Butler Gallery collection and NUIG Collections and The Arts Council of Ireland.