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### Re-inventing the Literary Exhibition: Exhibiting (Dialogical and Subversive) Art on (James Joyce's) Literature

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#### *Abstract*

This essay engages critically with visual art created in relation to literary works by James Joyce (1882-1941), as well as with an exhibition of such artworks. It thus deals with three forms of cultural representation: literature, visual art and the art exhibition. The exhibition, *Joyce in Art*, was an attempt to depart from the rather traditional ways in which literary exhibitions are usually presented and canonical writers 'celebrated', but it was itself subject to funding and festival structures, which encouraged the uncritically celebratory. The (contemporary) artists and works shown, however, collectively developed and displayed what appears to suit the author of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* exceedingly well and what can emerge here: novel ways of formulating oblique, irreverent and subversive responses to canonical literature.



Fig. 1: *Joyce in Art* (2004). Installation shot showing (left to right) works by Man Ray, E.L. Kirchner, Gereon Inger, Raymond Pettibon, Tony Smith, Joseph Beuys and Joseph Kosuth (ceiling).

*Joyce in Art*, my research project completed in 2004, comprised of a book (foreword by Fritz Senn, afterword by James Elkins, design by Ecke Bonk)<sup>1</sup> and an exhibition at the Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, co-curated by its director, Patrick T. Murphy. We showed approximately one hundred works from the last 90 years by over seventy international visual artists.<sup>2</sup> Both book and exhibition were launched in advance of the

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<sup>1</sup> Lerm Hayes (2004). The current essay was first presented at tVAD's *Show/Tell* conference. Subsequently, sections have been extended and recast, in order to address the question of 'The Joyce Effect: Joyce and Visual Art' for a Joycean audience. In that incarnation, it will be published in the new Blackwell Joyce Companion, Richard Brown (ed), Oxford, Malden: Blackwell 2007.

<sup>2</sup> See the list of exhibited works in the Appendix. Research for the book and exhibition were supported by a Government of Ireland Post-Doctoral Fellowship, based at University College Dublin. The project was also sponsored by the Irish Government's *ReJoyce Dublin 2004* Committee, MBNA Ireland, the National University of Ireland and *The Irish Times*.

centenary of Bloomsday, 16 June, the day on which James Joyce's *Ulysses* is set in Dublin in 1904.

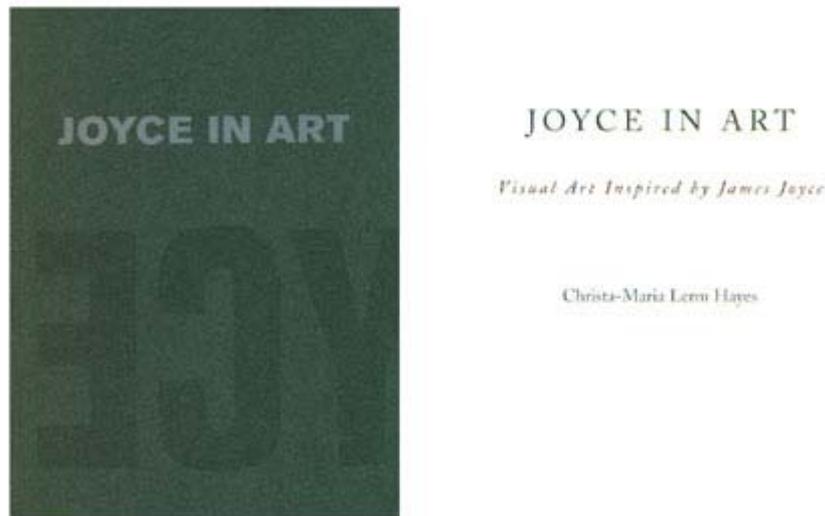


Fig. 2: Ecke Bonk. *Joyce in Art*: cover and typography, 2004

Although the book and to a certain extent the exhibition were encyclopaedic, thus in themselves responding to Joyce's accumulative strategies, some of the central hypotheses of this project were that illustration and portraiture – as the traditionally most common reactions by visual artists to literature – do not suit Joyce's works well, and that Joyce's writings, his thinking and example play a decisive if not central role at certain junctures of art historical developments over the last ninety (or at least fifty) years. He was also central to the works (and lives) of some of the leading artists in several Modernist movements and many canonical post-war artists like Tony Smith, David Smith, John Cage, Richard Hamilton and Joseph Beuys.

This art-historical dimension is something that had not been explored before<sup>3</sup> but it coheres generally with the observation that Joyce has been formative in the development

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<sup>3</sup> In his review of Lerm Hayes (2004), Ruben Borg generously stated: '*Joyce in Art* is an ambitious work. It is no exaggeration to say that it inaugurates its own field of research and proceeds to codify that field, giving it a formal concreteness and a scarcely hoped-for accessibility.' (Borg 2006: 189). While I was fortunate in having been the first to assemble so much fascinating material – beginning



of other fields, including critical theory from Derrida and Cixous to Eco and McLuhan in the same period.

One area of contemporary artistic practice that owes much to Joyce is conceptual art. This is not just because Joyce made a foray into what has to be called visual practice in the wake of the ready-made, since in 1929 he published photos of driftwood pieces under his name in the avant-garde magazine *transition* (Joyce, 1929). I also argue that the rediscovery of Duchamp in the 1960s would not have been possible without the *Finnegans Wake*-trained minds of the artists that led this rediscovery on both sides of the Atlantic. Moreover, it was noted that artists attracted to Joyce since the 1960s found in his work a precedent for artistic emphasis on both form and content, as well as – and this is a related point – an artist who could provide a legacy for committed art practices, those highlighting complex (postcolonial) identities, ‘dislocations’ (Lerm Hayes, 2004: 131-34) of all kinds and the fleeting nature of hierarchical power structures.

What I wish to explore here arises from this last aspect of Joyce’s legacy. It is the observation that the artists who have possibly most profitably responded to the challenge that is Joyce, have done so not directly, illustratively or in an overtly celebratory fashion, but obliquely and often irreverently or subversively. This argument suggested itself most powerfully when seeing the works come together in the exhibition and when reflecting on the published book, where this observation began to manifest itself in chapter 3.3: ‘Lingualization, Concepts, Openness, Commitment’.<sup>4</sup>

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with Wyndham Lewis in 1914, as well as Joyce as a visual artist in 1929, and ending with artwork from 2004 – there are several excellent studies that have dealt with various aspects of this topic. These include my predecessor Archie Loss (1984), whose study ends in 1922, approximately where mine began, Jo-Anna Isaac (1981), Ira B. Nadel (1989), Robert Scholes (1992) and, dealing especially with post-war art, Evan R. Firestone (1982), Marcelin Pleynet (1991), Jean Fisher (2003) and Sarat Maharaj (1996).

<sup>4</sup> Lerm Hayes (2004): 143-155. It is a rare privilege to write about an exhibition project in hindsight. The custom is to have any writing – usually the catalogue – available at the opening. Curators, especially those in museum or gallery positions, have to turn their attention to the next exhibition immediately after the opening of the previous one. This practice contributes, and this is particularly relevant in the context of *Show/Tell*, to an under-theorization of exhibitions and their outcomes, particularly of the way in which word and image components of any project actually worked together, what the function of the labels, wall texts, gallery notes, the catalogue and even reviews were and how they advanced the research questions.



The now canonical artists and movements listed above do not strike us today as struggling to forge their identities and fighting for recognition against all the odds. But they were, once, and for many Joyce has correspondingly – especially for the generation of artists who came into their own in the 1960s and thus had all of Joyce available during their formative years – remained a rebel, somewhat romantically eschewing canonization as well as commodification. The exceptions are his faithful illustrators and portraitists. Robert Motherwell and Richard Hamilton are testimony that these camps cannot neatly be kept apart other than for this abbreviated argument's sake. We all invent our Joyce: the question is which responses are particularly valid today as interpretations of the writer's works and in the sense of a Joycean legacy.

Joyce plundered and arranged his sources not on their own terms, but according to his works' demands, that he used and pillaged rather than celebrated and confirmed Homer and many others. Is it sufficient to state that a corresponding move in the visual field would also be the best strategy for artists to react to his writing? It appears that these approaches by the writer, which manifest themselves so strongly in his works – share their *modus operandi* with strong legacies in general. It is thus true for appropriations of Joyce at all times that they

cannot be fully justified in the straight line of a verifiable cognitive, hermeneutic interpretation. What Derrida in *Specters of Marx* says of his relation to the Marxian heritage might be said of the strongest [legacies.] Each is a 'performative interpretation, ... an interpretation that transforms the very thing it interprets.' Only such faithful-unfaithful appropriation can be a responsible reception of such a legacy. (Cohen, Miller, Cohen, 2001: xvi.)

When I chose the term 'inspiration' for *Joyce in Art's* subtitle ('Visual Art Inspired by James Joyce'), it was motivated by Derrida's thoughts on spirit<sup>5</sup> and echoed Joyce's penchant for secularized terminology (like epiphany). Here, however, I shall attempt to create some distance to the Romantic connotations of that term and thus prefer 'legacy', thereby only entering the 'mysteriously romantic' idea of 'afterlife' through the back

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<sup>5</sup> Derrida (1998). 'Spirit' can also be viewed as ideological structure. See Hirschkop, Shepherd (eds), 1989: 22.



door, since 'Nothing could be more overdetermined, unpredictable, nonlinear, and even mysterious than the notion of a writer's 'legacy'.' (Cohen, Miller, Cohen, 2001: xvi)

In order to pursue the question of how appropriate irreverent appropriations of Joyce are, and their implications for who 'owns' Joyce and which artists will own him in years to come (to paraphrase James Elkins in *Joyce in Art's* envoi), I will concentrate on a handful of artists and individual works, most but not all of them exhibited in *Joyce in Art*. Finally, I will propose a faithful-unfaithful strategy for continuing the work of *Joyce in Art* into the future. As has already become apparent, some Bakhtinian terminology will be helpful.

Joyce's fiction (especially *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*) can be viewed a particularly good example of heteroglossia, dialogism, unfinalizability, the carnivalesque (folklore), for foregrounding the body, and for the view that form and content discourse are one. To explain the most direct links, heteroglossia may refer to Joyce's speaking in many voices or styles in *Ulysses*. Dialogism is satisfied in Joyce's work, due to the recurrent presence of Shakespeare, Dante and many other authors, to the extent that Joyce claimed not to have written anything new. The best example is the 'Oxen of the Sun' episode of *Ulysses*, where the 'birth' of the English language is performed by means of chronologically arranged pastiches of other authors. Unfinalizability is a characteristic of the writer, who added and altered his texts up to the last minute, serializing *Work in Progress*, changing again and (re)publishing as *Finnegans Wake*. The carnivalesque is prominent e.g. in the atmosphere of the 'Circe' episode of *Ulysses*, which is set in a brothel and where the dead are encountered, late night transformations, brawls, wild political speeches and other improbabilities feature. The body is, of course, a focus here that influences thinking, as it is in all of *Ulysses*: Joyce allocated body parts to each of the episodes in order to turn the work into a veritable epic of the human body. *Finnegans Wake* can be understood as a night journey through a body or an anthropomorphized landscape. I refer to Brandon Kershner for further and far more detailed discussions about correspondences between Joyce and Bakhtin.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kershner (1989). Clark and Holmquist give a plausible reason for the conspicuous absence of references to Joyce in Bakhtin's oeuvre: 'Once again, Bakhtin's choosing not to include Joyce may



It is partly the aim of this essay to see whether such links also exist with respect to answerability and the more subversive (irreverent) aspects of Bakhtin's theories. However, I cannot here summarise Bakhtin's writings, but must retain a focus on the artworks. In keeping with my theme of faithful-unfaithful appropriation, it is, I hope, equally permissible to use Bakhtin in a similar fashion.<sup>7</sup>

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have been motivated politically. As of at least the First Writers' Congress in 1934, *Ulysses* could no longer be praised in print, and this was still true in 1965 when the dissertation [on Rabelais] was published as a book. Thus, Bakhtin effectively had two choices as regards Joyce, to attack him or not to mention him.' (Clark, Holmquist, 1984: 317).

<sup>7</sup> For a study on Bakhtin and art see Haynes (1995). Although Joseph Beuys' use of sculptural material does not match Bakhtin's notions of literary material, this artist's work, which has been central to my own research, seems to be a profitable subject for a study of its relationship to Bakhtinian discourse.

***Balka***



Fig. 3: Miroslaw Balka, *Remembrance of the First Holy Communion*, 1985.

Turning now to the artists whose works display a Joycean legacy, I find Miroslaw Balka a good example with which to begin. His *Remembrance of the First Holy Communion*, 1985, lays open moments of identification, as far as their Catholic upbringing is concerned, between this young Polish artist and the young Joyce, or rather his alter ego in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus. This work illustrates *A Portrait* relatively faithfully. It also represents Balka's youth and is a moving work that captures aspects of

late nineteenth-century culture, so well preserved in rural Poland. The artist has subsequently turned to works that focus on Stephen Dedalus' sensual experiences, namely wetting the bed, by his introduction of fountains, heated cushions and other unusual sculptural materials. Here, *A Portrait* is not illustrated so much as mediated via Joyce's thinking and 'material' use of language in his later works. The whiskey fountain  $250 \times 280 \times 120$  (*Sweets of Sin*), which Balka created for *Joyce in Art*, then merges many elements: biography (Joyce's fondness of alcohol), his literary use of synaesthesia (the sculpture reeked and foamed for the duration of the show), the snow in 'The Dead', Balka's previous 'bed'-works on Joyce, Molly Bloom with her chamber pot, Bloom's and Stephen's urination at the end of *Ulysses* and other bodily and sexually explicit, even abject passages of the book. *Sweets of Sin* is a mildly pornographic novel that Molly Bloom reads in *Ulysses*. Furthermore, whiskey (*uisce beatha* – water of life in Irish) is literally, in *Finnegans Wake*, the water of life that resurrects Tim Finnegan. It thus provides yet another instance of or evidence for the cyclical nature of life and history on which that book is based (Joyce appropriated Giambattista Vico). Balka's whiskey pump responds to Joyce's flowing cycles.



Fig. 4: Miroslaw Balka  $250 \times 280 \times 120$  (*Sweets of Sin*), 2004

The result is a flowing sculpture in response to the bodily excretions featured in *Ulysses* and the flowing narrative of *Finnegans Wake*. The work comments on and interprets Joyce's oeuvre as a whole and in a semi-abstract way. It is a richer, more subversively



humorous work than the *Holy Communion*, and it takes time and effort to decipher and interpret it – akin to the process of reading the language of *Finnegans Wake*.

This book, as the culmination of Joyce's oeuvre, merges previous motifs in such a way that Balka's procedure (not just his motifs) can also be said to appropriate Joyce: faithfully but not too much so, choosing to work on Joyce's legacy, but creating a sculpture that is clearly part of current artistic practice and part of Balka's universe before it is anything that illuminates Joyce or – God forbid – echoes the writer's own taste in visual art. While Christian (Orthodox) faith was upheld in Bakhtin's work, the 'answerable other' here, as in the following works, is both Joyce and (contemporary) viewers. In Balka's oeuvre, it even appears that a turning away from religious faith enabled a more pronounced dialogical trust in the recipients' capabilities to respond, to laugh and possibly to interpret – something that could be (and has been) said about Joyce before him.

### ***Beuys***

Joseph Beuys proceeded in a similar Joycean fashion, letting one work emerge out of another – and he went on to provide yet another point of departure, another 'dialogue partner' for Balka. The nucleus of his sculptural and performance work is the practice of drawing, particularly his *Ulysses Extension* from ca. 1957-61. Ten double pages of these drawings were displayed in *Joyce in Art* (Fig. 1). The six exercise books where they originated are also the place where Beuys outlined his theory of social sculpture, his use of materials, as well as their social and ethical import – all in a Joycean context. At first glance, they appear as monologues, interior ones; featuring many inside views of the human body, they use the pencil and other substances to 'think with the knee', as Beuys stated later in a postcard multiple. This is a dialogical way of thinking, creating a special kind of freely interpreted Joycean legacy, where not Bloom or Odysseus is the main protagonist, but a Penninus. This work is at once an extension and a 'correction' of Joyce,<sup>8</sup> one that built a legacy, that stood Beuys in good stead throughout his career.

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<sup>8</sup> Lerm Hayes, 2004: 175, 76. Also Lerm Hayes, 2001: 302-05.



Although *Ulysses* is mentioned in the title, I have shown elsewhere that the *Ulysses-Extension* as well as many sculptural formulations that emanated from this for the next thirty years are more closely related to the thinking of the later Joyce (Lerm Hayes, 2001: chapter IV d). The fact that Beuys annotated almost every page of the *Wake* and issued a late, confession-of-faith-like text in two multiples (*Joyce*, 1984, and *Joyce with Sled*, 1985), points to the immense importance Joyce had for the artist, whose work can, more than that of most artists of his generation, be called dialogical.<sup>9</sup> Joyce served for Beuys, as I propose here, as the answerable other.

While most literary critics in the 1960s and '70s slighted Joyce for his supposedly apolitical stance, Beuys read Richard Ellmann's biography in 1972 (having already bought Jean Paris' earlier one) and annotated it selectively to highlight a certain partisan-like, anarchic image of the writer. His work followed similar paths. Although Beuys did not always shy away from dogmatic statements, his overall intentions and especially his early work, show a distinct link between the presence of a Joycean legacy and his belief in answerability and social activism. The artist's interest in Ireland brought both elements together, for example in the then rather unpopular recommendation to solve the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland through dialogue.

### ***Ireland, Horn and Coleman***

Patrick Ireland, who emigrated from Dublin to Manhattan in 1957, is another artist whose socio-political commitment is apparent, even inscribed in his name: Brian O'Doherty adopted the name Patrick Ireland for his visual art practice in response to the British presence in Northern Ireland and following Bloody Sunday in 1972. Patrick Ireland has returned to Joyce's texts, as many Irish emigrants and second and subsequent generation Irish-American artists have, as a surrogate home (Lerm Hayes, 2004: 121-35). He is also the artist who has most strongly expressed not only his admiration for, but his annoyance with, Joyce. Explaining a game that he had devised in 1963/64, where half-

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<sup>9</sup> Beuys' dictum that the terms (of his Social Sculpture) will be dead and buried if not used and reinvented continuously strikes a Bakhtinian chord. See Graham Pechey. 'On the borders of Bakhtin: dialogisation, decolonisation'. Hirschkop, Shepherd (eds) (1989): 41.

cubes inscribed with words from *Finnegans Wake* could be re-arranged, he has stated that *In the Wake (of)*:

...is appropriately complex conceptually and had he [Joyce] seen it, it might have puzzled and bothered the wee bugger (not a very pleasant man I gather) by turning his own strategies against him. I think if you play with the great man, you have a chance of winning. Since I'm not in the tribute business, this is much more fun. (Lerm Hayes, 2004: 146, 47)

This kind of playfulness approaches the subversive nature of the carnivalesque in Bakhtin.



Fig. 5: Brian O'Doherty. *In the Wake (of)* \_\_\_\_\_, 1963/64

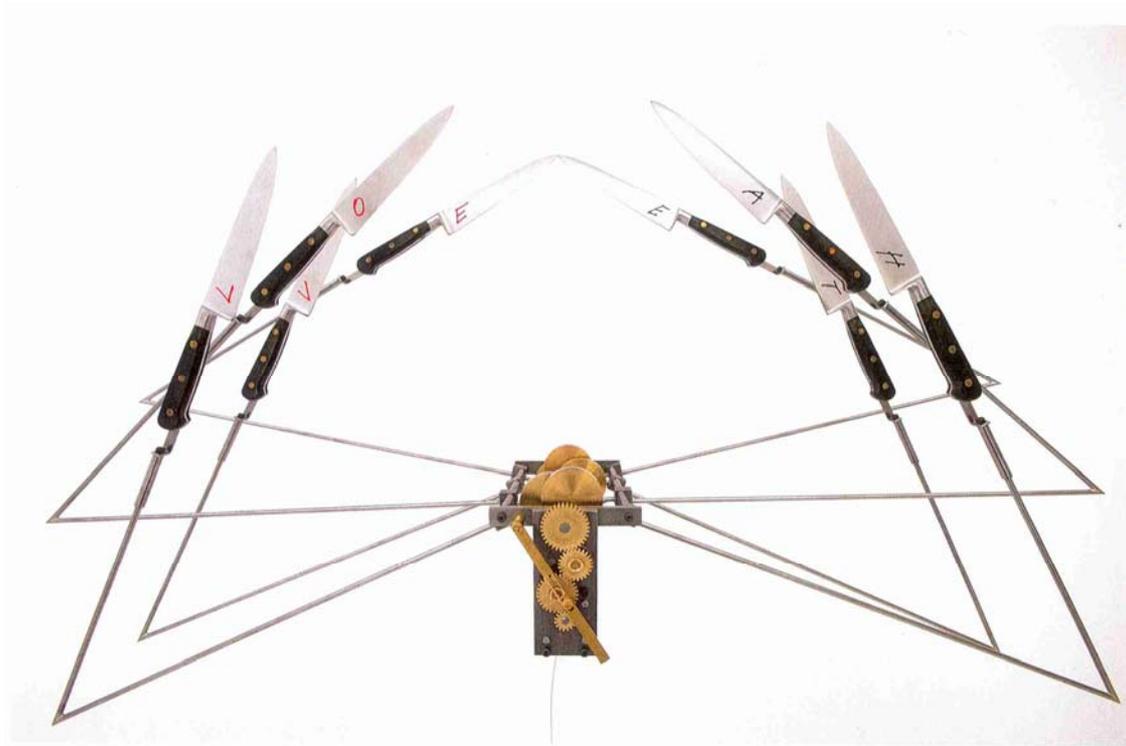


Fig. 6: Rebecca Horn, *Knuckle Dome for James Joyce*, 2004

Rebecca Horn's *Knuckle Dome for James Joyce*, 2004, is another expression of an artist's love/hate relationship with Joyce. While her Kafka-inspired sculptures are sensitive, even nostalgic, Horn has created a simultaneously violent and humorous anti-Joyce-piece that consists of ten knives with the letters 'LOVE HATE' inscribed on their blades in red and black, like the knuckle tattoos of urban rebels. This comments on the contemporary, impoverished urban lower class out of which Joyce came a century earlier (his father having drunk away his fortune, leaving his eldest son nothing but some contacts to secure a good, Jesuit education). Knives as everyday items also point to the kinds of domestic objects the odysseys of which feature in *Ulysses*. That book, however, focuses overtly on love and the dejection Bloom feels concerning his wife's unfaithfulness, while love and its 'opposite' are juxtaposed when Bloom becomes the victim of Nationalist anti-Semitism. Furthermore, the dome or delta-shape created by the converging knives is the sign or siglum for Anna Livia, the female protagonist in *Finnegans Wake*. It is a shape that simultaneously connotes the male (a mountain) and the female (the river delta), giving scope for a battle of the sexes that Joyce does not overtly perform. This is yet another 'extension' of the writer, especially in the light of the fact that the delta or



Penninus motif was a leitmotif in Beuys' engagement with both *Ulysses* and the *Wake*. The dancing knives move like spiders' legs and add a humorous element to anyone who knows that Joyce was remembered by his friends for the spider dance he performed. Several criteria for dialogism and the carnivalesque are fulfilled.

*Knuckle Dome for James Joyce* did not feature in *Joyce in Art*, since it was not created until 2004, perhaps as a reaction to the media hype that preceded the Bloomsday centenary. In this context, love and hate may now not seem disproportionately drastic to describe many artists' feelings towards the enabling and disabling literary giant, the dead, white male, the less than likable man. The format of a large exhibition like *Joyce in Art* with its need for sponsorship and thus an inevitable commercial side, as well as its association (on the Festival programme) with events like a sausage advertisement in the form of a breakfast for 10,000 people on Dublin's main thoroughfare, inevitably bears a Janus face that will have to be explored, following the introduction of another work that adds its own voice to Joycean celebrations.

James Coleman's overt occupation with Joyce originates in 1982, the Joyce centenary year. He used xeranthemum leaves (translated as 'cheerfulness under adversity' in the appropriate language of flowers) for a garland on the bricked-up door of 7 Eccles Street, the fictional home of the Blooms, which was demolished in the year of the Joyce celebrations. A silver cast of this garland was on show at a Dublin art exhibition in the same year. In *Joyce in Art*, this silver cast acted as the starting point for a new installation. Coleman mounted it on tinted Perspex, blocking the entrance to the second-largest room at the RHA, the one allotted to the artist. He left it empty. This void comments on the openness of Joyce's works, just like the near-white paintings in the central space of the main gallery (Fig. 1), accompanied by a wall text that explains Umberto Eco's 1962 book *Opera Aperta (The Open Work)* with its main exemplar, Joyce, to whose work a third of the publication is dedicated. The open work is already a political manifestation, a statement of the active role and the recipients' freedom, which it theorises. Additionally, Coleman's 1982 *Ulysses Project* was, despite its poetic manifestations, a scathing criticism of how Dublin and Ireland have treated their 'exiled' son in the past. The artist's own 'exile' in Italy, like Joyce's, adds another personal dimension.



The function of Coleman's new installation was to serve as a reminder of the absences and voids that the writer found in his home country and turned into a feature in his work – this time activating the readers' responses and empowering them. The large empty space within an exhibition that featured many works that reflect on Joyce's accumulations is also an affront: the antithesis to the illustration one could say, and a reminder that – as many authors have pointed out before me – Joyce never sits comfortably with most (Irish) people. One could lament this and observe that the *ReJoyce* festival was largely created by foreigners (and subsequently possibly attracted more tourists than Dubliners). The *Joyce in Art* project was a minority enterprise that could, unfortunately, not escape being yet another foreign (re-)import and possibly even a gesture of cultural colonialism. I prefer, however, to view this in a more positive light, as evidence that Joyce's work (as opposed to his face) does not arrive in a chocolate box. It retains its subversive potential, and *Joyce in Art* presented a narrative that distinctly tends towards the critical and dialogical.

### ***Displaying Joyce in Art***

This is where the selection and layout of the exhibition itself enter, since it is not sufficient to give subversive works a platform, thereby possibly neutralizing them. Many viewers expected illustrations and, possibly, features of the literary exhibition such as a first edition here or a portrait there. A chronological arrangement would have been the norm. Initially, this seemed to be granted, since the viewers were at the outset confronted with two 19<sup>th</sup> century vitrines displaying the earliest exhibits (Wyndham Lewis, Matisse and Joyce himself). However, visitors were then free to choose their own route through loosely thematic clusters. The 'white paintings' in the central space of the main gallery gave openness – the viewers' themselves – centre stage (Fig. 1). Slightly off centre stood a sculpture by Tony Smith, *The Keys to Given*, with its angles pointing in all directions: there was not one key, instead a reference to the shape-shifting multiplicity of identities that Joyce pioneered with his sigla (Lerm Hayes (2004): 109-13, 128-29). Moreover, synaesthesia (Balca's whiskey fountain and many sound works) sought to involve the viewers' bodies, appealing to their senses beyond the visual. This was particularly the case



when they were active, cycling on the bicycle in Jeffrey Shaw's *Legible City* installation. This took them through an interactive cityscape made up of writing. Here, they directly experienced a non-linear way of reading, akin to that which Joyce had encouraged in the *Wake*. John Latham, who had been Shaw's teacher, contributed his *The*-roller with text from *Finnegans Wake* (vertically arranged) and entitled after the cyclically 'last' word, 'the'. This work also focused on non-linearity in that incoherent individual letters could only be read when the canvas was on the roller. *The* was one of the last pieces in the show, downstairs, before it was possible for visitors (and encouraged by free entrance) to complete the 'commodius vicus of recirculation'<sup>10</sup> and begin once more, echoing Joyce's last book's cyclical structure. The absence of a 'last word', in both Joyce's and Bakhtin's sense, could be experienced.

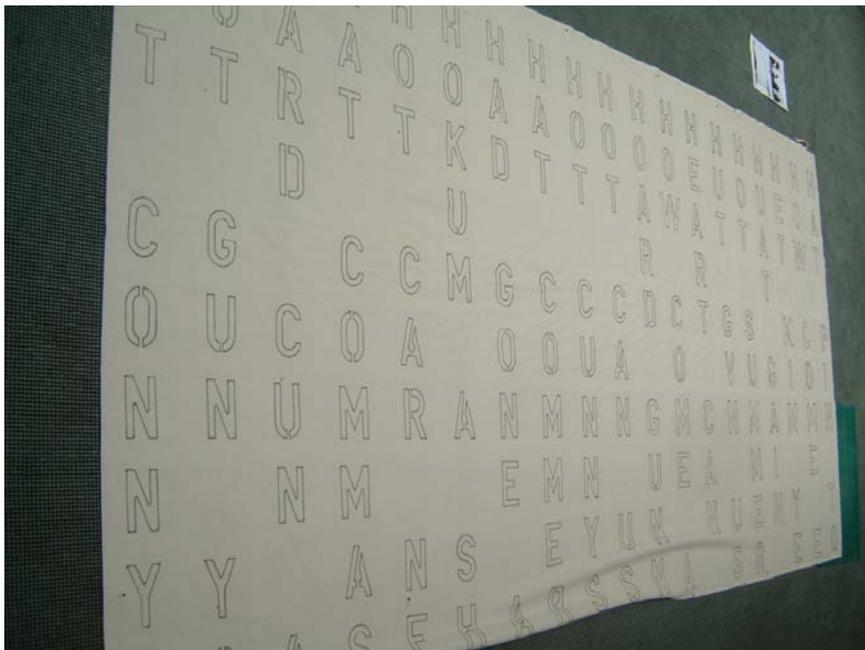


Fig. 7: John Latham. *The*, 1976 (during reconstruction with permission of the artist).

The presentation of thematic clusters and the freedom to choose one's own route are already standard practice within contemporary art display. This strategy – as here – carries the hope that visitors will create their own meanings. In *Joyce in Art* it was also a

<sup>10</sup> Joyce, 1939/1991: 3, line 2 (FW 3,2). Regarding the link between cycles and carnival, see Nancy Glazener. 'Dialogic SubversionL Bakhtin, the novel and Gertrude Stein'. Hirschkop, Shepherd (eds) (1989): 113.

move that echoed the ways in which artists have responded to Joyce and the dialogues that the writer himself had introduced with his own sources and cultures. The fact that many virtually unknown artists were presented alongside the canonical ones was also an attempt to subvert the tendency towards the easily consumable spectacle that is inherent in large-scale exhibitions.



Fig. 8: William Anastasi, *me innerman monophone*, 1993.

William Anastasi's *me innerman monophone* can serve to represent the time-consuming, work-intensive artworks in *Joyce in Art* that elude easy consumption. In researching and presenting the related, dialogical worlds of Jarry, Duchamp and Joyce, it also aimed at the 'coexistence of distinct languages which seems to define heteroglossia' (Hirschkop, Shepherd (eds) (1989): 18).

Following on from the non-hierarchical display, there were certain works whose main function was to create an epiphany in the viewers, a revelation about aspects of life. Epiphany is a term introduced by the early Joyce, who, however, soon dismissed the theory for what we would now call a more irreverent, dialogical concept of literature. The juxtaposition of both epiphanic and more subversive, irreverent works – irreverence is, in



the first instance a theological term (or its negation), just as epiphany was – the exhibition could conjure up yet another level of dialogism in relation to Joyce's oeuvre. In placing epiphany and dialogic art at opposite ends of current art practice, I am referring to Grant Kestner's argument in 'Conversation Pieces: The Role of Dialogue in Socially-Engaged Art' (Kester 2005). However, he does not mention Joyce in his usage of the term. In Joyce's work, the early collected snippets of conversations collectively entitled *Epiphanies*, are characterized by ellipses, i.e. openness. They are rather vague apparitions that leave a lot for the reader to contribute, and they do not prescribe. Epiphanies are also, following Joyce's definition, to be found in the 'vulgarity of speech' (Joyce, 1981: 188) – nothing that one could accept as the opposite of dialogism.

Some works, in particular Martha Rosler's *Car Boot Sale* at the Project Gallery, Dublin (an exhibition with close ties to *Joyce in Art*),<sup>11</sup> Rebecca Horn's knife-sculpture and James Coleman's installation, prompt the observation that the Bloomsday centenary, as the Joyce centenary before, inspired artists to focus in their own work on deviations from the uncritically celebratory and create works that anticipate how Joyce himself may have reacted to such festivities. *Joyce in Art* saw it as its task to facilitate such dialogical subversion.

The exhibition format, resulting from its need for funding and the ensuing complicity in an attempt at the spectacle,<sup>12</sup> clearly has its limitations. It was, nevertheless, necessary to hold such a survey-type exhibition that gives rise to many dialogues; and to write an encyclopaedic book that is organized similarly (first chronologically then thematically). It introduces reminiscences of Joyce's complexity and what one can call *Finnegans Wake's* 'non-linearity,' or 'hypertextuality,' in its three modes of internal references: index, notes, as well as a system in the margins, where related discussions and interpretations of the

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<sup>11</sup> It was advertised on the invitation to *Joyce in Art's* opening as an 'off-site venue', but was curated independently by Grant Watson, following his wish to present an associated exhibition. Rosler re-staged an exhibition that she had first developed in the 1970s: the customs of the car boot sale were transplanted into the gallery as the showpiece for an interactive, social realm that eschews hierarchical power structures. Martha Rosler's *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems*, 1974, was scheduled to be displayed at the RHA, but shipment problems regrettably prevented this at the last minute. Rosler has also been most eloquent concerning her reading of Joyce as clearly not an apolitical artist. (Lerm Hayes, 2004: 150).

<sup>12</sup> Ireland is a small country, with relatively small-scale art institutions, in which the mechanics for the blockbuster or other formats of the spectacle have not taken root in the visual arts.



same artists' works can also be traced. This was a feature that designer Ecke Bonk devised as an artistic response to the text itself (Fig. 2).

### ***Dialogistics***

I did not on that occasion make explicit the dialogistic implications. It has since also occurred to me what else was missing: the last work in *Joyce in Art* was John Cage's diachronic and anarchically dialogic *James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, Eric Satie, an Alphabet*, 1990. In it, Beuys appears among many other characters from all ages and many countries. Cage much enjoyed playing (or reading) the part of Joyce himself. *Joyce in Art* has brought me to realize that Noel Sheridan's intended reading of (or performance departing from) passages of *Finnegans Wake* at the exhibition's opening (which could not take place for copyright reasons) would have been an important pointer towards the work that needs to be continued in order to encompass the dialogical more clearly and in order to renew and review Joyce for the future.

If we could here locate elements of dialogism, the carnivalesque, of the focus on the body, of political activism, of ironic citation, of appropriation and an increasing distance from narrowly 'text-serving' approaches (of portraiture and illustration) in artists' reactions to Joyce, now would be the time to evoke the power of the reading group as an element in Joyce's later work that conjures up the dialogical. *Finnegans Wake* requires not just to be read aloud and so transgresses the boundaries of the written word, it also needs the simultaneously offered expertise of a great variety of specialists in nursery rhymes, Greek mythology, English literature, Dublin lore, comics, dance, the history of the book and many more: non-coincident consciousnesses in Bakhtinian terminology (Hirschkop, Shepherd (eds) (1989): 23). *Ulysses*, and especially *Finnegans Wake*, continuously point outside of themselves to details in real life, to other literature and theories.<sup>13</sup>

Far from being a venue for self-serving academic discourse, *Finnegans Wake* reading groups have a long pedigree of being held at independent venues like the Zurich Joyce Foundation or the Paula Cooper Gallery in New York, a space that opened with an

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<sup>13</sup> Joyce's appropriating 'quotations' have prompted many artists to employ similar strategies, such as Joseph Kosuth and William Anastasi, to turn their attention and methods (back) to Joyce's texts.



exhibition of activist art against the Vietnam War. Readings there have involved artists like Tony Smith, Patrick Ireland, Susan Weil and many others. The performance of (artistic) reading of Joyce – and texts like Bakhtin's that today form the destinations of Joyce's pointing – would be perfectly situated in the tower in which *Ulysses* begins with the secularized (and blasphemed) rite of the Mass: 'introibo ad altare dei': the Sandycove Martello Tower.

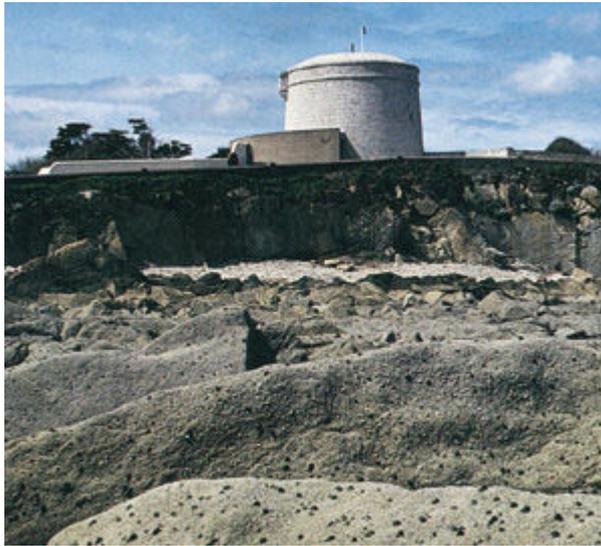


Fig. 9: Martello Tower, Sandycove, Co Dublin: James Joyce Tower Museum

Committed strategies, the dialogical and the performative have been central to work already carried out in and around that *omphalos* of today's Joyce-world (by Joseph Beuys, Marta Minujin, Gary Coyle and others). It would be the perfect venue at which to continue *Joyce in Art*. This could involve the tradition of the reading group and current artistic practice (in Ireland),<sup>14</sup> forge collective identities and build on 'dialogical aesthetics [that] suggests a very different image of the artist [and reader]; one defined in terms of openness, of listening and a willingness to accept dependence and intersubjective

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<sup>14</sup> The *Interface* Research Centre at the University of Ulster is investigating questions surrounding contested spaces, documentation (of performance art) and other issues, for which dialogism (and possibly Beuys' and Joyce's legacies) are central. The artist Sarah Pierce (The Metropolitan Complex), affiliated with *Interface* and representing Ireland at the Venice Biennale in 2005, has staged a series of published conversations with protagonists of the Irish art world. As part of the cultural programme for Cork during 2005, its year as European Capital of Culture, the collective art/not art (Fergal Gaynor and David O'Brien) have organised many seminars and lectures, but also reading groups. They reflect specifically on the Beuysian roots of their practice.



vulnerability.<sup>15</sup> These artists and readers/interpreters would bring with them their skepticism – and thus best (faithfully-unfaithfully) serve, interpret, appropriate and transform Joyce, as well as their own enquiries.

### ***Conclusion***

Re-casting and theorizing the genre of the literary exhibition can yield many fascinating insights, if artists are given space to develop their own independent and often subversive responses. Rather than 'celebrating' uncritically, such ventures can enhance the viewers' engagement with both art and literature and come closer to the ways in which a writer like Joyce invited independent responses through his works. Allowing for critical work addresses the apparent disconnect between Joyce's works and how they are traditionally celebrated and exhibited, for example at the Joyce tower. It also addresses a disconnect between audience members who are knowledgeable about one art form and seek access to another, where starkly differing poetics would cause confusion. Lastly, current artistic practices under the umbrella term of 'relational' aesthetics – one could also say dialogical aesthetics – explore all available cultural fields and ways of communicating, in order to encourage dialogical and irreverent engagement and interpretations. Exploring and bridging gaps in the triangle between the genres of art exhibition, literature and art practice can update a kind of exhibition practice that requires reinvention. And it is also eminently suited to the purposes and approaches of both Joyce and contemporary art.

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<sup>15</sup> Kester, 2005: 81. Also: 'Collective identities are not only, or always, essentialising. [Dialogic art projects] suggest a more nuanced model of collective identity and action; one that steers cautiously between the Scylla of essentialist closure and the Charybdis of a rootless skepticism.' Kester, 2005: 86.



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### ***Appendix: Joyce in Art***

List of works exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, 10 June-28 August 2004

#### **Valerio Adami**

Portrait of James Joyce, 22.5.71/23.7.71, 1971

William Anastasi

Me innerman monophone, 1993

#### **Mirosław Balka**

250 x 280 x 120 (Sweets of Sin), 2004

#### **Joseph Beuys**

Beuys extends at Joyce's request Ulysses by two further chapters, ca. 1957 – 1961, ten drawings, four pages from book one and six pages from book 2,

#### **Ecke Bonk**

Finnegans Wake 383, 1997/2004, typesetting by Sean Sills

Physics Letters 8/3, Feb. 1, 1964

#### **Bazon Brock, Thomas Bayrle and**

#### **Bernhard Jaeger**

Bloom Newspaper, 1963

#### **John Cage**

Writings Through Finnegans Wake, 1978

Roaratorio: an Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake, 1979

James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, Eric Satie, an Alphabet, 1990

#### **Thomas Chimes**

Our Soul, Being Air, 1984

Memorial Hall, 1981

#### **Christo and Jeanne Claude**

Wrapped Walkways of St. Stephen's

Green, proposal, 1977

#### **James Coleman**

Ulysses Project, 1982, 2004

#### **Gary Coyle**

Lovely Water, No. 29, 2004

Holy Water, 2001

#### **Michael Craig-Martin**

Wall Drawing III-B, 1990

An Oak Tree, 1970

#### **Micheal Farrell**

Café de Flore, 1993

#### **Robert Filliou**

Jenny: Portrait of the Artist Jenny, 1972

#### **Ivan Ladislav Galeta**

Films from 'Introibo and Altare Dei'

#### **Zbigniew Gostomski**

Pascal's Triangle, 1973

#### **Richard Hamilton**

Epiphany, 1987/1989

ICA Joyce exhibition, Poster-cum-catalogue, 1950



Paul Heimbach

Joy.. Series soundbook (More Joy), 1989

**Gerhard Hoehme**

James Joyce Epiphany, 1961

**Gereon Inger**

Finnegans Fake, 1994-2004

Ulysses Stamps, 1994

**Patrick Ireland**

H.C.E., 2004

Installation assisted by Fergus Burke

In the Wake of..., 1964 / 1965

Study for Purgatory I, 1985

Study for Purgatory II, 1985

Programme for In the Wake of ..., 2004

**Jess**

Boob # 3, 1954

Deranged Stereopticon, 1974

Echo's Wake VI, 1961/1966

Echo's Wake I, 1961/1966

**Sarah Kenny**

Downtown, detail, 2002

Brian King

Feeling one behind, 1982

**Ernst-Ludwig Kirchner**

Portrait of James Joyce, 1931

**Jürgen Klauke**

Overly Terse Trigger, 1991

**Joseph Kosuth**

Ulysses: 18 Scenes, 1988, 2004

**Michael Kvium and Christian**

**Lemmerz**

The Wake, Sweden, 2000

**John Latham**

The (roller), 1973

Replica with permission of the Artist

**Louis le Brocquy**

Image of James Joyce, 1977

Image of James Joyce, 1978

Image of James Joyce, triptych, 1983

Image of James Joyce, triptych, 1977

Study Towards an image of James Joyce,

**Lawrence Lee**

Are we speakin d'anglas landadge or are

sprakin sea Djoytsch?, 1988

**Ciarán Lennon**

CAMAC XIII, 2004

Wyndham Lewis

Blast, 1914

Portrait of James Joyce, 1921

**Piero Manzoni**

Merda d'Artista, 1961

**Henri Matisse**

Limited Edition Club Ulysses, 1935

**Colin Middleton**

The Kiss of Life, 1910 – 1983

The Bride, 1983

Opus No. 45, No. 3, 1945

May Herring for Kate, 1971

**Robert Motherwell**

Ulysses prints, 1988

**Mimmo Paladino**

Ulysses, 16th June, 1904 portfolio, 1985

- 1988

**Jürgen Partenheimer**



Anna Livia Plurabelle, 1983

**Raymond Pettibon**

Untitled (I stood there), 2004

Untitled (Here the great), 2004

Untitled (No posing in), 2004

Untitled (The tricks get), 2004

Untitled (You could hear), 2004

Untitled (May I be), 2004

Untitled (My wandering mind), 2004

**Erwin Pfrang**

From 'Odysseus and no end', 1988

**Kathy Prendergast**

The End and the Beginning, 1996

**Royden Rabinowitch**

Greased Cone, 1965

**Man Ray**

Portrait of James Joyce, 1922

**David Robilliard**

Get Your Revolver Out Joyce, 1988

**Michael Rogers**

from 'Six Bottles in the Wake', 1988

Alexander Roob

A Sequence of 7 Drawings, 2000

**Dieter Roth**

246 Little Clouds, 1968

Portrait of the Artist as

Vogelfutterbüste, 1968-1970

**Verena Schindler**

Simultaneous Ulysses, 2001

**Julião Saramento**

from 'Dublin - Trieste, 2 December

1909', 1997

Something Obscene (Dublin - Cornell

1909), 1995

**Jeffrey Shaw**

The Legible City, 1988

**Noel Sheridan**

H.C.E., 1966/67

**David Smith**

The Letter, 1950

**Tony Smith**

The Keys to Given, 1965

Untitled (For Bill Rafter), 1964

**Werner Schmidt**

Oranges have been laid to rust upon the  
green, 1994

**Sean Scully**

'Alone' from Pomes Penyeach, 1993

**Bernard Tschumi**

Joyce's Garden Project, 1976- 1977

**Hannes Vogel**

Wylermeer, 1996

Music: Corsin Vogel, Wylerhafen, 2000

**Lawrence Weiner**

Catalogue # 885, 2002

Ian Whittlesea

Joyce Studio Painting, 1997-2000.

James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a kind of epiphany (revelation) of the consciousness. His *Ulysses* is a tale about identity, aesthetics and faith. The Campus Novels of Kingsley Amis, Tom Sharpe and David Lodge deal with university life; it's the question of research, funding, politics of contemporary literary theory and feminism. Pound edited Eliot's *The Wasteland* and was at the fore front of major literary movements and development like Vorticism and Imagism. He was also associated with Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway and Hilda Doolittle first in London and then in Paris. He has an obsession with accurate language, minimalism and sharp imagery