

Bright Beginnings

An Exhibition featuring work from recent art college graduates from Fingal Joshua Sex and Sanja Todorović With special guest Michelle Hall And announcing emerging critic Edel Horan

16 October - 21 November 2009

First Floor Gallery. Draiocht

<http://www.draiocht.ie/whatson/visual.htm>

In the words of poet Brendan Kennelly; ‘ though we live in a world that dreams of ending/ that always seems about to give in/something that will not acknowledge conclusion/ insists that we forever begin. ‘ (Begin)

We are forever beginning. Propelled by an unknown force, life begins and ends and begins again. To begin requires a sense of purpose and path. For the artist, the beginning is often an idea, which spreads forth to a new beginning, into a new set of relations; resulting in a work. Something had begun, begins and is beginning simultaneously. The process counts as much as the end result. Conclusion is refused in the painters relation between representation and abstraction. To fully know a thing in itself is impossible, to come to a total conclusion is impossible. To represent through media is to form a new relation to people, places and things and thus resist conclusion. The relationship between medium and mediator is full of intrigue in the works on show in this exhibition.

With Joshua Sex, themes of the everyday and the religious sit side by side, each informing the other. In representing those stories and people which are close to his heart, his paintings are open and warm - asking the viewer to find their own inspirations in them. His bright canvases of giraffes, a voyaging ark or a forest belie an unabashed sense of play and adventure. He questions his sense of place and stories which shaped his view of the world; which gave him his beginnings. The relaxed lines and wide brush strokes of Sex’s work encourage the viewer to embrace his subject matter and gaiety of his interests. Each object seems ready to change, to move away, into something else. Paint expresses for Sex what words cannot.

Finding words may not be easy, but paint brings its own language, the textures and lines of Sanja Todorovic’s work speak of subtle emotions, borne quietly in the mind while awaiting their escape. Sanja Todorovic’s work shows a considered approach of re - working to render her subject matter anti - illusory. The reining in of the sensuous smothering of paint in the smaller canvases shows an intense relation. Todorovic’s interest in the fairground spectacle, hides a darkness in the glowing hues of blues, greens and pinks. Colours sweep behind her forms, drawing the eye in and tinting the viewer’s pupils with a muteness. Her focus on the anonymous such as certain buildings, figures and landscapes adds to the tension between representation and abstraction. Though Todorovic creates a sense of urgency the paintings require slow consideration, so much is contained in the small canvases. Her figures assert themselves. Described by the artist as ‘anti illusory’ her paintings give the subject matter a new form in becoming plastic in a new way. The body of work on show is impressive in its consistency and relentless exploration. So much to express so little time. To work everyday through paint, to have an urge to express and create as Sex does is inspiring. A new story has begun, is beginning , beings.

What will come from this beginning? For the painters, Sex and Todorvic, the struggle to make form from a medium whose physicality is an 'obstinate sensuous particular' to quote Todorvic, requires a dedication and willingness to commit to technique. They begin again with each new canvas and set of boundaries. All three artists work in making visible certain invisible boundaries. The boundaries they explore exist in ways of thinking about and representing the world. Making plastic the impressions and curiosities of their worlds, results in a tangible form to help think through.

For artist Michelle Hall, the boundaries between fantasy and reality, freedom and constraint are made physical in the work shown. What can be seen in making a physical object is the often disappointing reality of trying to realise abstract ideas. The idea of a dream living up to or not living up to its promise creates a tension between the artist and her materials. Her paper, wood and plasticine sculpture 'Boat' explores the means of journey. Each artist sets out on a journey to be realised in each medium. The vessel for the journey determines the passage. For the painters the weight of history bears down tossing the explorers high and low, forever propelling their path. For Hall the use of everyday materials and objects provide landmarks from which to navigate, departing and returning when needed. Her opportunity to now go and spend time in The Happy Valley in Wales which has informed her work makes real her questioning of the imagined living up to its full promise.

Seeing all the various works together inspires new ways of personal journey and beginnings. Something insists that they begin over and over again, refusing conclusion.

Edel Horan.