

Work

by **Christopher Reid**

Over the last few years my work has used context as a material. By this I mean that context, or some facet of it, contributes to the meaning of the final piece.

This work has been concerned with finding forms and means by which a specific context may be opened out to both poetic and critical interpretation and enquiry. These forms and means may vary considerably depending on the given site.

What I aim to achieve through this work is to open out context so that a discourse, or ideology, or other aspect of it that appears natural may be made visible, interpreted, and questioned. The end result aspires to question the means by which everyday life is rendered natural and normal.

In my practice I attempt to do this through poetic and critical interventions into a chosen site in the built environment. The images on these pages show some specific examples of work produced over the last year.

Fig. 1 shows a piece that was part of an exhibition produced during my residency at the Irish Museum of Modern Art and shown in their Process Room. This piece is one of three that were installed in Tara Street Station in Dublin for a period of one



Fig 1. Site specific work at Tara Street Station, Dublin, 2004

week. In this piece I appropriated the form of the six-piece poster, a standard advertising format, in order to place doubts about the function and social

consequences of the overwhelming presence of advertising into the public spaces that advertising occupies.

The text in the poster was a fragment, taken from an article I read five years previously. I edited and rewrote this text fragment until its mode of address, while appearing to be specific, was ambivalent, becoming both the voice of advertising, of the viewer, and of the author. The transitory nature of the site was integral to its meaning, which is open-ended.

This project also included the printing of a four-piece poster and a series of labels that were distributed through the city.

Fig. 2 is taken from a public art commission that is in the process of being produced. In this work I wish to use the forms of heritage in order to present an old public housing scheme, its refurbishment and the experiences of people who live there, as being of historical interest. The final work will consist of twenty plaques of varying shapes and patinas, and a book that will act as a guide to the many personal histories of this area, and link these with larger local, municipal, national and global histories. The texts and images included will also map the changing historical, social and economic relationships between the local people and other places.

Fig 2. Public Art Project (Per Cent for Art Scheme), Work in Progress, 2005; image showing how plaques will be installed, 2005





One of the processes I use is to talk to and record memories of people who currently live or have lived there in the past as well as to gather material from them. This may include old photographs, ticket stubs, invitation cards and other ephemeral pieces that link personal narratives with larger histories. In fig. 2 the text on the plaque was taken from a letter from a parent to an adult child who emigrated in the 1980s. What drew me to this narrative was its unheroic ordinariness that registered a national and global economic recession and its personal consequences. The image shows how I visualize such a plaque when installed as part of the site.

In this project questions about how heritage and history are constructed, for whom, and what is included and excluded from such narratives will always be in the foreground.

Fig. 3 shows a part of an installation that was produced for City Arts in collaboration with Chris Maguire.

The exhibition consisted of two LED signs placed in close relation to Oliver Shepard's statue of Cuchulainn and four double-sided 4ft by 6ft image/text panels. The exhibition attempted to use the historical and contemporary context to tease out meanings of citizenship and national identity in the light of the contemporary uses of this building by both local people and non-nationals. The LED signs delivered 40 different texts on an ongoing basis. Captions for Images

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Fig 3. Site specific piece at General Post Office, Dublin 2005