

Anita Groener

The Past is a Foreign Country

31 August to 12 October 2019



The Past Is A Foreign Country by Anita Groener, addresses one of the most pressing issues of our time - the refugee crises - and our response to it and asks what is it to be human today? Through drawings, large scale installations, film, and animation Anita Groener explores the tissue of trauma and loss rooted in this question. She makes work for what still needs language, experimenting with both figurative and abstract geography.



The deliberately modest means of the work (twigs, paper, pins, twine and gouache) speak to the fragility of life and society that refugee crises expose. The artist focuses on specific current events, their archetypal and psychological resonances, tracing urgent connections between people driven from their homes through armed, economic or political conflict and her own life and family. Her art asks questions about the ethics of witnessing atrocity and aesthetic response.

The Past Is A Foreign Country gives its title to one of the installations for this exhibition. Twenty young birch trees, stripped of their leaves, their branches cut, unearthed and uprooted, are reconstructed and suspended from the ceiling, in a closed circuit grid. We can walk around it, look into it but we cannot enter this enclosure.

An attempt to translate terror's destabilizing impact is echoed in *Moments*, a collaborative project with Syrian journalist Razan Ibraheem. Six animated line drawings, portraits of children traced and removed from their original context, play in a continued loop against a soundtrack of street noise, intermittently punctuated by voices from the actual video footage.

The exhibition incites an imaginative journey between here - the geographical, social, and cultural locations of the spectator and there - the site of the represented trauma. The work counters what the artist sees as an emerging collective alienation by encouraging the viewer to walk in the footsteps of a multitude of anonymous people, without a country and without a home.

A new book, designed by Oonagh Young, with contributions from Joseph Wolin, writer and curator based in New York City; Séan Kissane, curator Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; Suzanne Lynch, Washington DC correspondent for The Irish Times; Razan Ibraheem, Syrian journalist based in Ireland and Peter Sirr, Irish writer and poet, accompanies this touring exhibition.

This exhibition is supported by an Arts Council Touring and Dissemination Award, touring from Limerick City Gallery of Art in 2018 to The Dock, Carrick-on-Shannon, Uillinn: West Cork Arts Centre, Skibbereen and The Lab, Dublin in 2019.



The Past is a Foreign Country installation at Limerick City Gallery of Art

Anita Groener was born in The Netherlands and is based in Dublin, Ireland. In 2005, she was elected a member of Aosdána, the prestigious official association of Ireland's preeminent cultural producers. Until 2014 she was a lecturer at the Dublin Institute of Technology where she also served as the Head of Fine Art from 2004 to 2006. Her work has been exhibited at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; the Stedelijk Museum, Schiedam; Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris; Witteveen Visual Art Centre, Amsterdam; Kilkenny Arts Festival; Poggiali & Forconi Gallery, Florence; Rubicon Gallery, Dublin and Rubicon Projects, Brussels; Butler Gallery Kilkenny; Eugen Lendl Gallery, Graz; Art on Paper, New York City, with Gibbons & Nicholas; Art Miami, Miami, with Gibbons & Nicholas USA; Volta Basel, Switzerland with Gibbons & Nicholas; Point B | Williamsburg, New York City and DuPont Underground, Washington DC, USA.

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