Ireland: Alphabet Series
A Cork Printmakers Touring Exhibition

West Cork Arts Centre

20 September – 9 November 2013

Dave Connolly, Zoe D'Alton, Deirdre Delamere, Tom Doig, Aisling Dolan, Shirley Fitzpatrick, Marion Gilroy, Valerie Gleeson, Sean Hanrahan, Catherine Hehir, Heike Heilig, Mae Holland, Marianne Keating, Jo Kelley, Eileen Kennedy, Brian Lalor, Paul la Rocque, Aoife Layton, Peter McMorris, Donna McNamara, Claire Nagle, Noelle Noonan, Shane O'Driscoll, Antonia O'Mahony, Georgina Sutton and Sylvia Taylor.

This exhibition consists of 26 prints by 26 artists, each work taking a letter of the alphabet as a starting point. Cork Printmakers, invited participants to investigate what a specifically Irish Alphabet should look like. Artists were encouraged to be humorous, confessional, subtle, ironic, iconic or controversial; and to take on cultural and economic challenges that are relevant to contemporary Ireland.

The result is a rich, varied exhibition, executed in a range of styles and printmaking techniques.

Founded in 1991, Cork Printmakers is a specialist support organisation enabling the development of professional artistic practice. The workshop supports a high standard of printmaking and fosters excellence and innovation in contemporary print. It serves artists in the development of their professional practice and promotes opportunities through exhibition and exchange/networking both nationally and internationally.

Public appreciation and experience of printmaking is actively promoted through innovative education programmes which span all ages.

Cork Printmakers
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Opening Hours: Monday – Friday, 9.30am – 5.30pm

A   **Zoe D'Alton**

Title: *Alpha,* 2010
Medium: Etching

The letter 'A' has evolved over the ages in many shapes, styles and forms. It is said to derive from such things as the form of an ox head and trees. The Ogham alphabet, 'Celtic Soul' by Sandra Hynes, has the letter 'A' depicted as a '+' 'meaning Ailm, Ailim (fir, elm or pine tree). One theory behind the Ogham alphabet is that it was first created as a cryptic alphabet, designed by the Irish so as not to be understood by those with an knowledge of the Latin alphabet. The horizontal and vertical lines (+) are treelike to me; the vertical depicting the trunk of the tree and the horizontal the branches. In the cross and the letter 'A', I have used the textural effect to represent the bark of a tree.

B   **Valerie Gleeson**

Title: *Burst,* 2011
Medium: Photo Riston on paper

I have depicted the letter 'B' taken from the old Irish Alphabet to represent both visually and phonetically a bursting action. It is a true reflection of the current state of the Irish economy.

C   **Deirdre Delamere**

Title: *Consequences of....,* 2010
Medium: Embossed screenprint

I really liked the idea of the Alphabet Series, and the range of ideas it offered. I often like to use text in my work and was happy to draw the letter C. This gave me scope to voice my reaction of impotent anger and despair at the present state of the country!

D   **Tom Doig**

Title: *Drizzle,* 2010
Medium: Etching

This piece is meant to be reminiscent of rainy summer days in Ireland when flowers are in full bloom, inspired by my time working as a market gardener before studying art.

E   **Sylvia Taylor**

Title: *Evening Echo,* 2010
Medium: Relief on Japanese paper

For the last several years I've used images of animals or objects with animal-like qualities in my work. Often autobiographical, the creatures in my relief prints explore the

pathos, humor and humanity of existence. On one level I find animals to be perfect alter egos, and on another level I am simply moved by their beauty and strangeness. My recent work has a non-linear narrative quality with little creatures enacting their humble dramas, always alluding to the metaphorical journey of life.

F   Paul La Rocque

Title: *Forde,* 2010
Medium: Screenprint on paper

Henry Ford had family connections with both Cork City and Ballinascarthy in County Cork and established a factory for manufacturing tractors in Cork on the site of the old Cork Park Racecourse near the Marina. It had over 1800 men employed in the '20s and when the factory struggled in the '30s much of its production moved to Dagenham in England. Many Corkmen emigrated to work in the Dagenham factory which became known as 'Little Cork'. The factory continued production until 1984, when its closure ended an era in industrial history for Cork.

G   Catherine Hehir

Title: *Grow,* 2010
Medium: Etching

I am interested in repetition; identity; the body; story telling with reference to objects and past experience. The reconstruction and reinterpretation of personal history is an important element within my practice.

H   Peter McMorris

Title: *Each To Their Own H*, 2010
Medium: Screenprint

The piece deals with the use of the letter H in Ireland. The large faded circle represents the séimhiú symbol which was replaced by use of the letter 'H'.

The spelling of 'haitch' refers to the difference in spelling of that letter in Catholic and Protestant schools in the country – Catholic schools were taught to spell it 'haitch' while Protestant schools were taught to spell it as 'aitch'. The series of circles is Braille for 'Each'. The positioning of the word places the Braille 'H' in the centre of the piece which represents the title of the artwork, Each To Their Own H.

I   Sean Hanrahan

Title: *Keep your homes, pay no debt, 2011*
Medium: Embossed etching with gold leaf, letter press and paper collage.

On the 18th of October 1881, Patrick Egan as treasurer of the Irish land league, signed *"The No Rent Manifesto".* This manifesto called for a national tenant farmer strike against landlordism. In contemporary Ireland, banking can be equated to landlordism, as an ever increasing number of families face the repossession of their homes. As Daniel O' Connell put it in relation to English rule: *"in Ireland the whole policy of the Government was to repress the people and to maintain the ascendancy of a privileged and corrupt minority."*

J   Donna McNamara

Title: *Sweet Jesus,* 2010
Medium: Photo transfer, drypoint and chine collé

At the time of receiving the letter 'J' I had lost a precious item. Someone recounted an old belief that if one repeats, 'Jesus lost, Jesus found' ten times, the lost item will be found. And, to my joy it was….

K   Shirley Fitzpatrick

Title: *K is for Knowing,* 2010
Medium: woodblock and silkscreen on paper

'K is for knowing ... to plant trees' is the full sentence. This piece examines the relationship between trees and knowledge; it also uses the alphabet to address the urgent need for trees to be planted in Ireland.

L   Dave Connolly

Title: *Listening,* 2010
Medium: Etching

The poem depicted in this etching is from a collection of poetry the artist is currently writing.

M   Mae Holland

Title*: M,* 2010
Medium: Monoprint & Etching.

I have taken the structural qualities of the letter "M" and contrasted those with the blending of colour.

N   Claire Nagle

Title: Nama, 2010
Medium: Etching

My work explores and draws on my personal journey which reflects on and interprets an Irish identity both past and present. These images often embrace the surreal genre, while holding a unique simplicity.

O   Marion Gilroy

Title: Out of Order
Medium: Silkscreen printed on Fabriano, with procion dyes, and acrylic paints.

Using the letter 'O' as inspiration, I chose to use the word 'order' to direct the work. I am interested in the symbiotic nature of chaos and order in our contemporary lives. When life is chaotic we long for a more ordered and manageable life, and when we become bored or controlled by too much order we wish to break free, constantly striving for balance between perfection and human fraility.

P   Heike Heilig

Title: *Púca,* 2010
Medium: Photo intaglio

My work deals with ghosts of the past in Irish history. In it's imagery it is suggesting the topic of child abuse and the importance to put a face on otherwise faceless victims. A 'Púca' is a creature of Celtic folklore that can assume a variety of forms, including human form, to cause terror and confusion.

Q   Antonia O'Mahony

Title: *Queue,* 2010
Medium: Etching

Systems of societal organization breakdown and mutate, and for the citizen spring forth the tendrils of autonomy.

R   Jo Kelley

Title: *Rún,* 2010
Medium: Colour lithograph on paper

Rún: secret, mysterious, hidden
Allegory has the potential of flux, both in meaning and significance.

S   Aisling Dolan

Title: *Precious Child,* 2010
Medium: Photo Riston on paper

Scared Sacrifice Scarred Scandal. An Irish Clerical abuse story. In God's name she trusted.

Most of my work is a visual response to a thought, emotion or issue and I often use things in my environment to assist me in these visual expressions. Each piece tells its own story through the language of subject, shape, colour and texture. I endeavor to achieve through the tone and grace of my work, declarations that also allow room for the audience's own insight to be provoked.

T   Noelle Noonan

Title: *Time,* 2010
Medium: Etching

An exploration of the human condition and life's rites of passage underpin my work. In the main my approach to work is intuitive; there is a certain element of passiveness about the work; the pieces form over a period of time, often sharing a mood or theme. Words frequently inspire my practice. Certain words appear to unlock reservoirs of suppressed thought, which would otherwise be excluded from everyday life. The work seems to have recurrent motifs; certain images have certain power and repeat themselves. The images can often be dense and layered to begin with but over time they become distilled not unlike the sparseness of a haiku poem.

While musing on the letter 'T' I began to reflect on how the structure of time governs and dominates every facet of our lives.

U   Aoife Layton

Title: *Ulchabhán,* 2010
Medium: Mezzotint

Ulchabhán (owl) represents the letter U in the Alphabet Series, with the letter suggested by the visible section of the window frame out of which the bird emerges. The barn owl (or scréachóg reilige) itself is familiar both as the favoured icon of several television productions and as a recurring figure in Irish folklore.

V   Eileen Kennedy

Title: *V,* 2010
 Medium: hard ground etching and aquatint.

It is a three plate print in copper. The lines are drawn into hard ground, etched and printed in ultramarine. The other two plates are in aquatint and printed in cadmium yellow. In my work I seek to express simplicity. I am inspired by the writings of Agnes Martin and Louise Bourgeois. I relate to art that is honest and real, revealing the beauty and imperfections of life and nature. For the letter V I decided to render it in parallel lines in keeping with my desire to honour this intention.

W   **Marianne Keating**

Title: *Class War*, 2011
Medium: Screen-print on Fabriano

On August 31 1913, the Dublin metropolitan Police charged a rally on O' Connell Street, injuring hundreds and resulting in four deaths– an event known in the Irish Labour tradition as "Bloody Sunday". This was a direct result of the "1913 lockout" where over 20,000 workers were locked out or sacked, as up to 300 businesses refused to recognize the rights of the workers. This "Class War" is reminiscent of the structures in Ireland today, in the throes of a recession, where once again a division in social class is becoming apparent. Although the strike ultimately ended in failure, it signifies the power of the people and the unrelenting right of the people to be heard.

X   **Georgina Sutton**

Title: *Axil (latin axilla]*, 2010
Medium: Etching on paper

This small etching is inspired by sight of a magnolia bud unfurling, and is the first in a series inspired by plants. The axil is the name given to the upper angle, where the leaf joins a stem. New shoots symbolise renewal and we can all be renewed by nature if we take time to look.

Y   **Brian Lalor**

Title*: 'From Yurty to Qwerty, the letter 'Y', 2010*
Medium: *E*tching and aquatint

This print is concerned with the passage of time, with balance and continuity, from the most primeval of habitations, the branch and hide dwelling such as the Yurty, still used in Mongolia today, to the ubiquitous Qwerty computer keyboard. The movement of the Earth is suggested by the ring of spheres on the left, one of which merges into the Yin and Yang symbol of the gender balance in all things.

Z   **Shane O'Driscoll**

Title: *To the future,* 2010
Medium: Screenprint

The text reads:
"I'm only sleeping, strength will come into me again"

It is in reference to the current state of the state.
The image of the tiger represents what once was great, and
the "z" represents sleep. It is a message of hope.

PRINT TECHNIQUES

RELIEF
Relief printing is a generic term used to describe methods in which the raised areas of the printing plate are inked and printed.

Woodblock
Woodblock or woodcut is one of the oldest and simplest forms of printmaking. Various implements, both hand tools and power tools, are used to cut an image into a block of wood. The block is then inked and paper is placed over it and rubbed by hand, the back of a spoon or passed through a press to transfer the ink from the block to the paper, creating the image cut into the wood.

Linocut
The linoleum block consists of a thin layer of linoleum, sometimes mounted on wood. This material is easily carved using simple knives and gouges. The linoleum sheet is inked with a roller, the raised or uncarved areas receiving the ink, and then impressed onto paper or fabric either by hand or with a printing press.

Collograph
The term collography is derived from the Greek word collo, meaning glue, and the English word graph meaning the activity of drawing. A range of materials are glued to a rigid base, such as a sheet of cardboard or wood, to create a textured collage. Ink is then applied and the collage image is printed onto paper or on another material. Ink may be applied to the upper surfaces of the board with a roller, or ink may be applied to the entire board and then removed from the upper surfaces but remaining in the spaces between, resulting in an intaglio print. A combination of both intaglio and relief methods may also be employed. A printing press may or may not be used.

INTAGLIO
A general category of print techniques characterised by the incision of lines or images into a surface of a plate, which is usually metal. The whole plate is inked and then wiped to remove the ink from the plate surface, leaving ink in the incised areas only. The paper is dampened so that, under pressure, it will be squeezed into the inked recesses of the plate. Thin films of ink are sometimes left on the surface of the plate to achieve tonal effects.

Etching
Introduced in the early 1500's, this process uses acid to make marks on a metal plate. The plate is covered with an acid resistant coating called a ground. The image is drawn using a sharp needle to scrape through the ground, exposing the plate. The plate is then immersed in an acid bath, the areas of exposed plate, the drawn areas, are bitten back by the acid. The characteristics of the marks produced depend on a number of factors, the tool used to draw the image, the type of ground used to coat the surface of the plate (hard or soft ground) and the length of time the plate is left in the acid bath.

Aquatint
An etching method introduced in the mid-17th century to create a more subtle tonal range. Powdered resin is made to adhere to a metal plate. When immersed in an acid bath the metal that remains exposed around the tiny drops of resin is bitten down,

creating a pitted, grainy surface. These textured areas hold a thin layer of ink which prints as an area of tone. The longer the plate is left in the acid, the deeper the texture will be bitten and the darker it will print. A plate may be bitten several times to achieve a range of tonal areas. An acid-resistant 'stop-out' can be painted onto the plate to protect areas from being bitten in subsequent acid baths.

Spitbite

A method of painting strong acid directly onto the aquatint ground of an etching plate. Depending on the amount of time the acid is left on the plate, light to dark tones can be achieved. To control the acid application, water can be used to coat the brush and then dipped into the acid. Traditionally a clean brush was coated with saliva, dipped into nitric acid and brushed onto the ground, hence the term "spitbite".

Photo Etching

Photo etching is an alternative to using acid to bite an incision into a plate. A copper plate is coated with a photo sensitive film; the image is then exposed onto the plate using a UV exposure unit. This process allows the artist to transfer autographic material such as negatives, drawings and photocopies. The plate is then inked and printed as an etching.

Engraving

For this technique, a metal plate is incised with a tool called a burin, very like a fine chisel with a lozenge-shaped tip. Great skill is required to manipulate the burin as it is pushed at different angles and degrees of pressure to produce a variety of marks and lines. Engraved images comprise a multitude of crisp, fine lines. Shading is traditionally rendered by crosshatching or similar marks.

Drypoint

As with engraving, this is a process in which marks are made onto a plate using a sharp, pointed instrument. Unlike engraving, in which small amounts of metal are completely cleaned away as the lines are incised, drypoint is characterised by the curl of displaced metal, called the burr, which forms as the line is cut. When inked, the burr creates a distinctive velvety appearance. This technique is usually done on soft copper plates, but also works very well on perspex. As the edition is printed, the burr becomes flattened and less distinct. Therefore, it is generally preferable to have a print with a small edition for drypoint.

Mezzotint

This is very beautiful but time-consuming technique which was most popular in the 18th and 19th centuries. In creating a mezzotint, first the entire metal plate is roughened by marking fine lines into the plate in all directions with a rocker, making the surface receptive to ink. If printed at this stage, the entire paper would be black. The drawing is then created by burnishing or scraping into the plate, working from dark to lights.

PLANOGRAPHIC

This process describes printing from a flat surface, where the inked and un-inked areas are on the same plane. This is opposite to relief where the inked area is raised, and intaglio where the inked area is incised.

Lithography

A process invented in the late 18th century, based on the resistance of grease and

water. The origin of the term lithography includes reference to litho, for stone. An image is drawn on a smooth limestone or aluminum plate using pencils, crayons, tusche, grease, lacquer, or sometimes by means of a photochemical or transfer process. After the image is drawn, the entire surface is treated with rosin and talcum powder and then covered in a solution of gum arabic and nitric acid, which 'fixs' the image. The surface is cleaned down with a solvent leaving a greasy image of the drawing. It is then dampened with water and rolled with ink. The greasy image repels water and holds the oily ink while the rest of the stone's surface does the opposite. The printing is accomplished in a press similar to that used in intaglio processes.

Monoprint/Monotype
The key characteristic of a monoprint or monotype is that no two prints are identical, though many of the same elements may be present. All or part of a monoprint is created from printed elements whereas a monotype image is painted directly onto a smooth plate and then transferred to paper in a press. Only a single print can be made. A second pull is generally called a ghost.

STENCIL
A process of printing through an opening of material or cutout design.

Screen Print (Serigraph, Silkscreen)
The screen consists of a mesh, usually a synthetic nylon but originally silk, which has been stretched tightly over a metal or wooden frame. A stencil is then applied to the mesh, and the stenciled image is printed by forcing ink or paint, using a squeegee (rubber blade), through the exposed parts of the stencil and mesh onto paper or other material. The areas beneath the stencil remain un-inked. Screen prints can be made onto almost any material. There are a number of techniques available to create a stencil for screen printing, including, photographic, hand drawn and hand cut stencils, as well as using transfer films.

DIGITAL
An image that has been part or wholly created digitally on a computer. Typically images are scanned into a computer and worked on or altered using image manipulation software. These can then be printed onto acetate and used in combination with traditional media, or printed directly from the computer onto paper, using inkjet or laser printers.