

Exhibition / Education Guide

This guide is designed as a resource for teachers involved in our Primary and Second Level Schools programmes, however it may also be a useful resource for any other schools, teachers or other educational groups, who may or may not have visited this exhibition.

Using the images shown here and the links to other websites you and your class can explore this exhibition, Amy Walsh's work, and related themes and topics from the classroom and develop your own project based on the themes raised and artistic approaches used. Amy Walsh is an Irish artist based in Dublin. If you are interested in finding out about other work she has done, you can view more of her work on her own website [here](#)



Amy Walsh, Artist employing Kite Aerial Photography (KAP) technique

Freefall by Amy Walsh

The exhibition, *Freefall* by Amy Walsh shows work from three different projects related by their unusual viewpoints. All of the work explores the theme of people's everyday routines from an aerial *perspective*. To achieve this *perspective* the artist uses a technique called Kite Aerial Photography (KAP) in which a camera is attached to a rig on the string of a kite and flown into the air, where pictures can be taken using a remote control system to trigger the shutter.



Flower Lady, Amy Walsh, 2010

This aerial *perspective* is often referred to as a bird's eye view, or God's eye view, seeing the world through the eyes of a bird in flight, or looking down from heaven. More recently it has become familiar to us as the Google Maps view, through Google's online service that documents the planet through satellite imagery, making the whole world a searchable online resource.

This viewpoint reduces people to tiny figures, moving around, going about their business like ants on the ground. Amy uses this effect to observe those

movements, the everyday routines of people moving across the landscape laid out beneath. The people lose their individuality and become part of an almost 2 dimensional pattern.

Galleries 1 and 2

The New Gardeners is a series of large format photographs taken during an **artist's residency** in Tilting, Newfoundland in August 2010. Amy describes the community she was working in:

“Tilting is a small fishing village of Irish descendents, on Fogo Island located off the coast of Newfoundland. The first Irish settlers arrived in Tilting in 1752 and Irish families have fished and farmed there for generations.”

· Can you find Tilting on a map? Or on Google Earth?



Farewell Free Grazing, Amy Walsh, 2010

The photographs document the relationship the residents have with the land they live on. In particular the changes that have taken place since local laws restricted the practice of open field grazing in the 1980's. Open field grazing

meant that farm animals, like horses and sheep, would graze freely around the area, not fenced in as they are now.

The *perspective* of the photographs is confusing to the eye, there is no horizon, buildings and landscape are laid out across the picture surface in unusual *compositions*, depths and heights come towards us, or fall back, sometimes making the viewer feel like they're falling. This affect is not so visible online, but more so when standing in front of the large prints in the gallery. The titles of the pictures draw our attention to the people in them, and their activities, that otherwise might go unnoticed.

- Discuss what the changes in grazing laws would mean?
- Imagine if that were the case here
- Why do you think the work is called 'The New Gardeners'?
- How does the landscape and the lives of the people in Tilting appear to be different or the same as your own?
- What do the photographs tell us about the lives of the people in Tilting and how they live?
- Can you write a short description of what it might be like to live in Tilting, or imagine a short story based on what you see?



Sweep, Amy Walsh, 2007-8

Short Stories is a series of stop frame animations made during another *artist's residency*, this time in Iceland in 2008. These show suburban landscapes very different to the rural landscapes of Tilting. Stop frame animation is a technique where a series of photographs are taken and run together to create the appearance of movement. The photographs for these animations are also taken from a high viewpoint, although this time not using a kite but instead taken from a high vantage point (eg. a tall building or similar). Although not as directly looking down, there is still no visible horizon, or sky.

These *Short Stories* show scenes of everyday activity. Most of the scene appears still, but if you look carefully you'll see a small person, moving across the screen. The animations are looped so these little people are stuck in an endless cycle, of sweeping, walking, cycling or pushing a pushchair. The artist has also added a sound effect to accompany the movement, the only sound in a quiet townscape.



Cycle, Amy Walsh, 2007-8

The videos almost look like they are created from models, like a toy-town. This affect is achieved through using a tilt shift lens on the camera, which manipulates the *perspective*, meaning that the foreground and background are both out of focus as they would be if you were photographing a small model. This is called changing the *scale* – when something big is made to look small or

vice versa. The whole piece is deliberately designed to look like an illusion even though it is actually a documentation of a real place and real people.

- How is the landscape shown in these *Short Stories* different to the landscape seen in the photographs of *The New Gardeners*?
- Where would you prefer to live?
- Why does the artist choose to make it look like an illusion?
- What things do you do every day, either at home or at school? Perhaps you walk down the same road each day on your way to school? Or perhaps there are morning routines or bedtime routines you do every day, like brushing your teeth? What sound effects might accompany these daily routines?

Gallery 3



Saturday Swimmers, Amy Walsh, Aerial Photograph

The final piece in the exhibition, in Gallery 3, is called *Saturday Swimmers*. This is another stop frame animation, using photographs taken using the **Kite Aerial Photography** technique, showing swimmers at the Forty Foot in Sandy Cove, Dublin. This is a place where many local people go regularly to swim. It is

another type of routine, where groups of people gather regularly to take part in an activity they enjoy. The high viewpoint means the people lose their individual identities and become part of a pattern of movement.

This animation is shown through a **projection** that is controlled by the viewer turning a hand-crank. This is based on an early form of motion picture device called a **mutoscope** which in turn was based on the principle of a flip book in which a series of pictures is scrolled through to create the illusion of movement. This gives the viewer control over the movements of the swimmers, not only do we have a 'god's eye' view, but we have control over the little people below. This raises the question of how much we are in charge of the routines of daily life and how much those routines are in charge of us. The people in *Saturday Swimmers* have become like little toys, just as the places in *Short Stories* look like models.

- What activities do you take part in that involve groups of people in the landscape?
- Look at the patterns that the Saturday swimmers make, can you see the different things they are doing?

Artistic terms

Perspective- Perspective means the viewpoint from which something is seen, or the way in which depth and space is depicted in a 2 dimensional image.

Artists Residency- An artist's residency is where an artist is invited to go and work in a particular place for a period of time to create new work.

Composition- The way in which different elements of an image are arranged within the space of the picture.

Scale- Scale is an artistic term that refers to the size or proportions within, or of, an artwork.

Projection- A projection is when a digital image is projected onto a wall or screen using a light projector as you would see in the cinema.

Further ideas for discussion and research

Routines

Especially with younger children daily routines can be an important part of a child's life. Discuss these routines with the children – morning routines, school day routines, evening routines.

Discuss ways to record your school routines and how you move about the building and grounds at different times of the day.

You could also use this theme of routines, and whether we are in control of them or they are in control of us to address social issues depending on the age of your group, such as following fashions and peer pressure, and the difference between bad habits and good habits.

History and use of the landscape

The New Gardeners, explored the change in the landscape in Newfoundland. Try and find out how the Irish landscape has changed through history, and why. Discuss different ways we use the landscape, growing, grazing, recreation, industry, how fields, roads and buildings divide up the natural landscape. Compare this to other countries.

Aerial Landscapes

There are many examples of aerial landscapes from all over the world available online (see links below). Look through a selection of these with your class to discuss different types of landscapes and mankind's affect on them. Google Earth can also be used as a resource to look at different landscapes from above.

Animation

Explore the history of 'moving pictures', from early devices through to modern day film.

Practical ideas for the classroom

Drawing from your imagination

What would your neighbourhood look like if it was photographed from a kite?

Can you draw a picture from your imagination of a birds eye view over where you live?

Now swap this around and try drawing from an ants eye view where everything would look really big and tall.

Perhaps you can draw a picture of yourself or someone in your family doing something they enjoy, or do regularly outside, riding bikes, playing football, gardening, walking, farming.

Colour Field painting

You could then use your birds eye view drawing to make a colour field painting. Outline the main shapes of buildings, fields, roads and landscapes using an oil pastel or crayon. This will create a pattern of shapes on the page. Think about the composition while you're doing this, where will the different elements go on the page, what will be in the center, where will the lines cross reach the edge of the page. When you are happy with your composition mix paints and block in the different areas with bright and contrasting colours. They do not have to be realistic colours.

If you use tracing paper or layout paper for this exercise you can display them with light behind them, like a stained glass window. See the link below for examples of the work of Richard Diebenkorn for inspiration.

You could also use this idea for a fabric and fibre project in which the shapes are cut out of felt or other material and collaged or appliquéd together.



Baseball boy, Amy Walsh, 2010

Photographing movement

During your next PE lesson, try recording the movement that takes place around the schoolyard or playing field. Nominate one person for the job, or take turns through the lesson.

You can use a stills camera or a video camera, or both, whichever you have available at your school. If you're using a video camera, decide on your viewpoint (see below), then leave the camera run to record all the movement that happens in front of the lens. Fix it on a tripod if you have one, if not try and find a wall or other stable object to place it on so it stays still.

If you're using a stills camera, set it up in the same way, carefully considering the shot, and then take a photo at regular intervals (every five seconds for example) or using a burst mode in which the camera will take a number of shots in sequence each time you press the shutter.

Considering your viewpoint

Is there a high vantage point you can use to get a better perspective of the whole area when taking photos?

If not and you are based on the sidelines of the playing area try and stand back

a little and try and include as much of the playing area as possible in your viewfinder, and as little of anything else (background, or things that might be in the way)

Or you could decide on a small part of the playing area to focus on and see what passes through that small area during the lesson. This may mean there are periods of time where nothing happens. Perhaps you want to get down very low to the ground and record only the players feet? Perhaps you want to stand right by the goalmouth to catch what happens when the ball is coming towards the goal?

Decide on your strategy before you start and stick to it to get a series of pictures that can be used together to document movement. You can easily create a short stop-frame animation of these pictures using a free piece of software you can download online called jpgvideo.

You could use the same approach to document everyday routines like brushing your teeth or eating your lunch.

Mapping movement

Source a map of your local area, cover the map with tracing paper, and ask each child to trace their route to school on it in a different colour.

You can then remove the tracing paper from the map and you will have a drawing pattern based on their daily movement.

You could think about other journeys the children might make regularly and trace these on also.

Using chalk on the playground you can draw your movement directly onto the landscape. Either by drawing round your footprints, or tracing a line behind wherever you go. See if you can find a high vantage point to take a photo of the drawing on the ground.

Interactive animation

Interactive artwork like Saturday swimmers doesn't have to involve complicated technology.

There are very simple way of creating work where the viewer controls the movement, through simple animation devices. See links below for instructions on how to make them.

Links

[Amy Walsh gives an artist's talk on the exhibition at West Cork Arts Centre](#)

[A short film showing the interactive piece, Saturday Swimmers, by Amy Walsh in action](#)

[Artist Gary Coyle explores swimming at the forty foot from a very different perspective](#)

[Google maps, search for any location in the world](#)

[Find out more about Tilting, Newfoundland](#)

[Find out more about Kite Aerial Photography](#)

[Patterns in the landscape – examples of aerial photography online](#)

[Emmet Gowin, an American photographer whose aerial photographs document human activities that change the natural environment](#)

[freeware download of jpgvideo a simple piece of software that will convert a series of jpg photos into a video, a very basic and simple way to create a stop frame animation.](#)

[making a flip book](#)

[Experimenting with simple animation devices](#)

[Teaching simple animation](#)