

Gerard Byrne

18 September – 7 November 2014

Via Zenale 3, Milan

An ongoing practice of time-shifting photographs, depicting recent but dated displays of magazines and newspapers, forms the centre of an exhibition of new work by Gerard Byrne, his first solo show in Italy since he represented Ireland at the Venice Biennale in 2007. Each of these news kiosks, of the sort typically found in city centres and shopping precincts all over the world, has been captured by Byrne's lens over the past half decade or so, freezing the social, political and cultural contexts relevant to each particular time and place – perhaps revealing the salient headlines of the day or even which cars, celebrities, musicians and sportspeople were popular at that specific moment. Collectively grouped under the heading *Newsstands*, each unique black-and-white print, printed directly from a single negative – whether photographed in Mexico City, Paris or Brussels, and especially for this exhibition in Milan – has its own constantly morphing title, reflecting in prose the time past from when the photograph was taken: *Ten months, three weeks and one day ago*, for example.

Downstairs, a new video work further explores Byrne's already deep engagement with Irish author Samuel Beckett's *En Attendant Godot* (*Waiting for Godot*), previously the subject of a series of sculptures and photographs by the artist, based on the playwright's minimal stage designs and directions. In Byrne's new film, *He searches for the contrary of saved* (2014) the sound of a voice narrates instructions to actors performing the rehearsal of French production the famous avant-garde play. The voice revisits the actors' instructions as written by Beckett into the script. These instructions are very specific directions on the physical and temporal realisation of the play. Video footage of a full dress rehearsal, shuttles maniacally back and forth across the screen, in an asynchronous, fragmentary response to the call of the instructions. The play, understood here as a literal artefact of 20th century civilisation, is twisted, turned, scrutinised and antagonised in an illiterate manner. The materiality of the text, of the performance and its documentation emerge as an irresolvable, indefinite loop.

A new sculptural unit, *Untitled (die)*, inspired by Tony Smith's Minimalist sculpture *Die*, early Robert Smithson sculptures, Donald Judd works and Poul Kjaerholm table designs, serves to house an aggregation of imagery and various remainders that suggest ideas of the residual fragment, the decontextualized image and the history of photographic imaging technologies. The work offers a dynamic between the whole (the cube) and the fragment (the contents), acting as a time capsule of the artist's different projects, thoughts and lines of enquiry.

As a cross-section of Byrne's abiding interests and current practice, this exhibition combines work that variously rehearses and revises historical 'coordinates', through reference to canonical theatre (Beckett) and to the quotidian realities of the newsstand, either re-read as a sort of 'flash-back' (the photograph), or through a lyrical combination of images combined in a vitrine.

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About the artist

Visually rich and intellectually complex, the work of Gerard Byrne in photography, film, theatre and multi-screen installation examines the slippage between time and the act of image creation. Characterised by a laconic humour, Byrne's projects examine the ambiguities of language and of what is gained or lost in the translation from text to image. By reconstructing historically charged conversations, interviews and performances, from sources as diverse as *La Revolution Surréaliste* or *Playboy* and *National Geographic* magazines, Byrne tests our perception of the past and the present, and the inherent challenges of the visual record. Ongoing photographic series, such as *In the News* and *Loch Ness*, demonstrate that while images are fixed in time they are also interpreted in flux – a situation that both creates and distorts our knowledge of what came before. Byrne is precise in his research and analysis of the relationship between time, documentation and an identifiable visual language, and while each of his distinct bodies of work is conceived independently, they resonate together as being made in relation to a specific, but malleable historical referent.

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Gerard Byrne was born in 1969 in Dublin, Ireland, where he lives and works. Selected solo exhibitions include: The Whitechapel Gallery, London (2013); Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon (2012); IMMA, Dublin (2011); Milton Keynes Gallery (2011); The Renaissance Society, Chicago (2011); Lismore Castle Arts, Ireland (2010); The Common Guild, Glasgow (2010); Lisson Gallery, London (2009); ICA Boston (2008); Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (2008); Dusseldorf Kunstverein (2007); Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius (2007); MUMOK, Vienna (2006); BAK, Utrecht (2004); Frankfurter Kunstverein (2003). In 2007 he represented Ireland at the 52nd Venice Biennale. He has also participated in dOCUMENTA 13, Kassel, 2012; Performa, New York (2011); the 54th Venice Biennale (2011); Auckland Biennial (2010); Gwangju Biennial (2008); Sydney Biennial (2008); Lyon Biennial (2007); Tate Triennial (2006); and the Istanbul Biennale (2003).

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Since being founded in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, it has championed the careers of artists who have transformed the way art was made and presented. It continues to support the future of its artists, the legacy of historical figures, the evolving practice of established artists and the wide-ranging potential of emerging and new talents. With two exhibition spaces in London, one in Milan and another forthcoming in New York, the gallery further extends its legacy of curatorial innovation through *Lisson Presents*, a programme of timely initiatives beyond the gallery spaces, exhibiting work by our artists in collaboration with partners around the world.

Exhibition Facts

Opening Hours Mon-Fri 10am-6pm (closed 1-3pm) Sat by appointment

Location Via Zenale 3, 20123 Milan

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