



BY Buzz Contributor

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On Friday, Hennessy and IMMA (Irish Museum of Modern Art) revealed the names of the four contemporary artists whose works have been purchased by the Hennessy Art Fund for IMMA Collection 2018.

Barbara Knezevic, Susan MacWilliam, Mary McIntyre and Helen O'Leary were joined by Elaine Cullen of Hennessy Ireland, IMMA's Christina Kennedy, Senior Curator, Head of Collections and invited curator Hugh Mulholland, Senior Curator at The MAC, Belfast, as the works went on display.

The Hennessy Art Fund for IMMA Collection exhibition is free to view and runs from May 10th to September 16th.

Each of the artists selected has well-established practices, making work of quality and rigour which has received considerable critical acknowledgement and are not yet represented in the IMMA National Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art.

From thought-provoking sculptures to a haunting video to a photographic installation, each of the chosen works engages with contemporary culture, reflecting the artist's looking at and thinking about life today.

Barbara Knezevic's sculptural arrangement 'The Last Thing On Earth' (2016) is framed by the proposition: What if this is the last thing, the final material to be pulled out of the ground, the final piece of stuff that has not already been purposed by humans?

The 'thing' referred to here is a multi-sided marble object at the centre of the work, around which a constellation of other objects including a photographic backdrop, tripods and archaeological tools, mirrors, and an iPad are arranged.

'Pull Down' (2016) by Susan MacWilliam is a black and white silent video which uses reconstruction and detailed editing to explore forms of portraiture and the mechanics of looking and recording. 'Pull Down' continues the artist's exploration of the phenomena of spiritualism and conjures up the dark spaces of the séance room.

It intimately observes the repeated collapsing and slumping of a girl through the viewing lens of a camera and draws attention to the role of the camera as observer of the spirit medium within historical psychical research studies (the study of paranormal, especially parapsychological, phenomena).

Mary McIntyre's 'The Path to the Distribution Point of Light' (2015) seeks to explore the audience's relationship with photography. McIntyre has constructed a low platform, in the form of a vaguely disquieting shallow ramp that spills out from the corner of the gallery space.

It invites greater spatial interaction with the work, which, calls into question the possibility of 'passive' viewing. The stage-like structure also introduces a sense of heightened theatricality, something that has always been an important aspect of McIntyre's practice, as you are invited to walk across it to view the photograph on the wall.

Each step taken towards the photographic work therefore becomes self-conscious, as your footfall is acoustically registered upon a wooden incline.

Helen O'Leary's work 'Refusal' (2014) uses oil and wood while 'The Problem with Adjectives' (2017) uses egg tempera and oil emulsion on constructed wood. O'Leary's work has been described as an un-writeable novel, and she describes the frame-like structures she produces as paintings that can stand by themselves, that have their own architecture.

Her paintings hold a history of their past lives, with panels fashioned from pieces of previous paintings, cloth and materials at hand in the studio. The materials become woven together to create non-representational three-dimensional pieces that hold a story beyond what is immediately visible. She has described her process as "knitting" with wood, "cobbling together paintings out of the ruin of their own making."

Hennessy Ireland formed a unique partnership with IMMA in 2016 to help fund the purchase of important works by Irish and Ireland based artists for the National Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Funding cuts during the recession resulted in the museum lacking resources to purchase works meaning the practices of younger and mid-career artists from 2011 onwards were glaringly absent from the IMMA Collection story.

Works are sought which show excellence and innovation within contemporary art developments, and which represent a signal moment of achievement with the artist's practice. They must also have been made within the previous five years.

In looking back at the 12 works purchased over the last three years, IMMA Senior Curator, Head of Collections, Christina Kennedy, remarked; "As 12 works that stand as a distinct grouping within the IMMA National Collection, the Hennessy Art Fund to date reflects something that is on the pulse of what is observed by artists today, often ahead of other indicators, and which is contributing to thinking about the human condition in a technological age."

Artists are nominated by a selection panel, including IMMA Head of Collections, Christina Kennedy and invited curators, Senior Curator at The MAC Belfast, Hugh Mulholland, and Director of Temple Bar Gallery + Studios, Dublin, Clíodhna Shaffrey.

Final recommendations are approved by the IMMA Collection Acquisitions Committee, in line with IMMA's Collection policy. The 2016 Hennessy Art Fund for IMMA Collection saw works by artists Kevin Atherton, David Beattie, Rhona Byrne and Dennis McNulty selected. Artist chosen for the 2017 collection were Ciarán Murphy, Maireád McClean, Mark Garry and Yuri Pattison.

"Hennessy reveals four artists selected for Art Fund at IMMA." *Buzz.ie*, 11 May 2018. [online]