

***Troubling Ireland:***  
**A Cross-Borders Think Tank for Artists and Curators**  
**Engaged in Social Change**

Dublin, Leitrim, Belfast & Limerick  
September 17, 2010 – May 15, 2011

Conceived and conducted by Kuratorisk Aktion  
upon a commission from the Fire Station Artists' Studios,  
Dublin, Republic of Ireland



## ***Troubling Ireland:* A Cross-Borders Think Tank for Artists and Curators Engaged in Social Change**

### **THINK TANK INTENTION & OUTCOME**

The think tank *Troubling Ireland: A Cross-Borders Think Tank for Artists and Curators Engaged in Social Change* sets forth to create a critical aesthetic and discursive platform for engaging questions of artistic and curatorial potentiality vis-à-vis the social realities of the two Irelands and their relationship to the global world order.

Structured as a year-long mobile think tank that convenes at five different locations of social and political significance in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, the think tank is intended to offer a meaningful and stimulating environment for discussing how art and curating can contribute to troubling dominant perceptions of the Irish pasts and presents that may allow us to envision different futures.

*Troubling Ireland* brings together six socially engaged artists and curators based in the Republic and invites them to collectively reflect on their individual artistic/curatorial practices with an aim to develop new methodologies capable of addressing and crossing the many boundaries upholding the two Irelands as we know them today. Conceived and led by the curatorial collective Kuratorisk Aktion (DK) – whose practice investigates the complex relations between historical colonialism, capitalist globalization, and neocolonial forms of exploitation on the one hand and postcolonial forms of conviviality on the other – the think tank offers an opportunity to detect, destabilize, unthink, and transform “Ireland.”

Alternating between thematic readings, screenings, knowledge sharing and building sessions, walkabouts with local experts, artist talks, and participant presentations, the think tank will discuss art and curating’s ability to detect the repressions of northern and southern Ireland, to engage their blind spots, to listen to their silenced, to imagine things otherwise, and to engage the unknown.

The think tank starts out by discussing the “why,” “how,” and “for whom” of the aesthetic-political concept of troubling and moves on to looking troublingly at historical roots (British plantation economy), repressed traumas (Ireland’s colonization and division), recent globalization (the Celtic Tiger boom and bust), and, finally, to looking ahead to a more convivial and equitable future in which things and subjects that have been divided and kept apart are perpetually reunited.

### **THINK TANK PARTICIPANTS**

- Kennedy Browne (collaborative partnership between artists Sarah Browne and Gareth Kennedy, based in the Republic of Ireland)
- Anthony Haughey (artist, based in Dublin and Dundalk, Co. Louth)
- Anna Macleod (artist, based in Dromahare, North Leitrim)

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- Augustine O'Donoghue (artist and curator, based in Dublin)
- Susan Thomson (artist and writer, based in Dublin)
- Helen Carey (curator, based in Dublin)

## THINK TANK PROGRAM

### 1st Meeting

#### **Troubling Ireland: Why, How, and for Whom?**

Venue: National Museum of Ireland – Decorative Arts & History, Collins Barracks, Dublin

Dates: September 17–19, 2010

#### **Friday, September 17, 12–6:30 pm + dinner in the evening**

- 12–1: Introduction to the think tank by Kuratorisk Aktion (intention, structure, form, outcome)
- 1–1:30: Lunch
- 1:30–3: Participants' feedback and suggestions to proposed program structure
- 3–4: Practice presentations by 2 x participants and feedback (30 min. each)
- 4–4:30: Coffee break
- 4:30–6:30: Practice presentations by 4 x participants and feedback (30 min. each)
- 7:30–: Dinner

#### **Saturday, September 18, 10 am–6 pm**

- 10–12: *Why Troubling Ireland?*  
Collective uncovering, analysis, and articulation of what needs to be troubled and why
- 12–1: Visit to the permanent exhibition *The Easter Rising: Understanding 1916* in Collins Barracks
- 1–1:30: Lunch
- 1:30–3:30: *How Troubling Ireland?*  
Collective discussion on what ethics and methodologies to adopt or develop in order to trouble Ireland artistically and curatorially
- 3:30–4: Coffee break
- 4–6: Screening of *THE ROAD TO MENTAL DECOLONIZATION* (2010), DVCAM Pro to DVD, 63:45 min. Produced by Kuratorisk Aktion & The Sámi Art Festival 2008-2010
- Screening of Tamar Guimarães, *Jan Leton and the Archive* (2006), slideshow with English voice-over, 24 min.
- Closing discussion

### **Sunday, September 19, 9 am–4 pm**

- 9–11: *Troubling Ireland* for whom?  
Collective identification of audiences, affiliations, effects, and sustainability scenarios when engaging in the radical work to unlearn discourses and undo boundaries
- 11–12:30: Discussion of Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes’ Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles,” in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003.
- 12:30–1: Lunch
- 1–4: Open slot conceived and led by think tank participant Helen Carey relating to her curatorial investigations of Irish identity, nationalism, and public space.

### **2nd Meeting**

#### **Plantation Songs: From Colonialism to Celtic Tiger**

Venue: Leitrim Sculpture Centre, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim

Dates: November 12–14, 2010

### **Friday, November 12, 9 am–6 pm + dinner in the evening**

- 9–12: Collective transport to Manorhamilton
- 12–1:30: Check-in and lunch
- 1:30–4: Collective knowledge sharing and building on the complex relations between British colonialism and globalized Irish capitalism: How to artistically/curatorially engage such issues as repressed colonial histories and their patterned reproduction in current relations of rule, the changing ecology under plantation economy, industrialization, and global capitalism, etc.
- 4–4:30: Coffee break
- 4:30–6: Walkabout with Sean O’Reilly (Director of Leitrim Sculpture Centre)
- 7:30–: Dinner at a local pub

### **Saturday, November 13, 9 am–5:30 pm + dinner in the evening**

- 9–12: Open slot conceived and led by think tank participant Anna Macleod relating to her artistic investigations into the ecological consequences of rural migration and “ruberia” and the rediscovery of the erased social history of the protestant tradition south of the border
- 12–1: Lunch

- 1–3: Talk with Philip Delamare (Arts officer Roscommon Co. Council) and local artist Alice Lyons exploring the impacts of the Celtic Tiger phenomenon and the financial recession on Co. Leitrim/Roscommon.
- 3–4: Discussion of Arundhati Roy, “The Ladies Have Feelings, So...Shall We Leave It to the Experts?,” in Arundhati Roy, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, London: Flamingo, 2002.
- 4–4:30: Coffee break
- 4:30–5:30 Discussion of Andrea Geyer, “Now, Then and How. Notes on Artistic Practice,” in Stephan Schmidt-Wulffen (ed.), *The Artist as Public Intellectual?*, Publications of the University of Fine Arts Vienna, vol. 1, 2008.
- 5:30–: Collective shopping and dinner cooking

**Sunday, November 14, 9 am–4 pm**

- 9–12: Collective knowledge sharing and building (continued)
- Screening of Kobena Mercer’s keynote lecture “Post-Colonial Trauma” delivered at the seminar *Healing Postcolonial Traumas of Nordic Indigenous Women*, organized by Kuratorisk Aktion at the Tromsø Gallery of Contemporary Art, Norway, November 21–23, 2008.
- 12–1: Lunch
- 1–4: Collective transport to Dublin

**3rd Meeting**

**Borders, Conflict, Trauma, and Politics of a Commonwealth**

Venue: Ballynafeigh Community Center, Belfast

Dates: January 21–23, 2011

**Friday, January 21, 9 am–7 pm + dinner in the evening**

- 8:30–12: Collective transport to Belfast
- 12–12:30: Check-in
- 12:30–1:30: Introduction to the community center and its local area by Deputy Director Gerry Turbitt
- 1:30–2:30: Lunch
- 3–7: Walkabout in West Belfast by Cosite tour guide followed by walkabout in East Belfast with Sandra Johnston (Belfast-based artist and Ph.D. candidate)
- 8–: Dinner

**Saturday, January 22, 9 am–7 pm + dinner in the evening**

- 9–11: Collective knowledge sharing and building on The Troubles, The Good Friday Agreement, and the seemingly seamless border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland: How to artistically/curatorially engage the complex relations between class and religion, militarization and gender, mongrelization and state formation, postcolonialism and melancholia, decolonization and commonwealth
- 11–1: Discussion of project proposals and potential manifestations of the think tank
- 1–2: Lunch
- 2–4: Artist talk with Sandra Johnston (Belfast-based artist and Ph.D. candidate) on her practice engaging issues of borders, conflict, trauma, memory, and healing
- 4–7: Screening of Paul Gilroy's lecture "Colonial Crimes and Convivial Cultures" delivered during the public hearing *Debating Independence: Autonomy or Voluntary Colonialism?*, organized by Kuratorisk Aktion at the Teachers' Training School of Greenland, Nuuk, April 22–23, 2006 as part of their project *Rethinking Nordic Colonialism: A Postcolonial Exhibition Project in Five Acts*, 2006.
- Discussion of M. Jacqui Alexander, "Colonialism and its Contemporaries: Feminist Reflections on the State of War and the Meaning of Solidarity," in Kuratorisk Aktion (ed.), *Rethinking Nordic Colonialism Documentation DVD*, Helsinki: Nordic Institute of Contemporary Art, 2006.
- 8–: Dinner

**Sunday, January 23, 9 am–4 pm**

- 9–12: Open slot conceived and led by think tank participant Susan Thomson relating to her aesthetic-discursive engagement with suppression, internalization, and repression of colonialist dynamics and trauma from a queer perspective
- 12–1: Lunch
- 1:30–4: Collective transport to Dublin

**4th Meeting**

**Reading Up the Ladder of Privilege: Building Deep Solidarity Across the Racist, Patriarchal, and Heterosexual Divides of Global Capitalism**

Venue: Daghdah Dance Company, 1 St. Johns Square, Limerick

Dates: March 4–6, 2011

**Friday, March 4, 9 am–8 pm**

- 9–12: Collective transport to Limerick
- 12–1:30: Check-in and lunch

- 1:30–2:30: Introduction to the Ralahine Centre for Utopian Studies by Director Tom Moylan
- 3–6: Open slot conceived and led by think tank participants Sarah Browne and Gareth Kennedy relating to their artistic examination of the Dell Factory's relocation from Limerick to Lodz, Poland
- 6:30–8: Coffee, snacks, and screening of *Life and Debt*, dir. Stephanie Black, USA, 2001, 86 min.

**Saturday, March 5, 9 am–4 pm and 7:30–10 pm**

- 9–12: Walkabout in Limerick and visit to Limerick City Museum with local guide Noel Curtain
- 12–1: Lunch
- 1:30–4: Collective knowledge sharing and building on disenfranchisement in Ireland historically, during the Celtic Tiger, and during today's financial recession: How to artistically/ curatorially read up the ladder from the privileged position of cultural production and representation in order to address, for instance, migration, outsourcing, (sexual) trafficking, free trade zones, etc. under globalized capitalism from the perspective of the most disenfranchised and disposable? How to prevent representation from actually silencing the subaltern and instead foster new solidarities locally and globally, working towards a new global common good or wealth?

One starting point for the discussion could be to reconsider the nature of the global financial crisis and its stated impact on the Republic. While some anti-capitalists were fast to see the crisis as the fulfillment of Marx's promise of capitalism's collapse (finally!), others have stressed the potential of the crisis to make the opaque operations of global capital more visible to Western populations, perhaps helping to undo some of the blindness and some of the zones of invisibility that privilege, according to Mohanty, produce. For instance, during a public hearing Kuratorisk Aktion organized in Copenhagen in 2008 titled *Whatever happened to the alter-globalization movement? Learning from the recent past, planning for the future*, artist and educator Jakob Jakobsen suggested that the approaching bankruptcy of still more members of the Western middle classes might just pave the way for a new solidarity with the global proletariat. In any event, the financial crisis has allowed us, in the words of social theorist Axel Honneth, to spot the structure of late capitalism more clearly and view its internal structural tensions, not so much as "contradictory" in the hope that they will lead to capitalism's end, but as "paradoxical" in the sense that capitalism in one generation can bring with it moments of cultural liberation, which in the next are transformed into new, more advanced forms of disciplining and exploitation (see Martin Hartmann & Axel Honneth, "Paradoxes of Capitalism," in *Constellations*, vol. 13, issue 1, 2006).

Is the Celtic Tiger boom and bust such a symptom of capitalism's paradoxical structure? Did the boom constitute Honneth's moment of cultural liberation, which with the bust (and the subsequent financial rescue plans) has transformed into new, more advanced forms of disciplining and exploitation of the Irish population? Could this paradoxical connection between liberation and oppression form the basis for future anti-capitalist analysis and intervention?

4–6: Free time

6–7: Dinner

7:30–10: Open slot conceived and led by think tank participant Augustine O'Donoghue in Occupy Space, Limerick relating to her activist artistic research into the Limerick Soviet of 1919

#### **Sunday, March 6, 9 am–4 pm**

9–9:30: Debriefing of Augustine O'Donoghue's open slot

9:30–10:30: Screening of Artur Zmijewski's *Two Monuments* (2009), video, 15 min.

Discussion of Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009, preface + part 5.

10:30–12: Concluding remarks on the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting and discussion of potential opportunity to manifest the Think Tank during the *Dublin Contemporary* in fall 2011

12–1: Lunch

1–4: Collective transport to Dublin

#### **5th Meeting**

#### **Farewell to Postcolonial Irelands, Welcome to the Post-Postcolonial**

Venue: Fire Station Artists' Studios, Dublin

Dates: May 13–15, 2011

#### **Friday, May 13, 10 am–6 pm**

10–10:45: Updates from all participants on projects and ideas for the think tank's possible future manifestations

10:45–11:30: Continued discussion of the Hardt & Negri reading

11:30–12:30: Open slot conducted by Kuratorisk Aktion on Pia Arke's *methodology of mongrelization* that embraces the "impure," "unclean," "mixed," "both-and," "neither-nor". Does Arke's work represent a viable model for imagining alternative formations of statehood, identity, and ethnicity that go beyond the tyranny of the nation-state and national identity? Can we in her work detect future models for conviviality and creativity that may help us to artistically/ curatorially (re)vision "post-postcolonial" Irelands?

a) Screening of Pia Arke, *Arctic hysteria* (1996), video (S-VHS to DVD), 5:55 min.

b) Screening of Pia Arke, *Tupilakosaurus. An interesting study about the triassic myth of Kap Stosch* (1999), video (S-VHS to DVD), 9:18 min.

c) Discussion of Carsten Juhl, "Mother Tongue or Fatherland," in Kuratorisk Aktion (ed.), "Metropolitan Repressions," *SUM: Magazine for Contemporary Art*, # 4, 2009

12:30-1: Lunch

1-2:30: Open slot conducted by Helen Carey: "Drawing on my own interest in the notions around Commemorations, I suggest a consideration of Queen Elizabeth's visit to Ireland, and her visit to the Garden of Remembrance, of the 1966 commemorations of 1916, and the commissioning process of the sculpture of the Children of Lir by Oisín Kelly in that garden, the mosaic pool and the place of the Garden in the City. This will mean a short walk to the gardens in Parnell Square which may not be open as the Queen's visit will immediately follow the think tank's weekend, but what will be worth looking at is the security, reading the current comment and assessing the symbolisms. A performance will be envisaged as part of this visit."

2:30-3: Coffee break

3-4:30: Open slot conducted by Anna Macleod: "Singing workshop with Diane Henshaw, Artist/Musician & Curator, Co. Fermanagh. The singing workshop will focus on singing as a group activity that binds individuals together, can be inspirational, didactic and a cathartic release of tension and stress. The chosen songs relate to current social and economic realities in Ireland and beyond."

4:30-6: Discussion on our learning to date and potential future manifestations/outcomes of think tank in Ireland/abroad

### **Saturday, May 14, 10 am-6 pm**

10-11:30: Open slot conducted by Susan Thomson: "We will meet at the National Library, Kildare Street, Dublin, with passport or driver's license in order to obtain a reader's ticket at the main desk. In the Manuscripts Room, we will be looking at *The White Diaries* by Roger Casement."

11:30-12: Lunch

12:30-3:30: Open slot conducted by Anthony Haughey relating to his artistic and scholarly examinations of transnational migration, contested spaces, and new forms of citizenship: "I will frame the question of citizenship and emerging identities in Ireland and raise questions in relation to notions of 'informal citizenship' as Saskia Sassen calls it. I will re-create a scaled down version of a performance/intervention called *How to be a Model Citizen* (2009) in the

seminar room of Fire Station Artists' Studios. The performance will approximate a waiting room, where think tank participants will enter and take a seat awaiting further instructions... The performance will be led by Laretta Igboonu (one of the participants from the original performance/intervention). Following completion of the 'Citizenship test' Laretta and I will lead a discussion in relation to negotiating citizenship, asylum process, self representation/organisation and the current position of migrants in Irish society."

3:30–4: Coffee break

4–6: Continued discussion on our learning to date and potential future manifestations/outcomes of think tank in Ireland/abroad

**Sunday, May 15, 10 am–5 pm**

10–11:30: Open slot conducted by Kennedy Browne: Presentation and discussion of the collective's recent exhibition *How Capital Moves*, Limerick City Gallery of Art, 2011

11:30–1: Continued discussion on our learning to date and potential future manifestations/outcomes of think tank in Ireland/abroad

1–1:30: Lunch

1:30–3: Open slot conducted by Augustine O'Donoghue: Screening and discussion of the documentary *Sex Slaves* (2005)

3–3:30: Coffee break

3:30–5: Concluding remarks on our learning to date and potential future manifestations/outcomes of think tank in Ireland/abroad

5: Think tank ends