

# Ailbhe Ní Bhriain



## **Ailbhe Ní Bhriain | The Dock, Carrick-on-Shannon**

I normally make a point of not reviewing exhibitions/projects by the same artist on this blog. There are so many incredible artists working in Ireland and beyond that it only seems fair to shine a light on them equally.

So why then am I reviewing another solo show by Ailbhe Ní Bhriain, given my review of her *Passages* exhibition some time ago? Put simply, because this exhibition is brilliant! Having followed Ailbhe's work for several years now I have never seen her work looking so coherent or so exquisitely presented.

There has been an obvious close collaboration between the artist and the institution to ensure the works are properly installed, that there's a focused oversight on the artist's practice from recent years and that the needs of the viewer have been carefully considered. Many institutions could learn from that diligence.

Ní Bhriain's very distinctive practice is defined by a number of factors. The blurring of boundaries between the actual and the constructed, the multiple layering of computer imagery and the notable lack of human presence in any of the filmic works, despite several being filmed where people might normally congregate.

Ascending the stairs of the beautiful Dock building, the viewer is greeted by four photographic works from an ongoing series entitled *Inscriptions*. These monochromatic images of abstracted museum objects use a similar collage effect to her screen works – that of taking source material and combining it with imagery from multiple other locations. The inscription of the title refers to an early text on museology and the categorisation of objects. There is an elegiac quality in these photographs.

*Reports to an Academy* was first shown at the Royal Hibernian Academy at the end of 2015. Spread over four very large screens this work depicts the artist's studio, the Natural History Museum Dublin, an Aran Island landscape and a library in Cork. These separate films are knitted together with one audio soundscape creating a cohesion of experience between them. In these works the artist uses up to eighty distinct layers to create the effect of a static background image that very subtly shifts and transforms creating an altered reality – familiar yet evolving

*Window* and *Departure* were shot in the dreary interior of the abandoned former Cork Airport. Presented here as a monumental double-sided screen, that itself becomes an architectural feature, these works take on an epic quality. Using tracking shots filmed through the building the artist applies digital technology to create new environments that fuse interior and exterior,

real and imagined. The viewer is left questioning the truth of the image.

Many of the works in the exhibition I've encountered elsewhere but the presentation here is quite incredible. That's why I think this show is an early contender for my solo exhibition of the year.

curatoronabike is an occasional blog by Eamonn Maxwell, a Curator and Cultural Consultant. Previously he was Director of Lismore Castle Arts. He has been a visual arts curator for over 15 years and projects have included Curator of Irish Pavilion at 54th Venice Biennale.