

Conflict and Conviviality: Creating Politically Engaged Art situations in Contemporary Ireland

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This practice-led research aims to explore the production of political artwork in Ireland in the context of contemporary political conflict. I aim to provide an academic frame of reference for understanding current, innovative practice produced by Irish-based political artists since the beginning of the economic crisis in Ireland in 2008. This frame of reference was created from an art practitioner's point of view. I utilise a range of twentieth-century art making and art critique traditions employed in Ireland. These primarily revolve around the challenges that the Northern Ireland Troubles have presented for art practice. During this research, I identified through my artistic and curatorial practice, a gap between an artistic intention to create politically relevant art in Ireland, and on the other hand, the challenge of engaging an audience with the resulting artistic outcomes. The research culminated in the proposition that one, as an artist, must prioritise the contextualisation of creative practices to local, current public issues. This entails the creation and presentation of art projects outside the designated art sites such as galleries, in a manner that allows a socialisation of the location. // This interest developed to include a significant re-definition of the factors that must be considered in the artistic process that sits at the core of my research. These include artist (intention) - artwork (productin) - place (production and reception) - audience (reception) and all of these must be addressed in an integrated manner in order to research ideas of political art and its meaningful placement. The inclusion of a notion of a place in both the production and the reception aspects of art creation required the definition of an artistic element which I have dubbed 'found place.' By this I refer to a location that holds social and political meaning for those who occupy it as part of their everyday lives. The placement of artwork within a found place implies that the artwork and its social-political meaning interact and influence each other. // Both the practice and the theoretical research involved in this project led me to identify three elements that could be considered themajor challenges involved in creating political art in found places. The first is to relocate art pieces from the art gallery or museum locations to spaces deemed relevant to the particular piece, a relevance that would first

and foremost be determined in relation to the audience 'available' at the location. The second element is to design the form of engagement enacted in the pieces so that the medium and type of relationship offered to the audience is determined by the artist, who works to identify a form of interactivity in the design of the pieces and the manner of their reception. The third challenge seeks to protect the integrity of the work, which is in danger of being dissolved in the gestures of the relational art approach.