

NEW DIRECTIONS IN IRISH AND IRISH AMERICAN LITERATURE

# IMAGINING IRISH SUBURBIA IN LITERATURE AND CULTURE

Edited by  
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Editors

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## CHAPTER 14

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# SOUTHERN CROSS: Documentary Photography, the Celtic Tiger and a Future yet to Come

*Mark Curran*

My subjects, a new era is about to dawn. I, Bloom, tell you verily it is even now at hand, let yea, on the word of Bloom, ye shall ere long enter into the Golden City which is to be the new Bloomusalem in the Nova Hibernia of the future.<sup>1</sup>

One evening in the summer of 1998, I was standing on a doorstep having a conversation with my elderly neighbour, Kathleen. She described how her granddaughter, the first in five generations, could not afford to live in the area where she was born. The location, one of the oldest neighbourhoods on the north side of Dublin, was experiencing the initial stages of a process, marking the urban evolution and impact of the so-called ‘Celtic Tiger’ economy, a period since characterised in the description of the appearance of countless cranes elevated across the city skyline.<sup>2</sup> Over the following month, in response to that conversation, I began to

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**Fig. 14.1** *Portrait (A Child)* (c-print) from the series *Stoneybatter (Dublin)*, August 1998

make portraits of children and young people in the area. Possessing no front gardens, the street was the primary setting to gather, converse and play. So, at first, I approached those people I knew, made a request and then photographed each—always approximating eye level, gaze directed towards the lens—as they presented themselves to the camera. The timing was at dusk and always with cranes in the background. An impulsive reaction using photography to ask questions about the economic circumstance, and who benefits? And mindful of the significance of the age of

those portrayed—critically, whose future?<sup>3</sup> I would not then realise that this was really the beginning of a cycle of research projects, which thematically addressed the predatory context, resulting from flows and migrations of global capital, that continues to the present day.<sup>4</sup> As the Irish poet Theo Dorgan would later state of this time: ‘I was born in a Republic to realise that I live in an Economy’.

Mindful of Dorgan’s stark declaration, and wishing to acknowledge the significance of hindsight when critically reflecting upon a project that began almost two decades ago, I discuss here the context and rationale for SOUTHERN CROSS, with reference to the theoretical role of documentary photography and the photographic portrait. In turn, I position the project as a critical document that questioned the sustainability of the economic circumstances of the Republic at the turn of the new millennium.

Completed between 1999 and 2001, SOUTHERN CROSS was a critical response to the rapid economic development witnessed in the Republic of Ireland. The official Irish economic policy of attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) had over several decades brought about the largest transformation in the history of the country. Focused on Dublin and its county region, the project critically mapped and surveyed the spaces of development and finance. The project comprised two series. The first is ‘Site’, which explored the transitory spaces between the construction sites, which I described at the time as ‘what was’ and ‘what will be’, viewing them as the ‘birthing grounds of the New Ireland’. As a counterpoint, the series ‘Prospect’ surveyed the State’s first financial district, the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC). Since the 1990s, the IFSC had been a flagship for global capital and is itself the architectural embodiment of the ‘New Ireland’.<sup>5</sup> The title of the project was inspired by the motorway of the same name, which now encircles Dublin. Originally, it was proposed to be built in the early 1980s, near where I lived by the Dublin Mountains. However, due to massive local objection (including my parents), it was postponed for almost twenty years. Thus, I was drawn to the title partially as result of this personal understanding but also because the project was made in the Republic, the South of the island, so ‘Southern’ was geographically relevant. The reference to ‘Cross’ asked whether the new religion of the Republic was embodied in Capital. Representing the economic aspirations and profound changes of a country on the western periphery of Europe, this documentary project presented this area and those who inhabited it being transformed in response to an influx of global capital.

## TRANSFORMATION

In 1972, my family moved to a new housing estate on the south side of the city at the foot of the Dublin Mountains. Still being built, it was a privileged middle-class blend of modern convenience alongside the possibility to roam nearby fields and hills. This would be the family home and the site of the formative years of my youth. Then in early 1984, when I was nineteen, we emigrated to Western Canada during a time of continuing economic recession. Within two days of our arrival to a small village in Alberta, in the midst of frozen prairie, I was chasing cattle at my uncle's Auction Mart. Later, I would study at the University of Calgary and subsequently work as a Social Worker. While a migrant, one constructs romantic notions of where one is from and ideas of 'Home'. In time, I would be faced with the contradictions of my own understanding regarding the country of my birth. This was first made vividly evident in 1992 when, on the second day of my return, a very close friend brought me to witness what was then Ireland's largest shopping mall, The Square, in Tallaght, west Dublin. Believing I had left such a landscape of mass consumption behind in Calgary, I walked through this space, complete with multiplex cinema and food-courts, immediately recognising how it disrupted the idealised landscape of my memory. Such personal circumstance, including this encounter, would play a critically informative role in the subsequent construction of SOUTHERN CROSS.

The beginning of the 1990s is identified as the period marking the start of Ireland's largest economic upheaval in modern history. Aided by a massive migration of global capital into Ireland in the form of Foreign Direct Investment and buoyed by infrastructural and development grants from the European Union, the Irish government succeeded in attracting international financial, biopharmaceutical and technology multinationals to establish global sites of operation in Ireland, which became an outsourcing base to Europe and the world. In return, these Multinational Corporations (MNCs) received substantial grants and could avail of an educated English-speaking workforce and the lowest rate of Corporation Tax in Europe. A generation of Irish who had been forced to emigrate also began to return home. For the first time in modern Irish history, a new generation appeared to have an alternative to migration, where the possibility existed to remain and work at home.

\* \* \*



**Fig. 14.2** *West of the City* (Pine Valley, County Dublin, 2001) (1 m × 1 m, c-Print) from the series *Site*

Addressing the potential and role of visual art practice to critique globalisation, Saskia Sassen asserts:

Artists and activists can – and are doing, some interesting work here. It is the type of work that might be political, but not necessarily in the narrow sense of the word. Rather, I am thinking of a kind of politics that has to do with ‘making present’ of giving voice to people and social conditions usually rendered invisible. Often art can make present that which is not clear to the naked eye – and in ways that rational discourse cannot.<sup>6</sup>



It was this context and mindset that framed the outset of my first long-term project. As a student of photography, I was introduced to a theoretical and critical understanding regarding the application of the photograph and its central defining relationship to reality. An in-depth discussion regarding the indexical nature of the photograph is beyond the scope of this chapter.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, it is important to note that the photograph's relationship to the real persists, as the photographic historian Elizabeth Edwards states: '[photographs] embody meaning through their signifying properties, and are deliberate, conscious efforts to represent, to say something about something'.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, having started the series of portraits of children with cranes as a backdrop, it became increasingly clear there was a necessity to access and explore beyond the hoardings surrounding those sites.<sup>9</sup> I was also informed by the demand of the photographic theorist Mark Durden for an approach 'which is more empathetic, subjective, engaged. And this move to engagement ... opening up a space for contestation, orients us to action'.<sup>10</sup> As I viewed these sites, emerging throughout Dublin and county as the birthing grounds of a 'New Ireland', I began to ask: what did such spaces embody in relation to the identity of this 'New Ireland'?<sup>11</sup> And while popular conversation increasingly focused on subjects such as 'property portfolios' aligned with the extraordinary rate of asset-price increases, what was the socio-economic sustainability of such an outlook? In addition, having been made aware of the work of photographers such as Allan Sekula and Lewis Hine, I had questions concerning the role and representation of labour. And while such issues were prompted, it is important to state that at the time I had certain doubts. In the absence of critical documentary projects to reference, and in the context of what could be described as a general national optimism, what would be the function and value of such a project? Indeed, at times, I wondered, was there a point at all as friends told me 'don't rain on the parade'. Nonetheless, the project began.

In responding to the question, 'What is a documentary photograph?', Abigail Solomon-Godeau suggests that 'with equal justice, one might respond by saying "just about everything" or alternatively, "just about nothing"'.<sup>12</sup> While it is important to note that my research practice has evolved since the completion of the project, I wish to provide insight into the conceptual and critical contextualisation at the specific timing of this project. Thus, as a 'rubric', as Solomon-Godeau describes it, the term, 'documentary photography' is important and purposeful for this discussion.<sup>13</sup> Further, the role of gesture is also important in relation to the

motivation for the generation of photographs. This role is highlighted by the photographic historian, John Roberts, who, in his discussion on the ostensive nature of the photograph, argues for a ‘theoretically self-conscious practice’ that enables ‘the photographic document [to be] not so much an inert nomination of things in the world, but a source of inferential complexity’.<sup>14</sup> And as Joanna Lowry asserts, to view ‘the very act of photography, as a kind of performative gesture which points to an event in the world, as a form of designation that draws reality into the image field, is thus itself a form of indexicality’. And that accepting ‘the limit point of photography’s documentary capacity ... our attention shifts towards the act of photography itself as a moment of authentication’.<sup>15</sup>

Grounding the gesture was the impetus to produce photographs as part of a critical practice, i.e., possessing critical intent through critical enquiry.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the packing up, setting off and going out into the world to raise a camera, look through a viewfinder, and make an exposure. By doing so, to reflect upon, to witness, to tell and create a critical narrative. However, caution is required. As Allan Sekula observes: ‘the rhetorical strength of documentary is imagined to reside in the unequivocal character of the camera’s evidence, in an essential realism’.<sup>17</sup> So while we may not be able to define specifically documentary photography, this ‘imagined’ perception permeates all understandings of it as a practice. Therefore, the indexical nature of the photograph and its reception, in both a physical and psychological sense, can simultaneously describe, limit, alienate, and prejudice the possibilities inherent in the practice.

This represents to a large degree my theoretical positioning in relation to documentary practice during this period. However, it is also important to acknowledge, beyond popular media reports, there was a large absence of critical documentary and/or other media engagement with the socio-economic circumstance of the country. In relation to photographic projects, only a small number of substantial and analytical photographic work was undertaken at this time on the island as whole, such as *Boomtown* (2002) by John Duncan, which focused on his native Belfast, and *Traffic Island* (2003) by the German-born photographer, Axel Boesten.<sup>18</sup> I was overtly aware too of a general media and political narrative of unreserved and overwhelming optimism. Perhaps this was understandable in the context of the economic history of the Republic and the startling rate at which the situation unfolded. Nonetheless, I firmly believe these factors played a central role in the limited critical enquiry at this time. Unfortunately, the basis for the transformation would become a model of devastating economic unsustainability, for the country and its citizens with an enormous price to be paid.

## ACCESS

On Sundays, I began to explore and identify sites in the centre of the city. Aware this was generally a quieter, ‘non-working’ day, I would approach security at particular locations, which I had previously identified as of interest, and ask if I could photograph. On the smaller locations, where generally only one security guard would be working, it was never really a problem, while other sites, due to their sprawling nature, afforded easier access. However, in the large developments in the centre of the city (and later motorway developments like the construction of the urban ring M50 motorway), it proved almost impossible without official sanction. This was due, in large part, to public liability regarding insurance and personal safety and at a time when particular government and media interest began to focus upon the safety practices within the construction industry. In addition, and critically, I also wanted to gain more extensive access, allowing for the opportunity to return and repeat visits. This was and would become a central working method.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, I became acutely aware of questions surrounding the negotiation of access and that gaining such access would require a determined effort. In some cases, I was given a contact name, telephone number and address, usually of someone based in a Head Office. I would write a formal letter outlining my request with a rationale and then wait. After a period of a month or so, if there was no acknowledgment, I would telephone. Normally, I was told someone would reply. In the end, I generally received no response to any direct formal requests and ultimately, it would be my personal network that would enable access.

Over the course of a conversation with a close friend another possibility arose. As she was working for the company overseeing the development of Temple Bar (a then new cultural quarter being planned and constructed in the centre of Dublin city), she offered and subsequently organised formal and extended access to the ‘West End’ of the development as it was then being built. This would be a significant break-through as the developer was responsible for many other sites in and around the city and county. So having secured official access, the following months allowed for the opportunity to build relationships with foremen (who were then primarily men), site engineers and other relevant parties. In turn, this would enable the possibility to return, and eventually, to gain access to other significant locations throughout Dublin city and county.

There is an imperative to foreground how the process regarding this project, from a starting point driven by critical questioning and my critical positioning, evolved with a clarity that it would require

substantial investment and commitment in terms of time and focus—an extended process of research—if the project was to be fully realised. Thus, as I began to photograph within the centre of Dublin, I was drawn to visually survey these sites extending from the centre to the periphery—the liminal spaces of the suburbs. Through this process of visual mapping, and informed by discourses drawn from psychogeography and cultural geography, I began to consider the relationship and meaning of these spaces to the society around them.

\* \* \*



**Fig. 14.3** *HOME* (Temple Bar, Dublin 1999) (75 cm × 75 cm, c-print), from the series *Site*

Entering slowly, careful not to lose my footing on the scattered cables and wires that cover the floor. Camera in hand, light meter on a strap around my neck. A room to be, in the apartment to be. Darkened in parts due to the limited light. I stop. The blood-red catches my attention first. Stark. Rothko-like. Bold. Then slowly, I notice the chalk on the bare concrete wall above. Subtle. Almost. All written in upper case—‘HOME’.

In his discussion of late-modernism, Craig Owens foregrounds the role of allegory and its central ability ‘to rescue from historical oblivion that which threatens to disappear’, and how allegory ‘is consistently attracted to the fragmentary’.<sup>20</sup> Echoing these thoughts with respect to photography, Justin Carville writes that ‘the image itself becomes a space to be re-negotiated, a territory where contested narratives can be articulated’.<sup>21</sup>

The photograph (Fig. 14.3) embodied one of the core concerns of the project. Later, this bare concrete wall would be covered and this word, ‘HOME’, would no longer be visible. Elizabeth Edwards describes the allegorical qualities of the photograph as ‘that inexplicable point of incisive clarity’.<sup>22</sup> While the project progressed, I embraced the role of allegory within the photographic image as a central visual strategy, recalling the theorist and historian David Green’s assertion that ‘the only possibility of reinventing the representation of history is using photography through allegory’.<sup>23</sup> As I have suggested earlier, the role of gesture and intentionality matched with a critical visual awareness remained important throughout. Therefore, passing through the above scene something resonated, perhaps ‘caught off-guard’, combined with the recognition of a potential that would convey and evoke in a critically significant sense something about the nature of this in-progress newly urbanised space. It is important to reiterate that the function and meaning of allegory will always be inherently contested, but this is not necessarily detrimental; rather, it is vital for its ‘critical valency’.<sup>24</sup>

Regarding the use of aesthetic strategies combined with political intent, David Levi Strauss posits: ‘why can’t beauty be a call to action?’.<sup>25</sup> Thus, new forms of visual presentation possess the potential to subvert rather than distract. Historically, aesthetics has been problematised concerning its role in representation. I would argue that in the context of a broader reading of the image and as part of a critically reflexive practice, it has a political role to perform. It affords the viewer a way in, an initial

reading in its appearance giving way to other readings. As Strauss further argues, aesthetic strategies offer ‘new ways to reinvest images with believability [...] to recover the image from obscurity into which it has been cast’.<sup>26</sup> These landscape photographs, intended as allegorical references to the effect of the changing geography on society, intersected with portraits of the workers. They portrayed both those charged with the responsibility of transforming the landscape in the hope of fulfilling the desires of the society around them and those who occupied the completed spaces.

It is important to acknowledge that the photographic portrait as representation possesses a critically disputed, divisive and problematic history.<sup>27</sup> John Tagg argues that the truth-value of the photographic image was consolidated as a practical technique that functions within ‘an institutional paradigm of research, surveillance and control’.<sup>28</sup> Tagg is particularly critical of the portrait as a ‘monologic mode of address that represents the subject incapable of speaking, acting or organising for themselves...a mute witness to history’.<sup>29</sup> His argument is grounded in a late modern critique of representation, which challenges the alleged indexical nature of the image. However, the historian Steve Edwards has argued that the portrait should necessarily be seen as ‘a dialogue in which there are a number of subject positions’.<sup>30</sup> This point is further underlined by John Roberts, who argues that such a practice is ‘always divided between “the speakers” and those who are “spoken”, two kinds of utterances, divided by relations of power but maintained within the same construction’.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Carville argues that in acknowledging ‘the presence of multiple subject positions, the photographic portrait can be seen as self or co-authored, containing the reported speech of the sitters who make their own histories even if not in the conditions which they may choose’.<sup>32</sup> Referencing Edwards, Carville continues:

[S]eeing the photographic portrait in this way has a considerable impact on the documentary image. Reading the documentary image in this way would allow us to work through how both photographer and the subject speak within the same construction. The photograph is an object but... portraits are the outcome of shared experience between the photographer and subject, an experience in which both speak to the viewer... speaking through the mode of address, the presentation of self to be photographed.<sup>33</sup>



**Fig. 14.4** *Ger from Dublin City* (Skerries, County Dublin, 2001) (50 cm × 50 cm, c-print) from the series *Site*

As a central part of the project and due to what I would define as a historical visual absence, I felt it was critically important that those labouring were represented photographically.<sup>34</sup> The conditions in which the portraits were made required the process of making photographs to slow down. Over several visits, it was necessary to build familiarity with those working on-site. Brief encounters, chats and sometimes longer

discussions, while also dressed in hard-hat and steel-capped boots, enabled possibilities as many of those working queried the presence of a photographer with a camera bag on one shoulder and a medium-format Hasselblad camera strapped around his neck. At times, the conversation began merely on how the completely manual camera was operated; there was a curiosity as to why would I not use a more 'modern camera'. I was already making work-prints of the landscape photographs as the project progressed and would always bring several in my bag to show those who might be interested. This helped greatly in giving some insight into what I was doing and how. Using only available light to photograph required not just collaboration, but the patience of the workers photographed too.<sup>35</sup> To convey my intentions to the individual workers regarding the role of the portrait within the project, I returned after having made several portraits, bringing with me copies for those who had contributed and to show the other workers who had expressed an interest.

Equally, I was always forthright in stating how I hoped that these would ultimately appear as part of a public exhibition and/or publication. Therefore, I carried the prints of the portraits of workers as they demonstrated the visual approach and, critically, conveyed the material object of the print itself, which at some possible point in the future would also appear in the public realm. Related to this process, the anthropologist Marcus Banks observes that:

[V]isual research is actively, and perhaps inherently, a collaborative project between image maker and image subjects as: one is humanistic, that subjects are not just experimental subjects and, secondly, analytical [...] In order to do good social research, a researcher has to enter into that process self-consciously, not pretend that they can somehow transcend their humanity and stand outside, merely observing.<sup>36</sup>

\* \* \*

While the first focus of the project was the development sites in the city and county region, I wish to briefly reference the second: the *International Financial Services Centre* (IFSC). In 1989, the first



phase of the IFSC opened on the north quays in Dublin's inner city with the second phase being completed in 2000. It is now the European location for over half the world's largest banks and insurance companies.



**Fig. 14.5** *Stephen from Dublin* (IFSC, Phase I, Dublin, 2001) (75 cm × 75 cm, c-print) from the series *Prospect*

This symbol of global aspiration and capital was the first financial district in the history of the State; ‘driven by tax incentives, millions were spent to develop an international centre that would compare with The City in London or La Defense in Paris’.<sup>37</sup> Carville observes how the IFSC embodies ‘the Irish States’ monument to its position in a global economy’.<sup>38</sup> The initial goal in its establishment was ‘jobs to market...[mostly] “back-office” functions such as administration and processing; however, the goal now is to establish higher value “front-office” jobs...to ensure these companies stay here’.<sup>39</sup>

Prior to the onslaught of the global economic crash in 2008, this challenge of attracting and holding on to global capital investment was reflected in the cover headline in 2004 of an Irish business publication: ‘The IFSC – Finance Temple or Future Ghost Town?’<sup>40</sup> Further, in 2006, the lack of regulation in the financial sector in the Republic was highlighted with terms like ‘Tax Haven’, ‘Offshore’ and ‘Shadowy Entity’ being applied.<sup>41</sup> It is also worth remembering the plight of the majority of workers in this sector. Besides facing mass lay-offs, it has also been noted that ‘contrary to popular perception...[many] domestic financial services and IFSC employees were never in the big leagues when it came to making money’.<sup>42</sup> Even then, at the timing of the project in 1999–2001, the precariousness of the situation was strikingly made apparent through conversation with those portrayed. Many spoke of having only short-term contracts averaging from three to six months. Thus, ‘Prospect’ surveyed the economic aspirations symbolised by the IFSC and included images of the landscape and portraits of the young office workers, the new ‘physical labour’, inheriting the space from those who constructed it.

A FUTURE



**Fig. 14.6** *Inner City* (Marrowbone Lane, Dublin, 1999) (1 m × 1 m, c-print) from the series *Site*

Walking down a laneway at the side of a large housing development. Having gained access, this was my first day on site. Then I saw the pallets. Concrete blocks, or more correctly, ‘Breeze Blocks’. Stack after stack—a central building material. Secured in place, tightly wrapped in plastic. I made several photographs. First at a distance and then up-close. A landscape. Bricks in plastic. The impossibility to breathe.

At the beginning of 2007, the Republic of Ireland had boasted a decade of full employment for the first time in its history. However, by January 2009 the country was haemorrhaging over 1200 jobs a day and in early 2011 the national unemployment rate was 14.7%.<sup>43</sup> Over four short years, in the context of a global economic meltdown and the collapse of a home-grown ‘monstrous housing bubble’, the Republic became ‘one of the global recession’s worst casualties’.<sup>44</sup> This was in the context of a country once described as an ‘economic miracle...one of the most remarkable transformations of recent times’ and where as late as 2007 the print media still touted that ‘Ireland’s economy will continue to grow robustly’.<sup>45</sup> The calamitous scale of these events remains somewhat incomprehensible and difficult to portray and articulate. As a result of globalisation and home-grown economic failures, the Republic was viciously exposed to the whims of international markets, rating agencies and the demands of cross-state relationships.

This project, and the research projects that followed, argued for the pre-existence of the economic conditions, revealing the vulnerability of the nature and basis of Ireland’s economic evolution, which was evident to some prior to the financial crisis of 2008.<sup>46</sup> With the additional benefit of hindsight on the sustainability of Ireland’s economic growth, how vulnerable does Ireland remain with its prevailing dependency on FDI and to global market fluctuations? Aside from any political ramifications, there is continuing evidence of the unrestrained and unforgiving material consequences that result from a lack of any constraint on global capital flows. In his essay addressing projects, which documented the impact of the Celtic Tiger, Colin Graham wrote that SOUTHERN CROSS was:

evidence of the rasping, clawing deformation of the landscape, the visceral human individual in the midst of burgeoning idea of progress-as-building, propped up by finance-as-economics...it stands as an extraordinary warning of the future that was then yet to come.<sup>47</sup>

## NOTES

1. From James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, as quoted by the then Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister) Charles Haughey at the launch of the Custom Docks Redevelopment in Dublin, the future location of the International Financial and Services Centre (IFSC) in June 1987.

2. I worked in Canada and Ireland as a social worker. While in Canada, the focus was very much on issues of empowerment and self-advocacy, another defining personal influence. I was also involved as a volunteer activist working with First Nations youth and on educational projects related to the Anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa and Frontline States in Southern Africa. Following my return to Ireland in 1995, I decided to take a career break which became a career change. I bought a camera and went on an extended trip to Southeast Asia. On my return, I continued to live in the city suburb of Stoneybatter, one of the oldest parts of Dublin.
3. This initial undertaking was short but would provide a technical and critical framework for the completion of a substantial part of the SOUTHERN CROSS project. The project was recipient of the first Development Bursary/Artist's Award from the Gallery of Photography, Dublin in 2000 and presented as a solo exhibition there in 2002. The publication included support from the Construction Branch of the Irish Trade Union, SIPTU and included an essay by Justin Carville, titled 'Arrested Development', and a poem by the poet Philip Casey, titled 'Implications of a Sketch', a critique of the role of the architect. The intention for the publication was to create a discursive space for a critical dialogue between the textual and visual. It was subsequently exhibited internationally including in Cologne, Germany (2003), Aleppo, Syria (2003), Brussels, Belgium (2004), Lyon, France (2004), Paris, France (2005) and Limerick, Ireland (2015).
4. SOUTHERN CROSS was followed by *The Breathing Factory*, the outcome of my doctoral research. The latter addressed the role and representation of labour and globalised space in Ireland's newly industrialised landscape. *AUSSCHNITTE AUS EDEN/EXTRACTS FROM EDEN* (Arts Council of Ireland 2011), sited in a declining mining and industrial region of the former East Germany, evidenced the unevenness of globalisation. My current ongoing transnational project, *THE MARKET (2010-)*, focuses on the functioning and condition of the global markets and the role of financial capital.
5. In 1987, the Customs House Docks scheme was launched on the North Quays in Dublin with a view to developing a shopping and residential complex around an international conference centre. This idea would ultimately fail but did lead to the development of what is now known as the International Financial and Services Centre (IFSC), the Republic of Ireland's first financial district.
6. K. Waugh, 'Counter Globalities (An Interview with Saskia Sassen)', *The Visual Artists News Sheet* (January/February 2008), p. 24.
7. For further reference, see John Roberts, 'Photography, Iconophobia and the Ruins of Conceptual Art', in *The Impossible Document: Photography*

- and Conceptual Art in Britain 1966–1976*, ed. by John Roberts (London: Camerawork, 1997), pp. 7–45; Allan Sekula, ‘Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)’, *The Massachusetts Review*, 19.4, Photography (1978), 859–883.
8. Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), p. 17.
  9. In Spring of 1999, I undertook a documentary project working with residents of Arran Quay Terrace on the north quays of Dublin. Following a long campaign on the part of the residents, the south side of the street was demolished through a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) by Dublin City Council. The displacement of the residents and the demolition of their homes, the only street in Dublin to have such an experience, was to facilitate the building of the LUAS, the new tram service in the city.
  10. Mark Durden, ‘Empathy and Engagement: The Subjective Documentary’, in *Face On: Photography as Social Exchange*, ed. by Mark Durden and Craig Richardson (London: Black Dog, 2000), p. 37.
  11. The architectural theorist Kim Dovey and his writings on architecture and philosophy informed this position, as did the writings of the culture theorist Stuart Hall, who argues that identity is not about ‘being’ but ‘becoming’. See, for instance, Kim Dovey, *Framing Places: Mediating Power in Built Form* (London: Routledge, 1999); and Stuart Hall, ‘Cultural Identity and Diaspora’, in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. by Padmini Mongia (London: Arnold, 1996), pp. 110–121.
  12. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, ‘Who Is Speaking Thus? Some Questions About Documentary Photography’, in *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions and Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 169–183.
  13. The American-born photographer Walker Evans first spoke of photographing ‘documentary in style’ in the early 1930s. The term ‘style’ conveys how this kind of photography goes beyond the sole function of a document. However, it is the filmmaker, John Grierson who is credited with first using the term ‘documentary’ in 1926. See Steve Edwards, *Photography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 27–28.
  14. Roberts, ‘Photography, Iconophobia and the Ruins of Conceptual Art’ p. 9; 29.
  15. Joanna Lowry, ‘From Presence to the Performative: Rethinking Photographic Indexicality’, in *Where is the Photograph?* ed. by David Green (Brighton: Photoworks/Photoforum, 2003), p. 50.
  16. In relation to the role of gesture and critical practice, it is important to note that the project being discussed was not originally commissioned but undertaken first as a personal project.

17. Sekula, 862.
18. Other related photographic projects in this period include *By The Way* (2003) by Dara McGrath and *Midlands* (2009) by Martin Cregg. For further discussion of these projects, see Carville in this collection.
19. My research practice has evolved to one centrally informed by visual and media anthropology, with ethnography informing the method of research. In relation to access, the anthropologists Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson state that 'much can be learned from the problems involved with making contact with people as well as from how they respond to the researcher's approaches'. They understand access as a state of relation. Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, eds, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 55.
20. Craig Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism', *October* 12 (1980), 67–86 (pp. 68, 70).
21. Justin Carville, 'Re-Negotiated Territory, The Politics of Place, Space and Landscape in Irish Photography', *Afterimage*, 29.1 (2001), 5–9 (p. 7).
22. Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums*, p. 1.
23. David Green, 'Time After Time', *Creative Camera*, 338 (1994), 10–15 (p. 15).
24. Luke Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), p. 20.
25. David Levi Strauss, *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics* (New York: Aperture, 2004), p. 7.
26. Strauss, p. 17.
27. In the nineteenth century, following the invention of the photographic process, the portrait was employed as a means of surveillance, classification and record. At the same time, photography then began its long association with anthropology. The portrait was employed for its 'potential as a recording device, to create data for analysis...the indexical trace'. Elizabeth Edwards, 'Shifting Relationships: Writing Photography in Anthropology', *Source: The Photographic Review*, 38 (2004), 34–37 (p. 34).
28. John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), p. 7.
29. Tagg, p. 11.
30. Steve Edwards, 'The Machine Dialogues', *The Oxford Art Journal*, 13.1 (1990), 63–76 (p. 63).
31. John Roberts, *The Art of Interruption: Realism, Photography and the Everyday* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 162.
32. Justin Carville, 'Arrested Development', in Mark Curran, *Southern Cross* (Dublin: Gallery of Photography, 2002), unpaginated.
33. Carville, 'Arrested Development', unpaginated.

34. The role and representation of labour was and has continued to be a central research concern in this and subsequent projects including my doctoral research. Other than propaganda images produced at the time by public and governmental bodies, together with the private sector and those housed in the personal archive, little material of significance has been generated in the realm of audio and visual media. Historically, it can be argued, this notable absence is reflected and further perpetuated through the continued neglect of, and public indifference to, the media representation of workers, labour practices and working conditions. Significantly, the image of the worker in an Irish context has in large part been overlooked. Perhaps the traditional image of labour, in an Irish context, is epitomised by the 'Navy', a term originating from the eighteenth century with the beginning of the construction of the commercial canal system in Britain, known as the 'Inland Navigation System'. Located within a culture of out-migration resulting from the inability of the island to economically sustain its inhabitants, thousands of Irishmen went to work on the scheme and these canal diggers became known as 'Navigators', later abbreviated to 'Navvies'. Initially, this was a title borne with pride as it meant being 'a member of the new labouring élite, at the cutting edge of the Transport Revolution...and elevated from the rank of common labourer'. This would be carried on into the construction of the railway system, as part of the Industrial Revolution, where 200,000 'Navvies' were employed. However, by the latter part of the twentieth century, the name had become synonymous with the role and plight of unskilled Irish labour. The nature of the work itself remained laborious from tunnel building to roads, factories and new housing schemes, and only in the early 1960s was the term officially removed from British statistical data. See Ultan Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain: A History of the Irish Navy* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 2001), p. 14; see also pp. 13–18 for a fuller account.
35. The writer and philosopher Walter Benjamin references the slowness of the portrait-making process at the time of photography's invention and the 'length of time the subject had to remain still', continuing: The procedure itself caused the subject to focus his life in the moment rather than hurrying on past it; during the considerable period of exposure, the subject as it were grew into the picture, in the sharpest contrast with appearances in a snap-shot...everything about these early pictures was built to last, not only in the incomparable groups in which people came together...but the very creases in the people's clothes have an air of permanence.
- The intention here is not to advocate an all-encompassing deterministic descriptive notion of the portrait but rather how at a moment within the exchange between the 'utterances' there exists the potential for such a



- 'focus of life in the moment'. Walter Benjamin, *Reflections* (New York: Schocken, 1978), p. 245.
36. Marcus Banks, *Visual Methods in Social Research* (London: Sage, 2001), p. 112.
  37. Frank MacDonald, 'Capital Architecture', *The Irish Times*, 7 February 2001, p. 14.
  38. Carville, 'Arrested Development', p. 24.
  39. C. Brennan, 'Financial Centre of Gravity', *Business & Finance*, 40.1 (2004), 32–36 (p. 33).
  40. *Business and Finance*, 40.1 (2004).
  41. See, for instance, 'Tax Justice Network: Report on Ireland', <<http://www.financialsecrecyindex.com/PDF/Ireland.pdf>> [accessed 25 June 2017]; 'True Economics: Irish Corporate Tax Haven in News Flow', <<http://trueeconomics.blogspot.de/2012/10/13102012-irish-corporate-tax-haven-in.html?spref=tw>> [accessed 25 June 2017]; 'Ireland is world's fourth-largest shadow banking hub' *The Irish Times*, 10 May 2017, <<https://www.irishtimes.com/business/financial-services/ireland-is-world-s-fourth-largest-shadow-banking-hub-1.3077914>> [accessed 25 June 2017].
  42. Fiona Reddan, 'Behind The Facade', *The Irish Times*, 4 April 2010, p. 15.
  43. As reported in an article outlining the release of a report by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), <<http://www.independent.ie/opinion/analysis/jobs-meltdown-much-worse-than-it-appears-1628178.html>> [accessed 25 June 2017]. See also CSO quarterly report ending March 2011, <<http://www.cso.ie/aboutus/csomission.htm>> [accessed 25 June 2017].
  44. Published in April 2009 in *The New York Times*, the weekly column of Nobel Prize winner and Professor of Economics and International Affairs, Paul Krugman was titled 'Erin Go Broke'. Krugman defines the pivotal role concerning the lack of regulation on the part of the Irish government regarding the country's banking sector which in turn lead to an unsustainable reliance on the part of the Irish economy an over inflated construction boom. This was further underscored by another Nobel Prize-winning American economist, Joseph Stiglitz. While visiting Ireland, Stiglitz argued against Irish government spending cutbacks and defined quite bluntly the role of the government in the handling of the economy:  
Your government allowed the economy to become totally distorted, with a real estate bubble and with a banking system that was under-regulated. I am very critical of what happened in the US, but there are other countries that also allowed things get out of hand, and Ireland and Iceland are among those, worse than the US.

- See Paul Krugman, 'Erin Go Broke', *New York Times*, 19 April 2009, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/20/opinion/20krugman.html>> [accessed 26 June 2017]; Joe Dermody, 'Spending Cutbacks Are Short Sighted', <<http://www.examiner.ie/business/spending-cutbacks-short-sighted-128838.html>> [accessed 26 June 2017].
45. See *The Economist*, 'The Celtic Tiger: Europe's Shining Light', 343.8017, (1997) pp. 21–24; *Financial Times* 'Celtic Tiger Still Purring Despite Strong Euro' (May 2007), <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/fcb81e3e-fd7c-11db-8d62-000b5df10621.html>> [accessed 27 June 2017].
46. Indeed, even in 1998, significant attention was being given to industrial output figures concerning the quotation of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) over GNP (Gross National Product) when defining economic growth, the disparity between both now somewhat famously described by as 'Elvis Lives in Irish Trade Data'. See Denis O'Hearn, *Inside the Celtic Tiger: The Irish Economy and the Asian Model* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), p. 37.
47. Colin Graham, 'Motionless Monotony: New Nowheres in Irish Photography', *In/Print*, 1 (2012), 1–21 (p. 15).

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