

Resource & engagement for second level students & teachers supporting
Content Area 3: Today's World

Willie Doherty

Remnant



Saturday 13 April - Saturday 8 June 2024



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Designed to assist you in an inquiry-based exploration of the exhibition, this resource includes:

- Associated events you might like to attend.
- Information about the artist.
- Questions to consider & discuss relating to:
Artists Theory & Thinking
 - motivations behind the work;**Processes & Media**
 - techniques & materials to create the work;**Art & the Environment**
 - a source of inspiration;**Art as Social Commentary or Commentator**
 - raising awareness through art.

Describing the exhibition on page 4, we have highlighted:

- **Theme & subject matter:** the 'story' behind the artwork, what the work is 'about'.
- **Process & media:** the techniques and materials used by the artist to create the artworks.
- **Composition & layout:** the arrangement of visual elements in an artwork, or placement within the gallery spaces.

A glossary of words highlighted in *bold italic font* to aid your understanding is on page 9.

We encourage you to allow time to look, reflect and respond to the artworks in the gallery.

You can also combine this resource with our free associated learning & engagement events:

Exhibition opening

Sat. 13 April 2024

Join us for the opening of this exhibition and hear artist Willie Doherty speak about his work on display. This event is free to attend, and a unique opportunity to engage and question the artist directly.

<https://solsticeartscentre.ie/event/remnant>

ReTrace workshop

Sat. 11 May, €40 booking essential

Investigating our connections to memory and place, join photographer Brian Cregan for a daylong workshop exploring some of the exhibition themes through digital photography on your smartphone.

<https://solsticeartscentre.ie/event/retrace>

ENDLESS + Film Programme

Accompanying the exhibition, Doherty's film ENDLESS and a separate programme of his film works are screened in our theatre throughout the run of the show.

Information, screening dates and times can be viewed here:

<https://solsticeartscentre.ie/event/endless-film-programme>

Class Gallery Tours

Various dates available, booking essential

Assisting students to nurture the skills of critical literary, and analyse and reflect on the multiple perspectives used by artists, our VTS tours embrace Research & Respond strands, linking to the Today's World question as part of their exam.

<https://solsticeartscentre.ie/event/school-gallery-tours-primary-and-secondary>

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About the artist – Willie Doherty

Born in 1959 in Derry, Northern Ireland, Willie Doherty lives and works in Co. Donegal and has been a pioneering figure in contemporary art, film and photography for four decades.

Themes & subject matter: Doherty's art relates directly to the complexities of living in a divided society. Capturing mysterious isolated settings that conceal a troubled past, he has made moving-image works since the early 1990s. Using his native Derry – a city divided along sectarian lines during *the 'Troubles'*, he explores the relationship between landscape and memory, using powerful language and disorientating imagery to reflect on how we approach histories of trauma.

His primary geographic reference is Northern Ireland however, Doherty has also responded to contested history elsewhere in the world, including Granada, Pennsylvania and the US/Mexico border.

Process & media: Doherty's presents his video or film work as gallery *installations*, accompanied by related photographs.

Using a lens-based practice, the addition of language may be in the form of superimposed text, titles to the works or sound accompaniments to his film works and are crucial to an understanding of his intentions. Sometimes the words he uses appear to contradict each other or the image they accompany, challenging the viewer to consider and decide the true meanings of the work. He also uses *diptychs* to set contradictory points of view against each other.

His videos unfold slowly, sometimes combining *material evidence* with haunting fictional *monologues* that speak of shame, deception, brutality and its aftermath, as if leaking the stories contained within the landscape.

About the exhibition - *Remnant*

Remnant investigates the interconnectedness of place, time, and memory.

Referring to this body of work as his artistic experiment, Doherty combines photographic, video and audio works together under the collective title *Remnant*.

Fusing voice and soundscapes with *autonomous* yet interconnected black and white photographic and video imagery, the work is structured as a dynamic *interplay*, expanding the narrative, spatial, and atmospheric multi-layered connections between still and moving images.

Themes & subject matter: For Doherty, a photograph records a moment in time but becomes much more than that singular event. In this new exhibition, *Remnant* explores how landscape acts as a *repository* or keeper of memory, as a site to construct and sustain images and myths of national identity, of self and of others. Doherty explores memory as a measure of time and space, of dislocation and connection, of what is real and what is imagined. Revisiting and re-documenting some sites over long periods, through the passage of time, the histories of these places transform, becoming unstable, fictions of memory.

Process & media: Produced on Hahnemühle Photo Rag Baryta 315gsm, all twelve framed black and white photographic pigment prints are editions of 3, measuring 42.9 x 53.3 with frame.

Doherty's video works are composed of narrative loops, experienced at any point in each of the three spaces. Fusing voice and soundscapes with photographic and video imagery, he prompts the viewer's senses within the immersive atmosphere. The camera examines the landscape as a site of political and *ideological* intervention, a place shaped by time, and natural processes of decay and renewal.

Composition & layout: Printed on light sensitive paper, the gallery is devoid of direct natural light, highlighting the depth and contrast of the black and white imagery. The empty urban and natural scenes leave questions unanswered; what happened here and when.

Created in 2024, the black and white video *installation* is screened on five monitors throughout the space. This creates a fragmented narrative, animating the experience as the haunting voice surrounds the viewer.

Take a quiet moment to look and listen to the sound work and imagery throughout the gallery spaces.

Note the titles of the photographic works in the gallery handout.

Voice: Stephen Rea / Sound Recording: Beacon Studios, Dublin/ Sound Mix: Blast Furnace, Derry.
Exhibition production: Spike Wolff

This exhibition is supported by Solstice Arts Centre, the Arts Council of Ireland and Kerlin Gallery, Dublin, and travels to Matt's Gallery, London in spring 2025.

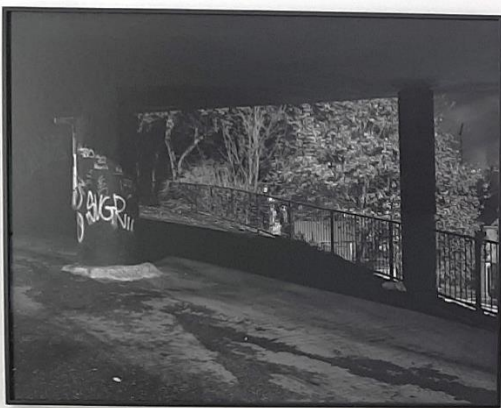
Read more about the exhibition on our website: <https://solsticeartscentre.ie/event/remnant>

See Useful Links on page 9 to gather more information about Willie Doherty and his art practice.

Questions to consider & discuss

Artists Theory & Thinking

Doherty's work examines the dualities of abandonment and resilience, presence and absence. Using the camera lens, he explores landscape as a site of political and *ideological* intervention, a place shaped by time, and natural processes of decay and renewal. His starkly atmospheric images articulate new perspectives on *transgenerational* trauma and our apprehension and uncertainty about the future.



Left image: **Silhouettes**, 2024 Right image: **Lost**, 2023

‘Unable to forget the past. Unable to imagine the future’ – Remnant

Doherty responds to specific sites, often returning to re-photograph the same places, sometimes frequently or many years after.

- What do you think draws Doherty to specific sites to include in his artworks?

He questions how we look at locations, what stories they might hold, or unfold in the future. He asks what Ireland looks like, then and now.

Capturing mysterious isolated settings that conceal a troubled past, Doherty's images resonate a universal sense of place,

- In your opinion what does that mean, and how does he achieve this?

Consider what is present and absent in Doherty's imagery.

- Interested in photojournalism, how does Doherty's use of black & white impact the work?
- Would his intent change if produced in colour?

While hinting at life in and around his chosen sites, for example graffiti on a wall or light in a window, all of Doherty's images and video are devoid of the figure, human or animal.

- Why do you think this is?
- What affect does it have on you, the viewer?
- What imagery stands out for you, urban or landscape?

List your reasons why.

Questions to consider & discuss

Processes & Media

Connecting ideas of time and memory this is the first time Doherty has collectively titled his photographic, video and audio works together as **Remnant**. This includes a video *installation* on five wall-mounted monitors, twelve framed photographic works, and audio piece resonating from numerous speakers in each room.

Excerpt from audio work Remnant

I dream.
I walk slowly.
Silently.
Watchful.
On the periphery.
The edge of darkness.

Memories, so long numbed and
suppressed, reveal themselves
to me.
As if I have walked through a
door that had been closed.

Glimpses of timelessness.
Silent fragments.
Silhouettes.

The narrow streets of my
childhood.
I know every building, every
brick, every mark on every
wall.

Faces from the past.
The living and the dead.
Side by side.

I can no longer tell if the
scenes that unfold before me

have already happened or are
yet to come.

What cannot be seen.

Only imagined.

A lost inventory of forgotten
things.

Fusing voice and soundscapes, three audio sequences form the narrative. Performed by Irish actor Stephen Rea, the story shifts from space to space, as his soft northern tone speaks of 'voices from the past'; 'the living and the dead'; 'forgotten woodlands'; 'what cannot be seen'.

Read this excerpt from Remnant.

- What thoughts or emotions does the text evoke?
List reasons for your answer.

Listen to Remnant in each of the gallery spaces.

- What other sounds do you hear?
- How do these sounds connect to the photographic and video imagery?

Playing segments of the narrative throughout the spaces, Rea's voice seems to speak from somewhere else and next to you all at once.

- What effect does this have on you?
- Is it calming or chaotic?
- Do you think the audio adds or distracts from the other works in the exhibition?

- In your opinion, does Doherty's combination of audio, photographic and video works relay his intentions to expand the narrative, spatial, and atmospheric connections between his imagery?

Voice: Stephen Rea
Sound Recording: Beacon Studios, Dublin
Sound Mix: Blast Furnace, Derry

Questions to consider & discuss

Art & the Environment

Willie Doherty's starkly atmospheric images of landscapes formed by the long slow processes of geological time exist alongside disregarded urban spaces shaped by the consequences of human intervention, conflict, and neglect. Investigating contested borders and the changing political landscape of Northern Ireland, his native Derry has been the focus of Doherty's work since the early 1980s.



Left image: *Apparition*, 2022 Right image: *Unknown*, 2024

'The narrow streets of my childhood. I know every building, every brick, every mark on every wall.'
– Remnant

Having lived and witnessed the conflict in his native Derry during the 1970's and 80's, research this time in Irish history to gain a deeper understanding of Doherty's personal experiences that influence his work.

Revisiting and documenting these locations over long periods, Doherty sees the histories of these places transform, becoming 'the fictions of memory'.

- Discuss what he means by this.
- Do you think the memory of a place can evolve and dissolve over time?

- Considering the Artists Theory & Thinking, compare and contrast the titles of these two works.

- Doherty combines urban with rural landscapes in his *diptychs*.
- Why do you think this is?

- Investigating themes of territoriality, history and identity, in your opinion how does Doherty convey this with and in his imagery?

-Did you notice the colour of the gallery walls?
How do the tones of grey relate to the artworks?

Questions to consider & discuss

Art as Social Commentary or Commentator

Doherty's work exemplifies Art as Social Commentary or Commentator, using landscape as a *repository* of memory, as a site to construct and sustain images and myths of national identity, of self and of others.

Provoked by a childhood in Northern Ireland at the height of the 'Troubles', Doherty's art relates directly to the complexities of living in a divided society, exploring how truth claims are constructed and contested, questioning what is real and what is unreal, what is true and what is false.



Remnant, 2024. Five-channel 4K video installation on five monitors, black and white, 8 minutes, edition 1 of 3

Imagery within the video sequence

'Remnant' in Gallery 1 shows streets in the Bogside area of Derry, close to Doherty's childhood home. Captured by Doherty on 30 January 2022, fifty years previously it was the site of a massacre known as 'Bloody Sunday'. This event on 30 January 1972 is regarded as one of the most significant events of the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland, when British soldiers shot 26 unarmed civilians during a protest march. It was marked in the media by the iconic footage of Catholic priest Fr. [Daly](#) waving a bloodstained [white handkerchief](#) while trying to escort a mortally wounded civilian to safety.

- Consider the impact and influence on Doherty and his artwork, having experienced the 'troubles' in his hometown.

Dealing with conflict as it relates to a particular place and time, Doherty's imagery is devoid of any hint of its violent past. The scenes are empty, serene.

- Why do you think this is?

- Discuss this further as a class group.

- View **Remnant** within each space. Note the images similarities and differences, their position within the space, and connection to the photographic works on the walls.

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Glossary

Autonomous, existing independent of anything else.

Diptychs, an artwork made up of two. These can be physically connected or viewed side by side.

Ideological based on or relating to a system of ideas, especially concerning economic or political theory and policy.

Installation art is usually mixed media constructions, often designed for a specific place, for a temporary period.

Interplay, the way in which two or more things have an effect on each other.

Material evidence is tangible such as an object, a tape recording, or a photograph.

Monologues, speeches presented by a single character, often to express their thoughts aloud.

Photojournalism, a form of journalism, which tells a news story through powerful photography.

Remnant, a part or quantity left after the greater part has been used, removed, or destroyed.

Repository is a place where or [receptacle](#) in which things are or may be stored.

Transgenerational passed on from one generation to the next.

The 'Troubles' was a violent sectarian conflict from 1968 to 1998 in Northern Ireland between Protestant unionists (loyalists), and Roman Catholic nationalists (republicans). The conflict is widely considered to have begun in the city of Derry, with the Battle of the Bogside (an inner suburb of the city) in 1969. The Bloody Sunday incident of 1972 occurred in Derry, in the Bogside area.

Useful links:

Using the links below, find out more about Willie Doherty's work. Look at the websites, follow on social media, and gain additional insight into his artistic career and practice:

Kerlin Gallery, Dublin <https://www.kerlingallery.com/artists/willie-doherty>

IMMA, Dublin (Irish Museum of Modern Art) <https://imma.ie/artists/willie-doherty/>

Matt's Gallery, London <https://www.mattsgallery.org/artists/willie-doherty>

Alexander and Bonin, New York; <https://www.contemporaryartdaily.com/project/willie-doherty-at-alexander-and-bonin-new-york-8709>

Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich <https://www.peterkilchmann.com/artists/willie-doherty/>

Galeria Moises Perez de Albeniz, Madrid <https://galeriampa.com/en/artists/representeds/willie-doherty/>

Visiting Solstice:

Solstice Gallery is open Tuesday-Saturday 11am-4pm.
Individual students and teachers can visit the gallery during opening times.



Class and group gallery tours must be booked in advance.

To book a tour, workshop or event please contact:

Deirdre Rogers, Visual Arts Facilitation & Public Engagement Coordinator at 046 909 2308 or by emailing deirdre.rogers@solsticeartscentre.ie

If you wish to be contacted directly about upcoming events and opportunities, please let us know and we can add you to our mailing list.

We encourage feedback to assist us in developing these resources and events to best meet your needs. Please get in touch with suggestions or any questions about our programme.

Best of luck to all students in their creative studies.

Deirdre Rogers

Visual Arts Facilitation & Public Engagement Coordinator

Notes: