

Critic's Guide: Dublin

FEBRUARY 10, *by Gemma Tipton*
2016



Left: John Rainey, *Slice Boy*, 2015, Parian Porcelain, 380 x 200 x 200 mm. Right: Fiona Mulholland, *Unfurl again*, 2015, powder coated 6mm mild steel and 4mm brass rod. Displayed on pinwheel scaffold by A2 Architects. Courtesy Oonagh Young Gallery, Dublin

In this new series, we ask a critic to select the best shows currently on view in their city. Here, Gemma Tipton selects her highlights from Dublin. A new show will be posted every day this week.

The first weeks of 2016 saw some trepidation in Dublin's art world. As Ireland commemorates the 100th anniversary of the failed Easter Rising that nevertheless marked the beginning of the birth of the Republic, there was a worry that there might be an onslaught of possibly terrible jingoistic shows concerned with nationalism, navel gazing and ersatz patriotism. The results, where programming did focus on the occasion, have been both a relief and a reminder that art can provide answers as well as raise important questions.

Fiona Mulholland, John Rainey and A2 Architects: 'Less + More'

Oonagh Young Gallery

10 December – 19 February

A never-ending plinth by A2 Architects creates a four-sided M.C. Escher-like support for works by artist and jeweller Fiona Mulholland and exciting emerging sculptor John Rainey, both of whose work straddles the disciplines of art and design. At Oonagh Young's always interesting space, Less + More oversets the expected. Why should a plinth be a white oblong? What if porcelain were gaudy à la Rainey's *Slice Boy* (2015) and *Untitled (Teeth)* (2012), the latter a quite brilliant bright yellow protrusion ending in a row of gnashers? What happens to the separation between the art object and the viewer when it is disrupted by kinetic art you have to touch, as with Mulholland's *Unfurl again* (2015), an interconnected series of metal rings and ellipses that demand physical attention? At the heart of this playful show, which is the gallery's response to last year's ID2015 Year of Design, is the conclusion that perhaps the disciplines of art and design are only different in the eyes of the institutions that promote and fund them.



Tessa Giblin and Núria Güell : Troika Fiscal Disobedience Consultancy

from Culturefox.tv PRO

02:45 |



1. Núria Güell: 'Troika Fiscal Disobedience Consultancy'

Project Arts Centre

15 January – 19 March

Project Art Centre's programming for the Centenary of the 1916 Rising kicks off with Núria Güell turning the gallery into a laboratory for a different kind of rebellion. It is unlikely that the new republic envisaged by the Signatories of the Proclamation of Independence would have included the Celtic Tiger boom and subsequent economic collapse – a fate shared by the artist's native Spain. Güell's solution to the resulting, increasing divide between rich and poor is an agency to enable 'ordinary' people to avail themselves of tax liability, borrowing from the tactics of corporate tax avoidance systems. Presented alongside films (including Katerina Kitidi and Aris Chatzistefanou's *Debtocracy* and Ruaridh Arrow's *How to Start a Revolution*, both 2011), Güell shows examples of social activism which, seen through the prism of art, encourage a rethinking of the self in relation to certain agreed social rules. The Boston Tea Party in 1773 proved that individuals can foment change through disobedience; while in Wales today, Crickhowell: The Fair Tax Town, shows how if enough small traders come together, inequitable systems protecting

multinationals may have to be reimagined.



Mick O'Dea, *Imperial City*, 2015. Courtesy the artist and Kevin Kavanagh Gallery; photograph Emile Deneen

2. Mick O'Dea: 'The Foggy Dew'

Royal Hibernian Academy

15 January – 21 February

The culmination of O'Dea's series of exhibitions that marks him as the semi-official artist of the anniversary of the Irish War of Independence (1919–21) includes four monumental canvases, in the artist's signature shades of tan and taupe. These form an architectural backdrop of burning or besieged buildings: the physical epicentre of the 1916 Easter Rising. Elsewhere, 18 smaller portraits depict the people behind the failed project that would nevertheless inform the identity of the new Republic, founded six years later. Portraiture could make it personal, but they remain distant figures, perhaps even judgemental of the Ireland that has evolved. The energy in the exhibition comes from O'Dea's cardboard sculptures, a return to a practice last explored by the artist 20 years ago. Britannia and Daniel O'Connell face off across the space, the pomp of statuary belied by the medium. Surrounding them, suspended in air, cardboard figures scattered by violence call to mind F. E. McWilliam's 'Women of Belfast' series (1971) – a distillation of trauma frozen in art.

About the author



Gemma Tipton is a writer and critic on contemporary art and culture, based in Dublin and West Cork. She writes for the *Irish Times*, *frieze* and other art publications, as well as contributing to radio and television programmes in Ireland.

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