

SELECTED READING Hill, 1972; Derek Hill, 'James Dixon', *IAR Yearbook*, IX (1993), 179–82; Glennie, 1999; Bruce Arnold, *Derek Hill* (London 2010).

**DOHERTY, JOHN** (b. 1949), painter. It is the acute observation of detail that gives John Doherty's work its sense of intense realism. Meticulously rendered to show every scuff mark in the painted surface of a rotting door, or the moss clinging to the roof tiles of a defunct village petrol station, Doherty's work presents images of nostalgia with a reserved objectivity.

He is best known for his frontal depictions of the kind of buildings that were typical in Irish towns in the economically depressed years of his childhood, but he has also explored unusual objects and structures for their form, such as the series of harbourside buoys, forming rusting still-life compositions on their quaysides. As with many of his scenes, the series depicting the gleaming upper bodies of whitewashed lighthouses are of actual structures.

Doherty's images have been described in terms of Realism (qv). However, despite the obsessive attention to detail that might suggest literal objectivity, they are also evocative and mysterious. In many, the even light gives little sense of the time of day, and all depict man-made environments devoid of their human occupants. The resolutely closed doors and empty Sunday streets suggest the ennui of places where lives are lived but nothing happens – an in-between existence without extremes. *Five Bells* (2001/02) [143], a typical example, presents an inscrutable exterior whose scruffy door shows five doorbells and as many curtained windows, evincing the separated existences of inhabitants secreted behind a single door. Text appears in some images, promoting commercial products or identifying ships or shops, such as in *McCarthy's Garage* (2002), its function primarily to suggest a literal and photographic objectivity – as though photographs were not as selective and manipulable as painting.

Despite the typical dilapidation of the scenes, they succeed in avoiding pathos or judgment. Some are even playful, particularly when inanimate structures evoke thoughts of human characteristics, as in *The Ballerina* (2004), where an industrial ventilator suggests a dancer's garb.



143. John Doherty, *Five Bells*, 2001–02, acrylic on acid-free board, 30 x 45 cm

Most of Doherty's compositions demonstrate abstract qualities, and the frontal buildings, with their reticent stillness and balance, have been related to photographic work by abstract painter Sean Scully (qv).

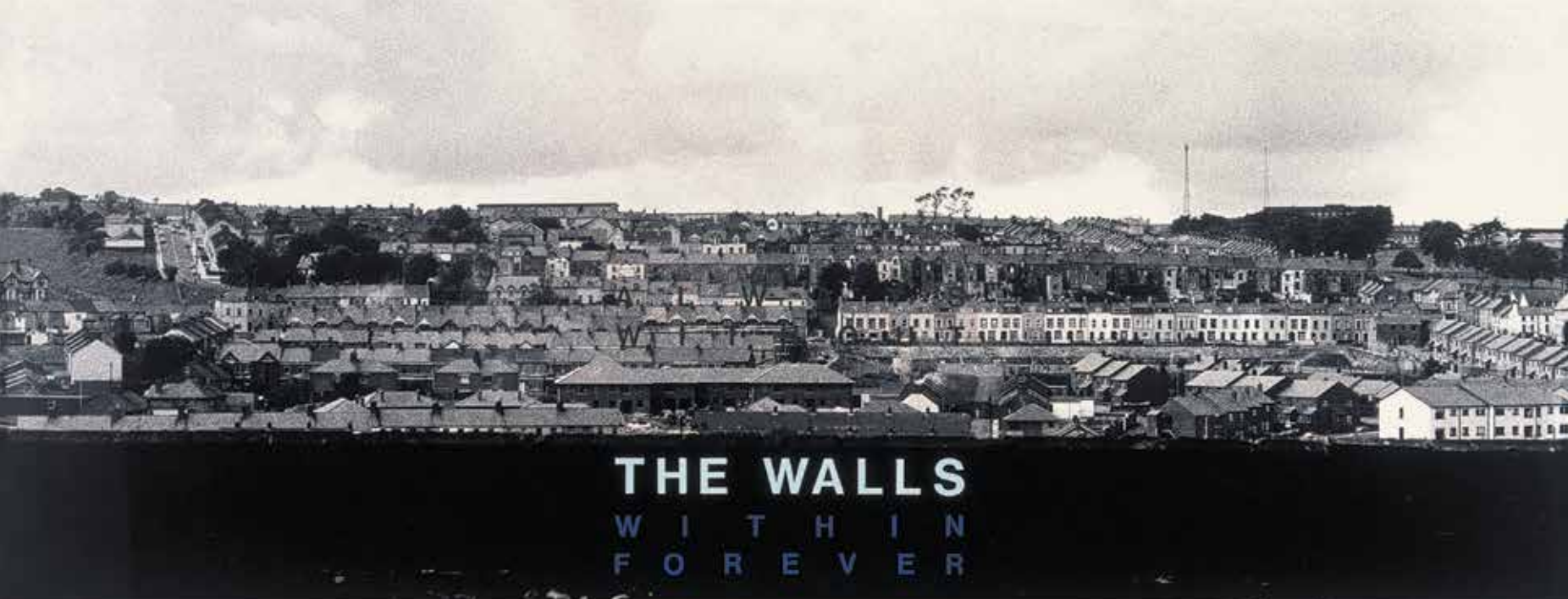
John Doherty was born in Kilkenny and trained as an architect at Bolton Street College of Technology, Dublin, before turning to art full-time. He was Artist in Residence at the National College of Art, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea in 1979. He has lived in Australia and Sweden, as well as Ireland.

YVONNE SCOTT

SELECTED READING Hilary Pyle, *John Doherty: Recent Paintings*, exh. cat. Taylor Galleries (Dublin 2005).

**DOHERTY, WILLIE** (b. 1959) (qv AAI III), artist. In the years between 1969 and 2001, the 'Troubles' (see 'The Troubles and Irish Art') made a profound and divisive impact on Irish society. However, the number of Irish artists who have confronted issues raised by the Troubles remains relatively small. The topic was avoided or approached obliquely through a widespread use of symbol and metaphor but, for the most part, artists were uneasy when it came to examining sectarian violence or the world-view of paramilitaries. An exception is Willie Doherty, whose photomontages and videos, made for the most part in Derry throughout the 1980s and 1990s, provide an alert and intelligent commentary on the realities of life in a province wracked by conflict. Born in Derry, Doherty grew up in that city. After studying at the Ulster Polytechnic in Belfast, he returned to Derry where he lives and works. He cites the Orchard Gallery, a small but important art gallery in Derry, as a significant venue, where as a student he encountered the work of artists such as Magdalena Abakanovicz and Richard Hamilton.

From the outset, Doherty avoided those images that became synonymous with the Troubles – scenes of marchers, petrol bombings, armoured vehicles and riot police. He employed, instead, a more distanced approach, using photographs (see 'Photography') of locations such as the city walls of Derry or the Bogside, local settings resonant with political meaning. In these works people rarely feature directly; the urban landscapes are presented as deserted places. Language, the power of words to affirm or denigrate communities and individuals, is also employed, through the use of superimposed texts. In the 1985 diptych, *Fog: Ice/Last Hours of Daylight* (1985), a black-and-white photograph shows countryside seen through fog. The words 'shrouding/pervading' are superimposed over the image, while in the second photograph, images of housing in Derry, with smoking chimneys creating a different sort of fog, are accompanied by the words 'Stifling/surveillance/last hours of daylight'. The words and images are a commentary on efforts by the British army in Northern Ireland to impose civil order by placing large sections of the community under sustained surveillance. *The Walls*, [144] a photographic work made in 1987, features a panoramic view of the Bogside, a nationalist area in Derry, notorious for protests and riots during the 1970s and '80s. The superimposed texts, in green and blue respectively, read 'always/without' and 'within/forever'. Again, the images and



# THE WALLS WITHIN FOREVER

texts refer to nationalist and unionist points of view, as do the colours of the texts.

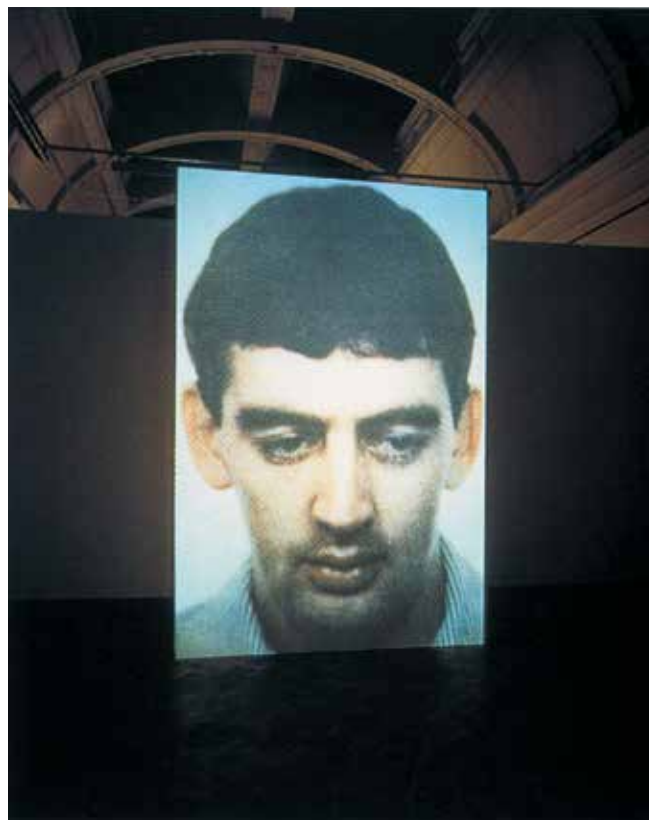
Much of the tragedy of Northern Ireland lay in the belief, held firmly on both sides of the religious and social divide, in exclusive ownership of the 'truth'. Doherty's art critiques this notion showing it to be threadbare and ultimately insubstantial. In the slide installation *They're All the Same* [145], a screen presents the face of a man accused of being a member of the Irish Republican Army. Overlaying the image, a soundtrack, a monologue, lists both affirmative and pejorative descriptions routinely applied to members of different communities in Northern Ireland. Such sentiments represent the psychological underpinnings of the Troubles, where stereotyping becomes normal, and, in a self-perpetuating cycle, acting out stereotypes also becomes routine. Doherty's work challenges the easy assumptions that characterized community relations during the worst years of the Troubles. Similarly, in the two-screen slide installation *Same Difference* (1990) [235], an image of a woman's face becomes something else when the viewer learns that the woman had been arrested as a suspected member of the IRA. In the Cibachrome print, *Border Road* (1994), concrete barriers block a quiet country road, an understated but eloquent record of the local impact of partition and guerrilla warfare.

The world depicted in these early works is one in which words with diametrically different meanings can be applied, with conviction, to describe the same event, or person. Doherty appropriates techniques used in advertising and journalism, juxtaposing image and text; but by paring back both images and text to the minimum, he provides little information to explain what is happening, and so leaves it up to the viewer to interpret his work, or to provide a narrative. Since each viewer's interpretation of the works will differ, so Doherty highlights the subjectivity of the artistic experience, while remaining rooted in the world of everyday experience.

A more autobiographical work, *30th January 1972* (1993), a slide installation with two projectors, refers to Bloody Sunday, a

massacre of thirteen protesters in Derry. Mixing archival images of marchers with live recordings made during the event, *30th January 1972* differs from other works by Doherty in that it refers to a specific incident. However, the work also analyses how history is created; by combining the reminiscences of those who were present, with those who were not, he emphasizes how memory can be deceptive. Doherty himself witnessed the Bloody Sunday massacre when he was just thirteen years

144. Willie Doherty, *The Walls*, 1987, photograph with text mounted on Masonite, etn unique, 61 x 152.5 cm, Irish Museum of Modern Art



145. Willie Doherty, *They're All the Same*, 1991, slide installation with single projection on to a wooden construction in a darkened space, colour, audio, 3 min

old. A more typical work is *The Outskirts* (1994), a large-scale Cibachrome photograph, showing an anonymous bend in a country road. Tracks of vehicles testify to some activity, but what that was is not revealed. Trees and hedges partly obscure the horizon, where light appears to be fading. Twilight and night are favourite times of day for Doherty, heightening a sense of foreboding, anticipation and mystery. A series of more recent black-and-white photoworks feature a footbridge crossing the Westlink road in Belfast. Although Doherty took the photographs in 1988, some of the work in which they feature was created in 2008.

In Doherty's art, memory and a sense of place are juxtaposed with the everyday experience of life, in such a way as to reduce the certainty of concepts such as truth and objectivity. Growing up in Derry during years in which civil unrest frequently intensified into rioting and open warfare, Doherty was acutely aware that the conflict was grounded in notions of cultural difference. Unlike many of his contemporaries, who moved to London after graduating in order to free themselves from the claustrophobic atmosphere of Northern Ireland, Doherty returned to his native city and chose to remain living and working in what was, in many ways, a frontline city in a war zone. In spite of the immediacy of this environment, he deliberately maintained a distance from the vociferous and emotional world around him, and from the rhetoric that spilled out on the airwaves and on the streets. Instead, his art is characterized by a dispassionate approach, in which experience is carefully filtered and analysed.

Doherty tends to deal with the aftermath of violence, rather than its present. There is a quality of stillness in the work, the silent witnessing of events, many of them disquieting. His video, *Re-Run* (2002), included in the 2003 Turner Prize exhibition, projected images of a man running endlessly across the Craigavon bridge, on to two opposing screens. Spanning the river Foyle in Derry, this bridge can be read as a link between divided communities. In *Drive* (2003), again there are two video images, one of a man driving with his eyes open, the other showing the same man driving with his eyes closed. A sense of mystery pervades these later works, making them even more ominous than the artist's early works. Doherty's protagonists, his images of urban life, share the distanced sense of Edward Hopper's images of people in roadside cafés and hotels. They possess a 'Film Noir' quality, in part inspired by cinema.

Since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, and the cessation of violence in Northern Ireland, Doherty has continued to make his characteristic photo-text and video installations (see 'Installation Art'), but they now include images from other cities, such as Berlin. His visual vocabulary continues to incorporate images of steel fencing, antennae, roads and office buildings, imbued with a generalized sense of disquiet and trepidation. Doherty's later photographic works are often in colour, and are larger in scale than the early photo text pieces, while the artist has also, in recent years, incorporated video installations into his practice to a greater degree.

In 1993 Doherty represented Ireland at the Venice Biennale, and the following year was shortlisted for the Turner Prize for the first time. Two exhibitions of his work were held in 1996, at the Kunsthalle in Bern and the Art Gallery of Ontario. In 1998

his work was shown at Tate Liverpool, while the following year an exhibition was held at the Renaissance Society in Chicago. A solo exhibition of Doherty's work was presented at IMMA in 2002/03, and he was again shortlisted for the Turner Prize in 2003. In 2002 Doherty represented Britain at the São Paulo Biennial, while in 1999 he represented Northern Ireland at the Venice Biennale. His work is represented in museums both in Europe and the United States. *Empty*, a 16 mm film transferred to video, was acquired by MoMA in 2007. *The Bridge* (1992) is in the Tate, as are *Remote Control*, a print dating from that same year, and *Re-Run. Ghost Story*, a fifteen-minute film written and directed by the artist, with text narrated by the actor Stephen Rea, was acquired in 2009 by the Dallas Museum of Art. Doherty's work is also represented in the collections of IMMA, CAG, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in New York, the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki and the De Appel art centre in Amsterdam.

PETER MURRAY

SELECTED READING Ben Tufnell, *Turner Prize 2003*, Tate Britain (London 2003); Charles Merewether, *Willie Doherty: Re-Run*, exh. cat. 25th São Paulo Biennial (2002); Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev and Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith, *Willie Doherty: False Memory*, exh. cat. IMMA (Dublin 2002).

**DONAGH, RITA** (b. 1939) [146], mixed-media artist. The daughter of an Irish mother and Anglo-Irish father, Rita Donagh was born and raised in the 'Black Country' in the English midlands, but her life and work have been greatly affected by her connection to Ireland, particularly after the outbreak of the 'Troubles' (qv) in Northern Ireland from the late 1960s onwards. Throughout her career, her art, as Michael Bracewell noted, 'maintains a palpable tension between the exploration of technique and the articulation of political events and social identities' (Bracewell, review of Rita Donagh at the Ikon Gallery, *Frieze*, no. 97, March 2006).

After graduating from the University of Durham, Donagh taught variously at the universities of Newcastle upon Tyne and Reading, as well as at the Slade School of Art and Goldsmiths College, London. Her highly conceptual and politically charged artwork has always employed careful draughtsmanship and realistic representation (see 'Conceptual Art' and 'Politics in Irish Art'). In the 1970s, perhaps influenced by her husband Richard Hamilton, she introduced collage to her work and by the mid-1970s was using cartographic methods to call attention to the contested geography of the six counties of Northern Ireland, a political entity created by the Government of Ireland Act 1920. Another body of work involved disturbing aerial views of the H-Blocks in 1979/80 coinciding with the first hunger strike there. Donagh's interest in Northern Ireland continued into the 1990s when she exhibited *Downing Street Declaration* (1993), which included an image of the then Prime Minister, John Major. As Bracewell has also pointed out, her work 'establishes a thematic link between documentary evidence of a situation, its subsequent mediation and its eventual reconstitution, in art, as a form almost of cultural pathology, at once commemorative and diagnostic.'