

PhD Profile - Graffiti meets Art

Connell Vaughan's research on aesthetics and the institutional theory of art brings him to obscure locations from the Blackrock Baths to the Graffiti Hall of Fame in Harlem, New York.

Vaughan originally completed a BA in Philosophy and Economics, so is interested in the overlap of the disciplines. From an economics standpoint, he examines the question of value. From a philosophical viewpoint, he explores the institutional theory of art, which broadly states that something is art if it is conferred this status by an art world and resides in an institution such as an art gallery or museum.

"I use the case of graffiti / street art as an example of where the value or status of art is ambiguous and changing, to highlight the nature of the contemporary economy of the art world. The idea that graffiti could be (street) art presents many problems for the theory as it stands. Primary among these is the

fact that graffiti / street art can be conferred the status of art yet appear to be outside the remit of the art world. I have developed a wider understanding of what an art world can be," says Vaughan, who is studying for his PhD in the UCD School of Philosophy under the supervision of Aesthetics expert Dr Brian Elliott, having previously done an MA in Philosophy.

"Perhaps the most unusual aspect of my research is my constant search for displays of graffiti / street art. As marginalised art forms they tend to exist in obscure spaces that are difficult to access," says Vaughan. His research sometimes requires him to visit locations that are off limits to the public, or in disuse.

"My research so far has revealed the close relationship that the art world has to marginalised art practices. Specifically I have been able to show how the contemporary graffiti artist works within the same economic structure as the fine artist. For both, institutional recognition is the goal."

A graffiti artist creatively engages with the particularities of the urban canvas. Graffiti Hall of Fame in Harlem. Photograph, 2008 UCD Images of Research Competition



Witness seminar on Northern Ireland conflict

A "witness seminar" allows participants in a particular event (or theme) to come together to discuss their role and recollections. It is a form of qualitative research that establishes much of the factual detail, but also allows participants meet in an academic setting to discuss their understandings of what happened at the time and their subsequent reflections upon it.

In December 2008, the UCD Institute for British-Irish Studies, IBIS held their fourth such seminar in the research project *Breaking the patterns of conflict: The Irish state, the British dimension and the Northern Ireland conflict*. Participants in seminar brought with them diverse perspectives.

Professor Sean Farren, SDLP politician, was negotiator in the 1997-98 multi-party talks, former Minister for Finance and Personnel and former Minister for Higher and Further Education in the Northern Ireland Executive.

Mr Wally Kirwan, is a former Irish civil servant who served as the Assistant Secretary-General in the Department of the Taoiseach, responsible for the Northern Ireland Division.

Mr Colm Larkin was an official of the European Commission from 1974-2004 and a special adviser to Seamus Mallon in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) from 1998 to 2001. He

was appointed to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission in 2007.

Mr Hugh Logue was special adviser to the OFMDFM from 1998 to 2002. He is a former official of the European Commission and a leading figure in the SDLP.

Mr Tony McCusker is a former civil servant and adviser to Secretary of State Mo Mowlam and to David Trimble and Seamus Mallon in the OFMDFM. He is currently chairman of the Community Relations Council and the Community Foundation.

Mr Tim O'Connor worked in the Department of Foreign Affairs from 1979 and has a long involvement in Northern Ireland affairs. He was Joint Secretary of the North/South Ministerial Council from 1999-2005 and is currently Secretary-General to the President.

Funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences, the *'Breaking the Patterns'* project builds on the John Whyte Archive, which is an archive of qualitative interviews conducted about the Belfast Agreement of 1998.

Along with the *'Breaking the Patterns'* project and the John Whyte Archive, the third main IBIS research stream is "Resolving Ethnic conflict: Approaches to Peace" (RECAP).

At the IBIS Witness Seminar from top l-r were (top left to right): Dr Christopher Farrington, UCD; Mr Colm Larkin; Professor John Coakley, UCD; Mr Michael Anderson, UCD; Mr Wally Kirwan; Ms Melanie Hoewer, UCD; Mr Hugh Logue; Prof Jennifer Todd, UCD; Mr Tony McCusker; Ms Susan McDermott, UCD; Ms Siobhan Byrne, UCD; Prof Sean Farren



Boito, Shakespeare and other studies

His Excellency Dott. Lucio Alberto Savoia, Ambassador of Italy was at UCD in November 2008 to inaugurate an International Study Day on Arrigo Boito. Organised by Professor Deirdre O'Grady of Italian Studies in the UCD School of Languages and Literatures, the day was supported by the Italian Cultural Institute.

Arrigo Boito (Padua 1842-Milan 1918) enjoyed considerable personal success as a poet, writer of short stories, composer and collaborator with Giuseppe Verdi. As a major exponent of the Milanese *'Scapigliatura'*, the first Italian avant-garde movement, Boito, in the wake of Victor Hugo created the paradoxical tensions that point towards the macabre duality of Pirandello.

The Study Day provided the students of the Italian Studies module 'Opera and Literature'

with an opportunity to absorb unexplored aspects of the writer's work. Speakers for the day included two UCD doctoral students and a doctoral student from the University of Padua.

Professor Joseph Farrell, University of Strathclyde, Scotland spoke about Boito's adaptations of Shakespeare great Italian actress Eleonora Duse, born in 1858.

Other speakers included: Ms. Annina Ahola, UCD; Ms. Selena Daly, UCD; Dr. Rosa Solinas, University of Oxford; Dott. Elisa Bosio, University of Padua; and Professor Deirdre O'Grady, UCD School of Languages and Literatures. The first session, of the day was chaired by Professor Jean-Michel Picard, Head of the School of Languages and Literatures.

Minister of State for Transport, Noel Ahern, TD, is shown the Evidential Breath Testing instrument by Professor Dennis A. Cusack, Director of the Medical Bureau of Road Safety during the official opening of the new premises in the Health Sciences Centre. The new forensic laboratory facilities enable the Bureau to conduct 20,000 analyses for alcohol in blood, urine and breath, and 1,500 analyses for other drugs in blood and urine per year. The work of the Bureau supports the Department of Transport in tackling a major public health challenge, the enforcement of substance free, safe driving conditions on the Irish roads

