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This thesis argues that the term permanence across its many definitions is particularly relevant to architecture at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

It proposes that an understanding of permanence is necessary in dealing with the contemporary environmental, cultural and psychological.

The materialation of an architecture of permanence is explored through two primer projects, the first set on a disused harbour on the Shannon Estuary in the west of Ireland, the second in the new city quarter of Hamburg, Hafen City.

Several texts are explored to gain an understanding of permanence within the architectural discourse.

The final project, which looks at the lost demesnes of Ireland, considers permanence within the evolution of the landscape and how building within a existing system of control evolved over time can create permanence through a sense of continuity.
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Introduction

The world which we collectively inhabit has developed an unquenchable obsession with expedience. Time, as a concept, is becoming continually shortened. In an environment of momentariness, speed and fashion, accelerating change has led to a sense of uncertainty.

A culture of mass consumption has led to the conditioned desire for the instant commodity. Contemporary architecture has largely followed this trend becoming obsessed with originality and newness at the cost of developing a cumulative knowledge and a sense of continuity. Architecture becomes a commodity and is then wrapped up in the novelty of fashion.

A landscape that is changing rapidly to suit momentary needs becomes continually transformed inhibiting the development of people’s connection with it. This connection, referred to as “rooting” by Heidegger, is required to respond to the bio-cultural and archaic dimensions of the human psyche.

In this thesis I explore the concept of permanence in architecture. An approach to architecture with permanence in mind means considering the both the history of the place and the afterlife of the building with the intention of enriching locality, sense of place and identity.

Permanence is not essentially conservative and it need not be grounded in a sentimental return to the past. Permanence gives you a feeling of security as a place of refuge against the backdrop of constantly changing world. Permanence can be felt through the material of a building, its solidity, its defiance of gravity and weathering. Permanence is also felt through a sense of continuity, where a building relates itself, either sympathetically or critically to what has gone before.

The thesis is working in the context of an Ireland in economic recession. Following an unprecedented frenzy of construction we are given the opportunity to reflect on that which was built during the boom years, to consider the legacy, if any, of the cheap office blocks and poorly planned and built housing estates which sprung up around the country.

The thesis makes the case for permanence for the 21st century by isolating three arguments; environmental, cultural and psychological.

An approach is explored through two primer projects, the first set on a disused harbour on the Shannon Estuary in the west of Ireland, the second in the new city quarter of Hamburg, Hafen City.

In the complexity of Permanence, several texts relating to permanence in architecture are explored in an effort to widen the scope and the understanding of the thesis subject.

The final project, which looks at the lost demesnes of Ireland, considers permanence within the evolution of the landscape and how building within a existing system of control evolved over time can create permanence through a sense of continuity.
Three Cases for Permanence

Environmental

Cultural

Psychological
Three Cases for Permanence

Permanence and Environment

We live in a world facing growing energy consumption and depleting resources. As energy becomes more difficult to produce, the way in which we use and give value to the resources available to us will have to change dramatically. Within the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, the construction sector accounts for between 25-40% of entire energy use. As a result, a significant amount of construction and demolition waste is produced. Within the European Union, annual demolition waste in 2010 stood at 330Mt, over double the figure from 1995 (160Mt), and is expected to rise to 500Mt by 2060. Emerging economies around the world, like China and India, are fast catching up with OECD consumption levels.

The growth in waste can be in part attributed to the shortening of the service-life of buildings, as buildings can be said to mimic the disposability of other contemporary products. If the average service-life of buildings were doubled, the quantity of waste from demolished buildings per year could be halved. An understanding of permanence and its causes/effect are, in the research, explored as an antidote to the disposability of building.

Permanence and the culture of disposable architecture

The growth in waste production is in part a product of a cultural shift in the way we use the resources available to us. We have come to regard material possessions in a very different way to the previous generation. There is a cultural expectation to keep up with the trends and fashions of the day whilst disposing of those considered old-fashioned. The speed at which trend and fashion is changing also seems to be accelerating. Things are not built to last but rather build to suit momentary needs.

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1 Environmentally Sustainable Buildings, Challenges and Policies, OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), 2003, p.7
2 Ibid
3 Environmentally Sustainable Buildings, Challenges and Policies, OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), 2003, p.27
needs. Contemporary architecture has largely followed this trend.

In “The Tyranny of the New” Adam Caruso suggests that society has become obsessed with novelty, and that this obsession has manifested itself in contemporary architecture. He suggests that the trend towards newness and disposability is associated with workings of capitalism.

“In the global free market economy, stasis is never good enough. As genuine demand within existing markets become satiated, increasingly contrived desires need to be created and than satisfied by multinational companies desperate to increase their market share”4.

Caruso warns that an architecture which follows the consumerism and disposability dictated by the markets risks falling victim to the Tyranny of the new, becoming obsessed with momentariness, speed and fashion at the cost of being able to developing a cumulative knowledge and a sense of continuity. Juhani Pallasmaa in his “six themes for the new millenium”5 suggests that this disposable approach has created an architecture which is both contrived and depthless never getting the chance to become significant before it is changed again.

Within this context permanence is proposed as an antidote to the disposability advocated by the markets, resisting and transcending its fluxuations.

**Permanence and the Human Psyche**

The insistence of contemporary architecture to deal only with the present is in direct opposition to the human need to resist what Karsten Harries calls the “terror of time”6, a fear stemming from the knowledge of the ephemerality of human life.

In “Building and the terror of time” Karsten Harries remarks on the following quote by Schopenhauer

*Man consciously draws every hour nearer his death; and at times this makes life a precarious business, even to the man who has not already*

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recognized this character of constant annihilation in the whole of life itself. Mainly on this account, man has philosophies and religion.\(^7\)

Schopenaeur is suggesting that humans have the need to create systems of defense against their own mortality. Harries suggests that architecture could have been added to the list of created systems and elaborates saying that

“Architecture is not just about the domestication of space but it is also a deep defense against the terror of time.”\(^8\)

Pallasmaa suggests that the speed of change, or accelerating change, in contemporary society has led to an increase in the terror of time.

“We need an architecture that rejects momentariness, speed and fashion; instead of accelerating change and a sense of uncertainty architecture must slow down our experience of reality in order to create an experiential background for grasping and understanding change. Instead of current obsession with novelty, architecture must acknowledge and respond to the bio-cultural and archaic dimensions of the human psyche.”\(^9\)

It is the ability to slow down our perception of reality, to transcend our understanding of time that gives permanence its strength.

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7 Schopenaeur, Arthur. The world as will and representation, tr. E. Payne (New York, 1969) Vol.1 pg.37
8 Harries, Karsten, The ethical function of architecture. (MIT Press, 1998) pg. 382
9 Ibid, pg 6
Primer projects

Shannon Cold Storage

Hafen City Baths
Shannon Cold Storage Unit

This project intended as a primer to develop our thesis ideas is situated within the Shannon freezone in a disused dock next to Shannon Airport. The dock is situated in the estuary of the longest river in Ireland which gives the airport its name and was built speculatively for flying boats in the late 1940’s, an industry which was to become redundant before it could be used. Shannon was developed as the world’s first tax-free zone and as such its raison d’etre has been economic. Large changes to the landscape in terms of drainage and the required infrastructure were made to prepare for its construction. The free-zone consists of the airport, a town also named Shannon, and an industrial business park all of which were built in the last 50 years.

The brief was to create a cold storage unit for housing pharmaceuticals as a need for such a facility was found. The Shannon region is an interesting paradox. Though situated deep within rural Ireland landscape it is connected to the rest of the world through its airport. The town is largely reliant on both foreign industry attracted by the low tax rate and passenger travelling to and from the airport. As such it is quite fragile and its success tends to follow that of the markets. There are many relics of previous industrial ventures in the area, the disused flying-boat dock, several empty factory buildings and with a large drop in the number of passengers the airport is at risk becoming the next relic.

The dock, where we were to site our project, consists of an open circular shaped low concrete wall in plan which has since almost completely filled with alluvial silt from the river. The circle opens out to the Shannon Estuary where it is deep enough for boats to dock. The wall acts as a flood barrier keeping the tide from flooding the airport. On one side of the circle there are several industrial warehouses and on the other a large marsh which acts as a bird-sanctuary attracting bird watchers.

I proposed to explore and test an architecture of permanence within...
this context. I began taking a purely personal approach to the concept of permanence and as I precedent I looked at my home town of Dun Laoghaire. I was looking for an architecture which gave me the feeling of security against the backdrop of a changing world, an architecture which encapsulated the deep defence proposed by Harries. I chose the Dun Laoghaire harbour, two large 18th century piers about 2km long made from massive granite stone from the nearby Dalkey quarry. The although the harbour is still a very active port within Dublin the piers are used mostly as a promenade. The piers consist of two levels with a thick low wall on the higher separating the perimeter of the harbour. On the far side of the wall there is just enough space to sit alone on the heavy granite stones patched up in over the years with concrete and look out across the sea giving a sense of calm with the low wall behind you protecting you from the busy harbour and the promenaders on the far side. I felt that the juxtaposing of the business and the calm within a single structure may go some way in providing a defence against terror of time.

I tried to create a similar sense for the Shannon Estuary project but rather than copy Dun Laoghaire’s pier on to the Shannon Estuary I tried to consider the sense in terms of frame and view. In Dun Laoghaire the granite and concrete pier which showed signs of weathering but had retained its strength had acted as the permanent element framing the view of the constantly changing sea to one side and the activity of the harbour on the other. I mapped the Shannon site in terms of frame and view. I intended to heighten the perception of permanence by contrasting it with its antithesis ephemerality. The concrete dock itself was the strongest permanent element on site but it circular shape and low wall offer little opportunity to create a frame. A difficulty arose in trying to describe element that were ephemeral. At first I had looked at the movement of sunlight across the site, that movement of the reeds in the marsh, the changing
weather etc. These elements were both permanent and ephemeral at the same time, and so I categorised them as constant. I posited that by juxtaposing all these elements; permanent, ephemeral and constant that you would begin to domesticate change, to harness its unpredictability and thereby create the experiential background for understanding change proposed by Pallassmaa.

In the final project I placed three large cold-storage warehouses along the pier halfway between the dock and the airport sitting on top of the marsh perpendicular to the pier itself. Thick foundations of the buildings rose above the level of the ground to the height of the pier itself and were formed in such a way that they could be inhabited by people in the same way I had inhabited the pier in Dun Laoghaire. The foundation continued as small piers continuing perpendicular across the pier enclosing a platform at water level framing views across the circular harbour.

The walls of the warehouse were made a stacking wooden crates, which hinted at the nature of the building. The boxes measured 1m x 1m x 2m, about the dimension of a person. These were to be filled with the alluvial silt from the harbour both to act as a thermal buffer to serve the cold storage units but also express the temporary nature of the building. The alluvial silt would strain the untreated wooden crates slowly willing them to decay. As the building outlives its use (when the pharmaceutical industry moves to another, cheaper country to do its business) and people stop looking after the building it will fall apart. The alluvial silt in the boxes will return to the ground, the wood will rot and only the foundations would remain which would, as the permanent element continue to frame the change across the site over time.

The intention of designing elements of the building to outlast the buildings use is that the building would retain a sense of place within the collective memory of the people who live in Shannon.
Hafen City Art and City

This project was an invited competition in Hamburg where students were asked to consider the new Hafen city development in terms of Art and Culture. The area of Hafen City was originally a free-port (in the same way Shannon was a free-zone) which lies on the periphery of the city centre connecting the city to the Elbe river which in turn flows into the North Sea. However the contraction of the Hamburg port coupled with the decrease in economic importance of the freezone left the land available for development. The new Hafen City development, a public-private venture, was an ambitious plan to build 5,800 homes plus over 2.25 million sq. m of commercial office space over a 20 year period increasing the size of Hamburg city centre by 40%. A series of world famous architects were asked to propose projects there among them Herzog and DeMeuron, Rem Koolhaas, Enric Miralles, Richard Meier, David Chipperfield and a host of contemporary German architects. The result was a overly contemporary a generic city, a themepark of architectural works. The new city lacked a heart, in the proverbial term, and the people of Hamburg were wary of large new section of their city which had sprung up in such a short period.

Again I began the project looking for the temporal aspects on site with the intention of developing a place of refuge against the rapid change brought on by the development. Hafen City was marketed as a new Hamburg on the water but because of the large fluctuations of the height of the tidal Elbe river the city needed to be raised up over 9 meters above low tide level. This created a disconnect between the new town and it’s waters edge.

Hafen City has a very particular relationship with the water that surrounds it. The water is seen as an infrastructure for industry and trade at the heart of the city. It is to be seen from afar and admired but seldom is it inhabited by the people of Hamburg. The master-plan for Hafen City posits the new development as bring the city to the Water.

The project wanted to bring this relationship further, to bring people into the water itself as both a cultural amenity and as a statement of intent.
for the people of Hamburg to reclaim the river from the industrial scale, to create an opportunity for both scales to co-exist side by side and to cross pollinate one another.

With the intention of breaking the strong edge condition a cut was made through the thick dock, which led to a platform at the bottom of the quay wall which became a swimming bath.

A number of paths were proposed through Hafen City which would give a gradient of scales moving from the centre of the city to the river moving through a series of scales and densities. The baths create a juxtaposition of phenomenologies through sounds, smells and feeling.

The project has the potential of uniting Hafen City not just at the water but within it and could become a catalyst for a possible move across the river if such expansion was justified in the future.

This project related the change of the city which people were disconcerted by to the changing of the tides which people had a better understanding of, creating a refuge against the terror of time.
Thoughts on Permanence
The Complexities of Permanence

The complexity of Permanence arises from its plural interpretations. To attach a contemporary relevance to permanence it is necessary to interrogate the concept across the spectrum of its meaning. This chapter will look at several different approaches that have been taken to understand permanence.

Katrina Touw: A conceptual framework for Permanence

In “Firmitas Revisited” Touw suggests creating a conceptual framework to overcome and analyze the different interpretations of permanence. The framework she suggests consists of realms and modes.

The Realm is the lens in which permanence is evaluated. It is broken down into absolute and relative parts. Absolute permanence describes something which remains eternally, it can only really exist as a concept. Touw suggests that its value lies in its ability to “foster mystery, myth and longing”. Relative permanence is described in relation to the human experience of time. Entropy governs relative permanence, measuring its years through evidence of decay.

The modes she suggests are static and dynamic. Static permanence is where a building endures in a single place over time. (The Parthenon in Rome is debatably an example of static permanence). Dynamic Permanence is when components of a building endure through reuse in numerous buildings, sites or functions (consider the iso shrine in Japan).

Rather than see this dualism of permanence as a problem, Touw considers the ability of permanence to straddle the absolute and relative realms and the static and dynamic modes as its real value. The strength of permanence lies in the materialization...
from the absolute realm into the relative realm. This transition from absolute to relative is called reification and is the bridging point between dream and reality.

Touw’s conceptual framework can be used to analyse and dissect alternate understandings of permanence.

**Vitruvius de Architectura**

The earliest written interpretation of permanence is written by Vitruvius in his “Ten Books on Architecture” and is thus generally taken as the benchmark for its definition. His work went on to be of influence to early Renaissance artists like Da Vinci, Alberti and Michelangelo and thus can be said to be important in forming the basis of western architecture.

The Vitruvian understanding of permanence is generally understood to be the firmitas (roughly translated as firmness or solidity) from his tripartite on the needs of architecture (utilitas, venustas are the others). Vitruvius makes several references to this firmitas in the section on city walls from his first book.

“Thus they [the walls] attain to a perfection that will endure to eternity”. Of charred olive wood “it is a material which neither decay, nor the weather, nor time can harm, but even though buried in the earth or set in the water it keeps sound and useful forever”.

His understanding of permanence is related to material durability, a relative term, yet he speaks about it in absolute terms (endure to eternity, useful forever). It is interesting to see that although Vitruvian permanence is often considered in absolutes, from the beginning permanence existed on both in absolute and relative realms.

Touw, who discusses Vitruvius at length, suggests that the understanding of permanence only as an absolute makes it irrelevant to

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contemporary practice.

“a disconnect becomes evident: absolutism in a society defined by relativity”

The problem with a building which follows the Vitruvian definition of permanence is that it is inherently inflexible, unable to adapt to the ever-changing function and demands of our contemporary society.

Edward Ford: The Theory and Practice of Impermanence-The Illusion of Durability

Ford’s position on permanence is taken in the context of the accusation levelled on modernist architects, that their buildings are poorly designed and detailed and are deteriorating beyond repair and that this is inhibiting the sense of permanence achieved by more traditional buildings. Stephan Rugero’s says in Progressive Architecture that “the legacy of poorly designed and detailed curtain walls built in the boom of the 1980s (are) claddings ticking timebombs”.

Ford rejects this accusation calling it an illusory problem arguing that the issues of deterioration are universal to both modern and traditional buildings.

“Each steel element of the Eiffel tower has been replaced at least once”.

In discussing the differences between western and eastern views of permanence he states that “the idea that important buildings should not only be durable but also permanent is so integral to the history of western architecture”. He uses the Ise Shrine, which has been rebuilt every 20 years for the past 1300 years as an example of an eastern view of permanence which is about cyclical rebirth as opposed to material durability, the building being ephemeral in its physical form but its “style” being permanent.

This eastern idea of permanence interests me as it allows for a sense of permanence apart from the vitruvian idea of firmitas while still being able to tackle the environmental, cultural and psychological problem earlier

discussed.

Within this eastern understanding Ford considers the ability of a building to be permanent in part and flexible in part within the same building. He draws on the following quote from Norman Foster:

*In an age of unprecedented change most buildings particularly those with specialized equipment subject to change, have hardly begun to recognise this reality. The process is perhaps best illustrated by parallels in aviation. The jet ranger helicopter for example was introduced in 1965 and, although many of the units such as the engine and the electronics have been changed, and in some cases very dramatically, it is still in full production. Even though its appearance is that of a fixed object, its design concept is based on modular units of limited life on a long-life airframe and it still responds, like most contemporary flying machines, to this process of continuous change.... The parallels in architecture are self evident.*

The interesting element of Foster's argument is the idea of a building being both permanent and impermanent at the same time. That considerately designing some elements of a building for dynamic change and some elements for static permanence could give a building the advantages of permanence in terms of psychological benefits earlier discussed but without any of the disadvantages of inflexibility.

Ford finishes by arguing that a layered system of construction is the inevitable result of this train of thought. I disagree with this sentiment as a layer system suggests to me hiding the permanent elements of a building behind several changeable layers (cladding, insulation). I believe a more appropriate system would allow the permanent elements of a building to be seen through out the life of the building.

**Alois Riegl and the Cult of Monuments**

Within the discourse of permanence there is a connection between permanence and the monument. In architecture and the city Aldo Rossi considers the monument as an...
Riegl looks at the different types of monument and creates a system of attributing value to them. He distinguishes between two different kinds of monuments, the intentional and the unintentional and looks at attributing a system of three values to them, Age-value, Historical value and Use-value.

The intentional monument is defined as “a human creation, erected for the specific purpose of keeping single human deeds alive in the minds of future generations,” “they claim a specific moment from the past and thus make a claim to immortality, to an eternal present and to a unceasing state of being.”

The arch de triomphe is a very obvious example of an intentional monument which celebrated the victories of Napoleon and is a symbol of the greatness of France. A less obvious example of an intentional monument might be the buildings of ancient Rome made to instill the virtues of the Roman civilization.

Unintentional monuments, on the other hand are those in which the meaning is not decided by the creator but is given a meaning retrospectively by a contemporary culture. An example of an unintentional monument is the Berlin Wall which while being built as a wall became a symbol of oppression and later of reunification.

Historical value is value attributed to building that gives comes from the building’s ability to place itself within the frame of time, acting as a mediator between different times. Buildings of historical value are generally preserved to their original state over time.

Age value differs in that its value arises from the visible aging of the building. Age-value is attained by the visible decay or ruin of a building. Reassurance being gained from its ability to withstand times wrath.

Use-value is ascribed to buildings that are still in use. Their value lies in their flexibility to deal with change.

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7 Rossi, Aldo. The architecture of the city. (MIT Press, 1984) pg.6
8 Forthcoming
9 Alois Riegl, The cult of the Monument, (MIT Press, 1982), pg. 16
Riegl, in a very similar way to Touw breaks down the term permanence, this time in respect to its values and its origins.

Karsten Harries and the Terror of Time

Harries approach to permanence in architecture is to look at its root of its relationship.

In “Building and the terror of time” Harries argues that if architecture is about the domestication of space "we must also recognise that from the very beginning it has provided defenses against the terror of time".

He argues that our need to seek refuge in architecture from the terror of time is a result of our recognition of our own mortality. Memory can banish the terror of time, he continues, suggesting that we find comfort in reliving memories of protection. "What we recall is thus not simply that past, but an idealised past over which time has no power and which so fuses with the present that it redeems it, too, the tyranny of time"

Geometries and Repetition can also be said to combat the terror of time. "we seek timeless order in primitive form. Harries find support in Plato:

"I do not mean by beauty of form such beauty as that of animals or pictures, which the many would suppose to be my meaning; but, says the argument, understand me to mean straight lines and circles, and the plane or solid figures which are formed out of them by turning-lathes and rulers and measurers of angles;for these I affirm to be not only relatively beautiful, like other things, but they are eternally and absolutely beautiful, and they have peculiar pleasures, quite unlike the pleasure of scratching. And there are colors which are of the same character,and have similar pleasures".

The ideas of timeless beauty are clearly sought after by architects. Le Corbusier advocated the use of clean line, and simple geometries to give his building a timeless beauty.

Although Harries’ ideas of permanence are deeply rooted in philosophical thought they do suggest that permanence is not only important to architecture but that a desire for permanence is also one of the reasons for the existence of architecture. Architecture without consideration of permanence cannot satisfy the innate desires of the human being.
Final project

The Irish Demesne
This project explores the concept of permanence in respect to Irish landscape. This was considered in terms of the ability of the land to permanently provide for those who inhabit it, leaving traces of its past uses. The landscape in Ireland is a receptacle for many layers of history, the traces of which informs us of who we were and are. These traces are evident in the court cairns, the castles, the stone walls, the systems of hedge-groves etc. The strength of the landscape as receptacle of the past lies in the fact each layer of history has built on the previous one.

In Ireland we find ourselves at the tail-end of a period of economic growth. This boom was characterized by an unprecedented level of construction both in housing and infrastructure. Following the decline of the Irish economy and the resulting collapse of the construction industry the opportunity arises to examine the fallout of the economic boom in terms of the way value was attributed to land. Massive failures are evident in the approach taken to development, particularly in terms of unsustainable construction practices which were primarily economically driven. These failures are most evident across the rural Irish landscape where poorly considered development threatened the grain of the Irish landscape. It is within this context that my final project positions itself.

The Midlands are characterized by a number of small to medium sized towns which were dependant on their agricultural hinterland. This agricultural landscape, once the life-blood of these Midland towns, has suffered a decline because of inflexibility of farms to diversify to meet changing needs. I was interested in looking at this landscape anew, to give it a contemporary relevance.

The Irish Demense

The Irish demesne defined historically as the lands, often walled, held by the manor for its own use and occupation.
The Demesnes which are well scattered across the rural landscape, shown in the image on the previous page, offer the ability to create centres for the new approach to landscape.

Its origins can be traced to the medieval tenurial system where a proportion of the land was set aside “in demesne” from the greater land of the lord to produce the goods need to sustain the house. The rest of the land was rented out to the cotiers who farmed the land and paid tithes to the lord. Given that the it was in the interest of the lord to ensure the productivity of his lands he would be keen to ensure the implementation of the latest farming methods to ensure high yields.

Although demesnes retained their primary functions as home farms, the process of land ornamentation, initially in the formal and later in the informal styles, dramatically affected their size and layout during the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

These demesnes also contributed to the import of new ideas into the rural landscape as lords were keen to import elements they had seen abroad to their estates. Various elements arising from these foreign ideas sprung up across demesnes in Ireland, from the botanical wealth of the glasshouse in the Powerscourts estate to the observatories at the Birr demesne. Among these imported elements was a new approach to designing large areas of the land surrounding the main houses.

These ideas were central in the development of the Irish landscape. It was no coincidence that the term landscape, derived from the Dutch “landskip” paintings, came into common usage during the late seventeenth century. Inspired by ideas from abroad, landowners were aware that the countryside around their houses could be designed on a large scale. By organising the demesne fields into regular grid-like patterns, and by extending the symmetry of their gardens into the landscape through long perspectives, the new unfortified houses of the late Caroline period...
acquired an imposing setting that reflected their owner’s power, status and wealth2.

The ability of these demesnes to create a system of control across the rural landscape gives them a contemporary relevance in considering the an approach to the current Irish landscape.

This system of control evolved from regular geometric patterns across the landscape using ditch, hedge, path and tree-lines to more “naturalised” parklands, whose planting and layout extolled the virtues and aspiration of the great landscape artists of the century, like Poussin and Lorraine. The more naturalised features of the demesnes included ha-has (sunken fences) allowing uninterrupted prospects across the park, a series of walks orchestrated in a series of pastoral arcadian scenes, featuring hillocks and winding streams, glinting lakes that mirrored the woodlands that dissolved into sunlit glades, and flocks and herds placidly grazing in the shadow of classical ruins and temples3.

These romanticised landscaped parks followed the Robinson theme, a theme developed from William Robinson from, The Wild Garden, 1881. Robinson advised the use of “hardy natives and exotic plants in natural association” saying “the successes of the English landscape depend on its appearance of having evolved from nature”4. His hardy perennials and annuals provided long lasting displays, in a similar way as they do in the wild.

Even though the production of the landscape parks meant undertaking large scale movements of land, the widening of streams and the relocating a great number of trees and shrubs the developments work with, as opposed to against nature, adding to existing features rather than destroying and creating anew.

The Decline of the Irish Demesne

Following the Encumbers estates Act in 1849 and the related Land cts the demense went into a period of decline.

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2 Ibid, pg.210
3 Ibid, Pg.201
which until this day has not been reversed. Over 120,000 hectares of parkland has since fallen into disuse or have been unsympathetically developed over by agriculture or housing.

...many pressures still remain, particularly from such developments as housing estates and golf courses. Consequently, the demesnes of Ireland face a mixed future as they struggle to adopt new roles in the evolution of the landscape6

It is landscapes such as these that the development of the Celtic Tiger failed to capitalise on. This projects will attempt to reinvent the demense for the 21st century giving it a contemporary relevance.

The evolution of the relationship between the landowners and the tenant in Ireland is worthy of note. In the nineteenth century, following the American, 1775, and the french, 1798, revolutions, there was a desire to overthrow the existing system of governance. There was a resentment wealthy landowner enforcing punitive rents on their tenants.

In the late 1880s a period of land agitation occurred in Ireland, there was a drive by Michael Davitt and the Land League to reclaim the land owned by the predominately protestant owners and restore it to the people. This happened in conjunction with the fight for home rule. The failure of the demesnes to evolve with this change is a major contributing factor in their demise. Considering the position of the demense in the 21st century must take account of this shift. The land should be consider as common land for the benefit of the people.

The consideration of the demense as commons gives the land a value as a national amenity

Moore Abbey Demesne, Monasterevin, Co. Kildare

Formally held by the Marquis of Drogheda, a member of parliment in Westminster, the estate attached to the Moore Abbey occupied some 16 600 acres (6720 Hectares)6. The demense

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5 ARIL, Ibid, pg, 205


FIG 3 | PLAN OF BUILDING
MONASTEREVIN ABBEY | 1860
itself occupies 240 hectares, making it one of the larger in the country at the time. It was in use by the Drogheda family up until the 1950s when the house and demense were sold to The Sisters of Charity, a religious order who have operated a mental disability hospital there since then. The larger part of the estate had long since been broken up follow the Land acquisition acts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The demense features the Mooreabbey house, which has grown to include some ancillary healthcare buildings, surrounded by a landscaped park, walled gardens, woodlands and farmlands. The lands which area still partly walled are contained on four sides. By the town of Monasterevin to the north, the River Barrow to the west, the M7 motorway, which links Dublin to Limerick, to the South and the R251, a regional road which connects across the landscape to small neighbouring towns.

The town of Monasterevin once dependent on the Abbey, has tried unsuccessfully to forge a new identity for itself by taking advantage of its proximity to the motorway and the high housing prices in Dublin and becoming a commuter town. The resulting property market collapse has left a large number of dormant housing estates in the town. Unemployment is comparitively high. The decision of the town to disconnect itself from its rural hinterland has had a catatrophic effect on the town. The development of the demesne could reconnect the town to its historical roots giving the town its inhabitants the sense of continuity Harries required to create a refuge against the terror of time.

The motoray likewise offers a potential to link the demesne across a much larger area. It also represents a much larger scale than the town side to the north.

The project will look at the layers of histories on site and how they have create a system which has evolved the Irish landscape. It will propose an additional layer to fit the needs of contemporary society while repected the inherent value of the existing system.
Learning from the Temporal Landscape

As urbanisation invades the countryside and threatens its fabric, there is a fascination with the reverse process as nature reclaims territory. "If any such forms feature in the foreground or middle distance they are ‘www’..."
Final Presentation Drawings

The final presentation was presented on Friday the 20th of May in the main studio (enclosure near the workshop). The banner measured approx 5m x 1.8m. Models were placed on the floor in front of the banner.

The presentation lasted 6 minutes and was followed by 15 minutes of questions. The questions asked ranged from clarifications of the process of ethanol production (in relation to the architecture) to questions on detailing.

The banner is organised with research into the Irish Demesne as a historic typology to the left-hand side, The site plan is in the centre as it was the major drawing in understanding the intervention in context. Site research is to the left of the plan, an diagrammatic explanation of the route through the site is below the plan and the various interventions (ethanol at the top, allotments, observation tower and lay-by below) made across the site are to the right of the plan. The route is expressed as a series of perspectives across the bottom of the banner.
Demesne Research

In exploring the Demesne of Moore Abbey in Monasterevin I found rather little documentation on the design intention of the original plan for the demesne.

I looked at three other demesnes, of similar size, which were better documented; Carton Demesne near Maynooth, Lyons Demesne in Kildare and Powerscourt Demesne in Wicklow.

The demesnes were mapped out in terms of axis, route, view, entrance and waterways. The way in which these were organised were found to be similar in each example and gave an understanding of the design intention behind the Moore Abbey Demesne. I designed a prototype demesne applying the lessons learned from the research.

The relationship of the manor houses to their immediate site was explored. The platation of woodland for framing, the use ha-ha (to allow uninterrupted views) and careful positioning of buildings were translated into the final project.
Moore Abbey Site Research

The Demesne of Moore Abbey stretches out southward from the manor house, Moore Abbey. It has an area of 250 Hectares made up of planted woodland and fields.

The Moore Abbey demesne is bordered by the town of Monasterevin to the north and northeast, the river Barrow to the West, and the M7 motorway to the south. The demesne has a history as both a productive and recreational center.

Using the knowledge gained from the research of the Irish Demesne as a historic typology Moore Abbey was analysed under a number headings including Transport, Waterways, Countour Height, Woodland, Route and View.

This research led to me understanding why the site was the way it was. I began to understand the demesne as carefully engineered landscape which had evolved over time. I intended my intervention to fit into this landscape becoming another layer of intention among the other layers.
The route which connects the town of Monasterevin to the M7 Motorway including my intervention.
The same route represented in a series of perspectives
The productive landscape

Given the agricultural nature of the site the concept of producing from the land was important. Considering the proximity to the motorway and to Monasterevin, a commuter town, the production of biofuel was considered to be a vital element of the productive aspect of the site. A spectrum of productive functions, ranging from the domestic scale near the town to the more industrial functions closer to the motorway, were made across the site. Allotments and pastoral areas provided productive space for use by the inhabitants of Monasterevin. A lay-by was created by the motorway in order to provide a hitching post at the south of the site linking it to the town across the site. Within the route between the lay-by and the allotments, an ethanol facility deep within the woods of the demesne in order to mirror the productive land uses at the site.
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