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A note on our cover

The cover combines images taken in and around Cork city with abstract images.

Photos by A. Murphy, with the exception of:

timetable by Christoph Burgdorfer
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Feet in water by Demis Crudeli
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Re-view: exploring the Docklands of Cork.

Anna Ryan

Cork's docklands sit apart. Reaching the city by car from the east, due to speed of motion, the activities of Tivoli Docks are kept hidden from view. As one moves nearer, the breadth of the River Lee positions itself between approach and activity: Kennedy Quay and the Marina are viewed across water. The workings and structures of the Docks become something to be looked at. Relationship is reduced to a view, to the formality of subject and object. Separation as distance.

When on the hillsides of Montenotte and St. Luke's, the docklands appear as a flat expanse of rail, water and open ground. Here, at a height, elevation imposes distance. For its people, the physicality of the city, its actual topography, implicitly results in such ways of viewing from above.

When moving outwards from the city to the southern edge of the river, one passes directly through the docklands. The leafy spine of Centre Park Road acts as a passageway, a controlled corridor, through the area. Its foliage acts as horizontal enclosure and asserts a different atmosphere to the workings of its more raw and direct surroundings. The focus becomes on moving through, moving beyond, towards the waterside. Destination as distance.

Thus Cork's docklands are a presence felt in the city, but always apart, ever at a distance.

This image-based piece seeks to reverse this distancing. The viewer is repositioned; is placed on the ground of the docks; is within. The images form a narrative sequence, which aims to engage with the actual materiality of the working docks- its structures and its stuff. This narrative of materiality is progressive. It begins with an examination of the 'containers' of the docks, exposing the direct and tectonic nature of these vessels of utility- a consideration of solidity and mass. It moves through an exploration of the apparatus of motion- the opening, changing and shifting nature of these dynamic structures. It concludes with a presentation of the gatherings of the docks - the stuff that arrives, is moved and becomes replaced. Thus this image-narrative documents a progression of materiality from permanence to transience- the processes that form the distinct territory of the docklands.
The haptic sensibilities of the viewer are employed—how the body engages with and 'feels' its surroundings. In the production of the imagery, surface, texture and enclosure are thus concentrated upon. Furthermore, the abstracting and juxtaposing of scale (re)positions the viewer and encourages him to reveal, question and re-view his relationship with this direct, elemental location. In these ways, the images are simultaneously very particular and very general: whilst specifically documenting Cork’s docklands, the themes they negotiate are universal.
This sequence of images also attempts to pose a number of questions. In our bodily experiences and the experiences of our senses, how do we perceive and engage with the actual physicality of our surroundings? And how, if exposed in a 'new' light, do these perceptions or experiences begin to change? It is for the reader-viewer to explore these questions, to examine their perceptions and to provide these images with their own (con)text.

All photographs taken by author; the morning of 26 July 2003.