

IMMA Press Release - 9 April 2008

The Burial of Patrick Ireland (1972 - 2008) 17 - 18 (wake) and 20 May (funeral)

After 36 years of making art as Patrick Ireland, the distinguished Irish-born artist Brian O'Doherty will reclaim his birth name with the symbolic burial of his alter ego in the grounds of the Irish Museum of Modern Art on the afternoon of Tuesday 20 May 2008. The burial is a gesture of reconciliation to celebrate the restoration of peace in Northern Ireland, just as his action in assuming the name Patrick Ireland was a protest at the British military presence in Northern Ireland and the failure of the authorities to ensure civil rights for all. "We are burying hate", says the artist, "it's not often you get the chance to do that".

During the Irish Exhibition of Living Art at the Project Arts Centre in 1972, O'Doherty, in a performance before 30 invited witnesses and assisted by Robert Ballagh and Brian King, undertook to "sign his artworks 'Patrick Ireland' until such time as the British military presence is removed from Northern Ireland and all citizens are granted their civil rights." This commitment, often seen as controversial, the artist describes as "an expatriate's gesture in response to Bloody Sunday in Derry". For almost fifty years, the eighty-year-old artist has lived and worked in New York.

At the 1972 performance, the artist, masked and clothed in white, was painted head to toe in the charged colours of green and orange by the two assistants, resulting in a glimpse of the tricolour before it was extinguished in the cross-over confusion of colours. The work documenting this performance can be seen along with the encoffined effigy of Patrick Ireland from Sunday 18 May, in IMMA's Gordon Lambert Gallery, named after the collector and long-time friend of the artist. The death mask of the effigy, which is dressed in white, was made by O'Doherty's friend, the American artist Charles Simonds.

On Tuesday 20 May, the effigy will be interred in the grounds of the Museum. The secular ceremony will be conducted by the distinguished art historian and museum director, Michael Rush, a former Jesuit priest. At the graveside, five poems that resonate most closely with the meaning of the event will be read in English, French, Spanish, and German by friends of the artist and in Irish by Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith. The ceremony will conclude with a vocal performance by the Irish artist, Alannah O'Kelly, after which those present will return to the Museum for a joyful wake.

Artists, museum directors, writers, and gallerists from Switzerland, France, Germany, Italy, England, Northern Ireland and the US are expected to travel to Dublin for the occasion. Attendants will also include a special contingent from the Fondazione Zetema, which owns and administers the Casa Dipinta in Todi, Italy, where 30 years of Patrick Ireland's wall paintings and installations can be seen. The house also contains an extensive research library on contemporary American and Irish art.

Born in Ballaghadereen, Co Roscommon Brian O'Doherty left Dublin for New York in 1957, where he became a pioneering figure in Conceptual Art and also a renowned writer, critic, filmmaker and educator. His work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington and the Centre Pompidou in Paris. He has exhibited at the Venice Biennale, at Documenta in Kassel, Germany, and in the Rosc exhibition in Dublin. His most recent exhibition in Ireland was his 50-year retrospective at the Dublin City Gallery the

Hugh Lane

in 2006. The exhibition was recently seen at the Grey Art Gallery, New York University.

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