



**The mind was dreaming. The world was its dream.**

An exhibition curated by Paula Naughton,  
Temple Bar Gallery + Studios.  
11th April – 7th June 2014

This piece has come about from a visit to the exhibition *The mind was dreaming. The world was its dream*. An account of sorts – thoughts prompted by spending time with Lisa Tan's *National Geographic*, Edgardo Aragón's *La encomienda*, Jonathas de Andrade's *4000 Disparos* and Gavin Murphy's *We look at the sun through smoked glass; we look at the past through coloured glass*

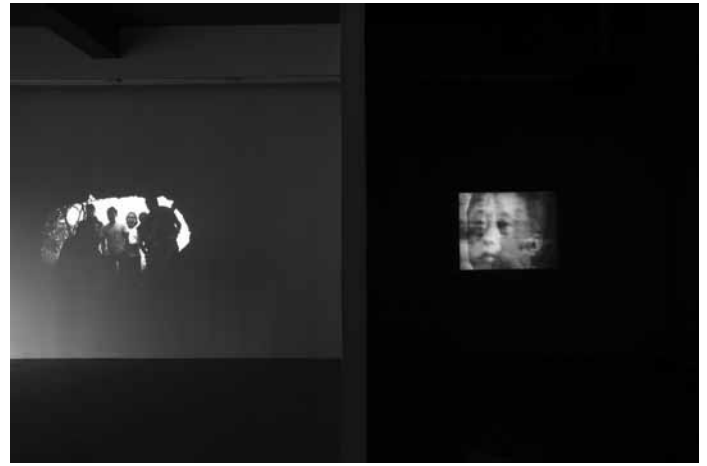
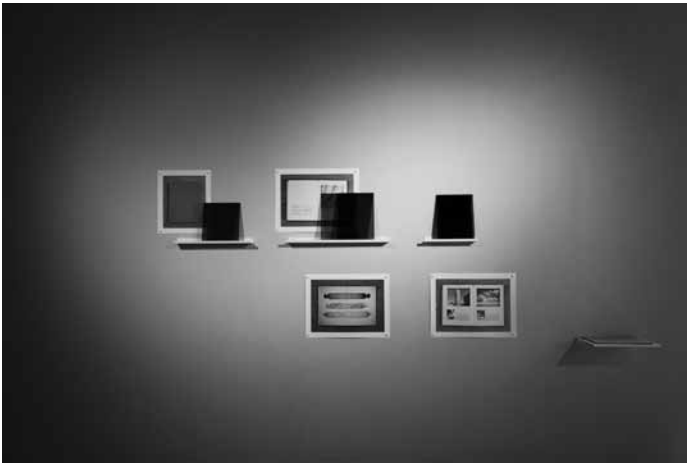
**Grow one. Copy that. Make another. Grow one.**  
(Sturgeon, 1950)

In 1987, Paramount Pictures commissioned a painting from Dario Campanile of the mountain logo the company had used since 1914. On his watch, the mountain catches the sun, above a darkly forested landscape, the range it dominates visible for miles, the day is fine and there are scant clouds in its aquamarine sky. A deep lake reflects the mountain's lower peaks. Thanks to the efforts of others, you can easily find examples of how representations of the locale around the Paramountain have changed dramatically over a century, sometimes directly in relation to a particular film's opening or closing sequence and sometimes not. It begins, a mountain with no landscape, with clouds about the base, as if in some supernatural place. Later it is more often located in a landscape and only occasionally dislocated and floating on a cloud. The landscape changes, the lake changes, the snowy slope grows and shrinks. It is mid-morning or early afternoon, except when it is dramatically dusk and the horizon reddens. The snows never melt, a jagged line, and 's' shaped lightning bolt from the summit downwards; this is constant. I mention it because my attention to it coincides with me discovering the idea of a 'golden mountain': a mountain made of gold that cannot exist in reality, but can be imagined. However, when ideas are brought into representation they have a cultural reality. Read decades ago in a borrowed book on pages soaked with use from the Dublin City public library; the author has slipped my mind, the name of the book – gone. This means

nothing, but matters a little because it turns out the curator of *The mind was dreaming. The world was its dream*, Paula Naughton, has been thinking about the golden mountain too. I love that and I greatly admire her exhibition. So here's to the Paramountain.

In *National Geographic*, Lisa Tan has clipped out photographs of mountains from the eponymous magazine, collected by her father, a subscriber. She has copied and mounted them as well as what is found on their reverse sides to 35mm colour slides shown simultaneously on two Kodak Carousel projectors. The mountains share the same photogenic quality and photography becomes them. She has written about the mountain in her hometown – the beautiful drive from one side to the other, east to west, across its north-south ridge – and how her parents separated to live on either side and how, in illness, her father returned from his side. Random fragments on the reverse of the cut out mountains, photographs of people, teacups, a golden retriever and "... a bear came through his tent and ate him", "... good food colouring for signalling in the snow in an emergency", "area enlarged". In an earlier work by Tan, *Moving a mountain* an anonymous image of a mountain hanging in a hotel bedroom is seen by her during a trip and leads to her return to the same room later, with an image of 'her' mountain, to make an exchange. There are clear resonances with and across her other works, *Notes from underground and Books*, where personal relationships are by turns cavernous, epic and intimate. Duplications appear as a couple brings their books together, but poignantly reveal differences too, as the cover art on alternative editions varies. In *National Geographic's* slide carousels go dark from time to time – blanks: a start, maybe an end – the bejewelled chemistry of images interrupted by these nothings. Doubt is invited in and the world reels on its axis. Left becomes right, up becomes down.

Jonathas de Andrade's, *4000 Disparos* shows, at great speed, photographs of 4000 Argentinian men, a frame per man, on Buenos Aires' streets. As a monument, it has been presented as reclaiming the lost living, men disappeared in by politically motivated, organised, and criminal means. Coincidences in the forms of faces, repeated details of the location of a mouth,



nose or eye, or light or shade across the greys in these black and whites, create the illusion of a rhythm, of irregular patterns and tempos, exacerbated by the soundtrack. More urbanely, the compulsion to anchor the sounds to things is so strange because some sound like system sounds, those tones and tunes played by computers and other devices when something is trashed, connected, refused, and maybe too a bit like the sound of rewards collected in the course of a computer game, golden coins and diamond rings. In an animation by Andrade, titled *Pacific*, Chile becomes an island, adrift having been detached from the rest of South America following a massive earthquake, originating in the Andes. The topographical dividend for Bolivia is a new coastline, while Argentina runs into both the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans. The cruel reward for Chile here is that its accession of the coastline and all that brings in the late 1800s, to its neighbours' detriment, is mocked as the country, made of mountains, becomes encircled by coastline, cut out.

An article published in the Albuquerque New Mexico Journal from September 1945, a few months after the first atomic weapon test in the desert there, is illustrated with a photograph of a woman wearing a decorative hair-pin in the shape of an atom. This atomic jewellery is made from Trinitite, a glass produced in the nuclear explosion as liquid and found as a solid where it fell, a little radioactive. In the short time between the test and the jewellery piece in the local paper, the Little Boy and Fat Man bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Not one but two cities. Not one but two types of warhead. An experiment. The Albuquerque jewellery correspondent dismisses Japanese claims that products of the explosion, the glass, were and remained radioactive, in addition to the contamination of land and materials at the blast-sites.

Gavin Murphy's *We look at the sun through smoked glass* overlapped in exhibition-time with another work installed over the river and across the city in another gallery. In that other place, a printed text, titled *We look at the past through coloured glass*, includes a poem by Basil Payne inspired by Patrick Scott's painting *Solar Device*, written about the human catastrophe of Little Boy and Fat Man. I think of the ritualistic donning of dark glasses by assemblies of men in the seconds before looking at a nuclear explosion from the vantage point of the viewing gallery. Reminiscent of the darkly mirrored Claude Glass and other coloured lenses and pieces popularly used for looking through by travellers, poets and artists from Europe when taking in the view, all the better when the view lay behind you, over your shoulder, feigning indifference. The more I looked at it, *We look at the sun through smoked glass* began to look like a machine

taken apart: un-ground antique glass on glass – spaced apart – photographed books spread flat on diamond polished aggregate floors. Humming along with the artist's other work across town. In 2013, in Manhattan, NY, New York, outside Tiffany & Co., Edgardo Aragón's score from *La encomienda*, is performed on the street. A direct action to implicate the jewellery trade in the activities of hostile mining interests in Mexico and Latin America, where the land is resolutely sung out as "land that is ours by right" – they "don't treat our water like they should". Watching the single-screen video with this soundtrack, seven miners sing, looking at me. I am in a hole. The mine, descending into the earth, is behind me, I can't turn around, the camera doesn't move. The ragged edges of the hole soften the rectangle of the projection. Apart from the music, this proscenium has something of the Baroque theatre or public square about it; dissident citizens, speaking in concert, making a public address, holding books, knowing the words by heart.

*How many trees, how many rabbits, flowers, amoebae, sea worms, redwoods, eels and eagles grew and flowered, swam and hunted and stood among their prototypes with none knowing that they were an alien dream, having, apart from the dream, no history?* (Sturgeon, 1950)

Late in 1945, the Kodak company began receiving reports that unexposed film was getting inexplicably fogged in the box. Turns out the paper mill making the pulp to make the cardboard to make the boxes for the film, used corn husks in the pulp-making process that came from an area exposed to radiation fallout after the New Mexico nuclear test site. Kept secret.

The quotations from Theodore Sturgeon, above, come from his book *The dreaming jewels*, first published in USA, in 1950.

Valerie Connor

Valerie Connor is an independent curator and advisor in the visual arts. She lectures in Photography at the Dublin Institute of Technology.

Centre: Lisa Tan, 'National Geographic', 2009, double slide-projection and printed text, variable dimensions.

Left: Gavin Murphy, 'We look at the sun through smoked glass; we look at the past through coloured glass', 2014, vinyl window text, tinted film, printed text, fabricated shelves, coloured glass and photographic prints.

Gavin Murphy (as above)

Left: Edgardo Aragón, 'La Encomienda', 2013, HD video, 4:45 minutes. Right: Jonathas de Andrade, '4000 disparos (4000 shots)', 2010, super-8 transferred to dvd, 60 minute loop.