

The Yalta Game: Myrid Carten, Susan MacWilliam, James Glass

Curated by Declan Sheehan

This exhibition has developed from a fascination with the central image seen here on the wall-mounted screen facing the gallery entrance - a family in a shared look at photograph album, a scene that was posed often for family portraits by early portrait photographers using the props of their studio. And from a fascination with a central quote from the late critic of photography, art and media, John Berger, commenting in an interview that photographs 'are both authentic and not authentic: whether the authentic side of photographs can be used authentically or not depends on how you use them.' (Berger, 1979). And from a fascination with a central performance in two recent rehearsed readings of Brian Friel's play *The Yalta Game* (2001), with the play's two characters imagining the lives of those that they observe from a cafe table, and then caught up in their own imagined and projected stories about their own lives, to the point of a vertiginous doubt, reflected in the quote from the play on the wall at the gallery entrance. As a response this exhibition brings together works that engage with fragments of memory, truth and biography by a filmmaker, an artist, and the archives of a photographer.

Wall facing gallery entrance:

A carte de visite photograph from the from the studio of photographer James Glass (1847-1931) (Image courtesy of Special Collections, Ulster University, (A998))

A quote from Brian Friel's play *The Yalta Game* (2001)

Left of gallery entrance:

Three table monitors screening the curator's short moving-image pieces reflecting on The Magee Community Collection's set of early studio portraits by Derry/Donegal photographer James Glass (1847-1931). (Archive photographs courtesy of Special Collections, Ulster University.)

Rear of central gallery wall and left of gallery:

Susan MacWilliam, *Kathleen Coyle Book Collection* (2014), Books, Bespoke Display Cabinets

The artist's extensive collection of first edition copies of Derry born writer Kathleen Coyle's books from the 1920s–40s and literary ephemera are presented in a series of bespoke display cabinets.

Susan MacWilliam, *KATHLEEN* (2014), B+W, Colour, Stereo, 33m

A childhood accident, the death of a beloved pet and a library of books provide formative experiences of the young Kathleen.

KATHLEEN is an exploration of the existential and the melancholic, an observation of life and death. Seen here in its first gallery showing in the North-West, Susan MacWilliam's moving-image work *Kathleen* (2014) interrogates the recounting of a life; that of Derry-born writer Kathleen Coyle (born in Derry in 1886, died in Philadelphia in 1952) using excerpts from Coyle's books, manuscripts, personal letters, unpublished poems and scribbled notes, alongside found footage.

Susan MacWilliam is based in Belfast and works with video, photography and installation, exhibiting extensively both nationally and internationally, including representing Northern Ireland at the 2009 Venice Biennale.

Right of gallery:

Myrid Carten, *WEB III* (2019), Colour, 18m

Myrid Carten's moving-image installation *WEB III* (2019), commissioned for this exhibition, deconstructs her recent short film *Wishbone* (2019) as a multi-screen installation. If *Wishbone* is itself a complex and honest study of female friendships, 'shot with mix of actors playing a friend and I, alongside my non-actor friend playing herself' as Carten describes it, then *WEB III* (2019) makes visible yet further layers within *Wishbone* and the process of its making, deconstructing the film and its performance process, making visible in an installation how the apparent boundaries of truth and fiction, the authentic and inauthentic, oscillate in memory; tracing the performances of a self.

Myrid Carten, originally from Donegal, now lives and makes films in Belfast. Since graduating from Goldsmiths in 2014, her films have been screened and supported across international festivals, awards and residencies.