

BETWEEN METAPHOR AND OBJECT

ART OF THE '90s FROM THE IMMA COLLECTION

Between Metaphor and Object features a range of works from the IMMA Collection, primarily sculptures and installation works principally from the 1990s. It provides perspectives on the diversity of such practice that is represented in the IMMA Collection from this period, and offers the opportunity to explore its particularities and consider them in the context of international trends of the decade. Central to the exhibition are a number of key works from the Weltkunst Foundation whose significant collection of 1980s and '90s British sculpture and drawings has been on loan to IMMA since 1994 and which will return to the Foundation in 2010. The exhibition acknowledges the vision and generosity of this loan.

The Weltkunst Collection epitomises what is popularly referred to as 'New British Sculpture', a term used to describe the quite disparate work of young sculptors who emerged in the late 1970s and '80s and who showed renewed interest in using traditional materials after the dominance of Minimalist and Conceptual practices. The principal artists associated with this movement and featured in the exhibition are Barry Flanagan, Shirazeh Houshiary, Anish Kapoor and Alison Wilding. Other key Weltkunst artists included in the exhibition are Avis Newman, Lucia Nogueira, Julian Opie, Jacqueline Poncelet, Rachel Whiteread and Richard Wentworth. Work by Irish artists using a variety of materials include a totemic cast resin sculpture by Eilís O'Connell, a work by Siobhán Hapaska of lacquered fiberglass, basalt and moss playfully pitching the organic with the mass produced and a bronze installation by Michael Warren in homage to Eileen Gray. The exhibition also includes other works of the 1990s from the IMMA Collection by artists such as Kiki Smith, Ann Hamilton and Maud Cotter whose presence references a central focus of the period on issues of identity, gender and the politics of the body and Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, whose works imply stories which must be imagined by their audience. These and many other Collection works which are not included here, reflect the growing prevalence of installation works at the critical forefront of art developments in the '90s. The international dominance in the 1990s of interactive art practices that draw on human relations and their social context, termed 'Relational Art', is not reflected in the Weltkunst Collection, although noted exponent Douglas Gordon does feature with the work *Above all else*, 1991.

Rather than addressing an overarching theme, each of the works in this exhibition operates as a sort of microcosm of each artist's practice. However, the exhibition title *Between Metaphor and Object* takes its cue from the figurative and metaphoric imagery and titles of many of the Weltkunst works and invites us to consider how we look at and engage with a work of art. It calls attention to the range of readings that can accrue around a work of art and the idea of the continuous flux that such engagement elicits between symbolism and objecthood in the mind of the viewer. It also references the polarities of opinion since the '60s and still pertinent today around interpretation of the art object, on the one hand the notion of the art objects' self contained presence that suspends the viewer from his or her self awareness and the opposite effect where the viewer by their participation in a theatrical sense 'completes' the artwork.

So as not to curtail the visitor's own instinctive engagement with the artworks we have confined all descriptions, critical interpretation, biographies and contextual information to the Reading Area in the centre of the exhibition.

Sincere thanks are due to Andrew Naylor and Anna Rolls from Hall Conservation Ltd. for their painstaking attention to the conservation of a number of works in the exhibition. We are extremely grateful to the Weltkunst Foundation for their generous loan to IMMA and to all the artists involved and their representatives for their professionalism and time. Our thanks also to Seamus McCormack, *Assistant Curator Collections*, Felicia Tan, *Collections Registrar* and Jessica Monnin, *Leonardo Fellow Collections* for their assistance in all aspects of making the exhibition and to the IMMA Technical crew under the supervision of David Trunk and Cillian Hayes.

Between Metaphor and Object is co-curated by Christina Kennedy Senior Curator, Head of Collections and Marguerite O'Molloy, Assistant Curator Collections.

Christina Kennedy
Senior Curator
Head of Collections
Irish Museum of Modern Art