

KATE MACGARRY

VAN CRITIQUE SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2015

Laura Gannon *Silver House* Uillinn, West Cork Arts Centre

Commissioned for Uillinn, Gannon's exhibition comprises a new body of experimental large-scale architectural drawings and a new film work, Silver House. The film was shot locally in Goleen, West Cork, during the Spring of 2015. The work is a collaboration with the sound composer Susan Stenger and features Eilish Lavelle and her home as the subject and the site of the film.

Lavelle has spent the last 40 years designing her home and garden in line with the ideals of high modernism, transporting the early-twentieth century avant-garde to the coast of rural West Cork. The house was once a horse stable, transformed by Lavelle in the 1970s with floor-to-ceiling windows, glass and chrome furniture, and bathroom walls covered in mirrored silver paper. However, the passage of time has softened the clean modernist lines.

The audience are seated on a white fur bench – a reference to the fur bedroom created by Adolf Loos in 1903 – which provides a tactile but also comfortable vantage point. The fur suggests the intimacy of being invited into the comfort of someone's home before the film even begins. *Silver House* opens with the specific – a deadpan close up of the intricate organic design of the rich red wallpaper – before cutting to the exterior of the property where the ancient trees sweep down to the Atlantic Sea.

This cutting continues throughout the film, shifting between interior and exterior, the inanimate and intimate portrait of Lavelle, the purely visual and Lavelle's personal stories about her home. Like the house, the film borrows techniques from early avant-garde film, using montage to juxtapose fast and slow paced shots in a way that compresses and fractures space, time and information.

We are presented with pieces, never a whole narrative. In fact when Lavelle speaks it is so unexpected that it takes time before the ear can understand what she says. Gannon has described her work as an “ongoing process of exploring ways to convey fragility, the female body within architecture and non-dominant narratives which emerge in geographical margins”.

The film is supported by Susan Stenger's soundtrack, which incorporates the sounds of the West Cork landscape and the house where the work was filmed to create a new audio composition. Stenger uses the associative meaning of the basic principles of music, melody, rhythm, metre, volume, etc. to heighten, suspend, slow down and interrupt. However, the score neither works simply in parallel with or as a counterpoint to the visual image. It is not mere commentary. It responds to what is not always evident in the image as the aural and visual share the power to create meaning.

Accompanying the film is a series of large-scale experimental drawings. A nine-panelled screen sculpture demarcates the space between the film and the drawings. Responding to the gallery space and the floor to ceiling windows Gannon has created three large sculptural drawings which occupy the double height gallery wall. The basis of these drawings has been in conceptual development for the past three years. Prior to this Gannon has mainly exhibited film work and undertaken live art performance projects where she used drawing to develop and inform her film work.

Her intent now is to bring a focus to the drawings themselves by exhibiting them with a film in one coherent exhibition space. The screen sculpture is a double entendre, acting

as both division and projection. Both film and drawing work as a trace and Lavelle's home and the page are both a site. But Gannon has not used a pencil as her tool of inscription but, instead, in a similar manner to her film, she has cut through the surface. Random rectangular and triangular incisions litter the screen like a foreign landscape. These large environmental drawings cascade down the two storey drop, unfurling onto the gallery floor. They are produced on high quality paper and canvas covered with inks and oil paints. You can see the grain of the paper and the mark of the brush echoing the striations of the trees projected onto the other side of the gallery. Here, imperfect circles are cut from a mass of paper flowing down the expanse of the gallery walls. The scale is monumental and their physical presence is imposing. Like unwound scrolls, the downward pull of gravity upon the paper suggests movement.

As a structure 'Silver House' has softened into the landscape over time, the clean modernist lines faded. Temporality is projected differently in the mediums of film and drawing but nevertheless they are both processes of duration, inscriptions of process on fragile surfaces, the lines of the incisions jagged. Both Gannon's film and drawing are rooted in temporality and duration; by capturing the passing of time and its fragility they reveal the complexities that time and life produce.

Gemma Carroll is an art writer based in Cork.