

# Isabel Nolan –One Foot In The World

31.8. – 11.11.2018

Welcome: Holger Graab, chairman of the board

Introduction by Noor Mertens, director of Kunstverein Langenhagen followed by a conversation between Isabel Nolan and Noor Mertens

## Isabel Nolan – One Foot In The World

The new season in Kunstverein Langenhagen opens with a solo exhibition by artist Isabel Nolan (Dublin, 1974). One Foot In The World is the third in a sequence of exhibitions that previously took place at the Douglas Hyde Gallery in Dublin (Calling on Gravity, 2017) and the Grazer Kunstverein (Curling Up With Reality, 2018). In each the focus is on how the world is brought into meaning through human activity.

In One Foot In The World. Four Thoughts, (a text written for this occasion and published in our bulletin), the artist examines the habit of perceiving our environment and organising our experiences in hierarchies of lower and higher, up and down. This differentiation manifests itself not only in belief systems and their attendant symbolism (one example being the cathedral wherein height brings one closer to God and thus further away from one's physical, unworthy self) – but also in social biases. Our status, moods and cultural tastes are all expressed in terms of high or low. Nolan connects these tendencies directly to the simple fact of our physical uprightness which we connect to our capacity for goodness, divinity and reason. The desire to always elevate the human, to transcend our animal nature, cheat death and even resist gravity, runs through the technologies, stories and artworks passed from generation to generation.

In the exhibition, Nolan's appreciation of the 'low' plays out in a subtle way. Her work, which includes suspended and floor-based sculptures; paintings; photography and the aforementioned text, lifts the low and brings it literally and figuratively to another plane. Photographs portray both human and animal feet, the part of the body that is closest to the earth. Nolan depicts the ground itself too, in both embellished and neglected states. Decoration here reads as an attempt to elude earthly uncleanness and to deny we occupy the same ground as inhuman (and apparently spiritless) beings.

The exhibition title focuses as on feet, the part of the body which both anchors us to the world and keeps us upright and mobile. However, it refers also to our consciousness of death, knowledge of which seems to somehow drive us harder to circumvent this inevitability. In a text that was part of the exhibition Calling on Gravity Nolan writes about man's desire to transform unbound sensations into matter, to give them structure, a votive object, an artwork, or perhaps even an ritual, to affirm their validity. In contrast to this, desire in this body of work seems to be for intimacy, for contact with the world, with animals and other people. Grand abstraction is countered with a colourful tomb, handmade dust, a fallen non-functional chandelier and with portraits of three individuals who tried, in different ways, to love the world and people, and one who did not. An uncomplicated desire of the artist to somehow love a complicated world. In the pastel painted gallery spaces these elemental themes are addressed with an inquisitive approach and a certain characteristic lightness.

One Foot In The World takes place not only in the former bowling alley in which Kunstverein Langenhagen is located, but also in the former chapel in the Eichenpark, the city park of Langenhagen. This location

has previously served as a context for exhibitions as well. It seems appropriate to use this specific building in the Eichenpark, the location of a psychiatric institution since 1862, first only for children, then also for adults, a largely self-sufficient institution where the chapel served also as a mortuary. In the presentation in the chapel, links are woven confusing the high and low with works which take one's attention back always to ones surroundings. In the place where these unenviable people in all confinement were laid out and committed to the earth (and in the merciful hands of god), the distinction made between above and below, between privileged and pitiable, is now put into another perspective.

## Calendar

30.08. Opening Isabel Nolan – One Foot In The World

5 - 8 p.m.

16.09. Guided tour by Noor Mertens

3.30 – 4.30 p.m.

04.10. Nearby Professions

A format in which experts from thematically related professional fields speak about their work, which allows a different view on the works on show.

7 p.m.

19.10. Conversation between Georgina Jackson (Director Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin), Kate Strain (Director Grazer Kunstverein, Graz), artist

Isabel Nolan and Noor Mertens on the work of Isabel Nolan and the three exhibitions of their work, which took place successively in Dublin, Graz and Langenhagen.

11.11. Guided tour by Noor Mertens

15:30 – 16:30 p.m.

During opening hours there is always someone at the Kunstverein who is willing to tell you more about the exhibition. You can also make an appointment for a free guided tour. via email or telephone.

For each exhibition, workshops for children and teenagers are organized. If you are interested you can contact Christiane Oppermann and Philipp Valenta via [mail@kunstverein-langenhagen.de](mailto:mail@kunstverein-langenhagen.de).

Participation for the entire program is free.