

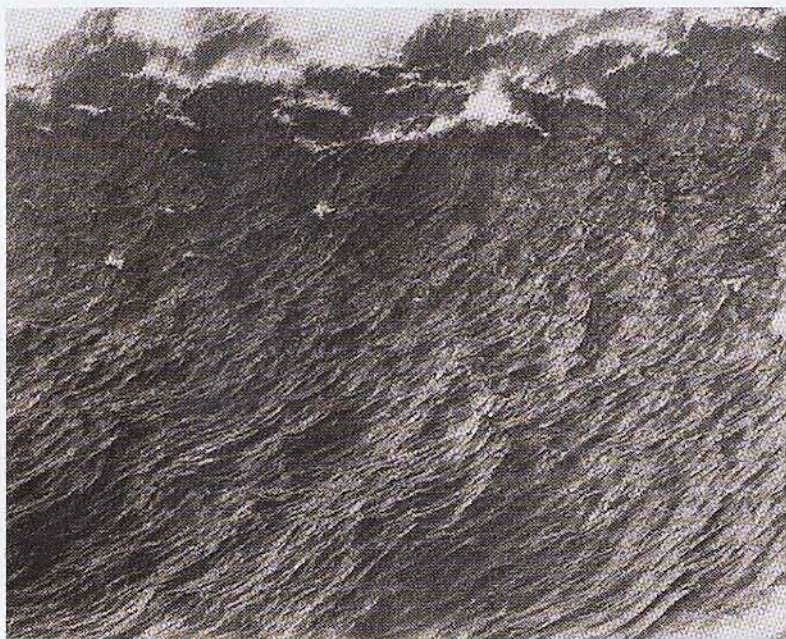


TRISHA DONNELLY
DUBLIN, IRELAND

Looking into the lofty main exhibition space from its upper landing entrance, viewers could easily assume that the door had been mistakenly left open during the installation process. The partially lit space and the seeming paucity of work make for a startling introduction. Originally conceived to coincide with Trisha Donnelly's 2007 exhibition at Modern Art Oxford, which investigated the sounds of the building, this project took off in a different direction [Douglas Hyde Gallery; August 1—September 18, 2008].

The three largest works evidence a confluence of natural elements. As the eyes catch sight of *Untitled*, 2008, a modestly sized video projection of a carnation emitting bolts of electricity, and *Black Wave*, 2002, a photograph of a massive ridge of water, the nose picks up the scent of cypress. Redirecting our gaze to our immediate vicinity, we detect another untitled work—a lengthy cluster of branches descending from a duct pipe near the ceiling to the floor below. Then, on the nearby wall behind us, we discover *The Vibration Station*, 2002, a bewildering snapshot of inverted organ pipes. While its shape suggests a canopy, little more is certain. Does it refer to an arbor, as implied by the proximity of the cypress, or to the landing on which we stand? The other works produce similar responses. *Black Wave*, for example, bears a solidity and stasis that defy its fluidity, while the fall of cypress branches intimates a cascade of water.

In the main exhibition space, we find several small drawings, another sculpture, and more little snapshots that have either been placed at the periphery of prime wall surfaces, tucked away under the landing or mounted in the dimly lit recesses of the lower level. The drawings fall between abstraction and figuration and exhibit a conceptual restlessness, not unlike doodles. One, a word picture, invites decipherment. The outcome may be an anagram. Others vaguely suggest architectural features, landforms or technical diagrams. Having



searched them out, we give them our attention, which they deflect elsewhere. We expect to take part in a conversation or see a pattern emerge, but find the works haltingly uncommunicative.

The sculpture nestled below the landing evokes the arrangement of things in a more literal manner. Single steel L-shaped legs support parallel blocks of mahogany, whose mirroring faces are disrupted by irregularly shaped hollows directly opposite each other. Crudely chiselled, these negative spaces imply a point of connection either destroyed or not yet realized. We lean forward to examine the indentations, comparing their ragged edges to the wood's grooved surfaces. We step between the pair, equating our height with their height, and compare the sculpture's characteristics with those of its setting. In a corner of the main space, a snapshot of a man looking out of a bay window has a similar effect. We feel firmly separated from the subject of the photo as the space between the seer and thing seen takes on an uncanny tangibility. Consequently, we zoom in on our surroundings, taking note of the direction in which we are looking, the relative scale of things, and the inherent contradictions between real space and the accompanying depiction.

Donnelly's rigorous installation subverts our expectations. It also leaves us guessing as to how her work should be read. Its seductive, yet enigmatic, presence resists verbal description. Whereas her exhibition at Modern Art Oxford dealt with the building's sounds, here the work's primary focus is the gallery's anatomy. The off-kilter placement, for example, draws our attention to the juxtaposition of exposed and whitewashed concrete or the space's various recesses and projections. The internal complexity and the fragmentary nature of the experience remain disconcerting.

—John Gayer