

Four Now

A joint exhibition from the collections of the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland

The collections of the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland were established with the aim of providing practical support for contemporary artists in the north and south of Ireland. These collections represent the shifting opinions, ideals and aspirations held by the changing purchasing committees over a roughly fifty year period in response to the current in Irish art. Consequently the strengths of these collections do not lie in their ability to present a linear survey of Irish twentieth-century art, but in the history they represent of contemporary responses to art production.

This commitment to artists and the collections' inherent relationship to contemporary practice find resonance in the curatorial approach taken in this exhibition. Four artists were invited to make individual selections from both collections informed by their positions as contributors to visual culture in Ireland. The four selectors Susan MacWilliam, Isabel Nolan, Dan Shippides and Joe Walker were invited to approach the collections from the perspective of their own practice - to select works they found relevant, engaging or simply intriguing. They were asked to make their selections from a position of justified subjectivity; to let their choices be led by the personal, anecdotal, imaginative and arbitrary. For some, these terms could be contentious in the context of an exhibition of the collections of two public institutions that normally emphasise their responsibility towards accountability, reason and objectivity; but Four Now suggests that maybe in this instance subjectivity can be celebrated. The exhibition also raises the wider question of how all collections are at least somewhat formed by personal beliefs and opinions.

Sarah Glennie, Curator

What is the significance of the contemporary artist's perspective in the selection process of this exhibition?

What is the role of a public art collection?

How do art collections influence the development of contemporary art?



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