

## Artwork of the Month

### Jo Kelley *Angel*, 1991

Oil on canvas  
122 x 107cm



The increase in global movement throughout the 20th century has created the loss of a sense of home for many people. Many of us share a desire to make tangible what is missing and absent. Much of Jo Kelley's childhood was spent moving house, as her father worked for the American military. The resulting sense of displacement dominates much of her work. One of the constants throughout Kelley's nomadic childhood, however, was the small number of objects she carried from house to house in her allotted packing box. Kelley used these objects to construct a narrative of belonging. Being at home had more to do with her attachment to these objects than being rooted to one singular place, and by extension, to one singular identity. In constructing various forms of diverse identities, Kelley was able to inhabit different geographical spaces with relative ease.

Over the past 10 years, Cork has undergone numerous economic, environmental, social and cultural changes. It has become a place of exile for the many new communities residing here. Part of my work as a Fellow in Curatorial Practice at the Glucksman Gallery involves the preparation and presentation of tours and talks on the UCC collection and exhibitions. Interaction with children from local

schools is where these cultural and social transformations in Cork society become most apparent.

When discussing *Angel* on a recent tour of the gallery, I asked a group of children if any of them shared experiences similar to those of Jo Kelley. To my surprise almost every child in the class began to recount with excitement the number of places they had lived or moved to and the type of objects they felt offered them a sense of belonging. Kelley's work opens up the possibility of re-imagining and re-inventing a narrative of belonging. The idea of home need not be tied down to a physical place filled with established scenes, symbols, and routines. Instead, it can be a type of betweenness. *Angel* is a visual representation of this state, where familiar objects in unfamiliar settings can provide a sense of comfort, belonging and hope.

*Angel* is included in a publication on the UCC Art Collection to be launched in September, which will be available to all schools in Munster free of charge.

*Ciara Healy, Glucksman Fellow in Curatorial Practice (2005-06)*