John Halpin (Born Cork 1964)

After Patinir, 1998

Computer-generated Lambda photoprint, 91 x 99 cm
Purchased at solo exhibition Landscape Allegories,
Crawford Gallery, 1998

At first glance the work appears to be an idyllic shot of the west of Ireland, an image often promoted to tourists. However, declares Halpin, 'pictures of paradise are boring, so dramatically it calls for some twisting and inverting.' These playful twists are evident in smaller details from the image, alongside which the photoprint was originally exhibited (These can be viewed on the artist’s website, www.johnhalpin.net). These depict, for example, a man walking his dog, who is in fact the artist Charles Tyrell, represented in the UCC Art Collection by three oil paintings. Another detail in the photoprint, relating to art practice, is the camper’s reading material, Leon Battista Alberti’s On Painting, a classic 15th century text on what constitutes a good painting. Halpin suggests that the landscape is an emanation of the thoughts of the tourist, who, as surrogate artist, conjures up the scene from his book. The still life in front of the tent is echoed in another detail of the house interior of rotting apples. Considered in the context of the history of art these decaying fruits could be seen as a memento mori, a symbol of mortality and a reminder of the ephemeral nature of life.

Nora Hickey, Curator of Education + Collections,
Lewis Glucksman Gallery

Campus Art continues its series on artworks with a focus on John Halpin’s photographic work, After Patinir.

With the exception of the Rocky Mountains, Halpin’s trips to the Beara Peninsula in West Cork provided the material for this constructed landscape. Halpin was interested in exploring what was digitally possible in picture-making and in creating complex narratives within a single picture. He selected 20 photographs that had been shot in similar conditions and merged them in the computer programme, Photoshop, to create one seamless image. Joachim Patinir (ca. 1480 – 1524), whose painting inspired the photoprint, was a Flemish landscape and religious painter. Halpin’s work refers to Saint Jerome in a Rocky Landscape ca. 1515 (National Gallery, London), in which there is a similar rocky mountain.