Michael Gurhy. *Childhood Fears, 2006*
Photographic print on aluminium

**Michael Gurhy** was the recipient of the 2006 UCC Purchase Prize, awarded at the Crawford College of Art and Design annual degree show. UCC purchased two photographic works, *Childhood Fears* from a series of the same name and a self-portrait titled *Sudden Silence*. *Childhood Fears* is very cinematographic in appearance, as though the artist had selected a still from Hitchcockian-style film footage in an attempt to capture a moment of tension and unease. This is precisely how Gurhy created the second work purchased by UCC, *Sudden Silence*, which is a still from one of his video works. Although this footage did become a work in its own right, it was originally intended solely as a means to enable the artist to select the still image which would become a self-portrait.

The Hitchcockian tone of the photograph *Childhood Fears* is reiterated by the inclusion of the crow, which is at the centre of the composition. The crow, often regarded as a messenger, symbolically invokes death, recalling dark childhood stories for the artist. The female model, whose vivid red hair contrasts with the blackness of the crow, descends to its level, looking the crow directly in the eye, as though perhaps to confront death itself.

The photograph was shot from inside the Glucksman, through a window looking out to the podium level, creating a voyeuristic relationship between the photographer and his model. The narrative elements of the photograph are encased by a strong linear composition, which frame the scene but also perhaps create a sense of entrapment. Gurhy was drawn to the austere, and what he regarded as masculine, quality of the materials of the Glucksman for the backdrop of his photograph, a quality he emphasised by enhancing the blue hues of the shot.

Gurhy is concerned with broad themes, those of life and death, fear and memories, relations and gender. Gurhy is currently undertaking a postgraduate degree in Fine Art in Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London and will feature in the Crawford Open 2007 exhibition in the Crawford Art Gallery from November 30th to February 8th 2008.

Text written by Nora Hickey following an interview with the artist.

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