

EAMON O'KANE

'Twentieth of April Sixteen Eighty Nine'

October 29 – January 22

Opening:

Thursday 28 October, 6pm

Artist Talk:

Friday 29 October, 12:30 pm



"On 20th of April 1689 King James passed thro' on his way from Mongevlin Castle to Strabane, after dining under a big sycamore tree in front of the house of John Keyes esq. at Cavanacor, to whom he gave protection, which afterwards saved this gentleman's house, when those of all the Protestant houses round him were burned. The old oak table on which the unfortunate monarch sat to dinner, and the antiquated china upon which the dinner was served are preserved as curiosities."

Excerpt from 'Derriana, Consisting of A History of the Siege of Londonderry and the Defence of Enniskillen in 1688 and 1689, with historical and biographical notes,' by Rev. John Graham (Londonderry [for the author] Wm. M'Corkell 1823).

"Twentieth of April Sixteen Eighty Nine" centres around the history of O'Kane's parents' house in Co. Donegal, and attempts to address and illustrate the overlapping histories of his family home and the siege of Derry by James II in 1689.

Eamon O'Kane's installation focuses on a pivotal period in the history of Ireland. The multi-layering of histories is key to O'Kane's work and espouses the idea of history being a highly contingent construct and thereby critiquing 'the artifice of representation'. The complexities inherent in the construction of history are teased out to form a subtle interrogation of the belief systems and political mind-sets subsequently formed in contemporary Ireland.

Crucial to the history-making is the symbol of a sycamore tree which James II lunched under on 'Twentieth of April Sixteen Eighty Nine' which subsequently fell in 1999 during a storm and the residues of history, myth and O'Kane's own art histories from which is created.

Re-enactment: Meal (diptych) and *Re-enactment: Hunt* are both set at once in the present-day New Forest, and also in late seventeenth century County Donegal. The meal film is a recreation of an actual event - a meal that King James II

enjoyed at the house of John Keyes, as the 'unfortunate monarch' was on his way to Derry to suppress an uprising against his rule.

As he and his army retreated the King ordered everything on his route to be burnt, saving only Keyes' house at Cavanacor, the very house bought by O'Kane's parents in 1974, the year the artist was born.

Eamon O'Kane 'Re-enactment: Hunt' © the artist/ArtsWay



The exhibition demonstrates the artist's skill and understanding of a wide range of media including video re-enactments, painting, performative drawings, and sculpture. *Re-enactment: Curiosities* displayed in a traditional 'salon-style' hang, shows documentary evidence to support the momentary relationship of James II with Cavanacor House. However, the curiosities are not all what they first appear. Mixing original artifacts with copies and replicas O'Kane probes the construction of histories.

The furniture featured in the meal film, and used as props by authentic seventeenth century re-enactors from the Earl of Essex Regiment of Foote, was constructed from wood from the very sycamore tree under which James II had his historic meal, adding an aura of authenticity and pathos to this exhibition.

Eamon O'Kane has exhibited widely including solo shows at ArtSway, New Forest, Economist Plaza, London, and Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco and Rare Gallery, New York. In 2006 he was short-listed for the AIB Prize and received a Pollock Krasner foundation grant. He was short-listed for the Jerwood Drawing Prize in London in 2007. O'Kane lives and works in Odense, Denmark and Co. Donegal, Ireland.

Open Hours: Monday-Saturday: 10:00-17:00, Thursday – 20:00
(Closed Bank Holidays & Sunday)
Admission Free

Crawford Art Gallery, Emmet Place, Cork, Ireland
www.crawfordartgallery.ie

