



Still from *Expulsion* © the artist

**Press Release** 02/09/20

***Expulsion***

**Kevin Gaffney**

**11 September – 6 December 2020**

Exhibiting in Cork for the first time, artist-filmmaker Kevin Gaffney premieres *Expulsion*.

Shot in part at Crawford Art Gallery, *Expulsion* is a 30 minute film written and directed by Kevin Gaffney. The Film moves between a fictional Queer State, archival footage of queer activists, a guided meditation to expunge internalised homophobia/transphobia, and nocturnal rituals. As the ideals of queerness in the state are confronted with the respectability politics of homonormativity and capitalism, the viewer is asked to reconsider each characters' motivations as they progress through ethically ambiguous scenes. 'Expulsion' incorporates archival footage of Joan Jett Blakk, the drag persona of Terence Smith, who ran for mayor of Chicago in 1991 and for president in the USA in 1992 on the ticket of the Queer Nation party.

'Expulsion' navigates through queer history, from the witchcraft trials and the inquisition, to current debates around homonormativity and the co-opting of queerness by capitalism. The footage of Joan Jett Blakk's rallies and speeches are full of hope and determination to imagine a better world for queer people, one which fails to fully materialise as the fictional queer state descends into bureaucracy.

Another 3 minute video work, *Retelling: Dr. James Miranda Barry and John Joseph Danson*, made in conjunction with *Expulsion* and filmed on location in the Crawford Art Gallery in response to the museum's collection will also be premiered in the exhibition.

James Barry (1741 – 1806) was an artist born in Cork, the sale of some of his paintings supported the studies of James Barry's nephew, Dr James Barry. Dr James Barry went on to become a surgeon and the fourth doctor to successfully accomplish a C-section with both the mother and child surviving. (Haefele-Thomas, 2019). Dr James Barry was assigned female at birth but lived his entire adult life as a man. While the terminology didn't exist at the time, today we would recognise him as being trans. About Dr James Barry, Kevin says: "He is written about as if he was a woman who masqueraded as a man in order to achieve an education and career that was not accessible for women at the time. However, being inaccurately hailed as "Britain's first female physician" ignores his transgender identity. Instead, he was the first trans physician."

The video work also critiques the institutional erasure of black historical figures. Dr James Barry's servant, John Joseph Danson, is prominent in one of only two known photos of Barry yet is often referred to only as 'black John' in writings about Barry.

The exhibition will also feature *Far from the Reach of the Sun* – a film set in a near-future where a government-approved drug can alter your sexuality; reflecting on links between gay conversion therapy, the role of organized religion in Western society and internalized homophobia and *dusting* – in which a monotonous domestic task, becomes the basis of a grotesque display of desire as the character licks years of dust and dirt off the windows of an abandoned building.

"As a natural storyteller, albeit with surreal leanings, Gaffney leaves the viewer with little sense of whether they are witnessing a dystopian or utopian view of the past, present or indeed the future." Kathleen Soriano, in the exhibition text for *Unseen by My Open Eye*, 2017

*Expulsion* will be the second exhibition in this new artist-directed yearly programme 'Platform', which aims to support artists to pursue their current research interests and connect with audiences through a collaboration with the Crawford Art Gallery, its site, collection and location. The programme aims to platform the development of an artist's career and its often intrinsic relationship with the institution.

## **ENDS**

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## **More about the artist**

[Kevin Gaffney](#) is an artist filmmaker based in Belfast. He graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2011 with an MA Photography and Moving Image, and was awarded the first Sky Academy Arts Scholarship for an Irish artist in 2015. His work is part of the Irish Museum of Modern Art's collection and a monograph of his work, *Unseen By My Open*

Eyes, was published in 2017. Expulsion was created as the practical component of Kevin's PhD research project, Resisting Homonormativity in Queer Filmmaking Practice, in the cinematic arts department at Ulster University, and was supported by and filmed on location at the Crawford Art Gallery.

His work is part of the Irish Museum of Modern Art and the Arts Council of Ireland's collections and has been shown in exhibitions and film festivals internationally, including: Cork Film Festival (2016 & 2018); European Media Art Festival (Germany, 2016); the 10th Imagine Science Film Festival (New York, 2017); and the Korean Queer Film Festival (2018). Solo exhibitions include: CAI02 Contemporary Art Institute (Japan, 2014 & 2018); Millennium Court Arts Centre (Northern Ireland, 2017); Block 336 curated by Kathleen Soriano (London, 2017); and Ormston House (as part of EVA's Public Programme, 2018).

### **More about Crawford Art Gallery**

Crawford Art Gallery is an Irish national cultural institution, dedicated to contemporary and historic visual art, located in a significant heritage building in the heart of Cork city. Home to a collection of national importance, it tells a compelling story of Cork and Ireland over the last three centuries, while also offering a vibrant and dynamic programme of temporary exhibitions.

Originally built in 1724 as the city's Customs House, the Gallery is home to the famous Canova Casts, gifted to Cork two centuries ago. Featured in the gallery's collection of 4,000 objects are well-known and much-loved works by Irish artists James Barry, Harry Clarke, Mainie Jellett, Seán Keating, Daniel Maclise, Norah McGuinness, Edith Somerville, and Jack B. Yeats, as well as contemporary artists Gerard Byrne, Maud Cotter, Dorothy Cross, Eilis O'Connell, and Hughie O'Donoghue.

An oasis of calm and tranquillity, Crawford Art Gallery is open seven days a week, free to enter, and a must-see for locals and tourists alike. Welcoming over 265,000 visitors annually, the Gallery boasts an award-winning Café in stunning surroundings, serving fresh local produce for which Cork is famous.

#### Opening Hours

Monday–Saturday 10.00am–5.00pm

Late opening Thursdays until 8.00pm

Sundays and Bank Holidays

Gallery: 11am - 4pm

Entry Free



An Roinn  
Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta  
Department of  
Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht