

Patrick Graham

Born in Mullingar, County Westmeath, in 1943, Graham lives and works in Dublin. He attended the National College of Art and Design (1959-1963), and was elected as a member of Aosdána in 1986. Long considered Ireland's finest draughtsman and a genuine 'artist's artist', these much abused terms - though undoubtedly apt in relation to Graham - do not capture the truly powerful nature of his work. Graham's paintings and drawings are a magnificent and unique balancing act of strength and fragility and amongst the most significant contributions to the Irish arts in recent decades.

His work is found in important public and private collections around the world, and he exhibits with Jack Rutberg Fine Arts, Los Angeles and Hillsboro Fine Art, Dublin. His work has also been the subject of exhibitions and symposia internationally, including the National Gallery of Ireland; the Berkeley Art Museum, USA; Irish Museum of Modern Art; Trinity College, Dublin; Walker Art Gallery, England; Hokkaido Museum, Japan; University of Michigan, USA; Northeastern University, USA and Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

"Patrick Graham's paintings are masterpieces...on a grand physical, emotional and intellectual scale...they are among the most complicated, salient reflections on modern existence that have been made in the last decade."

Donald Kuspit

Michael Warren

Born in Dublin in 1950, Michael Warren lives and works in County Wexford. He completed his studies at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Milano, Italy. Warren works in bronze, timber, stone, steel and concrete. An artisan's love of material and technique is combined with a keen comprehension of philosophy. He has always stripped things to the essential, in the simplest form revealing enormous potency. He has created some of the most challenging public sculpture of the last decades,



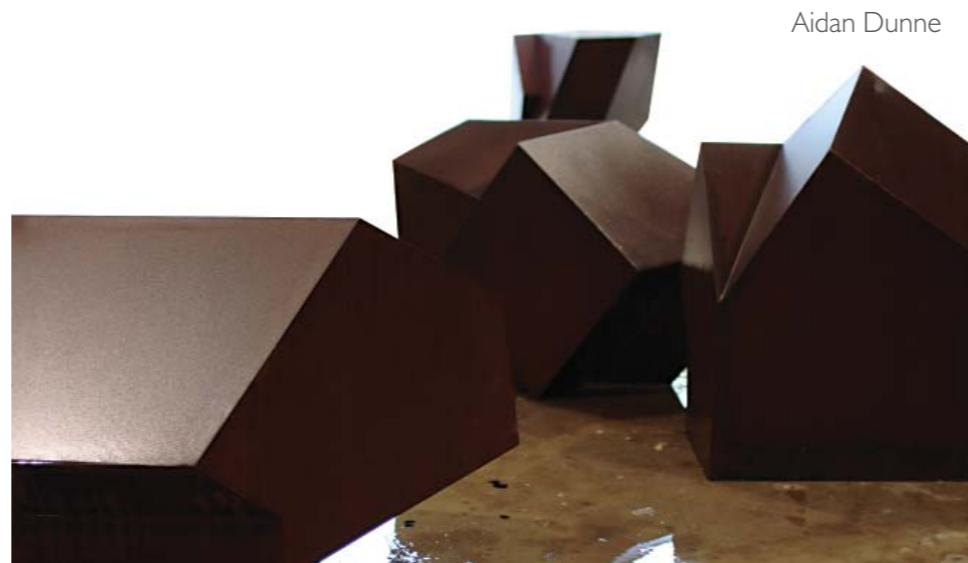
Patrick Graham, *Lacken Study I*
oil on canvas, 2008
120 x 120 cm

his commitment and achievement has been recognised the world over. Warren has made large-scale sculptures in Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Spain, Portugal, Andorra, France, the French West Indies, the United States of America, Ecuador, England and Ireland.

In 2008, Warren has made two site-specific sculptures in Marrakech, Morocco; his stainless steel homage to Eileen Gray, *M-7 23*, was exhibited at EXPO 08, Zaragoza, Spain; the bronze sculpture *Go Deo, homage to Samuel Beckett* was unveiled this summer at TRIARC, Trinity College, Dublin; a 4.5 metre bronze sculpture has recently been erected at Warrington Place, Dublin. Concurrent with the exhibition at Hillsboro Fine Art, his sculpture is showing at Galerie Der Spiegel in Cologne, and at CDAN in Huesca, Spain.

"There is always a metaphysical preoccupation at its heart... In Warren's basic language of form, the twin axes, horizontal and vertical, and physical forces and pressures, are the stage on which the drama of being is played out. A striving, upward momentum, a pull to earth, a tearing apart and a concentrated though tenuous presence: all figure in pieces that refer to being and embodiment in tragic terms of struggle and redemption."

Aidan Dunne



Michael Warren, *So it is (if you think so)*
patinated steel, 2008
installation detail



Michael Warren, *So it is (if you think so)*
machined bronze, 2008



Patrick Graham, *Lacken Study 2*
oil on canvas, 2008
120 x 120 cm

Footfalls

Patrick Graham
Michael Warren



Thursday October 30th, 6 – 8.00 PM
Exhibition continues until November 22nd 2008

Hillsboro Fine Art
20th Century & Contemporary Art

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Footfalls

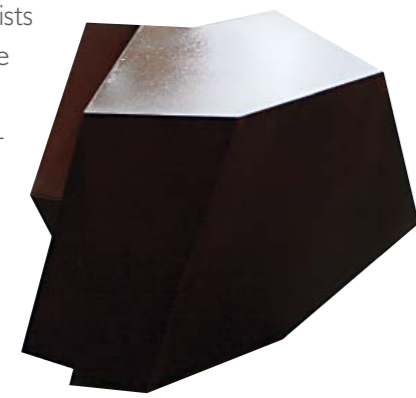
*...the motion alone is not enough, I must hear the feet,
however faint they fall...*

Samuel Beckett

Patrick Graham and Michael Warren are quite simply two of the most important artists born in Ireland; this in itself might be a good enough reason to put them in an exhibition together, but of course there is a more significant connection in the works of art they make.

In what may often appear random references to philosophy, art history, religion, literature and mythology, Graham and Warren convey a strong sense that their inclusion is considered, but the articulation of meaning and connection with what is in front of the viewer often remains enigmatic. Frequently these references and allusions are in themselves unfamiliar to many, but more tellingly perhaps is the highly personal nature of their use, which can even appear paradoxical. This in part stems from the fact that the dialogue or conversation taking place is that of the artist with himself. Looking back across the body of work created by both of these artists, we can identify a consistency of thought and a coherent if sometimes latent relationship in works that may appear at one level different to each other.

With artists of this stature, comparison with other artists is inevitable if not always helpful (interestingly both cite the influence of Della Francesca). Graham has been compared to Kiefer, Guston and others; the Graham-Kiefer comparison is an interesting one, and for me one in which Graham comes off the better. Yes they both have dealt with areas of much sensitivity and weight in their paintings, routinely introducing a three-dimensional dynamic in terms of materials employed. Nevertheless, Kiefer's approach is above all political and, for me, obvious and narrow. Graham's is philosophical, his thoughts run much deeper, his concerns universal.



Michael Warren, *So it is (if you think so)*
patinated steel, 2008
installation detail

Similarly, Warren is frequently mentioned alongside Tony Smith, Visser, Serra, Venet and others, but it is in Robert Motherwell's *In Memoriam* essay for Tony Smith that a line appears that could just as easily be applied to Michael Warren: "The monumental 'simplicity' of his sculpture is the reduction to essences of a complex mind and a primordially vital one". While utilising a concise vocabulary, on close examination, Warren somehow escapes the neutral coldness and dogma of minimalism. Works such as the sublime *Angel Negro*, with its subtle shoulder, that at first appear non-figurative are firmly rooted in the figurative.

Graham and Warren are both Irish born and much ink has been spent on questions of identity and the 'Irishness' of works created by Irish artists and writers; it is an all too easy trap to fall into. Yes of course Graham's 'midlands grey' of his Mullingar childhood is there for all to see, in both artists too the strong influence of our country's history under religious domination. But like Joyce, Beckett and other great artists we have produced, Graham and Warren's work is honest, uncompromising - unwilling to dodge the difficult questions that trouble the human condition; they have polished up Joyce's infamous looking glass to examine, re-examine and excavate. This is becoming rare in a world increasingly more interested in the immediate, the easy.

Graham's poignant, emotionally-charged paintings and drawings, where nothing is taboo, resonate, with symbols, lyrical fragments and phrases sprung from a unique historical consciousness, exploring personal and universal histories.

"The only knowledge, wit or wisdom I have for now is that my paintings come from silence and a world of abandonment. In another world there is this wrestling and restless engagement with things such as aesthetics and truth in which I can sometimes aggressively articulate my experiences and carve them in stone as though unbreakable and, at the next turn, smash these tablets of truth with little regard for what, yesterday, was the law of belief. In this world of silence, no truth exists; there is the abandonment of power that truth manifestly becomes in that other world of dogma, ideology and aesthetic certainty. The silence becomes the painting, the painting comes from silence. It is the moment when



Patrick Graham, *At Lacken*

oil on canvas (diptych), 2008, 185 x 342 cm

painting is no longer an act of doing or making but of receiving. There is no ego shape here, no facilitative reply to aesthetic notions, whether historical or contemporary, there is only that desperate faith of the abandoned."

The virtuosity of Graham as a draughtsman has never been in doubt, even though it is clear in many works that he is holding back, revealing to us the vital essence rather than the superficial beauty, out of the conviction no doubt that this is the more honest journey - the essential over the seductive. These works, battlefields of a sort, remain beautiful. His surfaces aptly described by Roberta Lord as "though the canvas is skin and the image is bleeding into its delicate network like stigmata, or a violent bruise".

In the magnificent *At Lacken*, a Mayo painting created for this exhibition, shown for the first time here, and also *Collateral Series (Wreath)* from a couple of years ago

that hangs opposite it, we have two contemporary masterpieces. Though inhabited by words and references, some more explicit than others, influencing outside perception of the work, these function merely as points of engagement and possible entry. Powerful, violently beautiful and in a strange way, seductive, the paintings are essentially non-narrative and non-representational. Landscape as a starting point, a vehicle, alive and at war.

Life as well as loss is painted here, though all is on the point of disappearing. Raw is a much abused term in art writings, but here it is appropriate for a number of reasons. Blood red pulses through the linen, all materials reflecting the physical process of their arrival at this point, paint stripped back to the skin-like canvas, drawings torn - the creator's physical presence. Evidence of the painting's history is formed in the layers; like Heaney's bog poems, surfaces resurface. We are linked to the work we are looking at, becoming part of the physical experience of engagement.

Warren too has created a very special work for this exhibition, *So it is (if you think so)*. Ryunosuke Akutagawa's short story *Rashomon* (which inspired the 1951 film of the same name by Kurosawa) explores the theme of unreliability and describes three witnessed accounts of a murder, no one account exactly matching the others.

This 'Rashomon effect', the effect of the subjectivity of perception on recollection, by which observers of an event are able to produce substantially different but equally plausible accounts of it, was explored by American sculptor Charles Ginnever. *Rashomon*, his large open-formed sculpture in a number of parts was sited across a mountainside in California. Concerned with the subjectivity of vision (perception), Ginnever found that by shifting exactly the same sculpture onto differing planes as base, it appeared as though he had potentially made as many as 15 entirely unique sculptures.

Warren's *So it is (if you think so)* is named after Pirandello's theatrical masterpiece. [As an art student at the Brera in Milan, Warren saw almost all of Pirandello's plays.] Like Ginnever's *Rashomon*, Warren's installation, *So it is (if you think so)*, derives from the same single unit form that, rotated, seems to conjure up totally differing configurations. This new sculpture consists of five steel, rock-like elements that are randomly placed through the gallery. Thus creating a spacial expansion beyond the immediate field of occupancy, elements which are part of the continuing space rather than self-contained objects.



Michael Warren, *M-7 23*
stainless steel, 2008
75 x 1425 x 1425 cm

This new piece follows another multi-part work, *M-7 23*, commissioned for EXPO 08 ZARAGOZA and presently on exhibition at the Rafael Moneo designed CDAN Foundation at Huesca, in north-west Spain. These recent works represent a new line of inquiry for Warren. Not interested in the optical tricks of perception, Warren is drawn to paradox and, above all, the senses of infinite expansion and diversity that only an eye ever-alert to chance or 'accident' can accomplish. More connected to Eastern philosophies of art, there is a characteristic hallmark use of 'controlled chance' in the work of both Warren and Graham and in this nothing has changed. Warren's charred sycamore *Stele* now cast in bronze, the torn fragments and scored surfaces of Graham's diggings.

Exhibiting the works of these two truly exceptional, articulate (though incredibly humble) artists side-by-side has been a tremendous experience. Ever since Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel* (1913), through to the 1960s of Raushenberg, Warhol and others, to Koons and more recently Hirst, questions have reverberated around the

art world as to the place of the 'emotional' or hand of the artist, yet even that master of the mechanical, Lichtenstein, could not help examining art as an emotionally expressive activity, albeit ironically, in his *I Know How You Must Feel Brad* (1963). Yes, in spite of the much invoked death of author myth (i.e. of the artistic subject), there is no doubt that we have seen for a significant time the return of the personal. This is not to suggest that these two artists resemble the popular neo-expressionists (where all too much seems calculated, part of a dialogue with the art world, not the real world), rather Graham and Warren find the potential for a reflective self-definition of the artist's personality. As Gerard Xuriguera has written of Warren's sculpture, it possesses "a spiritual charge which jumbles rigour and controlled chance to unleash a pacified silence reminiscent of a Haiku poem". Fittingly perhaps for two such modest men, it is silence that unites them.

John Daly