ARE WE THERE YET?

Moira Tierney, 2010
16mm, 10 min, colour.
Music by Macdara Smith & the Bahh Band

ARTIST STATEMENT :

When I arrived up in Manorhamilton to start the workshops, it was with great delight that I discovered the irrelevance of the border to the participating children; as one of their teachers put it Sure we don't use those words any more; I've a 20 year old who doesn't remember what the troubles were like; there's no border any more ... and sure enough, driving backwards and forwards between Leitrim and Fermanagh, there was no way of telling at which point the mysterious line had been passed; even my phone was undecided as to when exactly to welcome me to the UK. It was on one such trip that the footage was shot - an afternoon in January, with one of the celebrated local mists hanging heavy on the hills and the road disappearing into itself around every bend.

Still from *Are We There Yet?*   Still from *Are We There Yet?*

When the film came back from the lab, there was something intriguing about the developed footage - enough to provoke me to blow it up to 16mm, with a view to making a loop installation. The optic printer broke down, repeatedly. It stuttered, it jumped, it stuck; I rewound, started again, reloaded ... In the end I kept it all in - the jumps and the flares as well as the conventionally well-behaved footage; for me it represents the apparent paradox of the border and the struggle one faces when attempting to describe something that slippery - landscape? political imposition? colonial hangover? to be avoided in polite conversation? fact of fiction? comedy, tragedy or farce? to which the only answer I could find is another question: Are We There Yet?

INSTALLATION :

The 16mm loop was installed in a darkened room, with the projector and looper on a plinth, projecting onto a translucent plexiglass screen hung from the ceiling. The 16mm loop lasts ten minutes; it was accompanied by a 30 minute looping audio file, so that the film loop had three alternating soundtracks: the first was composed and recorded for the film by Irish artist Macdara Smith (trumpet); the second track is silence; the third is an instrumental composition by the Bahh Band, an Irish-Indian fusion group, courtesy of Brian Fleming. I was interested in the parallax effect in terms of both sound and image; the translucence of the plexiglass screen allowed the film to be seen from both sides and facilitated audience interference (if they stepped between projector and screen). The alternating soundtracks provoked different interpretations of the image.
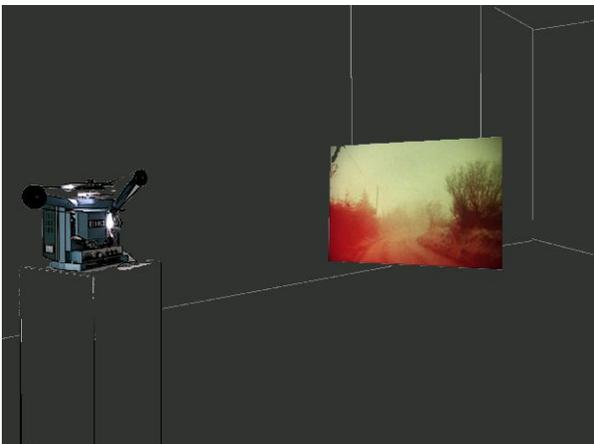
Installation plan

Installation plan

The repetitive drive along narrow border roads is reminiscent of the arcade games to be found in all Irish towns, large and small, during the 80s and 90s; that contemplative cruising is, however, interrupted by the optic printing glitches and the end of reel flares, as well as by the symmetrical reflections of the static lake shots. The film is part caoineadh (a form of elegy or lament, particular to early Irish poetry), part optimistic salute to the ambiguities of the border, circa Spring 2010. Since the film was shot, the Brexit vote in the U.K. has considerably increased the ambiguities of the situation.

A series of 32 photographs, taken while crossing the border, on the same day as the 16mm footage, were exhibited in a gallery adjacent to the looping film.

LINKS: 10 minute version (low quality telecine) of Are We There Yet?
             https://vimeo.com/47522898 (password: granuaile)

             32 photographs from the Leitrim-Fermanagh border
             http://moiratierney.net/border.htm

The film was commissioned by the Leitrim Sculpture Centre, in Manorhamilton, County Leitrim, as part of an initiative of the Peace III Programme (full title: EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland), which was funded by the European Union, with further national contributions through its Structural Funds programme. The programme covered the period 2007-2013.

Priorities were: To build positive relations at the local level
                     To acknowledge the past
                     To create shared public spaces
                     To develop key institutional capacity for a shared society

Following on from the PEACE I and II Programmes, PEACE III had a renewed emphasis on reconciliation; it also had a focus on cross-border initiatives. Community and voluntary groups accessed PEACE III Programme funding in a new way, with Local Councils in Northern Ireland playing a more strategic role, along with the six County Councils in the border region of the Republic of Ireland. PEACE III was committed to a "grass roots up" approach to the development of projects, which addressed shared issues and concerns. The eligible area for the PEACE III Programme was comprised of the North of Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland (Counties Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim, Sligo and Donegal).

As part of the PEACE III Programme, the Leitrim Sculpture Centre in Manorhamilton, County Leitrim, commissioned four Irish artists to participate in a Cross Border Arts Project, in collaboration with ten schools from Counties Leitrim and Fermanagh. The project explored the diversity of the border landscape in terms of the mutual influences and interactions of its cultural and physical geographies. Each artist was asked to create a personal response to the Irish border. The artists were were also assigned two schools each, where they carried out a series of workshops appropriate to their respective practices.

The resulting new work:
        End Times by Andrew Dodds
        Mapping Flight by Seoidín O'Sullivan
        Border Lines and Drawing Music by Diane Henshaw
        Are We There Yet? by Moira Tierney
along with the outcomes of the children's workshops, was featured in an exhibition entitled FIELDS OF VISION at the Leitrim Sculpture Centre.

LINK: http://www.leitrimsculpturecentre.ie/programme/exhibitions/2010/exb_fields_of_vision.html

Excerpts from the series *32 photographs from the Leitrim-Fermanagh border*