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Beyond the country - Perspectives of the land in historic and contemporary art

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Beyond the country has just opened in UCC's Glucksman Gallery. This exhibition presents historic and contemporary artistic representations of the land.

While 'land' is typically described in rural terms, often in opposition to the city or urban space, this exhibition challenges that division by presenting perspectives that dissolve any clear separation between the two.

How does landscape relate to land? Do they refer to the same thing? How can representations of the land or the countryside carry positive and/or negative implications? Juxtaposing 19th and early 20th century paintings with contemporary art, the exhibition Beyond the country examines different ideas of the land and presents new ways of approaching its visual codes.

Landscape does not simply exist. Landscape has always been an idea: a construction in which natural elements such as mountains, rivers and valleys are perceived as a totality, which can then be represented or described. As such landscape is not a natural feature of the land, but a man-made way of visually organising the natural world. A typical representation of the land is a linear perspective of an elevated view on a rural area, a mode of depiction that still dominates everyday imaginations of the land.

In the literary and visual arts, landscape has always been influenced by specific ideas or interpretations. Cultivated landscapes often invoked ideas of ownership of the land. From the 18th century the awe-inspiring forces of nature were regarded as sublime and the representation of landscape was considered as a mirror of the emotional state of the person found within it.

The contemporary practices selected for Beyond the country search for new artistic means to express ideas of the land. These artists rarely present straight forward depictions of the countryside. For example, landscape is often connected to personal experiences and memories with some contemporary imagery deliberately evoking the recollection of places experienced, perhaps on travels or during childhood. Other artists test the codes of landscape by introducing urban aspects such as motorways or social housing blocks into otherwise rural scenes.

The word land has so many connotations, as much as there are any number of viewpoints for any one scene. Beyond the country invites you to consider different ways of interpreting landscape and to reflect on the imaginative possibilities of representing the land.

Participating artists:

Bas Jan Ader, John Bock, Stephen Brandes, Nina Canell, Hugh Charde, Adam Chodzko, David Claerbout, Clodagh Emoe, Patrick Feehan, Cyprien Gaillard, Marine Hugonnier, Paul Henry, James Ireland, Sven Johne, Joseph Malachy Kavanagh, William Magrath, Dara McGrath, Frank McKelvey, David Muirhead, William Mulready, Dermod O'Brien, Olaf Quantius, Rachel Reupke, Xavier Ribas, Daniel Roth, George Russell, Walter Westley Russell, Johan Thurfjell, Richard T Walker, Richard Wilson.

The exhibition is curated by René Zechlin and Matt Packer and runs until February 3rd 2008.

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