

Artist Statement

My work highlights the interaction of bodies with the materiality of their surroundings and investigates the emancipatory potential of presence and awareness in the execution of everyday repetitions and encounters. I am interested in the minutiae and the ornateness of habitual movement.

My process is grounded in the production of texts which focus on corporeal, visceral memory by examining personal experiences (fictional, real or in-between) as prisms through which to investigate claims the work is making about the dominance of mind over body in a dualistic understanding of agency, the mutability of contemporary masculinities and the role of language, literature and myth in the formation of language and gender.

Distant, half forgotten events, dreams and hallucinations are elevated as a means by which to interrogate crucial moments at which subjectivities are formed. My video, performance, interactive installations and audio work together form an eclectic, live and temporal form of publication for the texts on which the work is founded.

My writing is complimented by a daily practice of observational notation by drawing, video log and audio recordings which together form a daily patchwork of gestures and turns-of-phrase, which are the materials I work with. A diminishing French exit, a flick of the wrist, or a wince, become the kernels from which a work is built.

My performances use a sparse evocation of scene and portrayal of character to embody a number of contrapuntal behaviours, voices and manners of speech. The technologies of theatre, stripped down and robbed of their stylisation, are appropriated and employed. Quasi-tragic tableaux are offset by the tropes of absurd and slapstick comedy. Sculptures become props and characters become subordinate to sets. Humour is commissioned as a smuggler of meaning.

My approach to video is textural first and textual or representational second. Every element of the videos is diegetic in that there is no post-production; every effect produced is arrived at in the filming process. I try to approach montage in an intuitive, painterly way by filming through translucent filters and diffusers like panes of glass, plastic and screens which soften the contours of what is represented and allow more formal decisions about colour, quality of line, pace and rhythm to come to the fore.

My process usually involves an initial performance for the camera, which is then abstracted and rendered oneiric by a repeated remediation of digital images. These are usually accompanied by a voiceover. My audio and video installations attempt to re-access real and imagined memories and dreams, evoking a hallucinatory, altered state.

Though each of the videos focuses on a very different subject or atmosphere, I would say that they are about what it means and feels like to move through and interact with familiar environments, and the uncanny feeling of being absent in, or in front of, your own body as you carry out rote tasks. They are about the joy I find in the way in which people learn and then individualise habitual acts into ornate performances, and the way in which character is conveyed by the subtlety of these messages. Each is definitely concerned with physical constraint and balance, uncertainty and hesitation within a performance of a particular kind of effete masculinity. The choice of the male protagonist is one enforced by the particularity of my own experience and the qualities of the performing body which I use.

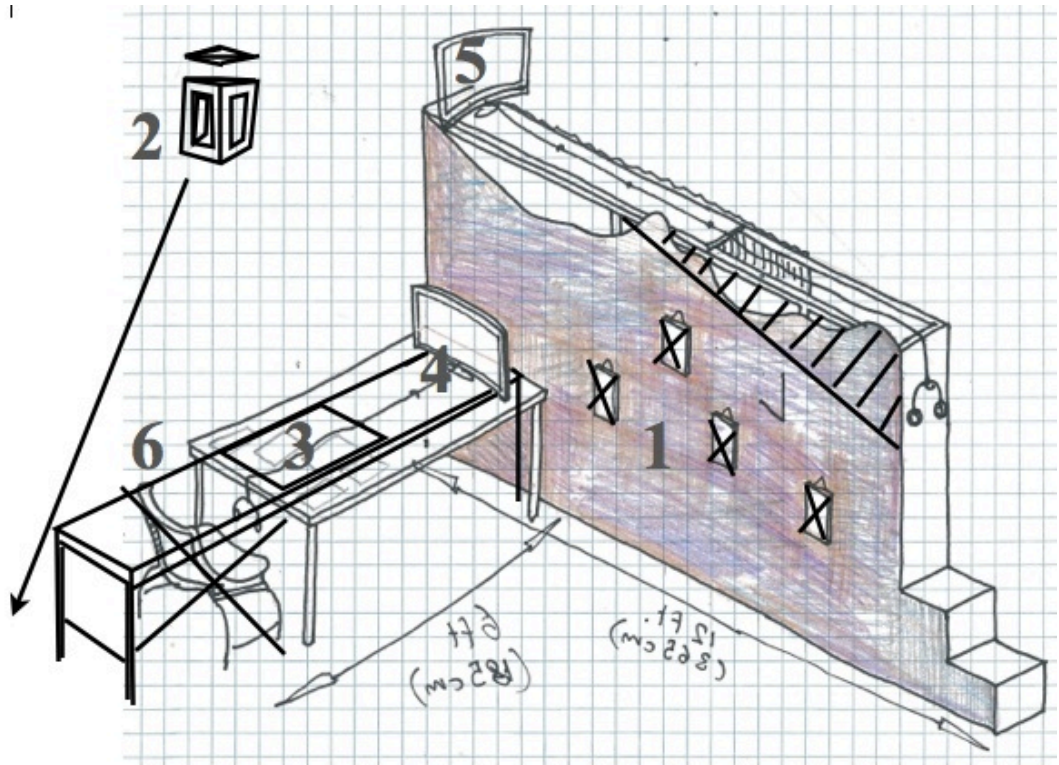
My installations attempt to draw attention to the act of viewing and the distance between the audience and the object that is being viewed. The specific shapes and colours that pervade the work have been arrived at through a desire to find some counterpoint to the soft, introverted tenderness of the video work. I have found a means of construction which is bold, hard edged and brash while retaining a sensuous eccentricity. This is a middle-ground which all of my work is concerned with; the points and lines at which performances of masculinity and femininity meet. The posturing and exhibitionism of the peacock.

My work together forms an autobiographical archaeology that questions the significance of past events and the arbitrariness of possible futures. Contained within are references to, and a reappraisal of, the patriarchal literary canon, whose characters and myths have contributed to the construction of the subjectivity that I must inhabit and therefore, feel compelled to question.

Separatist Structures

three monitor video installation at TENT, Rotterdam.
Timber, birch and MDF constructions, conte murals, HD videos and collages.





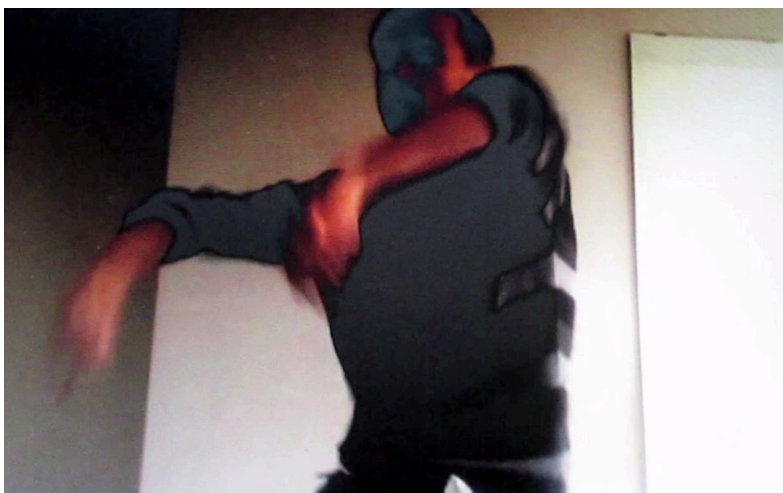
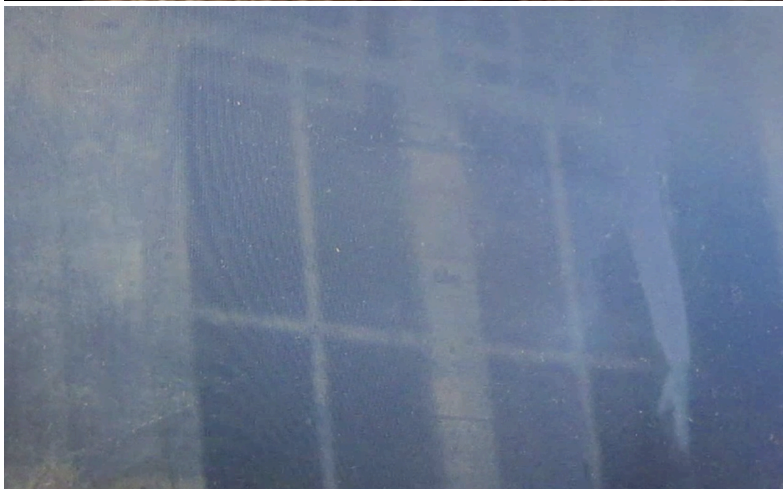
- 1 - *Magic Hour* (conté mural)
- 2 - *Lozengé I* (stool)
- 3 - *Illumination III* (drawing)
- 4 - *Study for an Unsized Canvas - Working Habits & Fluctuations* (HD Video - Duration 22min)
- 5 - *Tears of Joy - Dreams & Nightmares* (HD Video - Duration - 9 min)
- 6 - *A Healthy Distance* (desk)

Tears of Joy - Dreams & Nightmares

HD Video installed on top of *Separatist Structures*
Full duration - 9min, excerpt 3.30min

This is the earliest video in the series.
The narrator uses a succession of interconnected dreams to discuss his persistent difficulties deciding what to wear, and describes his inexplicable feeling of being under constant surveillance from an unknown eye. The performer flirts with the voyeur and the camera, imagined or real.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raBdQqGk1Pk>

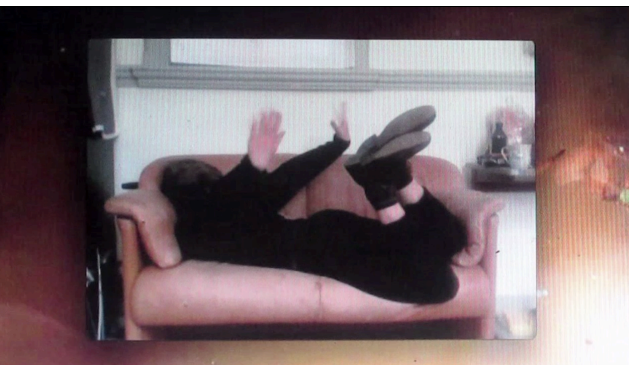
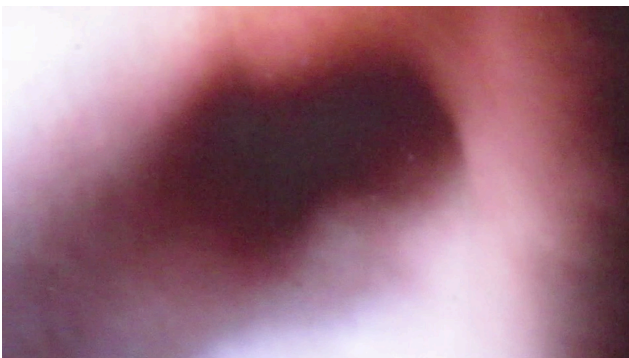


Study for an Unsized Canvas - Working Habits & Fluctuations

HD Video installed on elongated desk in front of structure
Full duration 22min, excerpt 3min

This, the final video in the series, frames a question about what constitutes artistic rigour in a discussion about a number of famous painters' practices. Eventually the narrator begins to recount a childhood memory of physical trauma, and begins to talk about Chuck Close overcoming a seizure and paralysis and continuing to produce work.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAO4vUiarLg&feature=youtu.be>



Troutmask Revisited - Domestic Humours

HD Video installed on bare backside of structure
Full duration 11min, Excerpt 3min

This video is without narration. It is structured around a makeshift, 360 degree dance podium and stage which the performer has erected in his home. The performer dances and assumes poses as he listens to Schubert's *Die Forelle* (The Trout) and replicates the movements of a fish swimming upstream.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYZpHRVe5UE&feature=youtu.be>



The Apparatus I, II & III

A series of semi-scripted / semi-improvised performance works produced for *Foaming at the Mouth 5* (Dublin 08/15), *First Cuts* (Rotterdam, 04/16) and *Assemble Relatives* (Rotterdam, 07/16).

The Apparatus III - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvXLAjAYNkM&feature=youtu.be>



The Apparatus II - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4ScM9QZHxo&feature=youtu.be>
The Apparatus I - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YjUimcSWW8&feature=youtu.be>

1. Alone & Palely Loitering - K/Yeats

One of a series of absurdist performance lectures on canonical poets and writers involving projections of original drawings and collages.

Performed at *Not a Sentence*, Art Rotterdam '15.

Full duration 20min

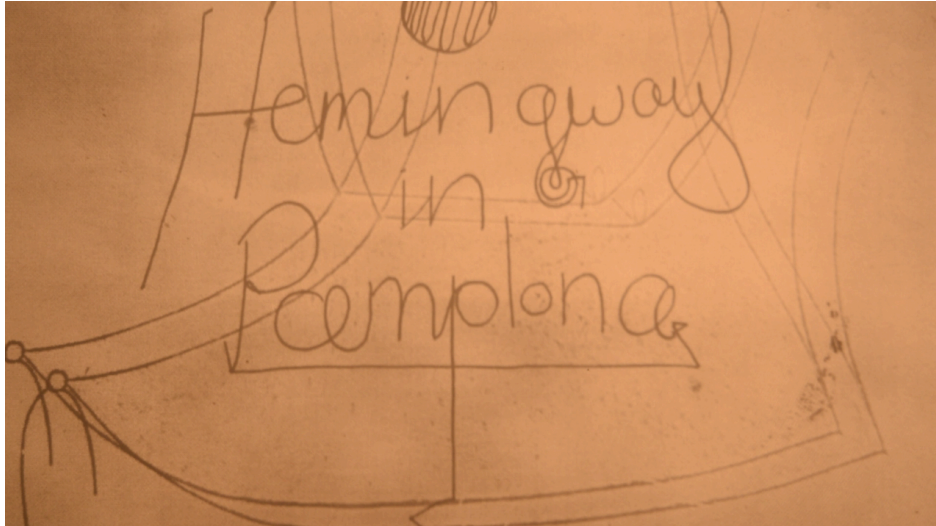
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6GFdyh5e_c&feature=youtu.be



2. Hemingway in Pamplona

performed at Open Studios '16, Piet Zwart Institute.
Duration 7min.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjY1dA7o2ng&feature=youtu.be>



Unintelligible

(photograph) Audio installation for *Cutting Leaves for the Dogs*, Tale of a Tub, Rotterdam
One of a series of audio works selected for presentation at *Rough House*, Glasgow International.

Duration 7min loop

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=naqjKseCA8&feature=youtu.be>



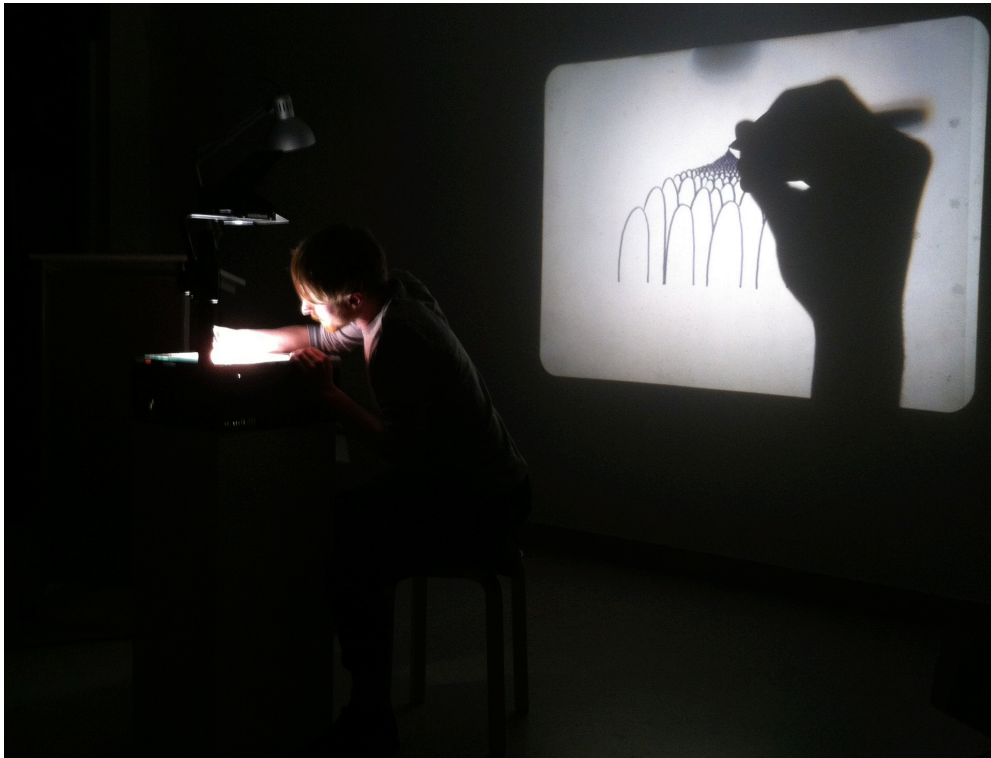
Pingolian Chickens

Students at the Piet Zwart Institute were invited to present their written work to an invited audience of professional writers, literary critics and writing tutors from other Masters programmes. My performance involved me drawing live while telling a story about the imaginary armies I used to draw as a child.

The photographs below are from the actual performance, but the video clip is from a rehearsal.

Excerpt 3min
Full duration 12min

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bEgP7fq6NOc&feature=youtu.be>



Michael FitzGerald is Moulting

Solo Exhibition at IMOCA, Dublin, 03/13

Materials - dried polymer, aluminium, timber, clamps and clips, builder's twine.

The hanging metallic piece at centre played an audio installation of a latin mass recorded in a shower.
An accompanying text discussed the regenerative benefits of long rituals of bathing.



detail - floorpeel



Paul

Paul and I used to go fishing together in the river that ran between our houses. We would go out once or twice a week and sit at our own particular spot and eat sweets and Paul would tell me about older boys he knew who had caught pike and bass there. All were predatory, big-game fish so Paul said we should use our spinners which behaved in the water like minnows. The fish were colour blind and would think the bright blue and bright red lures were smaller fish and would swallow them and stick themselves on the three-pronged hooks. The spinners looked like helicopter leaves in the sun as they fluttered down through the water before we reeled them back in.

Paul was constantly talking about the fish and I was happy to answer in monosyllables and nod, and watch, and perfect my technique, casting again and again into the sweet spot just short of the opposite bank. I liked how, reeling in, with just a single, repeated, circular motion of the wrist, the spinner would about-turn, find its line and then dance back to me through the water and, when it emerged, the weight it would find to plumb the line, hanging heavy in the air before my eyes. I felt I would never tire of it.

The river was polluted but shallow enough that we could clearly see down to the mangy growth and litter of the bed. I couldn't imagine how anything as pretty or as graceful as a fish could live there, gulping and

swallowing that water all the time. If I were a fish, I thought, I would avoid that place. But I suppose fish have to go through one place to get to another and some of them don't like salt and have to keep away from the sea and get to their breeding grounds at the sources of the rivers. Paul had been told that fish had been caught there though, and that was enough to keep us rapt with attention. Nothing could have passed that point unseen but we never saw a single fish, except once.

Paul told me it was a trout. He shouted 'Trout!' and I remember reeling the wrong way and my reel getting momentarily jammed and for a second thinking that a real disaster was going to happen, but then the kink which had threatened to knot the line smoothed itself back out and I began to reel in, trying to feel the rotary motion in my shoulder, elbow and wrist. Closing my eyes.

It was a fat, old, lazy looking thing, swimming reluctantly upstream like it was on its way to work. It never knew. Or maybe it knew. Who knows? We were noisy, shouting as we pursued it, jumping up and down from the path down to the mud of the bank, casting and recasting, our adrenaline and excitement overcoming any affectation of fishermanly reserve. Our spinners flying like blue and red missiles into the swell ahead of the fish and then falling behind it like sirens as the fish swam calmly on like a ship with its captain bound to the mast.

But my movements had become painfully deliberate and my spinner was falling far too close to the fish. Paul told me to cast further but once again in my panic I cast too close. Paul looked over at me as if to warn me as I was reeling back. The next time I flung the line so hard my spinner's hook got

caught tight in the trees of the opposite bank and I remember following Paul upstream as far as I could go until the line went tight and my feet were at the water's edge. I stood there with my neck craned around watching as he receded. He was casting and reeling, casting and reeling his angry red spinner into the slipstream of the fish which became a silver lozenge and then merged like a pulverized coin onto the currency of the water's surface.

Paul went round the bend in the river and disappeared from my sight and I was left there, holding my rod at arm's length with a catgut tightening between me and something unknown behind which was receding. I could not dislodge it and we had travelled upstream so far from our boxes and knives and scissors that I would have to wait there for him as long as it took for him to return and I knew he would not return unsuccessful. And I really thought that if the fish didn't take the bait, he would never return. And the only thing worse than that now would be for him to return with the fish.

He would leave me and I would have to set my rod down on the bank and go back and take up the scissors and return alone and I sensed then that this was the sort of work that I was destined for. While Paul was off wrestling serpents and severing the heads of hydra, I would be kneeling in the mud somewhere behind him undoing knots and hacking at wires. And that was the end of our friendship. Well, it wasn't, but that's how it feels if you look back at it like that.

It was a kind of collapsable desk or drawing board made of moulded blue plastic. It had little clamps on four corners to fix your paper down. Around the edge it had a drink holder and recesses to keep your pencils. It had spindly legs that you could fold up so that they disappeared into little grooves on the underside of the plastic body. I think the drink holder was the main thing that excited me about it and I think I was probably so obsessed with the thing because one of my friends had gotten one.

But I think also I liked the idea that you could fold out the legs and set up anywhere and fit a drink into the holder so that you could remain there at your outpost by the front door or down the back of the garden and just watch the world going by and draw for however long you liked without getting thirsty. It was important to me to be able to make my own little set ups where I was self-sufficient enough to be able to remain in them without having to go back out into the grown-up world to ask for anything.

I was so attached to it that I wanted to sleep with it in my bed. It was probably about half my size and made of cold, blue plastic. My parents tried to convince me to put it away until the morning. I didn't believe them when they said it wasn't the kind of thing you should sleep with and that santa or the tooth fairy or someone would take it back if I did.

So I made a show of collapsing it down and stowing it away but after they had gone to sleep I got up and dragged it back into bed with me and slept with the board lying across my chest.

And when I woke up in the morning it was gone.

To be honest, I still can't be sure that I didn't dream it. I can't really remember ever using it, but I do remember a morning and a yawning absence and a suggestion of foul play. I think it was the day after I got it. And when I asked around about it no one seemed to know anything. And this is why I think it might have all been a dream because I remember I was slipping and sliding and falling about the house asking people where my blue thing was gone but I didn't know how to explain to them what it was so I think I was just repeating the words blue thing over and over again so I think that even if they wanted to help they couldn't have known what I was talking about.

Either that or one of them had stolen it back for themselves.

