

Jolley Grim

By Aidan Dunne

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A blurred figure tumbles pell-mell down a deep, narrow stairwell, bouncing violently against the bannisters. Then it falls again, and again, as the looped video sequence plays repeatedly every two minutes or so. The black-and-white images have a rough, documentary quality, suggesting the dreadful possibility that we are watching something real. It is fascinating and disturbing, and the atmosphere is further heightened by the location, because the video is installed in the bleak surroundings of Dolphin House car-park in Crane Lane in Dublin's Temple Bar, after dark.

Shot on Super-8 film and transferred to Beta videotape, the work is called *Stairwell* and it was made by Paddy Jolley (with Reynold Reynolds). It is being shown as part of the Project Arts Centre's Off Site programme, effectively an exhibition programme in exile, while construction work proceeds in East Essex Street.

Jolley, who graduated from NCAD in 1989, has evidently been determined not to live up to his name. His work in photography and film/video consistently takes an extremely bleak view of existence in a variety of brutalising urban environments. Last year, as part of Limerick's EVA, he showed another video, *Late for the Train*. It was a static view of a subway station at night. The body of a man - drunk? dead? ill? - lay immobile on the platform while empty trains arrived and departed.

In 1996 his photographic exhibition *Satellite* created a chilling composite portrait of an archetypal urban world: concrete flyovers, high-density housing, nondescript industrial wastelands. In his fragmentary off-centre views of these ugly, uncomfortable spaces, there is an underlying threat of violence, realised in the image of a figure rolling across a motorway as if side-swiped by a passing car.

There is a recurrent pattern in Jolley's work, with its depiction of anonymous, marginalised individuals, left to their fate in the strange, dehumanised concrete jungles we have managed to create for ourselves. But beyond the particularity of relentless urbanisation that provides his imagery, his narratives stand as allegories for the tragedy-comedy of life itself in a remote, indifferent universe.