

## Do buildings dream of electric blankets?

*By Bill Leahy*

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An eerie 12 minute film about Ballymun asks not what happens to people who lose their houses but to housing when it loses its people.

Meeting House Square is deserted. It's Wednesday night, the wind is whipping the drizzle into cross fading clouds, the cold is biting hard. A cluster of diners in Eden quaff their coffees, swill their wine and peer out at the lone stranger, notepad in hand, eyes focused on a temporary screen hanging outside the Gallery of Photography. Perhaps their dinner conversation changes course, perhaps they are musing now about the odd, sodden journalist sheltering beneath the speakers in the corner of the square. He is not interested in them, however. He is too engrossed by the mesmerizing *Here After* film by Paddy Jolley, Rebecca Trost and Inger Lise Hanen, dancing before his eyes.

Mattresses are plunging gracefully onto the screen, crumpling, and then bouncing free onto each other in a poetic pile-on orgy. Two passers-by scuttle by oblivious to the descending wallpaper and water, funneled through a light fixture, cascading through the ceiling on the screen above their heads. Shot entirely in black and white and using only natural light, *Here After* is a visually intriguing piece commissioned as part of the part of the public artworks based around the demolition and rebuilding of the entire north Dublin suburb of Ballymun. Each evening from 7 until 10pm the 12 minute long film will be play-looped in Meeting House Square, while an off-site projection of a single scene is projected onto the window of Filmbase, formerly Arthouse, just a one minute walk away.

The work depicts the interior spaces of a four-storey housing project block in Ballymun, recording items discarded by former inhabitants through a mix of real-time and animated footage. These discarded objects – including net curtains, shelves, a chesterfield, books, papers and a computer monitor – dance around the debris directed by an unseen or invisible force. The eerie result is increased by the use of natural light, which leaves the top corners in darkness, lending it the feel of an old movie.

The animation, contributed by Norwegian artist Inger Lise Hansen, call to mind *Daisies*, the pioneering and seminal work by 1960s Czech director Vera Chytilova. At other times the choppy edits nod towards Sergei Eisenstein.

What both the building space and these objects have in common is a fundamental loss of their original function, ceasing to be used in the manner for which they were created. In an artists' statement the trio explain their method. "Throughout filming, our guide of approach was a notion we termed 'psychic journalism': to extrapolate from the actuality that we encountered into visual forms that, although fantastic, articulated and expanded the presence of the building".

"Meanwhile to someone we met on the way to the flats, we would say: That instead of a story about what happens to people when they lose their housing, this is going to be a story about what happen to housing when it loses its people".

As the first scene looped round again, and the familiar net curtain blew in the wind, the breeze sympathetically picked up in Meeting House Square, merging with the film past the idea of deserted spaces and interested onlookers.

Billy Leahy, November 2004

*Hereafter will be shown in Meeting House Square until 4 December, 7-10pm, Tuesday to Saturday.*