

Press Release: *Ackroyd & Harvey's Cunningham*
Part of Artist's Garden's for Void Sites curated by Greg Mc Cartney
Opening on 14th September at the Cunningham Building, Ebrington Barracks

Void gallery is pleased to present the first public artwork in Northern Ireland by internationally renowned artists Ackroyd and Harvey. Cunningham is the second Artist's Garden from the Void Sites program for 2013. The Cunningham building at Ebrington has been chosen as the site for a temporary art installation with the intention to plant and grow the facade with seedling grass. Nature and structure, control and randomness are juxtaposed in the artists work to reveal a time-based practice with intrinsic bias towards process and event. Through creating a surreal manifestation of a landmark building, enacting a transformation, the artists present a rare opportunity to open up new possibilities for interpretation and experience.

In the 23 years that they have worked together this is the 5th work where they have grown the façade of the building. The Cunningham building at Ebrington is from the Late Victorian period, austere in its presence and brooding over the contested site of a former military barracks, prior to this it was an orchard in the 17th century. The site was chosen for its architectural heritage, historical context and socio –politico associations. The artist's intention is to cover the front façade of the building with a layer of clay into which will be planted millions of germinating grass seeds. The familiarity of living grass as a material and their artistic practice of 'growing' enacts powerful transformations. It encourages and creates new feeling for place, fresh imaginings and in the process temporarily reshapes monumental buildings.

The work is time based, changes daily and rapidly interfaces between germination and growth and the eventual demise of the grass skin. It becomes a living process and no longer a solid architectural site. Being covered by a grainy brown seed initially draws out the architectural contours of the building, this then morphs into a spectrum of change that occurs on several different levels. As the grass grows the inanimate building takes on a living presence; the grass can be seen as a living pelt fluctuating between beast and botany. There is a sense that the building is consumed by the verdant growth, the familiar architectural details becoming effaced. Clay, seed, water and light are deployed by the artists to explore the boundary between growth and decay in the urban space and by skilfully manipulating grass's properties and connotations, they articulate and actualize notions of ephemerality, landscape, and memory.

Noirin McKinney Director of Arts Development at the Arts Council of Northern Ireland said:

'Art is woven in to the fabric of our society. The Ackroyd and Harvey project places creativity beautifully in the centre of our lives. The opportunity to experience work from such highly acclaimed international artists is a reflection of the quality of work we have been exposed to

throughout the UK City of Culture 2013. We hope such work engages audiences and encourages them to continue pursuing artistic experiences.'

The artists take up their residency at the building for three weeks and become temporal custodians of this consequential building. Aware of the contexts they are operating in, Ackroyd and Harvey offer an interstice inspired by aesthetics and poetics that becomes an abstract observation of what happens in space, through time and history.

Biography :

Ackroyd & Harvey www.ackroydandharvey.com have collaborated together since 1990; sculpture, photography, architecture, ecology and biology are some of the disciplines that intersect in their time-based work, revealing an intrinsic bias towards process and event and frequently reflecting environmental and scientific concerns. They are internationally acclaimed for their large-scale architectural interventions and for their work making complex photosynthetic photographs in seedling grass utilizing the light-sensitivity of the pigment chlorophyll. In the public space their artwork often makes explicit connections with socio-political ecologies by highlighting the temporal nature of processes of growth and decay in found sites of architectural interest. To date, their work has been exhibited within contemporary art galleries, museums, and public spaces worldwide.

2014 will see the completion of their History Trees legacy artwork; a series of landmark living sculptures marking ten main entrances into the Olympic Park, a major commission in recognition of the history of the site and the London 2012 Olympics. This year have been awarded a commission by the University of Cambridge to create a series of public artistic interventions for the refurbished Arup Building in the New Museums Quarter of the city, due to open in 2016.

They continue their long-term engagement with Beuys' Acorns nurturing over two hundred young oak trees grown from Joseph Beuys's seminal artwork "7000 Oaks", exhibited at the Royal Academy in 2009/10, the Southbank Centre, London 2012 and 2013 at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, UEA, Norwich.

In 2012 they exhibited at Tulca, Festival of Visual Arts, Galway, occupying a disused schoolhouse on an island off the coast of Connemara, where they created a series of photosynthesis photographic portraits of former inhabitants of the island. In 2012 they also exhibited and participated at *Images Festival des Artes Visuels Vevey*, Switzerland; *Carbon 13* Ballroom Marfa, Texas; *NA! Academy* dOCUMENTA, Germany; *Festival of the World*, Southbank Centre, London; *Capital Offense; The Ends of Capitalism*, Beacon Arts, Los Angeles; *Points of View*, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, USA, and had their first showing in China as part of the 3rd *Art & Science International Exhibition* in Beijing where they were awarded the prestigious Wu Guanzhong prize for Innovation.

In 2011, Ackroyd and Harvey had their first solo showing at Void gallery responding to the vernacular architecture of Derry with a bespoke photosynthesis photographic work articulating transience and the passage of time, *Park Ave + Resident*. They also exhibited at *Terre Vulnerabili* Hangar Bicocca, Milan; *Principia*, Milan; M.A.D.R.E., Napoli, showing a work first created in 2010 for *Trasparenze: Art for Renewable Energy*, MACRO Testaccio, Rome, Italy.

Since 2003, they have made a series of expeditions to the High Arctic with Cape Farewell, looking at the effects of climate change on the ecosystem and have shown the resulting work *Stranded*, a 6m long whale skeleton encrusted with crystals at London's Natural History Museum, the Liverpool Biennial 2007, Fundacion Canal in Madrid and Japan's Miraikan Museum and Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich 2013.

Ackroyd & Harvey have given many lectures and presentations, notably at the *Nobel Laureate Symposium* on Creativity, Leadership and Climate Change at London's Science Museum; Planet Under Pressure, Excel Centre, London; Art & Alchemy, Trinity College, Cambridge; WVEE Forum, Smiths College, Oxford; Royal Academy of Arts, London; London School of Economics, UK; the Royal Society, London; Royal Institute of British Architects, London; Tate Britain, London; Royal National Theatre, London; Manchester International Festival, UK; Oxford University; Courtauld Institute, London; Harvard University, USA; San Francisco Institute of Arts, USA; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, (USA).

Notes to Editors

- Artists' Gardens is part of Void Sites; a new initiative in addition to Void's gallery programme that extends the gallery's activities to various locations around the city and its hinterland involving three major off site projects; Artists' Gardens, Resonance FM and Partition.
- *Cunningham* is a temporary public installation at the Cunningham Building, Ebrington Barracks, Derry Ackroyd & Harvey's artwork *Cunningham* is supported-in-kind through James Coburns Ltd, a grass seed production company based in Northern Ireland with a family history dating back to 1852.
- Derry~Londonderry has made history after winning its bid to be the first ever UK City of Culture in 2013. After many years of turmoil Derry-Londonderry is enjoying the dividend of the peace process and undergoing a renaissance, transforming physically and culturally.
- Void is a non-profit organisation with core funding provided by The Arts Council of Northern Ireland with additional assistance from Derry City Council and other sources. Void is an artist-led space. It has a staff of 11 and circa 20 volunteers, which include the Curatorial Committee and Board. Void also regularly employs the skills of freelancers for specific projects.

For further information regarding this event or on any of the projects in Void's 2013 programme please contact Emer Grant at Void: communications@derryvoid.com

GALLERY INFORMATION:

Void Gallery of Contemporary Art, Patrick Street, Derry, Northern Ireland, BT487EL

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Admission: FREE Opening hours: Tuesday – Saturday 11.00 - 17.00



VOID SITES 2013
Admission free www.derryvoid.com/void-sites
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