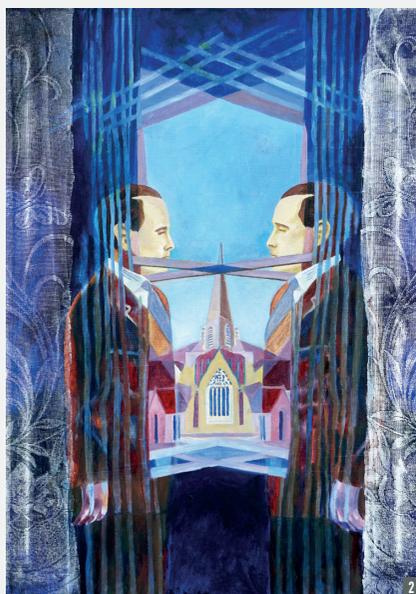


FLANNTASMAGORIA!

Christian Dupont probes the interplay of literary and visual arts in an exhibition inspired by Flann O'Brien and *The Third Policeman*.



A recent exhibition by Donegal artists Edward and Joanna O'Kane and their son David makes the case for a synergistic relationship between literary and visual arts riding on the jagged edges of genre and perception. Their literary subject is Flann O'Brien, in particular his simultaneously

employ stop-motion animation, evoking the paradoxical theories of time expounded by the eccentric physicist de Selby, an amusing character footnoted in O'Brien's novel. In another short film, David engages O'Brien with Kafka and Borges in a dramatised dialogue composed entirely from quotations from

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paranoiac and romantic afterlife adventure, *The Third Policeman*.

'Flanntasmagoria! The ever-widening circle of Flann O'Brien', an immersive video and art installation mounted by the O'Kanes at Boston College's headquarters on St Stephen's Green, was held in conjunction with a summer conference on the writer hosted at UCD. The installation featured several experimental short films by David O'Kane that

their writings, in their own languages.

The interplay between the O'Kanes as artists, their media and the themes of *The Third Policeman* proves still more complex. Joanna O'Kane, a mixed media sculptor who studied in Belfast and Cardiff, has fabricated a series of ghostly masks in fibreglass resin that recall the disturbing appearances of the policemen, O'Brien's multiple authorial personas and death masks. Her husband,

Edward, donned the masks and a replica of an early 20th-century RIC policeman's uniform to pose for animated video sequences and oil portraits created by David.

In one portrait, staged in O'Brien's abandoned birthplace in Strabane—near the O'Kane's Cavanacor Gallery in Lifford—David subjects the viewer to the terror of posthumous interrogation under the policemen's otherworldly glare. The imposing mural-like image reflects the influences of David Lynch and Neo Rauch (David studied with Rauch at the Academy of Visual Arts (HGB) in Leipzig).

Edward O'Kane also contributed several paintings to the show. For one series, he positions the viewer again in Flann's birthplace, now peering outward between lace curtains onto the Bowling Green. In 'Macasamhail' ('The Double'), Flann is forced to face his mirror image, constrained by intersecting architectural elements.

Conjunctures as well as disjunctures play out in the relationships between the three artists and their engagements with the novelist and his novel. Genre and identity and their echoed interactions emerged as major themes in the exhibition (now online), which also featured a selection of pages from an original typescript of *The Third Policeman* from Boston College's John J Burns Library. ■

This series explores the interplay of Irish artists with Irish literature in contemporary Irish culture.

Christian Dupont is Burns Librarian and Associate University Librarian for Special Collections at Boston College.



1 DAVID O'KANE
THREE POLICEMEN
2019 oil on canvas
180x130cm

2 EDWARD O'KANE
MACASAMHAIL (THE DOUBLE)
2019 oil on canvas
70x50cm

3 JOANNA O'KANE
PERSONA 1 from
the *Personae* series
2019 fibreglass
resin