

CIARÁN MURPHY

PLAINSIGHT

Jan 14, – Feb 24, 2018
Keizersgracht 241

Opening: January 14, 2018 from 5 pm until 8 pm

GRIMM is pleased to announce the presentation of a group of new paintings by Ciarán Murphy (IE, 1978) at the Keizersgracht space in Amsterdam. This exhibition marks a decade of collaboration between the artist and the gallery.

In the introduction to his book *The Order of Things* (1966), French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) makes reference to the unease he felt after stumbling upon a reference to a certain 'ancient encyclopedia'. In this encyclopedia, animals are ordered into strange, unfamiliar categories. For example some were grouped under headings such as animals that 'at a distance resemble flies' or animals that are 'drawn with a very fine camel hair brush'. By encountering something that confounds ones expectations, the mythic encyclopedia highlights that unbridgeable gap between things and the names we use in an effort to contain them. Any attempt to name and categorize the world will inevitably grapple with the tensions between vision and language, reality and appearance. All those unknowable things which lie beyond standard perception, cognition and experience.

In Ciarán Murphy's paintings we encounter an unsettling array of things; sticks, rocks, martian landscapes, insects, interiors, hands, letters, blank screens, architectural feature and geometric shapes. Objects seem in varying states of flux: things float, or seem in the midst of changing form, while other things seem barely there, are entirely absent, or in various states of becoming. They all seem to have in one way or another a vexed relationship to gravity.

Some things are familiar but somehow strange (hands, sticks) other things are more ambiguous yet somehow strangely familiar. In the painting *Double Spacing*, letters are encountered from behind as if solid objects, perhaps apprehended from a moving vantage point. Throughout there seems a kind of unsettling reference to mental processes like memory and dreaming, but not specific recognizable versions of these processes. The paintings feel like they are trying to communicate in the absence of language.



Ciarán Murphy | *Firecraft* | 2017 | Oil on Linen | 55 x 55 cm

The paintings are the result of a more circular rather than linear process. Work is taken up, then left to gestate, abandoned only to be revisited at a later time. This process allows for slippages of meaning, changes of direction, the forgetting of original intentions, and retroactive understanding. It is perhaps this methodology that lends the work its somewhat ephemeral quality.

Murphy's paintings can be understood as an effort to grapple with the fact that we live in a world where images are omnipresent, exerting an almost ghostly or spectral presence in our everyday existence. Temporalities are increasingly blurred and our very notions of what constitutes reality is, in itself, a process mediated by images. In some ways the work grapples with the idea of untangling representation from reality or if such an untangling is even possible.

As art critic Luke Clancy notes in his 2014 essay *Time after time*, that "Ciaran Murphy's paintings propose a way to explore figuratively the limits of our understanding, to offer objects that undermine our understanding of objects, objects that dramatize our expectations not just of comprehension, but of sensing. Our knowledge, it turns out, is patterned from what we forget, as much as what we can recall. We exist in what never reaches that minor part of us in the conscious spectrum, as much as in what does. We are also what hides in blanks, gaps and aporia, in outlines, skeletons, in anticipation and afterimage."

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Ciarán Murphy | *Hand / Wrist* | 2017 | Oil and acrylic on canvas | 35 x 45 cm

About the artist

Ciarán Murphy (born 1978 Mayo, Ireland) received his BA at the National College of Art & Design, Dublin in 2003 and his MA in Visual Arts Practices (MAVIS), IADT, Dublin in 2005. Solo exhibitions include *15 single-word titled paintings* at Mother's Tankstation, Dublin (2006); *Ciarán Murphy* at GRIMM, Amsterdam (2007); *Ciarán Murphy* at Kavi Gupta Gallery, Chicago (2008); *Ciarán Murphy* Cerealart,

Philadelphia (2008); *All That's Air Melts Into Solid* at GRIMM, Amsterdam (2010); *The Paradise* Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin (2013); *A particular nothing* GRIMM, Amsterdam (2014). Murphy has participated in group shows at Gallery Massimo Carassi, Milan (2006); Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin (2011); the Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin (2011); the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2013, 2017).

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