



James Ireland interviewed by curator Paul Luckraft, 15 April 2016.

**Paul Luckraft:** The exhibition features an array of sculptures set in the space of the gallery that each have their own distinct properties. Can you talk about the development of this series over the last couple of years?

**James Ireland:** In a talk on landscape I gave recently, one of the things I referenced was a Hito Steyerl essay 'In Freefall'. It runs through the story of perspective – of it being a fixed grid or screen to be looked through, and then that grid rupturing with Cubism, and rupturing in film too, where points spread over time with the jump-cut, through to the present with Google maps and the grid spreading around us. A cheesy example might be the movie *The Matrix*, and the way those spinning-around shots were created, which is actually very mechanical. There is some great making-of footage where Keanu Reeves is falling onto a crash mat surrounded by about 60 SLR cameras. The cameras trigger and the shots are then knitted together. I think it's a great metaphor for how the single point perspective ruptures and is then multiplied.

**PL:** So is the grid now wrapped round us from above, rather than it being a screen we look through?

**Jl:** Yes, it bends and we become part of it. Bending and folding have constantly interested me, these classic sculptural things. And this use of the grid is also down to my strong reaction against being asked to live in a database – that my decisions are somehow correlated in a known way, or my tastes can be understood, and I can become part of a metric. I'm of that generation where I'm a bit sceptical, even though I use such technology all the time!

Preparing the talk I also thought about the fact I run quite a lot, and I've bought myself a GPS watch. I look up my data, and I've got my routes logged. The routes are automatically layered on to my Google maps. The correlations that had to have happened – the

mapping of space via satellites, the processing power of microchips, the construction of the internet and mobile phone networks – these exchanges come together to pinpoint what is meant to be this pure experience of running freely in the streets. It's quite loaded. But these are my genuine spatial experiences.

**PL:** These new sculptures have elements that don't exactly reference body parts but almost do; they get close to posing perhaps?

**Jl:** Specifically I'm interested in a relation to the bodily, rather than the body, if there are those lines to be drawn. It's more that experience of being a point in space. I think I've always been interested in this, but perhaps in the past, in the work, I've not made it as clear.

**PL:** How much does the work draw on the local and specific. How directly do you want the work to feel of a certain place?

**Jl:** Well, I do often refer to 'generic' objects. But it's perhaps not quite the right term. I don't think 'universal' rings true either; maybe 'common' is closer. I use things that are ubiquitous – the fluorescent tube or the breeze block, or the burger carton. They are so prosaic, there is no need to innovate their design, or do anything interesting with them. They are sort of clichés, but also strangely pure things too.

In a way they don't speak of a particular culture or place, but in another way they are totally iconic of the global model of capitalism, of mass-produced things. They might have emerged first from a western modernist ideal but now are made in a factory in China. That's where something like the orange shoe-lace in the work comes in. Everyone in the world seems to wear trainers, from monks in Nepal to refugees from Syria. The objects I use often come from a petrol or plastic materials root too. And at the same time, returning to your mention of the local – I

wonder if I am sometimes just replicating the inside of my favourite little messy hardware shop near the studio! Or things I see in the gutter on the walk there.

**PL:** But then your pieces are not replications of these scenes from the streets are they? You undertake a design process, which takes it away from being a ready-made assemblage, in which an ad hoc arrangement from the outside is transferred into the gallery.

**Jl:** I've been thinking about this, and it probably comes down to it being art really...

**PL:** Not just a pile of stuff...

**Jl:** Totally. But it is a weird fine line and I struggle with it. Sometimes there is just a pile of stuff in my studio. And it looks quite good. But maybe it is just a pile of stuff, albeit a tasteful pile of stuff. Going back to my intentions, I think I want each part of a work to do more than it should do. I want it to add up to more than the sum of its parts. Each thing can perform a few functions. Some of these functions are within the language of art. In the carton stacks there is a nod and a chat about plinths.

There is also something about their practical function. The stack of cartons is kind of amazing. I go past the back of supermarkets and see these kinds of things, looking very sculptural, perhaps tipped over. And in the gallery if I stack them high they would do the same. So I'm also thinking 'how do I encapsulate that, how do I hold it together'. These things brew in my head and then kind of squeeze together, so you end up with this discarded looking concrete thing, which is holding these cartons together in a pristine way.

**PL:** So each work is part reference to the external environment, part material enquiry and part design solution?

**Jl:** Kind of like a Venn diagram, yes. I am a bit of obsessed by

Venn diagrams. Almost as a way of setting up quite clear ideas, but also as a way of seeing what happens as well, of not being too prescriptive. You set up these parameters, and see what the bit in the middle of the diagram offers you. That's maybe how I make the decisions about these works. And how I consider whether they are successful or not.

The works aren't still lives or moments in time. Along with 'expression' and 'universal' a third word I have issue with is 'real'. This stems from me thinking that making judgements on the 'real' comes from quite a privileged position. So, I am not claiming that I am somehow better at noticing the 'real', or the 'everyday' than somebody else. I have a bit of an issue with that kind of thing in art.

**PL:** It's interesting that you are questioning authorship by doing quite a lot of designing and decision making, by more clearly authoring something rather than re-presenting a found thing?

**Jl:** I'm trying to take that problem on, though it's almost an impossible one. Foucault has the idea of 'author-function', in response to the 'death of the author'. It makes sense in that there is this spreading of lateral authorship. However, it's not like there are infinite possibilities, and everyone has a completely different take on things, because we wouldn't be able to communicate. Things do need to narrow towards recognisable points. I guess as an artist you're aware that your name's going to be on the handout! You're building things. And I hope some of the work I am making now talks to the work I made ten years ago, and also that it will talk to work in ten years' time. That it isn't just arbitrary.

**PL:** How does time function in the work? Some previous works have processes of pumping or circulation, and some evoke time through the changing of light. Whereas this new series feels more blunt.

And that bluntness might mean a quicker assessment by a viewer perhaps? Do you see the sculptures as points in space where you want people to slow down the pace of looking, and contemplate? Or are they on the edge of being overlooked?

**Jl:** I think most artists would like their work to be looked at slowly and poignantly for hours on end, but in reality know that most people squeeze past on the way to the bar! But more seriously, I hope the works are not too quick to be looked at. Of course, it could be 'there's a shoe lace and some concrete'. But I hope the question of why these things have been put together is raised. That they take some figuring out. Maybe it's to do with them not being 'real'.

Reverse:  
*Wire Mesh Container (Red Sky)*, 2016  
Stainless steel, concrete, spray paint. 240 x 57 x 57 cm



#### Artist's presentation

Sunday 22 May, 3pm: James Ireland discusses ideas of landscape and the picturesque with artist Sigrid Holmwood

**James Ireland** (b.1977, Derby) studied at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, Oxford. Solo exhibitions include *James Ireland*, Art-O-Rama, Marseille, 2008; *The Difference Between Truth And Honesty*, FA Projects, London, 2007; *You Mistake My Horror For Love*, Economist Plaza, London, 2007; *Straight Lines Are Curves From Very Large Circles*, FA Projects, London, 2005; *This Is A Test*, Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham, 2005; *All Of The Known Universe*, Spike Island, Bristol, 2003. In 2014 Ireland completed a public sculptural commission for Kingfisher Court Mental Health Centre, Radlett, Hertfordshire.

Zabludowicz Collection Invites is dedicated to solo presentations by UK-based artists who do not currently have representation by a UK commercial gallery.

176 Prince of Wales Road  
London NW5 3PT  
Opening times  
Thursday–Sunday, 12–6pm  
Other times by appointment  
FREE ENTRY

#### Upcoming Invites

Victoria Adam  
16 June–17 July  
Luke McCreadie  
29 September–6 November  
Willem Weismann  
10 November–18 December

ZABLUDOWICZ  
COLLECTION

