

## "Promenade" Elements of Design

"Promenade" is a permanent installation in the lobby of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts. This work was installed by the conceptual artist Patrick Ireland in 1998. "Promenade" features a linear mural painted on the south concourse wall and a set of ropes attached horizontally onto the east and west walls. The background color of the mural is painted royal blue with a three tiered set of descending rectangles painted in an egg yellow, (maybe peach), olive and purple. The three rectangles descend from the smallest to largest at the base, something like the structure of a wedding cake.

In addition to the colorful mural, there are the three taut ropes attached to the side walls, the bottom two, white, the upper one, red. The three ropes add a textural element to the installation and transforms the flat mural into a three dimensional work of art.

In order to fully appreciate the connection between the mural and the suspended ropes, the viewer must move: meander front to back and side to side while looking up at the mural. In other words, promenade around the installation. There are many angles to "Promenade" and with each step, a viewer's perspective changes. There are moments when the ropes perfectly frame each of the mural's rectangles. This change in perspective appears to be one of the functions of "Promenade:" to alter the viewer's perspective while he or she interacts with it.

## Tour Questions

- What do you notice first when you look at "Promenade?"
- How would you describe this work?
- Why might the artist have added the ropes?
- How is this work different from other kinds of art in a museum? What kind of art might it be or resemble?
- How does movement increase your appreciation of this work?
- Conceptually, how might "Promenade" relate to the Chihuly glass work at the entrance of the KIA and the Calder work just inside the concourse?

## The Artist: Brian O'Doherty/Patrick Ireland

Brian O'Doherty is one of those people with a Renaissance man resume: medical doctor, artist, critic of contemporary art, novelist, film-maker: Hopper's Silence," professor, friend of Marcel Du Champ and other noted artists. Married to Barbara Novak, art historian and former Art Department chair at Barnard College, she introduced the doctor to the art world of New York City where both have lived for the past 50 years.

Brian O'Doherty was born in the county of Roscommon , Ireland in 1928. After completing his medical studies, he received further accreditation at Harvard. Practicing but one year in a cancer center, he moved permanently to New York City and becomes a conceptual artist and art critic. What complicates any study of Brian O'Doherty is his numerous alter egos adopted over his lifetime: Patrick Ireland, writers Sigmund Bode, Mary Josephine, and William Maginn. These many identities reflect O'Doherty's belief that, "Any identity is a fiction. None of us has one. Disperse all identities as wildly as possible. To look in the mirror and see no reflection" (Moore-McCann, 18). To illustrate this maxim, in 1972, O'Doherty creates the name Patrick Ireland as a protest against "Bloody Sunday," the British killing of Northern Irish citizens. He vowed to keep this name until peace agreements could be reached. In 2008, treaties were drawn up and O'Doherty, in an elaborate piece of performance art returned to Ireland and literally buried an effigy of Patrick Ireland, complete with death mask and casket. All of O'Doherty's artwork from 1972 to 2008 is labeled, Patrick Ireland: works before 1972 and after 2008 are identified as Brian O'Doherty. Often curators and critics will include both names: O'Doherty/Ireland in their labeling of him.

In his critically acclaimed collection of essays, Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space, O'Doherty speaks of the evolving function of the art gallery. No longer a space just for framed art on the wall or sculpture, the gallery, he suggests, must accept other forms of art -- such as performance, installation or conceptual art, (more accepted today than at the time of these essays original publication in the 1970s). He defines conceptual art as a "gesture." Art also need not be restricted to within the gallery. He shows a photograph of the Christo and Jeanne Claude's "Museum of Contemporary Art Wrapped Chicago," completed in 1969. Here the two artists wrap the museum in tarp and rope, a rather grand gesture outside the gallery space. In all that he writes and the installations that he creates, Brian O'Doherty challenges the traditional definition art. (IV. The Gallery as a Gesture," Inside the White Cube... 87-107).

## Influences

The first artist to have influenced Patrick Ireland would have been Marcel Du Champ and his installation, "Mile of String" shown at the Whitelaw Reid Mansion in midtown Manhattan in 1942. In this exhibition on Surrealism, visitors had to navigate around a jungle of string attached to the floor, the ceilings and the walls just to view the wall art in the exhibition. The majority of Ireland's rope installations, however, and in contrast to DuChamp's "Mile of String," were much smaller and were not obstructions for the viewer. Ireland's rope drawings were meant to be interactive, but not like Du Champ's tangled web. Like Du Champ the majority of Ireland's ropes were anchored to floors, ceiling and walls. 108 of Ireland's rope drawings were meant to be temporary. The Kalamazoo Institute of Art's permanent exhibition of Patrick Ireland's "Promenade" is one of three exceptions. None of its rope lines are attached to the floor. The lines of rope are affixed to the upper walls of the museum. If a visitor does not look up in the atrium of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, "Promenade" might be seen as a colorful mural in the concourse. One must come up close to observe Ireland's rope lines.

Ireland could not have missed viewing the exhibitions of Sol LeWitt. Both artists lived in New York City; both artists shared a passion for geometric designs. LeWitt's first drawings appeared in the 1960s, years before Ireland began his rope drawings in 1972. LeWitt painted complex geometric designs onto an exhibition wall and like Ireland's rope drawings, were meant to be temporary. Ironically, all of LeWitt's creations are being replicated in a massive exhibition in California, perhaps permanently. Ireland's installations are but memories for those who actually saw them. However, there are books which have photographs of Ireland's installations. Ireland created most of his geometric rope installations to be a walk through them, a physically interactive experience. DeWitt's wall drawings made no such demands.

In his pamphlet, "Patrick Ireland: 'Promenade'" - Jan van der Marck states "...from an early age Patrick Ireland has identified with Piero della Francesca." Ireland's fascination with Piero and his works led Ireland to make many pilgrimages to Arezzo, a region in Tuscany where Piero drew his inspiration. So inspired was Ireland by this area, he bought a home there in 1978. Examine Piero's "The Flagellation" Look at its colors and geometric lines and see the influences of Piero and Tuscany.

## Sources

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