Press release:

GRIEF-WORK
Chapter 1, Pomegranate

Helen Kirwan announces the launch of a series of online performances
26 February - 23 April 2021

Image: still from *Fragment and Trace* (2015).

Kirwan, who is currently artist in residence with the Cyprus Academy of Arts Residency Programme, proudly presents the launch of a new project of live online performances titled: ***Grief-Work.***

Grief-Work will consist of five one-off performance art pieces broadcasted live to a global audience every two weeks between 26 February and 23 April 2021 at 6pm GMT so that audiences from around the world will be able to join in and experience Kirwan's performances in her studio and on location.

Her first performance in the virtual
will be premiered on the 26 February at 6pm GMT on
performanceartinthevirtual.com

This innovative approach to the experience of performance art is especially poignant during the global pandemic and the new reality which we humans find ourselves in.

Kirwan is an Irish-British conceptual artist born in Dublin, Ireland in 1949 and is known for her quiet, meditative performances and moving image and installations on the themes of memory, loss and on journeying as a metaphor for loss. Her most recent works exploring these themes

include her trilogy of video work collectively known as *Memory Theatre* which were each unveiled at the European Cultural Centre during last three editions of the Venice Biennale.

During the performance, Kirwan will make seemingly endless cuts into pomegranate fruit. These acts of futile repetition echo the absurd processes which Kirwan believes are essential to the act of mourning. Viewers will become immersed in a compelling, meditative experience as they watch the repetitions of cuts exposing the innards of the fruits, the glistening seeds and the blood-red juice oozing out of them. The pomegranate has carried powerful symbolic and mythological meaning in many cultures for many centuries. In Greek mythology, it was known as the 'fruit of the dead' having arisen from pomegranate seeds to become immortal.

Kirwan's performances of futile activities are part of her ongoing inquiry into mourning and loss and are a form of marking time. Her work draws on her own experience of mourning the loss of a loved one. 'These futile activities are the performance of the searching and yearning which some psychologists identify as essential to the bereavement process,' she explains.

Kirwan's work is underpinned by her inquiry into the concept of the 'philosophical fragment'. The German Romantic philosopher Fredrich Schlegel posited a radical definition of this fragment as a dynamic process which aims at fragmentation for its own sake. Intrinsic to Kirwan's futile reiterations and journeys is the essential incompletion which is itself the mode of fulfilment. The repetition which lies at the heart of Kirwan's work draws also on the Hegelian concept of memory as a dynamic process of repetition that constantly reinvents itself. Her seemingly endless, repetitive tasks serve as a medium for the metaphorical construction of memory.

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For images and press enquiries please contact studio@helenkirwan.com

Notes to editors
Performance Details: Dates: 26 February - 23 April 2021
Bi-weekly: details for the ensuing performances will be announced soon.
Times: 6pm GMT
Location: https://performanceartinthevirtual.com/

About Helen Kirwan

Helen Kirwan practised law as a barrister in Dublin and London for nearly twenty years before becoming an artist full time. She has a B.A. (First Class Honours) in Fine Art from the University for the Creative Arts Canterbury (2000), an MA in Fine Art from the University of Middlesex (2002) and an MA in Aesthetics and Art Theory (2004) from the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy, London.

Kirwan's videos, video installations and performances which include 'Memory Theatre' (2017), 'Fragment and Trace,' (2015) and 'Image of the Road,' (2013, with Simon Pruciak) have been exhibited internationally including at the European Cultural Centre during the 56th, 57th and 58th Venice Biennale. Other recent exhibitions, festivals and screenings include: Bermondsey Project Space, London UK (2020), Experiments in Cinema Film Festival, Albuquerque, NM, USA (2020), Pie Factory Margate, 2020, European Cultural Centre during the 58th Venice Biennale

Festival Internacional De Videoarte De Camagüey, (2019) & (2017), Cuba; Tbilisi Art Fair Georgia (2019); Space Arts Centre London (2018); Close-up Cinema (2018); 'Thread of Light,' (2017), P-21; London and Sussex Open, (2017), Rapid Pulse Festival, (2016), Chicago USA, Fonlad Festival, (2016), Coimbra, Portugal, International Festival of Projections, with Simon Pruciak (2016), University of Kent, UK, Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne; 'East Sussex Open', (2016), Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne; 'October 15 Ceremony', (2016), Gallery Çenkaya, Ankara; Bodrum Biennial (2015); Bodrum, Turkey. During 2019 she was artist in residence at Arts-Iceland/ Outvert Art, Iceland and the Sirius Arts Centre, Cobh Ireland; and in January 2020, at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre, Annaghmakerrig, Ireland.

Kirwan has worked for many years with the award-winning Dublin-based composer Tom Lane and cinematographer Simon Pruciak. She conducts live performance- experiments, including an outdoor performance on a beach and in the sea during the Folkestone Triennial Fringe, UK (2017), and a performance with live sound by Tom Lane and a five- channel-video installation at The Space Arts Centre, London, UK (2018).Kirwan has contributed papers and film screenings to a number of interdisciplinary conferences and has lectured and taught contemporary fine art criticism and theory at UK universities including the University for the Creative Arts, Canterbury, UK.

www.helenkirwan.com