GRIEF-WORK
Final Chapter, Offering the Ribbons

Helen Kirwan presents her seventh live broadcast performance of grief-work online at performanceartinthevirtual.com on Friday, 28th of May at 4pm BST

Currently artist in residence with the Cyprus Academy of Arts Residency Programme, Kirwan proudly presents the seventh and final performance in her new series of online performances to be broadcasted live to a global audience.

Grief-Work, is a new development in Kirwan's *Memory Theatre* series and her direct response to the poignancy of the global pandemic. She has introduced this innovative, virtual approach to the experience of performance art so as to reach out to audiences around the world. During this period of much grief and death, her performances allow a space and time for moments of comtemplation.

Kirwan is known for her quiet, meditative performances and moving image installations on the themes of memory and loss; and journeying as a metaphor for loss. Her most recent work exploring these themes, includes her trilogy of videos collectively known as *Memory Theatre* which were each unveiled at the European Cultural Centre during last three editions of the Venice Biennale.

Grief-Work is part of Kirwan's ongoing inquiry into mourning and loss. During her seventh perfor- mance, Kirwan will offer ribbons to men in black in an outdoor setting at an archaeological site. Since ancient times, during funeral and burial practices in many cultures, including Ancient Greece, ribbons ('tainia') and cloth were used as popular grave offerings and as tangible expressions of grief in the face of death. Often these were vermillion red and a number of late

Classical and Hellenistic stone markers are decorated with painted and/or low relief images of red ribbons, but other bright colours were also used. ribbons, but other bright colours were also used.

During this performance, viewers will again become immersed in a compelling, absorbing experience as they watch these seemingly infinite repetitions. Kirwan regards these repetitive tasks and absurd processes as metaphors for the mourning process and as a medium for the metaphorical construction of memory.

Kirwan's work draws on her own experience of mourning the loss of a loved one. In *The Tragedy of Hamlet,* Shakespeare powerfully expresses how difficult it is for Hamlet to explain the depths of his personal, singular experience of grief and for others to understand it. 'Grief is a Mouse'[1], hidden and quiet, in Western cultures especially. And yet, as Derrida points out, death takes not only a particular life within the world but each death, each time, will have opened up a world of other deaths in both finite and infinite ways.[2] Kirwan thinks that however difficult, grief needs attention; it's due time and respect especially now, when over 2.5 million people have died during the Covid pandemic and countless more are in mourning. It seems also that people are becoming more introspective and open to contemplative work; perhaps after decades of sensory overload, loosing their appetite for the sensational and a perpetual craving for the 'new'.

The restrictive measures introduced to overcome the pandemic, especially on communication with the sick and dying have intensified and complicated the experience of grief for many. The basic human need and desire to touch has often been denied completely and being forbidden to touch and hug a dying loved one must be one of the most unutterably painful and poignant features of the pandemic across the globe. Kirwan's performances attempt, if only for fleeting moments, to give grief expression and to open up spaces and time for quiet moments for the contemplation of grief and mourning.

[1] Poem by Emily Dickinson (1830-86)

[2] Jacques Derrida, The Work of Mourning, eds., Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

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Notes to editors
Performance dates: bi-weekly, 26 February - 28 May 2021
Date of next performance: 28 May, 2021
Time: 4 p.m BST

Kirwan's previous performances in the Grief-Work series are now available to view on performanceartinthevirtual.com:
Chapter One, Pomegranate, Chapter Two, The Cypress Tree, Chapter Three, Sifting the Flour, Chapter Flour, Rending the Cloth, Chapter Five, Breaking the Vessels and ***Chapter Six, Emptying the Sea.***

About Helen Kirwan

Kirwan is an Irish-British conceptual artist. Born and partly raised in Ireland, she now divides her time between the UK, Cyprus and Brussels. Her videos, installations and performances including 'perpetuum mobile' (2019), 'Memory Theatre' (2017), 'Fragment and Trace,' (2015) have been exhibited widely internationally including at the European Cultural Centre during the 56th, 57th and 58th Venice Biennales. She has also exhibited video installations at the Bermondsey Project Space London (2020), Festival Internacional De Videoarte De Camagüey Cuba (2019, also 2017), Tbilisi Art Fair Georgia (2019), Close-up Cinema London (2018), P-21 Gallery London (2017), Towner Gallery Eastbourne (2017 and 2016), Bodrum Biennial Turkey (2015). Her multi-channel video 'Image of the Road,' (2013) with Simon Pruciak has also been shown widely internationally including in India and France.

She has participated in media and performance art festivals, including Experiments in Cin- ema v15.1 Albuquerque USA (2020), Rapid Pulse Festival Chicago (2016), Fonlad Festival Coimbra Portugal (2016), International Festival of Projections University of Kent UK (2016). She was artist in residence at Arts-Iceland/ Outvert Art, Iceland, the Sirius Arts Centre, Cobh Ireland in 2019 and in 2020, at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre, Annaghmakerrig, Ireland.

Kirwan conducts also live 'performance-installation-experiments' such as, performances and a multi-channel video installation together with composer Tom Lane at Palazzo Tiepolo Venice during the 58th Biennale (2019) and at The Space Arts Centre, London, UK (2018) and she undertook outdoor performances on a beach and in the sea during the Folkestone Triennial Fringe, UK (2017).

Kirwan has worked for many years with the award-winning Dublin-based composer Tom Lane and cinematographer Simon Pruciak.

She practised law as a barrister in Dublin and London for nearly twenty years before becom- ing 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 Eu- ropean Philosophy, London. She 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.

In 2020 she recorded seven micro-documentaries on the philosophical issues underpinning her performances and in January 2021 began a residency at the Cyprus Academy of Arts during which, in response to the global pandemic, she has been broadcasting regular live performances on performanceartinthevirtual.com.

www.helenkirwan.com