

## Carlos Garaicoa

10 June – 5 September 2010

The Irish Museum of Modern Art is very pleased to present this survey of works by Cuban artist Carlos Garaicoa. He is associated with a generation of artists emerging from the periphery who are interested in critically exploring the development and historical references inscribed in our cities. Since, the early 90s Garaicoa has developed his multi-faceted practice as a means to critique modernist utopian architecture and the collapse of 20<sup>th</sup> century ideologies using the city as his point of departure. His practice encompasses sculpture, drawing, video and photography, meditating on signs, language and meaning. Interested in urban planning Garaicoa's installations often take on the visual methodologies of architects and planners by utilising maquettes or models to re-create or re-imagine cityscapes.

Garaicoa's literary background is inscribed in his work; he refers to writers Italo Calvino and Jorge Luis Borges as influences. Calvino's collection of short stories titled *Invisible Cities* prefigures Garaicoa's use of sculpture as a narrative to respond to the development of the globalised city. *Invisible Cities*, is written in the form of dialogue between Marco Polo, an iconic figure of travel and Kublai Khan, the Mongol Emperor. Kublai Khan invites Marco Polo to describe the cities he has visited, in his account he describes cities that are unique but similar. It is within this observation that one can draw parallels with Garaicoa, in his piece *No Way Out, 2002* he constructs a city at night through various scales of rice-paper lamps that are illuminated, while the materials reference Japan, the uniformity of the city landscape alludes to a universal city, the homogenisation of which is common worldwide.

"Cities are turning into one single city; a single endless city where the differences which once characterized each of them are disappearing. This idea...came to me from the way that many of us now live: we continually move from one airport to another, to enjoy a life that is almost identical no matter what city you find yourself in."

*Italo Calvino, Continuous Cities 2- Invisible Cities*

Garaicoa directly references iconic texts and writers through the titles of his pieces as well as within the sculptural works themselves. In his one of his recent pieces *My personal library Grows-up Together with My Political Principles, 2008* he uses architectural publications as a device to form a city landscape. Cities are locations where we live, explore and try to gain an understanding of our surrounding environment. The universal factor is that within this discourse whether we attempt to comprehend the fabric of a city through its architecture or its social dynamics there is an element of familiarity.

Havana, the extraordinary city where he grew up, often features in his work and it is from this city's complicated development that his preoccupation with the detritus of the cityscape developed. The juxtaposition in Cuba of architectural projects halted and abandoned, and buildings of the colonial period create a narrative of a complex political history that scars the landscape. Garaicoa refers to these as 'ruins of the future, where ruins are proclaimed before they even get to exist'.

This exhibition brings together a significant body of work and focuses on the importance of architecture as a cultural and political indicator. Garaicoa bears witness to the evolving nature of urban space its problems and possibilities.

I would like to thank the lenders to the exhibition Luiz Augusto Teixeira da Freitas Collection, Brazil. Verusca Piazzesi, Veronica Tronnolone and the staff at Galleria Continua in San Gimignano who have been extremely helpful in facilitating this exhibition and Galeria Luisa Strina, São Paulo, Brazil who have also been instrumental. We thank the following galleries as well: Galería Elba Benítez, Madrid, and East Central, London. I would like to thank the artist's studio staff in both Havana and Madrid. The catalogue has been beautifully designed by Irelio Alonso Torres who collaborated very closely with Carlos Garaicoa. The exhibition is curated by Séan Kissane.

I would like to thank all the IMMA staff and especially Séan Kissane, Head of Exhibitions, Mary Cremin, Curatorial Co-Coordinator: Exhibitions; Gale Scanlan, Head of Operations; Cillian Hayes, Head Technical Crew Supervisor and Joe Stanley, Technical Crew. I am extremely grateful to Emilio Navarro at Centro De Arte Caja De Burgos, Spain since this exhibition will travel to their institution early next year.

Finally, I would like to thank the artist Carlos Garaicoa whose work I greatly admire and which I have followed for years.

Enrique Juncosa

Director