

LAURIE ROBINS 'FREE TRADE OR ELSE'*

8 MAR - 26 MAY 2019
GALLERY 1, FIRE STATION
FREE

EXHIBITION GUIDE

SLG

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ENGLAND**



LAURIE ROBINS 'FREE TRADE OR ELSE'

Following six months as the SLG Postgraduate Artist-in-Residence, Laurie Robins presents *'FREE TRADE OR ELSE'*. This new 50-minute film stages an encounter between the contemporary Irish landscape and German novelist Heinrich Böll's impressions of 1950s Ireland.

One of Germany's most notable writers, Böll's work confronted the economic transformations of post-war Germany and the political legacy of Fascism. For over 40 years, he wrote critically acclaimed novels, radio-plays, essays and articles, winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1972. Though distinctly varied in content, Böll's stories often offered an intimate depiction of people and their struggle to survive against a backdrop of war, political division and profound economic and social transition.

In 1952, Böll made his first visit to Ireland. Over five years he chronicled his observations in the newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, later compiling them into *Irishes Tagebuch* (Irish Journal), published in 1957. Böll wrote in a time of emerging European cooperation. In the aftermath of the Second World War, six European countries (Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany) came together to establish the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), a centralised authority which aimed to regulate industrial production. First proposed by French foreign minister Robert Schuman in 1950, the ECSC would neutralise competition between European nations over natural resources, and therefore "make war not only unthinkable but materially impossible" (Schuman, 1950)¹. Formalised in 1951 by the Treaty of Paris, the ECSC became the first international organisation based on the principles of supranationalism and started the process of official integration which ultimately led to the formation of the European Union. A referendum held in 1972 confirmed Ireland's (and the UK's) entry into the European Economic Community (a precursor of the European Union). Two previous attempts by Ireland to join the EEC were blocked by the six founding member countries, who expressed doubts over Ireland's economic capacity and neutrality as a result of its dependence on the UK market.

Robins' practice draws on the histories of experimental documentary filmmaking of the late twentieth century. He takes inspiration from the work of James Benning, Hartmut Bitomsky, Peter Nestler, Martha Rosler, Helke Sander, Allan Sekula and Harun Farocki. In particular, *'FREE TRADE OR ELSE'* pays tribute to directors Jean Marie Straub and Danielle Huillet, whose techniques Robins uses as a form of analysis through practice. Robins uses long panning shots and live recordings capturing ambient sounds, in order to draw attention to occluded political histories and disrupt the prevalent

romanticism associated with landscapes in art. *'FREE TRADE OR ELSE'* employs these cinematic techniques to consider historic and contemporary Anglo-Irish relations, observing the influences of capitalism, imperialism and resistance in the places described in Böll's writing. Created and presented in the current political climate of European upheaval, the film directs our attention to the patterns of history etched into the Irish landscape.

^{*}Placards hung on the cannons of the 1778 Irish Volunteers. James Connolly, *Labour in Irish History* (London: Bookmarks, 1987), 61

¹ Robert Schuman's, French Foreign Minister (1948-53), proposal for founding of the means of gathering the European nations into a peace-enhancing Union, 9 May 1950

BIOGRAPHY

Laurie Robins (b. 1988, UK) is an artist and filmmaker whose work looks at contemporary politics through historical landscapes and architectures. Robins studied at the Centre for Research Architecture, Goldsmiths, University of London and was a studio participant in the Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Recent presentations include Transmediale 2019, Berlin, Germany; The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, New York, USA; The Showroom, London, UK; and Monitoring at the 35th Kasseler Dokfest, Kunstverein Kassel, Germany where his work *Real Performance* (with Grace Phillips) was awarded the Golden Cube for best installation. In 2019 he will be in residence at IMMA, Dublin.

RESIDENCY

Since 2011 a six-month residency at the SLG has been available to postgraduate artists. This opportunity is open to artists in the final year of an accredited or non-accredited postgraduate programme of study from an institution, collective or art school in the UK. Application details are advertised on SLG website every summer.

The Postgraduate Residency is supported by the Paul and Louise Cooke Endowment.

EVENTS

Screening:
A Working Men's Club in Sheffield /
The Miners' Campaign Tapes
Fri 29 Mar, 7pm, £5/£3 conc
Clore Studio, Main Building

Laurie Robins presents *A Working Men's Club in Sheffield*, 41 mins (1965) by Peter Nestler, a vivid picture of British working class culture in the 1960s, and a selection of *The Miners' Campaign Tapes*, recorded from the picket lines during the British 1984 miners' strikes.

Screening and Q&A:
Money and Trade Considered / Arbeit
Wed 10 Apr, 7pm, £5/£3 conc
Clore Studio, Main Building

A second evening of films explores current affairs through historical parables. Screenings of Duncan Campbell's *Arbeit* (2011) and *Money and Trade Considered* (2013-14) by titre provisoire are followed by a conversation between Robins and Marcel Dickhage and Cathleen Schuster (titre provisoire).

Publication Launch
Wed 8 May, 7pm, Free
Clore Studio, Main Building

A new publication edited by Laurie Robins explores landscape cinema and the historical relationship between England and Ireland.

ALSO ON AT THE SLG

Haegue Yang: Tracing Movement
8 Mar - 26 May 2019
Main Gallery, Main Building

The Source: Works from the South London Gallery Collection
8 Mar - 26 May 2019
Gallery 2 & 3, Fire Station