

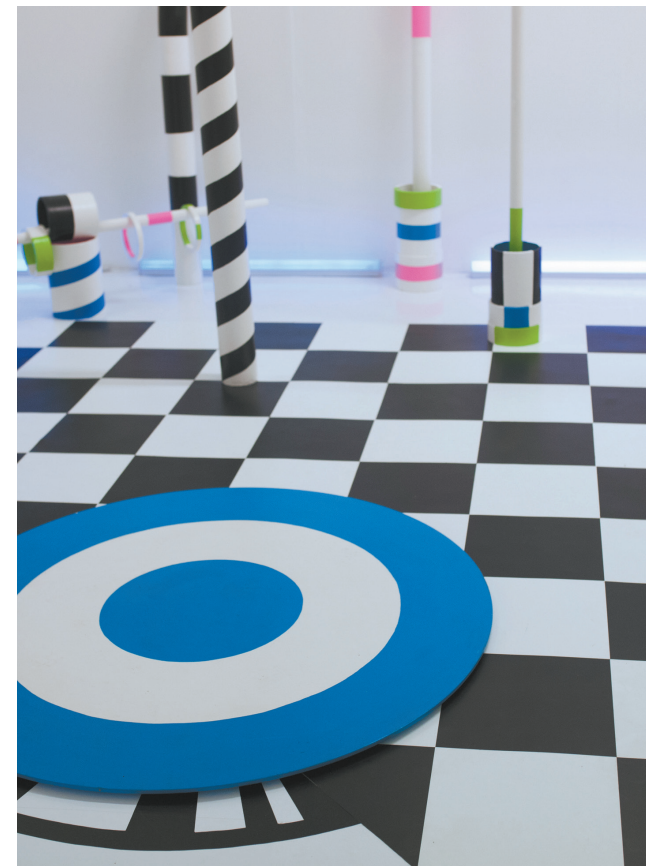
CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Hyperboles of Form & Colour

AOIFE DUNNE DISCUSSES HER DIGITAL INSTALLATION 'LIMITLESS' AND UPCOMING COMMISSIONS FOR THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS, LONDON.



Aoife Dunne, *Electric Forest*, 2016; video still, HD film; image courtesy of the artist



Aoife Dunne, *LIMITLESS*, 2016; video still, HD film; image courtesy of the artist

PRIOR to pursuing a career in art, I was always very interested in film. At the age of 13, I produced a short video piece that was selected to be shown at the Beijing International Film Festival 2008. This gave me the confidence to continue investing time in this passion of mine, which began to manifest in different ways as my career developed. Being a dancer and performer also influenced my creative process and gave me insights into experiencing an artwork from the perspective of both the performer and the observer. As well as this, I have become increasingly involved in the styling industry, creatively directing editorial shoots for international publications. The experience I have gained from working in this industry over the past six years has been crucial to the development of my artistic practice, which is so heavily focused on clothing and costume. My proficiency with digital media has also been fundamental to the development of my work. I am an avid user of different software programmes, teaching myself the skills required to use editing and 3D modelling programmes. This is particularly important as a large amount of my work is solely computer generated. My background and experience across these different fields has given me the skills and knowledge required to develop and produce my own films.

I created *LIMITLESS*, a digital installation piece, in 2016 for my degree show at the National College of Art and Design (NCAD), where I studied Fine Art Media. I was subsequently commissioned by the Royal Academy of Arts in London to present the work at the RA Lates event, 'The Summer Circus', in July 2016. After this exposure, Adam Lerner, Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver (MCA Denver), invited me to show *LIMITLESS* as part of the group exhibition 'Bodaciousss', curated by Taylor Balkissoon. This exhibition aimed to capture the fluid nature of twenty-first-century artistic practices that are "not only changing the definition of art, but also the ways in which art is produced and consumed" (mca-denver.org/bodaciousss). My work was shown alongside artists such as Dara Birnbaum and Keith Haring, who offer alternative perspectives on what is commonly termed 'post-internet art'. The work of emerging digital artists was contextualised by artists from earlier generations who pioneered hybrid styles of art-making.

During this period, I was also selected to exhibit at the RDS Visual Art Awards, curated by Alice Maher, which showcased 13 of the best graduating artists of 2016. The selected artists were chosen by a panel of five judges nominated by the RDS, RHA, IMMA and the National

Gallery of Ireland. I was delighted to have been selected to exhibit, let alone receive the RDS Monster Truck Studio Award, which has enabled me to develop new work in the Dublin studio for an entire year.

I have always been interested in the complex relationships that exist between the viewer, the artist and the context in which the work is made and exhibited. In the early stages of developing *LIMITLESS*, I knew that I wanted to create an interactive piece that would potentially allow audiences to see themselves within the work – inviting them to participate in the installation, yet ultimately giving them no control over what was happening. The piece is based on the concept of a video game I created using MAYA and Adobe After Effects software, that I later extended into the physical realm.

An important element within my practice is the use of costumes and the creation of theatrical backdrops. The video features five models all wearing a uniform that I created. While the costumes seem futuristic, they were also influenced by the historic objectification of women under patriarchal societies. I wanted to eradicate the girls' unique qualities and emphasise the notion of fabricated identity. Working within the fashion industry over the past six years has heavily influenced my treatment of the body as a medium. I use costume as a vehicle to explore, express and define notions of identity in a consumer society. I want to use the language of clothing to push the boundaries between fashion and sculpture, both of which deal with notions of space and volume in relation to the human body.

My installations are large, colourful, chaotic, vivid playgrounds that conflate the two-dimensional moving image with the three-dimensional arrangement of objects in a space. I like to distract the audience with visually-striking sculptural elements that probe the fuzzy boundary between abstraction and decoration. I am inspired by everyday materials, found objects and patterns. I enjoy creating unexpected juxtapositions, with hyperboles of form and colour that make the familiar seem strange. I like to choose bright colours and bold patterns, as these suggest imaginary spaces or hallucinations amidst the electric mania of modern life. The sculptural pieces I used within the *LIMITLESS* installation were also used throughout the filming process, reaffirming links between the video and the space in which it was presented. The viewer is invited to immerse themselves in this space, enabling them to form a relationship with the video, while highlighting the ongoing dialogue between identity and technology and the fusion of our physical and digital selves. I am currently expanding on

this idea of audience engagement with the use of sensors, sound and improvisational performance.

My background in dance, music and theatre, informs the performative aspects of my work. After studying at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, I became interested in the composition of music, which led me to learn different instruments and experiment with recording and distorting sound digitally. As a result, my videos are both sonically and visually distinctive. I consider sound to be the most important aspect of my editing process, and in the early stages of developing a new body of work, I am always thinking musically. I have been experimenting with the idea of an interactive live performance piece which would involve a large group of people and objects, and would incorporate sound, movement, technology and costume. Over the next few months, I want to find ways of interlinking my skills in theatre and digital media. As part of this work-in-progress, I have been collaborating with Dublin Youth Dance Company's Artistic Director, Mariam Ribón, on a new piece that will be performed by her senior company at the opening of *LIMITLESS* in Draíocht.

I am also currently working on a commission for the Royal Academy of Arts in London for two separate digital works which will be exhibited in June and August as part of their RA Lates programme. I am in discussions about a solo exhibition later this year in New York, where I hope to have the opportunity to be more ambitious and playful regarding the scale of my work. I am sure that my ongoing practice will be affected, both technically and aesthetically, by the evolution of technology and that unprecedented levels of interactivity and audience engagement will be achieved through modern technologies such as sensors and holograms. Capitalising on these innovations will allow my work to connect with audiences in new and exciting ways.

My practice as an early career artist embodies some of the principles central to the new visual arts programme at Draíocht arts centre, developed by curator-in-residence Sharon Murphy. Draíocht has commissioned me to adapt *LIMITLESS* for the main gallery this summer and has invited me to co-curate Draíocht@Night – a summer evening's extravaganza of performance, art, music, dance and food that will take place on the opening of my exhibition on 7 July.

Aoife Dunne is a visual artist currently living and working in Dublin.

aofedunne.com