

Highlanes Gallery

Bristle: Hair and Hegemony

Exhibition Guide

8 July – 23 September, 2017

In 2014, the artist Petra Collins was controversially thrown off Instagram – not for sharing an image containing nudity or violence nor any of the other violations outlined in the online platform’s terms and conditions. Instead it was for posting a photograph in which pubic hair protruded from her bikini line. The image, which utilised a popular filter, showed the young artist in front of a glittering curtain. It could not be considered explicit. It did, however, break with the perceived norms of feminine beauty in the twenty-first century. The ensuing debacle demonstrated that hair remains a powerful means of revolt against the cultural hegemony.

Where hair can or cannot grow and the qualities that make it beautiful or unsightly are a perennial subject for artists. Some celebrate conventionally beautiful locks whilst others extol the transgressive. Norms have changed over the years as is evident from this exhibition of diverse and complex reactions to hair in all its guises. The artists in *Bristle* reveal the part played by hair in many aspects of human experience. The cornrow braids so carefully drawn by So Yoon Lym show hair as a means of self-expression and creativity for African-American students. Hair plays a role in memory and remembrance in eighteenth-century hair jewellery/miniatures. Hair can be an indicator of religious and national affiliations as in the work of Kiran Riaz. The absurdist extremes of fashionable hairstyles are caricatured in prints by Matthew and Mary Darly whilst hair’s role as a commodity is in the capitalist economy is highlighted by Bharti Parmar.

Collins’s unaltered and unshaven bikini line was deemed ‘too personal.’ When it comes to female bodily hair it appears that the natural is inappropriate. The writer Emer O’Toole discovered this when she experimented with growing her body hair. Displaying her furry body in public caused some to snigger and others to threaten violence. She views her experiment in hairiness as a type of activism and a challenge to the gender binary: “It confronted people around me with their learned sexism in relation to women’s bodies in a visceral way, and at the same time it forced me to deal with my own deeply felt shame.”¹ *Natural Wax* by Abigail O’Brien is a clever video piece which explores these themes. Despite the nomenclature of the work it shows that the process of waxing is anything but natural. A list of conditions and prohibitions associated with waxing pan across the screen whilst Serge Gainsbourg duets with Jane Birkin. The lyrics of *Je t’aime ... moi non plus* and the sound of female orgasm provide the background for a text

1 Emer O’Toole, *Girls will be Girls: Dressing up, playing parts and daring to act differently*, London: Orion Books, 2015, p. 160.



A Woman After her Bath, Hashiguchi Goyo (1880-1921), 1920, Ukiyo-e woodblock print on paper, 33.8 x 29.2cm, Collection of the Chester Beatty Library © Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library

outlining the many stipulations and prohibitions on when wax can or cannot be applied. It is not suitable for those with loose skin nor the elderly. There might be discomfort after its use and skin may react to the process. The groaning we hear in the background could just as likely be from someone undergoing a painful bikini wax. O'Brien interrogates a process that is considered by many women in 2017 as an essential precursor to sexual liaisons. As Natasha Walter notes in her book *Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism* many of the young women that she interviewed would "not want to have sex if they hadn't depilated their pubic hair."²

Barbie with her unrealistic figure, hairless body and blonde hair represents the pinnacle of stereotypical femininity. Helen Chadwick's photograph *Birth of Barbie* (1993) shows the plastic icon gleefully emerging (with a full head of voluminous Californian-style hair) from a blood-red fleshy vagina fashioned from meat. Chadwick's insertion of Barbie into the visceral and bloody orifice is both humorous and disquieting. The image also contains a suggestion of human hair in the form of the reddened fur that Chadwick substituted for pubic hair. Chadwick's Barbie emerges fully formed and conforming to society's norms with regard to where women's hair should grow, however, as the artists in this exhibition demonstrate adhering to such societal hair norms requires serious work.

Niamh McGuinne's work references hair and religion. Drawing on the biography of the fourteenth-century Portuguese female saint, Wilgefortis, McGuinne further expands the theme to allow for an exploration of hair and contemporary body image. Wilgefortis miraculously grew a beard in order to prevent an arranged marriage to a pagan suitor. Her subsequent veneration was part of the fourteenth-century cult of bearded female saints. As with all things, bearded saints too went out of fashion. We now know that the Portuguese woman's beard was most likely the result of her refusal to eat and the resulting condition *Anorexia mirabilis* which would have caused the growth of lanugo – a downy hair. Matters of control and body image are powerfully evoked by McGuinne's life-size figures. Screens alternately show x-rayed, clothed, hairy and covered female figures thus opening up debate as to which depiction is 'right' or 'wrong.'

Other artists explore biblical, mythical, folkloric and fairytale representations of

² Natasha Walter, *Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism*, London: Virago, 2010, p. 108.

Saved as: ASI WAX 2nd Part (1) BACK - 25.4.95
 ASI WAX 2nd Part (1) BACK - 25.4.95

7. Should any residue of wax be left on the skin, it can be easily removed with baby oil.

Legs

The hair growth pattern may vary from thigh to lower leg check before removal. Remember to hold skin taut. Bend knee to remove hair from knee cap. Whisk off strip against growth.



25.4.95
 Thigh/leg/Ansi - Mind column width 1.5"
 SAWED IN: BACK STRIP & bit feel
 compression - none

Arms

Check the direction of hair growth which on forearms is usually from inner to outer arm, therefore strip is applied across arms width and whisked off against the growth.



Thigh/leg/Ansi - Mind column width 1.5"
 SAWED IN: BACK STRIP & bit feel
 compression - none

Underarms

Underarm hair growth can vary in direction, check before attempting hair removal. Remember to whisk back the strip against the direction of hair growth. Place hand behind head to stretch skin and apply as illustrated. Remove as usual stretching the arm as far back as possible to hold the skin taut.

Caution After hair removal do not use deodorants for 24 hours. Witch Hazel may be used as a temporary anti-iperspirant.



Thigh/leg/Ansi - Mind column width 1.5"
 SAWED IN: BACK STRIP & bit feel
 compression - none

Bikini Line

Check the direction of hair growth, which is usually inwards. Bend the leg outwards and smooth strip on to the inside of the thigh. Use your other hand to stretch skin taut, close to where you are pulling and quickly whisk off against the growth. If a few stubborn hairs remain they can be removed with tweezers.



Thigh/leg/Ansi - Mind column width 1.5"
 SAWED IN: BACK STRIP & bit feel
 compression - none

Please Note

1. Bikini line and underarms are sensitive areas. Use Natural Wax on them only after you have perfected the technique elsewhere. For waxing the facial area we recommend Louis Marcel Facial Strip Wax.
2. As with salon wax treatment, slight discomfort may be expected when the wax is removed, and the skin may turn pink for a short time after treatment. A very few people have such sensitive skins that any form of waxing may be unsuitable, so always test a small area on your arm or leg first.
3. After removal, the treated area is hair-free until new roots are formed and hair grows again. Any hair appearing before this is not regrowth, but hairs which were not visible or too short for removal when treated.

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hair. The *Hairy Legs of the Queen of Sheba* (2001), is a series of six screen-prints by Ana Maria Pacheco. Unlike biblical references to male hair which emphasise it as an indicator of strength, Sheba's hairy legs were circumspect and suggestive of deviance and demonic associations. Her hirsute legs must be denuded. There are many variations to Sheba's story and all provide scope for an exploration of women, power relations and hair. Images from the beginning of Pacheco's series show the queen's legs as decidedly hairy. This is not a light fuzz that one could overlook. Pacheco has drawn a thick dense blanket of hair. It is a source of curiosity for the monster-like figures. A later scene shows the depilatory process in the form of a matronly figure holding a spatula and a bowl of wax. As with David Hockney's older Rapunzel and David Shrigley's sparse line drawing there is an element of humour in Pacheco's portrayal of hair and our absurd reactions to it.

The work from Alice Maher's *Ombre* series (1997) draws on the story of Mary Magdalene who was miraculously covered by her hair when she cast off her rich clothing. She cites Silvestro dei Gherarducci's *Assumption of Mary Magdalene* (1380s) in the National Gallery of Ireland as an historical antecedent. Her triptych of outsized charcoal drawings brings to mind cloaks or fur and hints at the animalistic or bestial nature of human hair. Each head of hair differs in texture and shape as do the heads drawn by So Yoon Lym for *The Dreamtime*. Hair is a recurring theme for Maher, occurring in works such as *Folt*, a categorisation of hairstyles which utilises the Irish word meaning 'hair (of head), locks or tresses.' In interview she notes hair's multiplicity of meanings: "Hair is a really interesting material. Its history is interesting; its relation to the female is interesting, it has multiple doors into itself as a material."³

Within art, women's hair was typically the object of the masculine gaze. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's drawing of Jane Morris (née Burden) glorifies her loose, thick, dark, wavy hair. The artist's model was one of a group of girls chosen by the young men of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood for their wild hair and striking looks. The flowing locks of Burden and her fellow models Fanny Cornforth and Elizabeth Siddal were perfectly suited to the Pre-Raphaelite's re-enactment of Arthurian legends and other medieval tales. From our twenty-first century perspective it is difficult to see how the lustrous locks of the pre-Raphaelite

3 Rosita Boland, 'Alice Maher: a singular artist brought to book', *The Irish Times*, 15th September 2014.



Jane Burden, aged 18, as Queen Guinevere, Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), 1858, Ink, graphite and wash with white highlights on paper, 48.3 x 55.3 cm, National Gallery of Ireland Collection

models ran counter to the Victorian cultural norm. Nevertheless, they did. During the 1860s, the decade in which this drawing was completed, respectable women wore their hair parted in the centre and tied neatly in a chignon which coiled towards the back of the head. Long flowing hair was generally accepted only in girlhood. In an era where the pseudo science of physiognomy flourished one's physical appearance was felt to convey moral attributes. Abundant hair had connotations of the primitive and the sexual. Loose hair was also utilised in depictions of contemporary scenes such as William Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* (1854) where it signified a fallen woman. Burden's black hair typified the dangerous woman and unruly hair was linked to uncontrolled sexuality.

The association of female hair with propriety and standing in the community is sharply depicted in David Lean's 1970 film *Ryan's Daughter*. Set in an Irish village in 1916, Sarah Miles plays Rosy Ryan a married woman who falls in love with a British Officer who has returned shell-shocked from World War I. She receives harsh punishment for her perceived role in informing on a rebel leader and her association with a member of the British forces. In a menacing scene which has a lasting impact upon anyone who views it the mob shears off her hair. This takes place off screen but its violence is evident from the resulting crude and patchy skinhead. When the parish priest grabs a lock of her shorn hair we know that the loss of her hair stands in for her honour and her standing in the closed village society. As she leaves the village her cropped hair marks her as an outcast.

Concern over the appearance of one's hair is not, however, the sole preserve of women. Historical evidence reveals that Irish men have styled, altered and augmented their manes. The most distinguishing feature of Clonycavan man, the Iron Age bog body found in County Meath in 2003 was his hairstyle. Hair product made of plant gel imported from France or Northern Spain enabled him to maintain his elevated Mohawk style. Archaeologists conjecture that the hairstyle compensated for his short stature. Medieval Irish manuscripts show tonsured monks alongside stylised images of men whose curled hair was most likely the result of curling tongs. Hair related interdictions were directed towards Irish men as colonising forces attempted to assert cultural dominance. From the 16th century onwards and throughout the period of the plantations, London sought to impress their authority on the native Irish population. Native language



Hirsute, Niamh McGuinne, 2017, Etching and aquatint on paper, 50 x 30cm, Courtesy of the Artist

and customs including distinctive hairstyles came under scrutiny. Albrecht Dürer's drawing of 1521 *Thus go the soldiers in Ireland behind England. Thus go the peasants in Ireland* records an outlawed Irish hairstyle known as the glib. In 1517 Laurent Vital described this Irish style: "for they were shorn and shaved one palm above the ears, so that only the tops of their heads were covered with hair. But on the forehead they leave about a palm of hair to grow down to their eyebrows like a tuft of hair which one leaves hanging on horses between the two eyes."⁴ Its detractors claimed that it allowed for all kinds of skullduggery and that Irish criminals could hide behind their fringes. Ironically an earlier edict legislated against hair that was long at the back and short at the front – a kind of precursor to the mullet. Irish men's moustaches were also a cause for concern. The Irish practice of wearing moustaches without beards was problematic for English law makers and this too was prohibited. These arbitrary and somewhat illogical laws demonstrate that hairstyles can be seen as indicators of nationality and as tools in state control.

So Yoon Lym's hyper-realistic paintings of cornrow braids reveal the creativity and individual expression associated with hairstyles. The heads of African-American students at a college in Paterson, New Jersey, are viewed from above thus revealing various abstract patterns. *The Dreamtime* series evokes maps and references Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines* a work in which he explored the link between the songs of indigenous Australians and nomadic travel. Inspired by basketball players such as Allen Levenson and Camelo Anthony and the rapper Snoop Dogg each head reflects the fingerprint of a unique personality. The work also celebrates the craft skills that the creation of such hairstyles requires. The vibrancy of African-American hair culture was compellingly and wittily observed by Chris Rock in his 2009 documentary *Good Hair*. He explores the gender and racial tensions surrounding the quest for 'good hair' which for many African-Americans involves the purchase of expensive weaves or exposure to painful and potentially dangerous straightening chemical treatments. He questioned the multi-million dollar industry which assists that community in augmenting and manipulating their hair. Whilst subsequent critics have queried the notion that hair can ever be truly 'natural' and that even the politically charged Afro requires maintenance and intervention. Nevertheless, Nakeya Brown, an African-American photographer whose practice concentrates on hair and its impact upon her community notes that "through the grooming of hair we learn codes of conduct,

⁴ Archduke Ferdinand's visit to Kinsale in Ireland, an extract from *Le Premier Voyage de Charles-Quint en Espagne, de 1517 à 1518*. Corpus of Electronic Texts, accessed 12/06/2017.



Juan, from *The Dreamtime*, So Yoon Lym, 2010, Digital Archival print, 55.9cm x 76.2cm, Courtesy of the Artist

we learn obedience. That liminality brings someone, somewhere great comfort.”⁵

The tradition of hair as a marker of sentiment is exemplified by the eighteenth-century miniature lockets from the collection of the National Gallery of Ireland. These touching and powerful objects contain the essence of a person long since dead. A contradictory fact about hair is that even though it can be seen as a symbol of vigour and life, it is in fact dead matter. Despite this and unlike other bodily remains hair is immune to the ravages of time. The disembodied locks in these pendants are untarnished and have remained unchanged over the centuries. This quality is noted by Marina Warner in an essay entitled *Bush Natural*: “In its suspended corruptibility, it seems to transcend the mortal condition, to be in the full possession of the principle of vitality itself.”⁶ Within the micro-environment of the locket, the hair has been fashioned into various designs and shapes, combined with gems or woven into feathered designs. Part of the appeal of these objects is that they allow tactile as well as visual engagement with the loved one. As Geoffrey Batchen remarks photographic jewellery incorporating hair acts as a “as a physical, permanent, and public reminder of the otherwise missing subject.”⁷ According to the memoir of the secret service agent Clint Hill, Jacqueline Kennedy lovingly cut a lock of her husband’s hair from his head as a final act before the assassinated president’s casket was closed. Thereby demonstrating the continuance of this practice into the twentieth-century.

Although death and dying are often associated with jewellery made of hair they are by no means limited to those sentiments. The collecting and keeping of hair does not necessarily relate to death rituals. Human hair can also be exchanged as a love token acting as a surrogate for the beloved. A baby’s curl or locks shorn after a child’s first haircut are kept as mementos. These keepsakes celebrate and mark the beauty of children’s hair before it dulls or changes colour. Andrew Folan’s *Centre of the Universe* (2001) incorporates photographs of the artist’s daughter’s hair with patterns derived from the Hubble space telescope. The enduring nature of hair and its carrying of DNA and family resemblances are evoked in Kathy Prendergast’s *The End and the Beginning II* (1996), where three generations of human hair are wound around a spool symbolising the thread of life.

5 Charlotte Jansen, *Girl on Girl: Art and Photography in the Age of the Female Gaze*, London: Laurence King Publishing, 2017, p. 116.

6 Marina Warner, ‘Bush Natural’, *Parkett*, No. 27, 1991, p. 7.

7 Batchen, Geoffrey, *Suspending Time: Life – Photography – Death*, Tokyo: IZU Photo Museum, 2010, p.120.



Birth of Barbie, Helen Chadwick (1953-1996), 1993, Cibachrome photograph on paper, unique in size, 58.5 x 49.5cm,
© the estate of Helen Chadwick, Courtesy of the Richard Saltoun Gallery, London

Attitudes to these objects, be they *momento mori*, love tokens or jewellery made from woven human hair, have changed over the centuries. Many have a strong reaction of disgust to hair once removed from the body. Once cut and disembodied they view human hair as a substance akin to waste and as repulsive as toenail clippings. Bharti Parmar's *Shag*, a human hair shag pile carpet made using traditional wig making techniques both repels and attracts. She emphasises craft and tradition but also uses this piece as a platform from which to explore hair as a commodity. The multi-billion dollar worldwide industry which centres around the buying and selling of human hair for use in weaves, wigs and hairpieces is the subject of Emma Tarlo's *Entanglement: The Secret Life of Hair*. Like Parmar she notes the racial undertones and prejudices entailed in how hair is marketed as it moves from economically depressed regions to the West. A premium price is paid for un-dyed and un-treated hair which is generally sourced in China or through the practice of tonsure by Hindu pilgrims in India. However, to sell in the United States this hair must be re-branded as European in order to remove the perceived connotations of poverty and exploitation which have their origins according to Tarlo in "the mythologies of race spun by nineteenth-century scientists, who tried to divide the entire world population into racial categories on the basis of physical features such as hair."⁸ Such racialised notions are also at play in the reception of the Circassian ladies depicted in the nineteenth-century *carte-de-visites* from the Waldman collection.

There is much to be pilloried and laughed at in the interactions and interventions we perform on our hair. The ludicrous lengths to which hairstyles and fashions are followed are the fodder of satirists and artists such as the eighteenth-century caricaturists Matthew and Mary Darly. Their cartoons lampoon the 1770s fashion for large and elaborately decorated headpieces. Wigs were padded with animal hair and other substances and according to the Darlys' *Oh Heigh Oh, A View of the Back Settlements* (1776) some could comfortably accommodate models of the British territories in America. This was during the American War of Independence and the Darlys incorporated a critique of fashion with politics. They also ridiculed the attire of the male dandies known as Macaroni whose over-the-top appearance included tall powdered wigs topped-off with chapeau de bras hats. Likewise William Hogarth's *Five Orders of Periwigs*, *The Company of Undertakers* and *The Bench* are engravings which satirise the taste for outlandish

8 Emma Tarlo, *Entanglement: The Secret Lives of Hair*, London: OneWorld Publications, 2016, p. 161.



THE RIDICULOUS TASTE OR THE LADIES ABSURDITY

The Preposterous Head Dress, or the Feathered Lady, Matthew Darly (1720-c.1778) and Mary Darly (fl.1776-1779), 1776, Hand coloured etching on paper, 35 x 24.7cm Collection of the Chester Beatty Library © Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library.

wigs. The scrutiny of politicians' hair continues and the 2016 American Presidential Election provided ample fodder. Pundits and writers discussed the nature of Donald Trump's hair. Its colour, its constituency and make-up were widely debated, ridiculed and caricaturised. The unusual tinge of yellow and the length of his comb-over were the focus of many satirical cartoons directed towards his vanity. In 2015, an article in *The New Yorker*, compared the hairstyles of American politicians with those of Roman emperors, noting the ancient origin of the comb-over. Evidence that concern over male pattern balding has persisted for millennia. It also pointed out that in its Roman incarnation, the comb-over was not based on a side parting but rather it was combed forward. With regard to the future president's hair it was deemed that "Donald Trump is the outlier. Definitely the *Gallus comatus*, or long-haired Gaul. His comb-over is just too much for ancient Rome."⁹ Obviously a substantial number of American voters were able to overlook its absurdity. Age-related hair concerns are addressed, but not satirised, by Jessica Lagunas in her video piece *Preoccupation (Gray Hair)* which sees her plucking out grey hairs from her head. Her work examines the condition of woman in contemporary society, questioning obsessions with body image, beauty, sexuality and aging. It chimes with Kate Byrne's photographic portrait *Mia*, from the series *I am here, you are there* (2013). Ideas of ageing and beauty in contemporary Western society are scrutinised through portraits of eight women, linked by a lifetime living in the peninsula of Howth, Co. Dublin. The large scale photographs allow for a clear and unequivocal portrayal of the sitters making grey hairs and the natural signs of aging visible.

In 2017, the binary notions of gender pushed by the beauty industry and society are seen by many as reductive and limiting. However, it is against these norms that most people measure themselves. Hair represents and reveals so much about us be it class, gender, status or ethnicity. It is regulated by many gazes but it also represents a legitimate site for resistance. Self-expression, creativity and joy are evident in many of the pieces within the exhibition. It has not been possible to discuss each of the multifarious approaches to hair that are on display within *Bristle*. Suffice to say that the artists' responses should make us pause and ponder why so many of us invest so much time and money in cutting, growing, shaving, dyeing, perming, bleaching or removing hair.

9 Charles Bethea, 'By a Hair,' *The New Yorker*, 14th September 2015.



Mia, Kate Byrne, 2012, Photograph on diabond, 122 x 122cm, Drogheda Municipal Art Collection, Purchase 2013

Artists and Artworks in

Bristle:
Hair and Hegemony

Anonymous

Coiffure of Madame de Korff

1791, Paris

Hand coloured engraving and etching on paper

23.9 x 16.9cm

Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library

This satirical print of the French Revolution shows an image of the attempted escape of Marie Antoinette and King Louis XVI of France to Montmédy, a fortress near the French-German border in 1791 during the French Revolution. According to one account, the queen travelled under the assumed name of Madame de Korff, while the king pretended to be her valet de chambre. He is shown dressing his wife's hair, which was often ridiculed in the press as it symbolised Marie Antoinette's extravagant lifestyle. The image also suggests that the king submitted to his wife's demands by fleeing Paris rather than participating in the National Convention that aimed to transform contemporary France. Both figures paid the ultimate price for this escape for which they were convicted of treason and guillotined in 1793. (There is a lock of hair that allegedly came from the head of Marie Antoinette in this exhibition).

James Barry (1741-1806)

King Lear and Cordelia

1776

Etching and aquatint on paper

55.3 x 55.1cm

Collection: Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane

James Barry's print reproduces his painting, *King Lear Weeping Over the Body of Cordelia*, (1774) that depicts a scene from Shakespeare's tragedy, *King Lear*. Until the 18th century all performed versions of the play had a happy ending but Barry stays faithful to the original and depicts the tragic scene from the last act where the aged king dies of grief with the body of his daughter in his arms. The image is concerned with mourning and loss. The figure of Lear is oversized. His dramatic gesture and long flowing beard convey the depth of his emotions. His coarse windswept hair contrasts with the downward sweep of Cordelia's long tresses, evocative of her death and her gentle demeanour in life, and of her youth and beauty. Along with the pose and gesture of the figures, hair is used to convey emotion and thought to the viewer.

Cristina Bunello

Girl with Wig

2014

Oil on linen

30 x 30cm

Private Collection

Girl with Buns

2013

Oil on linen

30 x 24cm

Courtesy of the artist and the Cross Gallery

Cristina Bunello is an Italian artist based in Ireland. She graduated from the National College of Art and Design and is represented by the Cross Gallery. In *Girl with Wig*, the young sitter stares out with a dead-pan expression. There is something unsettling about her look. The flat monochrome background and the pale, flawless skin do not seem to attempt to represent reality. The title of the series *Of Innocence and Of Experience*, from which the work comes, contributes to the sense of unease by asking whether the girl, while personifying the innocence of a child, also has an adult-like knowledge or experience. In the painting, she wears a blonde wig, wisps of brown hair escaping at her temple. Is she playing at being a blonde? From an early age children are influenced by popular culture and often identify with the blonde princess regardless of their natural hair colour. In *Girl with Buns*, the subject is elusive. According to Bunello, 'In my work I do not wish to portray the character of the sitter. The image instead is a tool to probe into the question of reality and perception. Of significance, also is how the sense of temporality can be contained within the image'. The frailty of the child is evident in her delicate frame but the playful hair gripped in two buns is beautifully detailed. In this painting, time is suspended, and we are called to question the perception, the reality and the experience, of the young girl.

Frederic William Burton (1816-1900)

Study of a Woman's Hair

Black chalk and gouache on paper

22.4 x 29.2cm

Collection National Gallery of Ireland

Burton was born in Co. Wicklow and had a very successful career as an artist in Ireland before becoming director of the National Gallery in London in 1874. His most famous painting is *The Meeting on the Turret Stairs* in the National Gallery of Ireland, in which Burton paid a great deal of attention to the hair of the female figure, Hellelil. Like other Victorian artists he considered hair to be of great significance to the successful depiction of women and children in art. *Study of a Woman's Hair* is, however, a very unusual work. The drawing is tightly controlled and appears to be primarily a study of light and shade.

Kate Byrne

Mia

2012

Photograph on diabond

122 x 122cm

Drogheda Municipal Art Collection, Purchase 2013

Kate Byrne studied Fine Art at the National College of Art and Design, graduating in 1999, and went on to complete a Masters in Fine Art at the University of Ulster in 2002. She has exhibited widely in group and solo exhibitions, both nationally and internationally.

Mia is one in a series of large scale portraits of eight women in which ideas of ageing and beauty in contemporary western society are explored. These women all experience a common thread that their age and physical appearance has resulted in a marginalization and an invisibility within society. Their uncompromising stares, grey hair, wrinkles and veins confront the viewer and force them to accept the ageing process in all its detail in a way that is unapologetic, enduring and independent.

The singular focus of the camera and the restricted conditions eliminate the possibility of social coding and focus instead on the subtlest of psychological and physical innuendos. Their gaze is fixed, reciprocated, unsentimental, and one the viewer will always be, to a certain degree, excluded from. It is fundamentally concerned with the relationship and expectations of the viewer to the subject.

The resulting images reveal not the conscious projection of an identity but a space between the subject's private and thoughtful world and her public presentation.' Kate Byrne

Helen Chadwick (1953-1996)

Birth of Barbie

1993

Cibachrome photograph on paper, unique in size

58.5 x 49.5cm

Courtesy Richard Saltoun Gallery, London

Helen Chadwick, photographer, sculptor and installation artist, was one of the most important British artists to emerge in the 1980s. She was shortlisted for the Turner Prize in 1987, the first year that a woman was nominated for the award. Her range of sources, from myths to science, together with her innovative use of a rich variety of materials, such as flesh, rotting vegetal matter, flowers, chocolate and fur, has been hugely influential.

In *Birth of Barbie*, Chadwick positions a crimson-coloured, blonde-haired Barbie emerging from a piece of sheared flesh on a red fur base. The abundant hair, blue eyes and white teeth are the only elements untainted by the bloody flesh. She emerges as if on a stage ready to greet the audience.

In contemporary popular culture, blondes are said to have more fun and it is often stereotyped that men find blonde women more attractive. Barbie, as the epitome of beauty and the quintessential blonde, is used here to embody western society's concept of idealised femininity. While referencing Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, Chadwick's work questions this ideal of perfection and makes no attempt to sanitise the physical process of birth. In this work the reality of the birth process is contradicted by the genital-free doll which can be read as a pointed reference to the early sexualisation of young girls.

Circassian Beauties

Cartes de Visite, Cabinet Cards

Courtesy of Stacy Waldman, House of Mirth Photos, Easthampton, MA, USA

Circassian is the name given to a race of people from the north-western Caucasus, nowadays Georgia in Eastern Europe. The women were reputed to be the epitome of idealised feminine beauty and the term Circassian was used extensively to

promote cosmetics and beauty products. From the middle of the 19th century the circus owner P. T. Barnum advertised and exhibited women whom he claimed were Circassian beauties. They all possessed a distinctively curly hair style, for which there was no evidence in earlier portrayals of Circassians. However, as a craze it caught on and was copied by other female performers in the United States. They also became known as the Moss Haired Girls and by some accounts had to wash their hair in beer in order to achieve the frizzy hairdo. Their spectators were led to believe that these women had been liberated from a life of slavery as they were purported to have been traded as slaves and concubines in the harems of Sultans and Shahs. This alluded to their sexual maturity and provided a titillating spectacle for the voyeur. They were given exotic names beginning with Z and dressed in fantastic costumes. The incongruity, evident in the postcards, lies in the juxtaposition of the ladies' outlandish hair and costume with their domestic or pedestrian settings.

Harry Clarke (1889-1931)

Six Illustrations to Alexander Pope's Rape of the Lock

1913

Her guardian sylph prolonged the happy rest

Ink on card

30 x 20cm

Now awful beauty puts on all its arms

Ink on card

36.8 x 26.8cm

See fierce Belinda on the Baron flies

Ink on card

36.9 x 28cm

He takes the gift with reverence and extends

Ink, traces of graphite underdrawing and touches of bodycolour on card

36.9 x 26.1cm

Down to the central earth, his proper scene

Ink and traces of graphite underdrawing on card

36.9 x 28cm

But trust the Muse. She saw it upward rise

Ink and traces of graphite underdrawing on card

36.8 x 25.9cm

National Gallery of Ireland Collection

Clarke's six drawings illustrate Alexander Pope's celebrated poem, *The Rape of the Lock* (1712). Based on a true story, the poem recounts in epic terms the theft of a lock of hair from the head of a beautiful aristocratic woman, Belinda, by a lustful Baron. In the first scene a spirit or sylph, warns Belinda of the impending event while she lies asleep. In the *Toilet* scene Belinda is attended to by her exotically attired servants as she prepares to attend a ball. A coiffeur dresses a single lock of her hair. In the next scene which takes place at the elaborate gathering, the Baron snips off the lock, while unawares Belinda plays cards. In the next drawing having realised what has occurred she remonstrates with the Baron, who refuses to return her lock. The next section departs into fantasy as one of the spirits who protects Belinda flies to the Cave of Spleen and gathers a bag of sighs and sobs and a vial of tears and sorrows to give to Belinda so that she can plead with the Baron and convey the indignity of her position to the rest of society. Finally, in the last scene, the lock, which the Baron still refuses to return is transformed by the spirits into a constellation and floats upwards to take its place in the heavens.

The poem is a parody of aristocratic pretensions and vanity. As interpreted by Clarke in these intricate drawings, it becomes a fantasy. Sinuous line conveys an otherworld of beauty and intrigue in which hair plays a central role.

Sarah Cullen

From *You Shall Have Exactly What You Want*

2016-17

Untitled

42 x 29.7cm

Untitled

29.7 x 42cm

Archival pigment prints on Hahnemuhle paper

Courtesy of the Artist

Cullen, a 2017 graduate of Dublin Institute of Technology is currently living and working in Dublin. She works in photography, moving image and textiles and her practice focuses on issues of mortality and women's rights, in relation to the self and the domestic space. Both these works come from a series that the artist

made to explore how our experience of the everyday and especially the domestic context changes in the face of trauma and, in particular, crisis pregnancy. Hair, an organic substance, disrupts the apparent neutrality of the mundane surroundings adding to the sinister connotations of the objects to which they adhere.

Matthew Darly (1720-c.1778) and Mary Darly (fl.1776-1779)

The Ridiculous Taste or the Ladies' Absurdity

1768

Hand coloured etching on paper

35.5 x 24.3cm

Fruit Stall

1777

Hand coloured etching on paper

35.2 x 24.7cm

Oh Heigh Oh, or a View Of the Back Settlements

1776

Hand coloured etching on paper

35 x 24.7cm

The Preposterous Head Dress, or the Feathered Lady

1776

Hand coloured etching on paper

35 x 24.7cm

Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library

Matthew and Mary Darly, husband and wife, ran a successful print business in London in the 1760s and 1770s, specialising in comic images of contemporary society. One of their most memorable series parodies the absurd fashions amongst wealthy women of the day. They focus on their hair, the enormous height of which was achieved by the fitting of a complex structural framework which allowed the hair to reach two or three feet. This scaffold was then skillfully disguised by a combination of real and artificial hair. The hairstyles were completed with decorations of flowers, fruits and even vegetables. Imported from the court of Marie Antoinette in France, these outrageous coiffures were imitated by women of more modest means including servants. They were however widely satirised in the contemporary press and particularly amongst the middle classes who, as the Darly prints suggest, considered such fashion to be frivolous and even immoral.

Albrecht Durer (1741-1528)

Witch Flying Backwards on a Goat

Originally printed c.1500-03

Engraving on paper

11.5 x 7cm

Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library

In Durer's day it was common practice to punish women by making them ride backwards through towns on an animal. But in this print the cosmos is turned on its head by the wild witch at its centre. She rides naked on the back of a long-haired goat, a symbol of the devil. Her loosened hair blows in the opposite direction to which she flies. Her wild tresses suggest her mysterious powers and her rejection of conventional behaviour. She grabs the goat's horn with one hand while the distaff and a spindle, that she holds in her other hand, take on a distinctly phallic quality. Evidently disturbed by the antics of this formidable woman, who appears to be making it hail from the sky, the four putti beneath her act in a strange, disjointed manner.

Andrew Folan

The Centre of the Universe

2001

3 x digital lambda prints mounted on acrylic

58 x 303cm

Courtesy of the Artist

The triptych *Centre of the Universe* is composed of a central macro photograph of the top of the head of the artist's infant daughter. It is flanked by composite images of locks of her hair. These composites are assembled in Photoshop using Hubble Space Telescope photographs as background matrixes. The fragments of hair are arranged in the form of galaxies and spiral nebulae. The work refers to the synchronicity of organic and dynamic pattern in both microcosm and macrocosm. The ancient Greeks believed that the composition and structure of individual human beings (microcosm) corresponded to that of the universe (macrocosm), thus ensuring universal harmony. The title is a pun on how parentage changes one's perspective on the world.

Andrew Folan

Corona Hibernicus (study)

2007

Digital print on gampi tissue with seed pearls

33 x 25cm

Courtesy of the Artist

The artist works with printed realities – cutting and burning through the physical surface of the image as well as attaching actual objects in the juxtaposition and relation of both image and object realities. This work, made during the Celtic Tiger years, presents a faceless individual with an ostentatiously lavish hairstyle and crown of pearls. The incendiary quality of the crown implies all is not well – referencing the deep suffering of Christian iconography.

Saidhbhín Gibson

Mettlesomeness and Stroke

2014

Silver, badger hair, plastic

20 x 3.5 x 4cm

Courtesy of the Artist

Mettlesomeness and Stroke formed a part of Gibson's *Natura natura* exhibition (2014) which was staged in Dublin in two locations: The Natural History Museum and The LAB Gallery on Foley Street. One of her aims of the exhibition was to explore our experience of nature, and to look at how we try to make sense of our observations. She swaps and juxtaposes disparate foraged items to produce her art in a playful way that challenges the viewer's sense of understanding.

Badger hair is traditionally used in hand made shaving brushes and was chosen for its strength of the bristle and the softness of the tip. Different gradations of badger hair are 'pure' badger, 'best' badger, and 'super' or 'silvertip' badger. From the 1800s badger shaving brushes began to be luxury items and it was not uncommon for handles to be made of ivory, gold, silver, tortoise shell, crystal, or porcelain. Instead of a shaving brush, Gibson mounts the badger hair onto a silver handle, previously a fork, to make a paint brush. In doing so she elevates the brush into an object of beauty and preciousness. In *Mettlesomeness and Stroke* she proposes a link between the idea of bravery and producing the stroke or the act of an artist in painting.

Jane Giffney

Glove

2013

Human hair, Carrickmacross lace

18.5 x 12.5cm

Courtesy of the Artist

The use of hair is an abundant source of inspiration in the work of the Dublin artist, Jane Giffney. She uses it as a material to explore issues relating to women's identity and experience. Giffney is drawn to process based works that are intensely ritualistic and repetitive such as printmaking, lacemaking, taxidermy and drawing. Such processes that rely on long-established skills are very alluring and important to her in the development of her work. In *Glove*, which is made of human hair and lace, the hair represents a oneness with nature while the lace glove represents the bounded tie to the domestic domain. *Glove* is an exploration of the loss of identity through domesticity, a bristling inversion to a feral state, symbolised by hair. It mediates between the wildness within, of nature, fertility, sexuality and the containment and ordering of the female body.

Beatrice Glenavy (1883-1970)

Affectionate Couple

1902

Pastel on toned paper

36.2 x 39.3cm

Drogheda Municipal Art Collection

Provenance: Presented by Mrs. Aileen Bodkin through the Friends of the National Collections of Ireland FNCI, 1963

This early painting by Beatrice Glenavy (née Elvery) was painted when she was a student at the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin. It depicts a romantic scene of a young couple embracing. The woman, who wears a gown with a collar of embroidered Celtic design, wraps a strand of her long red hair around the neck of her lover, drawing him closer to her. The expression of the male figure suggests that he is deeply moved by the sensuousness of this gesture and by the touch of his sweetheart's hair on his flesh. Glenavy was a notable beauty with long red hair and she may have based the female figure on herself.

Beatrice Glenavy (1883-1970)

Glendalough

1904

Plaster

13 x 12 x 13cm

Collection: Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane

This is a rare example of Beatrice Glenavy's early sculpture, little of which has survived. It was created after she had spent a night at Glendalough where she claimed to have experienced 'the extraordinary sense of something brooding over' the place. Glenavy was strongly influenced by the Celtic Revival and by spiritualism at the time. The female head represents the spirit of the upper lake at Glendalough, while the little figures who shelter beneath her hair, symbolise the Seven Churches which surround it.

Hashiguchi Goyo (1880-1921)

A Woman After her Bath

1920

Ukiyo-e woodblock print on paper

33.8 x 29.2cm

A Woman in Summer Robe

1920

Ukiyo-e woodblock print on paper

33.8 x 27.6cm

Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library

Goyo trained as a painter in the western tradition in Tokyo and his familiarity with western art is evident in these works. He designed a small number of woodblock prints which revived the long-established Japanese art form of *Ukiyo-e*, which had been made famous by masters such as the 18th century artist, Utamaro who specialised in series of prints of beautiful women. The treatment of the figure in Goyo's work is much more three dimensional and conventional than that found in these earlier prints. But the typical Japanese hairstyles of the figures in the Goyo prints and the patterning of the silk fabrics recalls the past. Traditionally Japanese women paid close attention to the way they wore their hair which was tied up in a mage or chignon as in these prints. The treatment of the hairline required special skills for the carvers of the woodblocks. In imitation of Utamaro, Goyo blended the ink with mica dust so that, under certain lights, the surface shimmers.

Paddy Graham

Pieta and Odalisque, Odalisque 1

2001

Mixed media on board

98 x 83.5cm

Office of Public Works, State Art Collection

This delicate painting is part of a series on the *Odalisque* by Graham. An odalisque was a female slave or member of the Harem. The figure became a favourite subject for the treatment of the female nude in French art of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The most famous work associated with this tradition is J.D. Ingres's *La Grande Odalisque* (1816) in which the senses of sight, touch and smell are evoked. The reclining form of the figure in Graham's work recalls this convention. The sprouting of the elusive tendrils of hair from its head contrast with the mass of the painted body. The work suggests both the sensuousness of the human body and its vulnerability.

Sarah Cecilia Harrison (1863-1941)

Study of a Man's Head

Etching on paper

20 x 15cm

Collection: Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane

The Dublin artist trained under the French realist painter Alphonse Legros and the impact of realism is evident in this work. The dark-light process of the etching and the myriad lines of the needle capture in great detail the features of a man's face as it is illuminated. His long dark hair and thick beard add to the intensity of the image, making the figure appear philosophical and thoughtful. Through its rigorous delineation of the hair, the work also imparts a strong sensual quality that accentuates the masculinity of the figure.

Lock of Hair of Marie Antoinette,

Arch Duchess of Austria, Daughter of Emperor Francis I

Married Louis (1770) later Louis XVI, King of France

The lock was presented by Marie Antoinette to her friend and one time favourite Marie-Thérèse-Louise de Savoie Carignan, Princess de Lambelle (who was murdered by the Paris Mob 3rd September 1793) and passed during the 'Terror' to her relation Madame Ruxelle and taken to Guernsey.

Document Dated 16th February 1835.

David Hockney

From Illustrations for *Six Fairy Tales from the Brothers Grimm*

The Enchantress with the Baby Rapunzel

1969

Etching and aquatint on paper

27 x 23.1cm

The Enchantress in Her Garden

1969

Etching and aquatint on paper

23.2 x 13cm

British Council Collection

Hockney produced 39 etchings to illustrate the book *Six Fairy Tales from the Brothers Grimm* (1970). He chose 'Rapunzel' and five other tales because of their strangeness, the relationships and motivations of their characters and their elements of the supernatural.

In *The Enchantress with the Baby Rapunzel* the pose references Bellini's *Virgin and Child* but is rendered macabre by the hairy chin and hands that hold the infant.

In this work, even without depicting the legendary rope of golden hair central to the story, it is hair that contributes a new dimension to the evil nature of Rapunzel's future jailer.

In this illustration to *Rapunzel*, the Enchantress shows all of the traditional characteristics of the witch with her pointed nose and chin, warts, flaccid breasts, and hairy face, armpits and hands. In the garden scene, she stands with her head dress and broom like a Millet peasant with a rake or paused for the angelus.

However, her hairy drooping breasts and face evoke the sense of a more sinister contemplation.

William Hogarth (1697-1764)

The Bench

originally published 1758

Etching and engraving on paper

31 x 21cm

Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art

Donation, Madden / Arnholz Collection, 1989

The wearing of wigs was adopted by the English judiciary in the 17th century at a time when there was a vogue for long hair and flamboyant wigs among the

aristocracy. Judges and barristers continued to sport elaborate white and grey powdered wigs, long after they had gone out of fashion. In the middle of the 18th century, the wig and its connotations of pretence and self-aggrandisement became a target for satirists of the legal profession, most notably Hogarth. As a response to this the judiciary took to wearing smaller white powdered wigs in the latter half of the 18th century. The bloated dozing figures of the judges are based on real figures including the notoriously cruel Lord Chief Justice, Sir John Willes.

The Company of Undertakers

Published in 1736

Engraving on paper

27 x 18.5cm

Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art

Donation, Madden / Arnholz Collection, 1989

This is a satire on the state of the newly formed medical profession in the 18th century, a favourite target for artists and writers. The print is made to appear like a coat of arms with a mock explanation of the heraldry given at the bottom. Bones feature prominently in the design and the motto 'Et Plurima Mortis Imago' means 'And many an image of death'. Fifteen doctors are depicted. The professionally qualified ones, sniffing the pomander at the top of their canes, are at the bottom. At the top of the image are three quack doctors, notorious for the dubious nature of their cures. The one on the left, an oculist, holds a false eye on his stick. All the figures, professional and amateur, wear elaborate wigs indicative of their pomposity and their desire to present themselves as part of a profession. The figure wearing the hat, in the top centre, is a woman, an infamous bone-setter of the day.

The Five Orders of the Periwigs

1791

Etching on paper

30 x 22cm

Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art

Donation, Madden / Arnholz Collection, 1989

This print, like *The Bench*, is concerned with Hogarth's fascination with the difference between caricature, the distortion of physical features, and character, based on the natural features of the individual. He considered his own work and that of the great masters to belong to the latter, rather than the more vulgar

caricature which was becoming so popular in 18th century London. The five orders referred to in the title are the classical orders of architecture, Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian and Composite. Hogarth uses these to criticise the contemporary taste for classical art and design amongst the aristocracy. He shows the upper levels of society and the professions divided into orders, identifiable by the style of their wigs. The wigs, like classical architecture, are associated with conceit rather than naturalness and authenticity.

Jessica Lagunas

Preoccupation (Gray Hair)

2007

Single-channel digital video

20 minutes

B/W, Silent

Courtesy of the Artist

Jessica Lagunas is a New York-based Guatemalan artist. *Preoccupation (Gray Hair)* leads the viewer to consider the inevitable effects of ageing and the pointlessness of attempts to cover increasingly visible signs of it. The artist films herself methodically pulling out coarse grey hairs from her scalp. She never succeeds in removing all of the hairs, which 'renders the tedious and painful process all the more absurd, and exposes us as the vain and unwitting agents of our own subjection to socio-cultural norms of an ideal feminine'.

The video-performance deals specifically with women's obsession with ageing and grey hair. According to Lagunas in most of her work she deals with 'the condition of woman in contemporary society, questioning her obsessions with body image, beauty, sexuality, and ageing. When I turned 35 years old I had the dilemma of having grey hair or to color my hair - and in one attempt to remain young - I made this video, where I am criticizing these pressures and standards of beauty'.

Stephen Lau

Be Enamored // Greed Punishable

Crime and Consequence // Authentic Self

2016

Pencil and ink on paper

56 x 124cm, each

Courtesy of the Artist

Lau graduated from the National College of Art and Design in 2015. He describes his work as a tool for perverting the relationship that people hold with objects and situations. He creates anthropomorphised objects, frenzied scenarios and macabre motifs. In these works, hair is a linking motif between the two-scroll works, starting as a large tangle in the first, unravelling in the second. Lau says that these two works 'illustrate ritualistic activity within an imagined ceremony. They contain large frenetic processions of people, creating layered scenes of frantic activity that sometimes veil darker acts of devilment. The work builds strange narratives where viewers are confronted with apparent decisive and rigorous absurdity.'

This absurdity works under a delicately balanced system with its own precise rationale and rules. There is the notion that a greater good is at play, giving the chaos some purpose. The work tries to visualise mass hysteria and deals with the ways madness can be cultivated amongst groups of people.

Niamh McGuinne

Wilgefortis

2017

Mixed media prints in a metal mobile frame

205 x 126 x 100cm

Courtesy of the Artist

Niamh McGuinne is a Dublin based visual artist and a member of the Graphic Studio. In April 2017, this work was included in her exhibition of the same title. This focused on representations of hairy women, monsters and beasts and the perceived interchange between these states.

In the 14th century a religious cult surrounding the veneration of female bearded saints surfaced in Europe. The main protagonist was known as St. Wilgefortis of Portugal and her legend recounts how her father promised her in marriage to a pagan. To avoid the marriage, she prayed that she would become ugly and miraculously grew a beard. Refusal to eat as a form of protest is one of the few controls one has over one's body. The body, consequently, stimulates the growth of lanugo or downy hair as it attempts to protect itself from deprivation. The miracle of St. Wilgefortis might be explained by this phenomenon and in 1969 her status of saint-hood was revoked.

Attitudes to hairiness in women changed in later millennia. Hairy women came to be seen as monstrous and beastly and the opposite of their saintly medieval

sisters. Rather than being compared to men or saints, these individuals were invariably grouped with animals, mythical beasts and monsters. *Wilgefortis* allows the viewer to compose and impose notions of what is right and wrong.

Niamh McGuinne

Hirsute

2017

Etching and aquatint on paper

50 x 30cm

Courtesy of the Artist

The portrayal of hair is a fascinating theme; it is an interesting connector between the inner and outer selves; it has been used as symbol of attractiveness and desire. In fairytales, hair can assume a life of its own, continuing to grow after death, symbolising health, vitality and sexuality. It can also serve as a warning that all is not as it seems as in Angela Carter's *The Company of Wolves* from *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. Here she recreates the traditional tale of Red Riding Hood but in her reinterpretation, the young girl on the brink of puberty is not a victim of the wily wolf but a willing partner and capable of looking after herself and the life she chooses. She knows that 'the worst wolves are hairy on the inside', and she shivers; however, she does not shiver because of fear but because of 'the blood she must spill'.

In *Hirsute*, the figure's exposed hairy pelt references her relationship to the wolf, while alluding to her own sexuality. The scissors, which in the fairytale are used to cut open the wolf to release the grandmother, is on hand as she is coming out of her shell, and her lineage as part of the animal world is evident in the brooch she wears.

Alice Maher

1997

Charcoal on paper

370 x 170cm

Courtesy of the Artist

Ombre is part of a triptych of vast charcoal drawings of long, cascading hair, in which Maher examines the story of the penitent Mary Magdalene who is often depicted as completely naked but covered by very long hair. In medieval legend, she became miraculously covered by her hair when she cast off her clothing to

spend a period of repentance as a desert hermit.

The monumental scale of the work, spanning almost four metres in height, transforms the figure, imbuing it with a celestial dimension. The richly dense charcoal used to portray the hair is not blonde as in most historical depictions such as Silvestro dei Gherarducci's *Assumption of Mary Magdalene* in the National Gallery of Ireland. Instead rich, dark shades intermingle to make the tresses of hair resemble a protective cloak.

Recently the term Magdalen has become associated with a generation of women who were locked away for reasons of their perceived promiscuity - enslaved, silenced and shamed. One of the punishments included being shorn of their hair. This silent, anonymous goddess, is hidden behind its shield of hair, either in defiance or in indifference to the society that pronounces its judgement on her. According to Maher, 'As in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, you will find a dislocated world where scale is no longer conditioned by rational circumstances. The 'normal' sized body provides the measure which determines our social and architectural environment. A sudden disruption in scale can have both intriguing and threatening effects...'.

Sampson Towgood Roch

Gaspar Erck

Watercolour on ivory

4.5 x 3.5cm

George Lawrence

Portrait of a Man in a Blue Coat

1793

Watercolour and gouache on ivory

6.6 x 5.1cm

George Lawrence

Hamilton Gorges of Kilbran, Co. Meath

c. 1800

Watercolour on ivory

7.2 x 5.6cm

George Jackson

Self Portrait

1810

Watercolour on ivory

7.1 x 5.7cm

Irish or English School

Thomas St. George Armstrong

Late 18th century

Watercolour on ivory

5.6 x 4.3cm

Collection National Gallery of Ireland

The portrait miniature emerged in the 15th century but it was not until the 17th century that interest in naturalistic portraits took hold. Improvements in the processing of ivory and in the techniques used to adhere the watercolour to the surface meant that there was a growth in popularity in the 18th century. These portraits were valued for their accuracy and intimacy and were commissioned for commemorative occasions such as marriage or as a keepsake during separations due to war, travel or death. They were worn as jewellery in gold pendants, lockets, bracelets and rings. The sitter's initials, mottos and inscriptions were often included on the reverse. It also became the fashion, especially in mourning miniatures, to encase an elaborately woven lock of the sitter's hair as a *memento mori*.

Hair is inexorably connected to life and physical presence; its emotive quality stimulates remembrance of the individual and allows a physical remnant of the deceased to be retained. Its resistance to decay and malleability made it possible to work the strands into elaborate patterns in miniature and also in larger scale wreaths. Wearing jewellery made from hair may be considered a little macabre today but in the 19th century it was common for women to swap locks of hair as a token of love, the hair symbolising a connection and an association between friends or lovers.

Kieran Moore

An heap of Wheat set about with Lilies

Oil on canvas

30 x 25.5cm

Scary Solstice

2010

Pencil on paper

33 x 44cm

Private Collection

The work of Moore, an Irish artist based in Berlin, draws on a mixture of art historical sources and contemporary popular culture. His strange, fluid creations, in which hair is a key feature, interrogate with subtle humour, the boundaries of sexual and gender identities. The title of this work comes from the *Song of Solomon* 7:2 in the Old Testament.

Moore says of *Scary Solstice*, 'My own gods straddle the margins of medieval folklore and the Vaseline-smearred meadows and little paths of horror movie interludes. However, I would like to stress that this may not be merely impudent posturing. There is a sense of something being awry, not quite right, not quite covered. I am not sure if they are brazen in this exhibitionism or just innocently unaware. Their transgressive dress sense is in part inspired by the sleeve of David Bowie's *The Man who Sold the World* (1970), from which emanates a fey, autumnal musk.' Kieran Moore.

Abigail O'Brien

Natural Wax

1995 - 2017

Video Projection

6 Minutes 32 Seconds

Courtesy of the Artist

Abigail O'Brien's work explores themes such as ritual, rites of passage and the domestic realm. She is currently working on *The Cardinal Virtues, Fortitude, Temperance, Prudence and Justice*.

Natural Wax was originally conceived in 1995 as a student project. It has been reworked this year for *Bristle: Hair and Hegemony*. The piece has never been shown in public before. According to O'Brien, 'How women are imaged in the past 20 years has changed very little. In Ireland, body hair on women is considered

taboo and unsightly and from a very young age girls are encouraged to remove it. Women are told that they will be more attractive and desirable if hairless. The text focuses on the contra indications of 'using a home waxing method.'

As the detailed instructions scroll slowly across the screen, they are accompanied by Serge Gainsbourg's *Je t'aime, moi non plus*, recorded in the 1960s. O'Brien recalls how 'when played at a disco in the seventies it created a huge frisson amongst us teenagers. It is one of the very few songs ever to be banned in Ireland, where for many years, ideas of sex or sexual emotions were also considered taboo'. However, it is in the long list of side effects that *Natural Wax* holds our attention. The lengths that are undertaken to present the female body as hairless seems ridiculous when accompanied by the erotic soundtrack.

Ana Maria Pacheco

Hairy Legs of the Queen of Sheba 1-6

2001

Hand coloured screen prints on paper

20.5 x 21.5cm

Courtesy, Pratt Contemporary Art, London

Ana Maria Pacheco (sculptor, painter and printmaker) was born in Brazil. Since 1973 she has lived and worked in England.

The legend of the Queen of Sheba recounts how King Solomon sent a hoopoe bird to find any place that was not subject to his rule. When the bird found the rich, lush land ruled by the Queen of Sheba he arranged for her to meet the King. The Queen was well renowned for her beauty, wealth and power but the King had heard a rumour that she had hairy legs and the hooves of a donkey. To discover the truth, he had a floor constructed of glass under which fish swam and water flowed. The Queen was deceived and lifted her dress to cross the water and revealed her hairy legs. King Solomon insisted that her legs be shaved and the account of Sheba's capitulation became the first mention of subjugation to the ideal of feminine beauty enforced by men. The legend continues that Sheba posed three riddles to test King Solomon which he solved and in turn he wagered that he could fulfil his desire if she took anything from him. By accepting a drink of water, Sheba lost the wager and her fate was sealed. The meeting between the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon exists in Christian, Muslim and Jewish tradition in different versions but most end with the return of the Queen of Sheba to her own realm.

Bharti Parmar

Shag

Human Hair

152.5 x 152.5cm

Courtesy of the Artist

Bharti Parmar has exhibited nationally and internationally for 20 years. Her practice is concerned with the use of human hair as sculptural material. *Shag* is a complex work which attracts and repels in equal measure. It is full of paradoxes: it is large in scale but its construction involves a painstakingly detailed process; it is a carpet but it is fragile; it elicits desire but also elicits disgust as attested by its vulgar double-edged title. *Shag* suggests the body through its absence and evokes a sexual animalistic response in the viewer with its nod towards fetishism and excess.

The hair in *Shag* has been sourced from wig makers' suppliers and originates from Europe and China. Quality human hair has always been expensive to purchase; in the 19th century, the highest prices were paid for blonde and, surprisingly, grey hair for use in hairpieces. Hair from suppliers is costly because of the laborious processing involved; it is washed, de-loused, colour matched, cuticle corrected (strands pointing the right direction) and double drawn (it is as thick at the bottom of the bunch as at the top). *Shag* contains approximately 90 per cent human hair, the rest is high quality Japanese heat-resistant modacrylic fibre used by wigmakers (as expensive as real hair), which the artist has used to build up the texture and pile within the work.

According to Parmar, 'When I neared the end of knotting, the carpet became 'alive'; I thought of it in anthropomorphic terms – it had a total gestation of nine months with two spent on researching and seven months making. Furthermore, I began to liken each hair type with the personality of its owner: blonde hair was unruly when dry, tamed when wet; grey alluring and silk-like but coarse to work with. It is an imprint of humankind – a hybrid mix of people, it has a personality as individual as the hair it contains'.

Kathy Prendergast

The End and the Beginning II 1/3

1996

Hair and spool

5.5 x 4 x 4cm

Collection of the Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon

The work is made of three generations of human hair entwined together – that of the artist, her mother and her son. The small scale and the simplicity of a cotton reel suggest a magical object, like something from a fairytale, where something wonderful or bizarre may happen. The paralleling of human hair with thread equates also to the thread of DNA, the basic genetic structure that binds us to our family and to a predetermined biological pattern. Human hair is one of the most accessible sources of DNA and it can be seen here as a metaphor for the scientific and biological connections that exist between different generations as well as suggesting the marvel of human biology.

Joanne Proctor

Source

2013

Text on Seeds, Human Hair, Glass Petri dishes

Courtesy of the Artist

Drawing Breath

2013

Hand Stitched Human Hair on Paper

57 x 77cm

Courtesy of the Artist

Nest

2013

Pigment Dots and Hand Stitched Human Hair on Paper

57 x 77cm

Courtesy of the Arts Council Collection, Northern Ireland

Joanne Proctor is an award winning contemporary visual artist based in Northern Ireland. In *Source*, words such as being, becoming, roots, renewal, time, change and potential are hand written directly onto seeds which are held inside small glass petri dishes alongside others containing human hair. Like a seed, a strand of human hair holds all the DNA necessary to build a profile of an individual,

while all the time lying dormant until it is examined, extracted and built. An individual seed holds the potential for growth and an ability to multiply only when exposed to favourable conditions. In each case, as long as the core material is held in suspended animation, its future viability is always a potential possibility. *Source* has the appearance of a scientific experiment whereby change, growth and potential await the right moment in time and technology.

In *Drawing Breath*, Proctor's process of using hair to create her work is intricate, delicate and highly labour intensive. Collecting hair that falls away naturally from her hairbrush she threads each strand individually and uses several to produce her line elaborately in stitch. She believes that it is an effective way to carry her actual DNA into her art work. By using her own hair, Proctor ensures that her ownership of these art works is inarguable.

The hand-stitched *Drawing Breath* is a biological drawing of bronchial breathing tubes, the passage by which we breathe in life.

Nest uses an image of the female reproductive system to relate to the cycle of life and is symbolic of the potential for new life, growth and change. Time and identity are very much at the core of her practice.

The stitched line drawing, made of human hair, while two dimensional, has a tactile quality. The stitches are more reminiscent of surgical stitching than embroidery, an occupation traditionally associated with women. In using hair, Proctor brings ideas of mortality into the work, the once growing but now dead hairs highlight the vulnerability of the body and its critical organs.

Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669)

The Great Jewish Bride

1635

Etching on paper

21.3 x 26.2cm

Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art

Donation, Madden / Arnholz Collection, 1989

Portraits play a very important part in Rembrandt's oeuvre. Between 1633 and 1664 he finished about twenty portrait etchings. Most were produced as studies for facial expressions and not for commercial publication. The title of 'The Great Jewish Bride' was provided by the eighteenth-century collector Valerius Röver but this print is also known in more modern times as 'Esther before her visit to Ahasuerus'. In this interpretation Esther is awaiting her audience with her

husband King Ahasuerus in order to plead on the behalf of the Jews living in Persia. The subject is from the Book of Esther in the Old Testament. Haman, a councillor to the king is angered by the lack of respect shown to the king by Esther's cousin Mordechai and calls for his execution and that of the entire Jewish nation as an act of revenge. In her left hand, the figure holds the decree ordering their extermination.

Her long, magnificently detailed tresses accentuate her femininity. Her hair is a potent symbol of the figure's beauty, strength and allure which is not referred to in either her clothing nor jewellery. This etching was executed in 1635 when Rembrandt was 29 years old and the model for the bride was his wife Saskia whom he married in 1634.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882)

Jane Burden, aged 18, as Queen Guinevere

1858

Ink, graphite and wash with white highlights on paper

48.3 x 35.3 cm

National Gallery of Ireland Collection

The depiction of hair was a central feature of Pre-Raphaelite art and that of its leading exponent Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In this drawing of Jane Burden, the artist pays close attention to the young woman's face and her dark, wavy hair. In contrast to the other parts of the work, including her submissive but prominent hands, her hair appears vigorous. Close attention is paid to the way the light is reflected on its lustrous surface. It augments the large eyes and sensual lips of the sitter. Rossetti's treatment of hair in such works contradicted the prevailing attitude of Victorian society which had strict conventions regarding the wearing of a woman's hair. Rather than being allowed to hang freely, long hair was supposed to be tied up from adolescence onwards although this did not prevent widespread interest in hairstyles which were constantly subject to changing fashions. While Burden was blessed with shiny curly hair, it was quite common for less fortunate Victorian women to use hair pieces to make their hair look fuller and to make use of devices for crimping their hair. Burden married William Morris, a close friend of Rossetti, two years after this work was made and she acted as muse and model to both artists in the following years.

Kiran Riaz*East Meets West***2016****Digital print on canvas tiles****244 x 152.4cm****Courtesy of the Artist**

Kiran Riaz grew up in Pakistan and moved to Dublin to study for her MA at the National College of Art and Design in 2015-16. Her work deals with cultural perceptions and her own experience of living between East and West and explores terrorism, religion and stereotypes of eastern men as adversaries post 9/11. *East meets West* imitates Islamic mosaic tiling, by using small squares on which are printed photographs of men from the West and the East, all wearing beards. Together the squares and the images coalesce to form a picture of the 17th century Wazir Khan mosque in Lahore in Pakistan. This building was central to the Mughal empire, noted for the religious and cultural plurality and diversity of its population. It continues to function today. The work hints at how a superficial preoccupation with appearance can affect our understanding of other cultures and religions and equally interrogates the idea of globalism and the apparent insignificance of cultural and national boundaries in the 21st century.

David Shrigley*Magnified Hairs***1998****Pen on paper****24.5 x 26cm****British Council Collection**

English artist, David Shrigley was shortlisted for the Turner Prize in 2013 and is best known for his drawings and photographs, which make witty observations on mundane situations from everyday life. While drawing is at the centre of his practice, the artist also works across an extensive range of media including sculpture, large-scale installation, animation, painting, photography and music. According to Shrigley 'magnification reveals nature to be boring'. In *Magnified Hairs* Shrigley divides the page into two zones; hair and magnified hair but neither are really any more explanatory than the other. It is a simplified view of a simplified subject. Such literal-mindedness has an immediate comic effect, toying with our expectations of the subject. He is particularly well known for stating

the obvious and in doing so making a statement of the humdrum. It is tempting to see the work as mocking the viewers' curiosity, in its elevation of the ordinary and its playful take on abstraction.

So Yoon Lym

From *The Dreamtime*

Angel

Juan

2010

Digital archival prints on Hahnemuhle paper

55.9 x 76.2cm

Courtesy of the Artist

So Yoon Lym was born in Seoul, Korea and spent her early childhood in Uganda and Kenya. At the age of seven her family emigrated to the United States where they settled in northern New Jersey where she currently lives and works.

The Dreamtime, the series to which *Angel* and *Juan* belong, is inspired by the Australian Aboriginal stories and visions of creation. *The Dreamtime* paintings are depictions of the hairstyles of teenage students that the artist documented from 2001-09 at the JFK High School in Paterson, New Jersey. Painting these hairstyles was a point of departure in her work, as it enabled her to make 'visual connections and tell parallel stories of the work of the braider, who like the artist and the original Aboriginals, recover the mythical past of the natural world and its creation of age old signs and images by re-telling new stories to new generations.'

Each braided pattern is a map of the ancient universe, a topographical palimpsest of the world in pattern: valleys, mountains, forests, oceans, rivers, streams. The painter and the hair-braider, according to So Yoon Lym, 'lays down their marks like their predecessor creator beings, carving and inscribing, creating and being, in turn, created by their labor. These braid patterns are the language for the new aboriginal, the transplanted and de-territorialized nomad. The braid patterns both record journeys to the present and re-present cartographical longings; they are a stamp of entry into a brave new world order while simultaneously remembering prehistory.'

Highlanes Gallery

Published on the occasion of the exhibition

Bristle: Hair and Hegemony

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for Highlanes Gallery, July 2017

with exhibiting artists

James Barry, Christina Bunello, Frederic William Burton, Kate Byrne, Helen Chadwick, Harry Clarke, Sarah Cullen, Matthew and Mary Darly, Albrecht Dürer, Andrew Folan, Saidhbhín Gibson, Jane Giffney, Beatrice Glenavy, Hashiguchi Goyo, Paddy Graham, Sarah Cecilia Harrison, David Hockney, William Hogarth, George Jackson, Jessica Lagunas, Stephen Lau, George Laurence, So Yoon Lym, Alice Maher, Kieran Moore, Niamh McGuinne, Abigail O'Brien, Ana Maria Pacheco, Bharti Parmar, Kathy Prendergast, Joanne Proctor, Rembrandt van Rijn, Kiran Riaz, Sampson Towgood Roch, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, David Shrigley

Exhibition Curators: Roisin Kennedy, Lecturer at the School of Art History & Cultural Policy, University College Dublin, Niamh McGuinne, artist and paper conservator, National Gallery of Ireland, and Aoife Ruane, Director, Highlanes Gallery.

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Highlanes Gallery is open 6 days a week, Monday – Saturday 10.30am–5.00pm, Closed Sunday

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