



Atushi Kaga's work is somehow both silly and profound

EXHIBIT A SOPHIE GORMAN

Bunnies, slogans and doughnuts? It must be an arts festival

Take one giant bunny rabbit, add in a weeping panda and a smoking pink skull wearing shades and you've got yourself one hot young artist with a pronounced sense of humour.

Bearing the cumbersome title of *In the dark or outside of the light*, this piece features in the even more unwieldy 'I want to give love to socially neglected parts of you, that's my mission', an exhibition of new work by Japanese artist Atushi Kaga in the Butler Gallery as part of the Kilkenny Arts Festival (www.kilkennyarts.ie).

A major arts festival typically means the same big names being wheeled out year after year, which makes it most refreshing to see the Kilkenny Arts Festival championing bright young things.

As an 18-year-old, Kaga apparently dreamt of becoming a stand-up comedian and his work is stamped with his wry look at a world that is simultane-

ously brutally dark and joyously funny.

Kaga actually studied in our own NCAD, graduating just three years ago, and is currently taking part in the international residency programme in Temple Bar Studios. His work is instantly identifiable for the way it combines elements of cultural politics and his own identity, managing to be both frivolous and profound.

In this show, for example, the silly bunny, the melancholic panda and sombre kangaroo that pop up in various pieces are all different facets of his own personality. Doughnuts also feature heavily – apparently the result of a recent trip home to Japan – and 'Welcome to Doughnut Heaven' is emblazoned in Japanese across the top of the vast centrepiece, which also features bunny as some kind of superhero whose mission is to lead us all to supersweet heaven.

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