

Ben Eastham, 'Dublin Gallery Weekend'
art agenda, New York, 30 November 2017

art agenda

by BEN EASTHAM

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Dublin Gallery Weekend

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, Dublin
November 23–26, 2017

Dublin is a dirty and disjointed city, a tangle of loosely connected neighborhoods best navigated on foot. On arrival my smartphone gave up the ghost, transforming the schedule of Dublin Gallery Weekend—a semi-coordinated program of exhibition openings, performances, and events—into a Situationist strategy. Deprived of online mapping services, I was forced to plot unusual paths between galleries across the city using a frayed, decade-old mental map. The resulting three-day drift along canal towpaths, through post-industrial edgelands, and down streets named for poets made it impossible to disentangle the experience of art from the emotional disorientation of travelling through the city hosting it.

I muse on how Dublin has been defined by its proximity to the sea—Viking slaving hub, prosperous trading port, fortified English foothold—as I traipse west along the torpid Liffey towards Mother's Tankstation. I arrive at the gallery just in time to catch the climactic end of Rosalind Nashashibi's *Electrical Gaza* (2015), one in a program of screenings titled

"Being Infrastructural" and curated by the Dublin-based writer Maeve Connolly. Nashashibi's eighteen-minute film (also on view in the Turner Prize exhibition at Ferens Gallery, Hull) combines live footage and animated images to conjure the febrile atmosphere of a city under siege. The contrast with the interior of the gallery—warmed by a freestanding iron stove, the audience plied with hot drinks—was in one obvious sense pronounced. Yet Nashashibi refuses to exoticize a city familiar from sensational news footage, focusing instead on the universal and everyday rituals—playing, shopping, gossiping, swimming—through which a unique sense of Palestinian community is fostered. The act of convening to watch and discuss films is just such an activity, albeit a privileged one; that these screenings are free to attend, open to all, and address the infrastructures on which societies depend makes it possible to reflect upon and expand that privilege. "Being Infrastructural" offers a reminder that communities are not merely the "same people living in the same place,"⁽³⁾ but are forged through cooperative activities, in communal spaces, in a dialogue of diverse voices, towards a shared system of values.



Rosalind Nashashibi, *Electrical Gaza*, 2015.

Rosalind Nashashibi, *Electrical Gaza*, 2015. HD video, 17:53 minutes.
Installed at Mother's Tankstation, Dublin.
Image courtesy of Rosalind Nashashibi and LUX, London.

(3) The definition of a nation given by Leopold Bloom—a cosmopolitan Irish Jew—to refute the one-eyed nationalist in Barney Kiernan's pub. James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Oxford: Bodley Head, 1993), 12.403.

Ben Eastham is assistant editor at art-agenda and co-founder of The White Review. He is the co-author with Katya Tylevich of *My Life as a Work of Art* (Laurence King, 2016).