

Enniskillen: Recent Work of David Rankin

Hazelhurst Regional Gallery
14 October – 27 November 2011

About David Rankin

1946 Born in England

1949 Migrated with his family to Australia. Growing up in Gymea, Rankin's father was gardener for the Broadhurst's, the original owners of Hazelhurst, and his grandmother was their housekeeper.

1966 -74 Teacher in NSW

1968 Began exhibiting his paintings

1975 Established Port Jackson Press, publishing original prints by many important Australian artists.

1983 Awarded the Wynne Prize, AGNSW

1989 Moved to New York City with wife Lily Brett, a poet and novelist.

1997 Fire ravished his Manhattan Studio. His work changes.

2010 -11 Worked on Enniskillen series.

David Rankin is an Australia artist who has lived in New York for the last 22 years. His past bodies of work have covered the physical landscape, from the deserts in Australia to Mexico, other peoples' journeys which incorporate the unspeakable tragedies of the C20th and the holocaust, while Rankin's own existential thoughts involve transcendancy or 'humanism'¹.

About *Enniskillen: Recent Work of David Rankin*

More recently he has turned to his own family history and investigated where his father's family comes from, Enniskillen in Ireland. Rankin started with an IRA bombing in Enniskillen on Remembrance Day in 1987, where people had gathered around the town cenotaph to commemorate their war dead. Of the 11 people killed and 63 injured, Rankin lost an Uncle and Aunty. Rankin had not previously embraced being Irish because that represented his father. The artist is discovering the darkness of his own past and recollecting what it is to grow up as an Irish migrant family. This exhibition can be seen as the artist coming to terms with the black rages of a violent and alcoholic father who saw Rankin not as the artist he wanted to be, but as "the shoe maker the father was - and the boxer he'd wanted to be."²

David Rankin began his art process by searching the internet for images from the 1987 Enniskillen bombing. He then printed these images and to make them his own, began to draw boxes around them. In his working drawings we can see quotes from the artist, from his wife Lily Brett the writer, and others. Initially he questioned using others suffering, but ultimately he embraced these images as his own, transforming them. He has used recurring images, such as Jacob's Ladder, mandalas, the angel of small repair and Arthur Stace's Eternity. These images and words connect to his ideas of spirituality and redemption.

Rankin's concepts were achieved through his observation of a broken roof, extended to create a mandala, then by stretching the triangular shapes contained he created an abstract figurative form called 'the angel of small repair'. A ladder appears as Jacob's Ladder, connecting angels from heaven to earth, a living hell. The ladder is also a form he has sculpted over the last 15 years, representing husband and wife.

Rankin's material practice layers collaged images from the internet with his personal signs such as ladders or angels of small repair. His painting style is derived from abstract expressionism or the New York School of Art, think Jackson Pollock. However early on Rankin's painting style is described as lyrical abstraction.

Rankin has described the large painting *Enniskillen - Luz Perpetua Triptych* 2011, as a 'veil of tears'. This may be a response to the bombing in Enniskillen, but Rankin was also a witness to the Twin Tower terrorist attacks of 9/11 in New York in 2001 and has spoken of the fact that there were no living victims of this attack. In the days after the attack, people posted missing notices for their lost ones on street walls, and this gave the inspiration for the display of the pages from his sketchbook.

¹ humanism- an approach that focuses on human values and concerns,
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

² Sydney Morning Herald, Weds 12 October 2011, p 14

Years 7 to 12

Look at the exhibition.

List images that recur in this exhibition.

What techniques have been used?

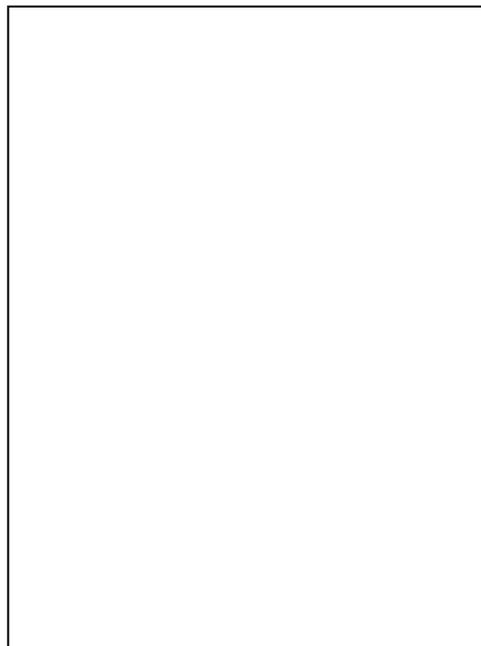
What colour scheme has been used? Discuss scale and size.

Frames

1. Look at *Husband and Wife* 2007.

This sculpture has been made with mixed media and kiln dried bamboo. David Rankin has been making husband and wife images for the past 15 years as a representation of himself and his wife the writer Lily Brett.

Draw this sculpture:



Consider the recurring shapes and direction. How does this work convey the idea of a union between husband and wife? (structural frame)



Figure of Small Repair 1, 2010

2. Look at *Figure of Small Repair 1, 2010*. Acrylic and collage on black canvas. What images do you see? Are these figures or sculptures? What images are layered on top? How does it make you feel? What personal thoughts do you think the artist is conveying? (subjective frame)

Conceptual Framework

3. *Pages from the Hazelhurst and Enniskillen Sketchbooks 2010 - 2011*

List the recurring images.

How has Rankin recontextualised these images?

Consider colour, tone and words. What is their visual impact?

How does the audience respond to this work?

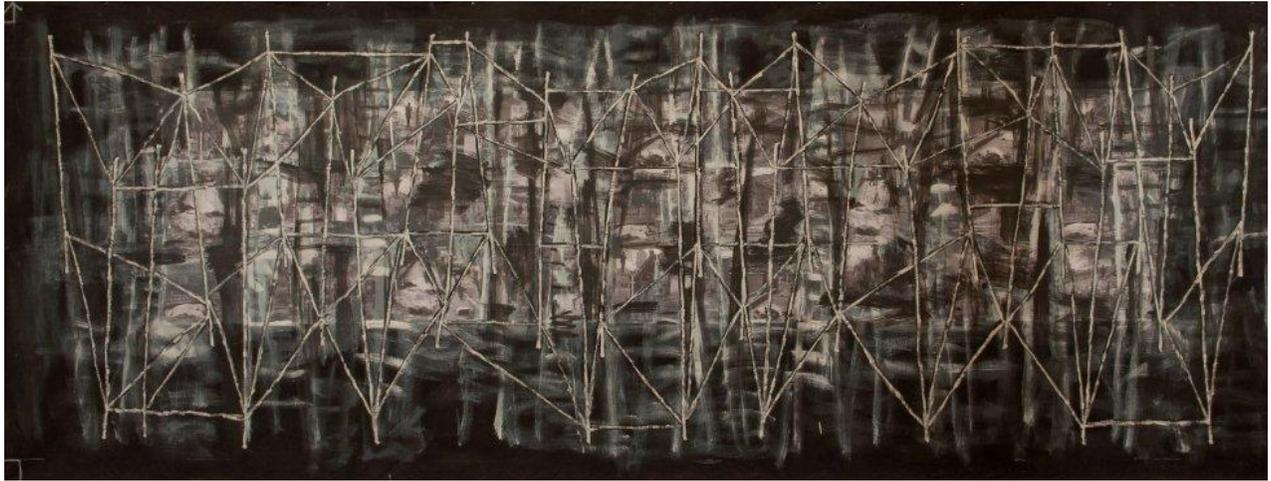
(artwork/ postmodern frame/ audience)

4. Look at *Enniskillen- Luz Perpetua Triptych* 2010.

Consider the visual signs such as direction, tone, movement and paint application. What do you see?

The artist has also called this painting “veil of tears”. How does the work convey his idea of emotion?

(artwork/ structural frame)

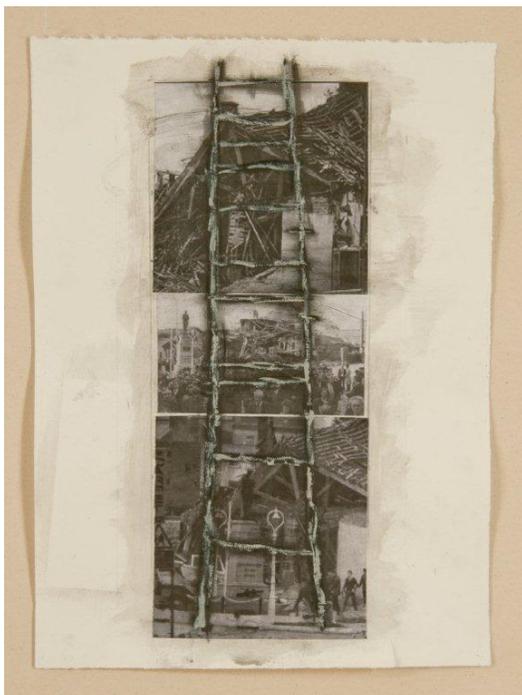


Enniskillen – Nameless Embrace, 2010

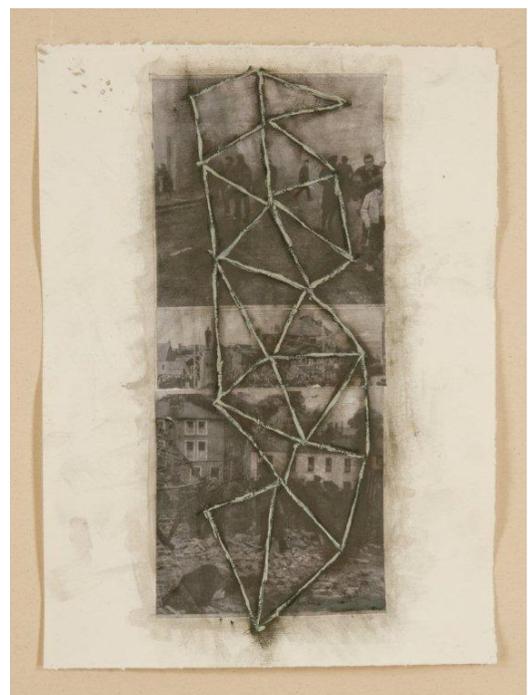
5. *Enniskillen – Nameless Embrace, 2010*. Acrylic, charcoal and collage on black canvas. This large painting is taken from newspaper photos of the Enniskillen bombing.

The artist has used layering to conceal the gravity of the subject matter.

Look at the images. Consider the formal qualities such as shape and tone. What mood is conveyed? How is the somberness of the subject matter transcended? (artwork/ structural frame)



Jacob's Ladder- Aspiration 2010



Small Repair – Families 2010

6. *Jacob's Ladder- Aspiration, Triptych and Ruin*, 2010

Small Repair -Responders, Families and Memorial, 2010

This series of works has two layers. Look at images in the collaged material and the images drawn on top.

What is displayed? What does the layering suggest?

Consider both sets of works placement in relation to each other.

What meaning is implied? (artwork/ structural frame)

7. Explain how has Rankin's material practice connects to world events. (artwork/ structural frame/ world)
