

At the Talbot Rice Gallery – Stephen Brandes

At the Talbot Rice which is situated in the far corner of the Old College Quad a first Scottish exhibition for an Irish artist.

Parc du Souvenir

Stephen Brandes

29 October – 17 December 2016



Exhibiting in Scotland for the first time, Cork-based artist Stephen Brandes presents a new body of work including a monumental drawing, a dual screen video, a series of framed works and an outdoor sculptural billboard all in the historic Old College Quad.

Parc du Souvenir gives form to both an interrelated and seemingly incongruous nebula of ideas and interests: from modern European history, Enlightenment philosophy, expressions of ideology in rural and urban environments, architecture and monuments, the Northern Romantic Landscape tradition, Dada and Constructivist collage. Connecting these areas is the idea that affliction and wrongness provide a relevant, alternative aesthetic to classical notions of beauty.

Brandes got the original idea for the show after reading *Cities in Evolution* by the radical Scottish sociologist and city planner Patrick Geddes, closely followed by Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum*.

The differences between these individuals could not be more profound.

Geddes' ideology was symptomatic of the Victorian culture of empire and philanthropy, though equally and conversely non-conformist. He was drawn to the improvement of civic wellbeing through ideas founded in botanical study. Grass, adversely, witnessed the utter destruction of his bipartite birthplace. the Free City of Danzig, now Gdańsk. Once a great and important Hanseatic port, part Polish, part Prussian, it fell firstly under Nazism and later through Soviet invasion. Geddes the scientist was a dreamer drawn to mysticism,

Grass the fabulist and satirist, a pragmatic socialist, instrumental in the reformation of German post-war politics. Both made remarkable achievements and both suffered the consequences of historical circumstance at varying points in their lives.

"There is no cohesive thesis to be sought here, no tidy packaging of contents. What is aimed for is a particular sentiment, one that sits between the endeavours of human ambition and its recurrent failures in a balanced mixture of poignancy and humour." Stephen Brandes 2016