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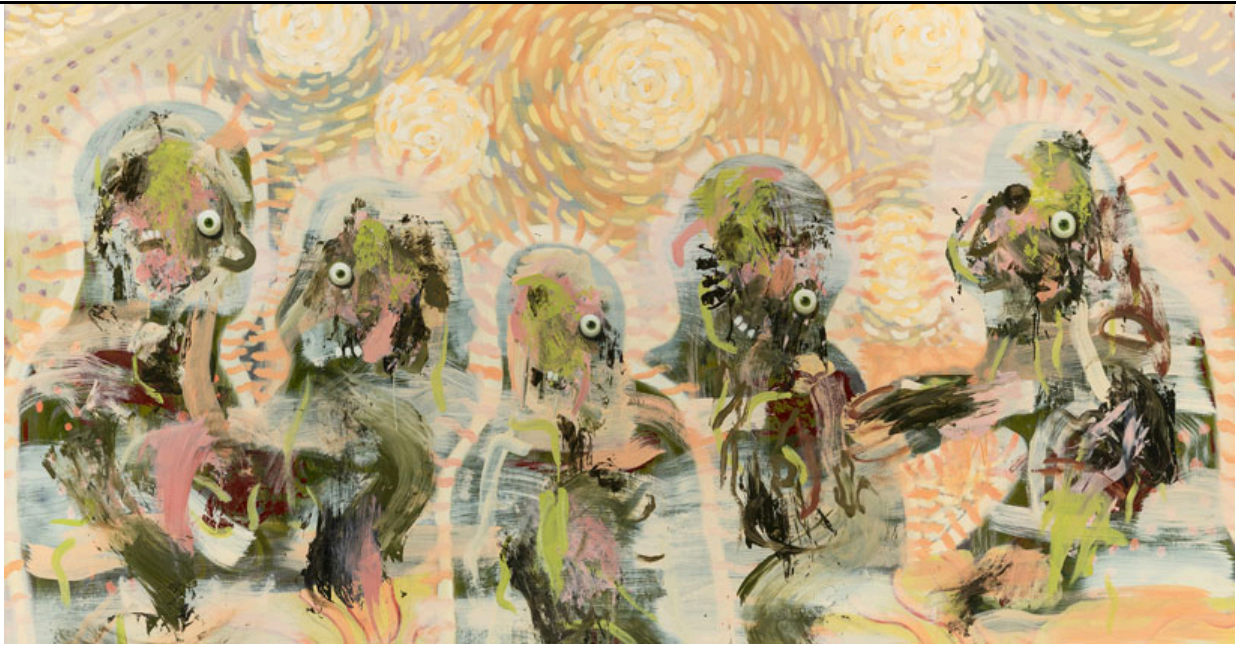
WINTER 2022

VOLUME 39. NO. 4

Blighted culture

Seán Kissane explores the work of Kevin Mooney, in which complex webs of history and cultural references abound





Kevin Mooney *Blighters* (detail) 2018-2021 oil on canvas 160 x 220cm

Seán Kissane explores the work of Kevin Mooney, in which complex webs of history and cultural references abound

Circularity, transformation and shapeshifting lie at the heart of Kevin Mooney's painting practice. He mines Irish cultures in search of a new art history that might address the gaps in our shared material culture, impoverished as it was through colonial hegemony. He takes well-known and sometimes clichéd tropes of Irishness and looks at them askew. What is revealed is far less familiar and more uncanny than may initially have seemed the case.



man and woman. Mooney's painting captures this spirit in this process. Mooney piles a patchwork of mythological and contemporary references on top of each other to arrive at this image. At the centre of the picture is a vagina, derived from a Sheela na gig carved in stone and framed by fingers. Like Cú Chulainn, the figure has seven toes at the end of each of its legs. The stormclouds in the background could be giant wings, or a spiralling energy that evokes the special effects of 1980s horror movies. The different painting processes produce an expressionistic mood and this suggests the violence of the metamorphosis, giving the surface a haptic quality.

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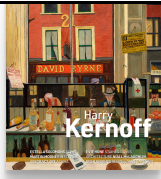
An example is *Ilcruthach* (Fig 3). *Ilcruthach* or *Ílimhne fhial ilcruthach* is a shapeshifting fairy from Celtic mythology. She is beautiful, but also malign, and moves through boundaries of human and animal, mortal and immortal, man and woman. Mooney's painting captures this spirit in this process. Mooney piles a patchwork of mythological and contemporary references on top of each other to arrive at this image. At the centre of the picture is a vagina, derived from a Sheela na gig carved in stone and framed by fingers. Like Cú Chulainn, the figure has seven toes at the end of each of its legs. The stormclouds in the background could be giant wings, or a spiralling energy that evokes the special effects of 1980s horror movies. The different painting processes produce an expressionistic mood and this suggests the violence of the metamorphosis, giving the surface a haptic quality.

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ARTIST

Kevin Mooney



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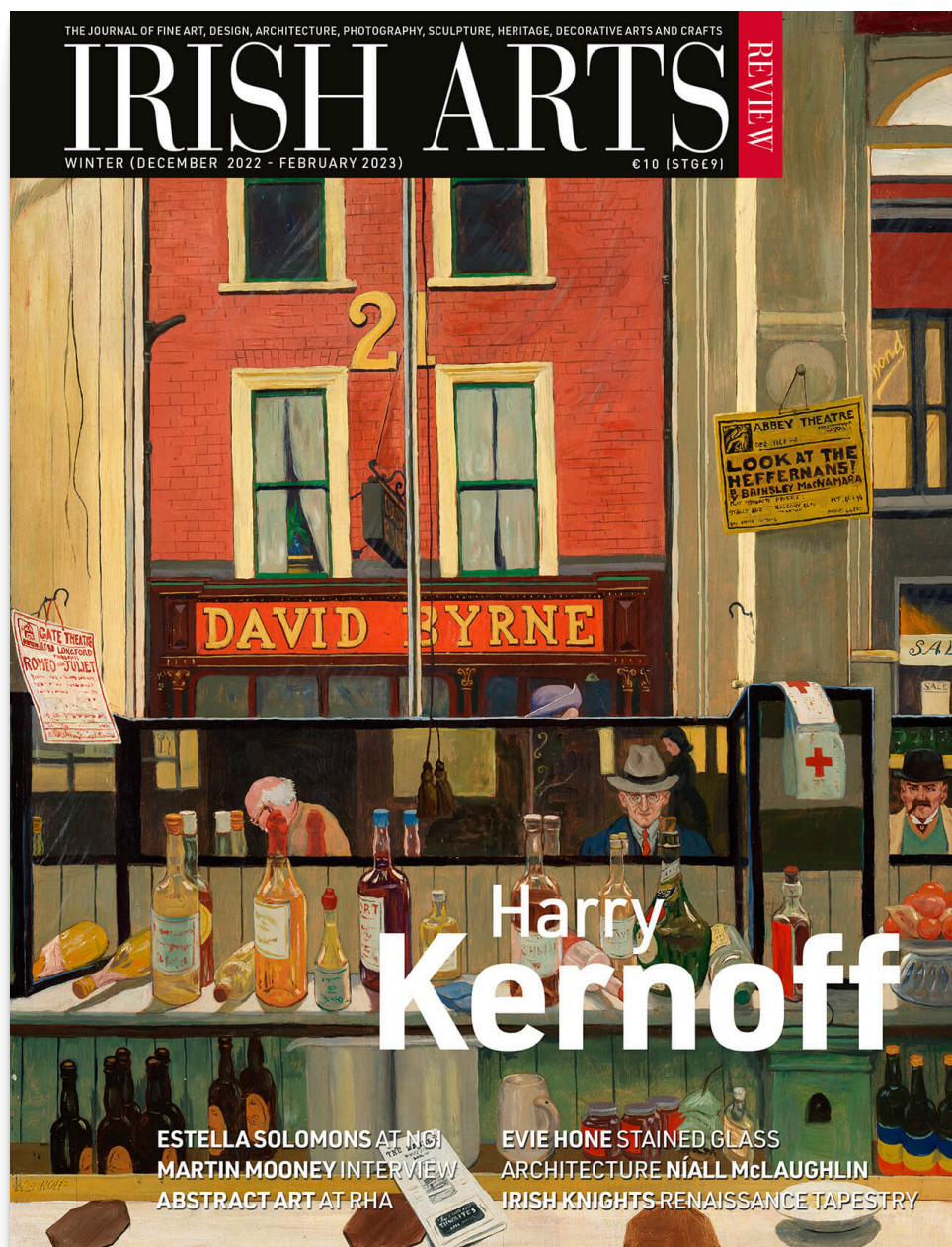
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