

# PRAXES

PRAXES presents cycles of exhibitions and activities revolving around two distinct artistic practices. This cycle runs August — December 2013

CYCLE 1

HAND OUT N° 3

## Gerard Byrne

GERARD BYRNE uses photographic, video, and live art to explore the ambiguities inherent in revisiting the legacies of cultural forms such as theater, photography, and magazines. Engaging ideas of episodic patterns and the temporality of reconfiguration – found throughout Byrne’s practice – five exhibition modules are presented at PRAXES this fall and announced in a script that loosely references, directs, and annotates the shifting works on show. Organized as a reverse chronological journey, the timetable soon reveals itself as a gesture of staged surprise encounters and performed interpretations – as is often the case in Byrne’s transformation of historical sources.

*Hommes à femmes (Michel Debrane)* is a dramatization of an interview with Jean-Paul Sartre originally published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* in 1977. As the French actor Debrane portrays Sartre as the self-appointed “liberal male chauvinist,” answering questions about his relationship with women, the camera seeks out objects within the apartment – a pipe, a *Le Monde* newspaper – cuing the typical idea of the great French intellectual. Byrne’s addition of English subtitles, which trail off in accordance to the shortened English translation, points to the multi-layered staging of a conversation that was as much a performance as any of the ensuing interpretations.

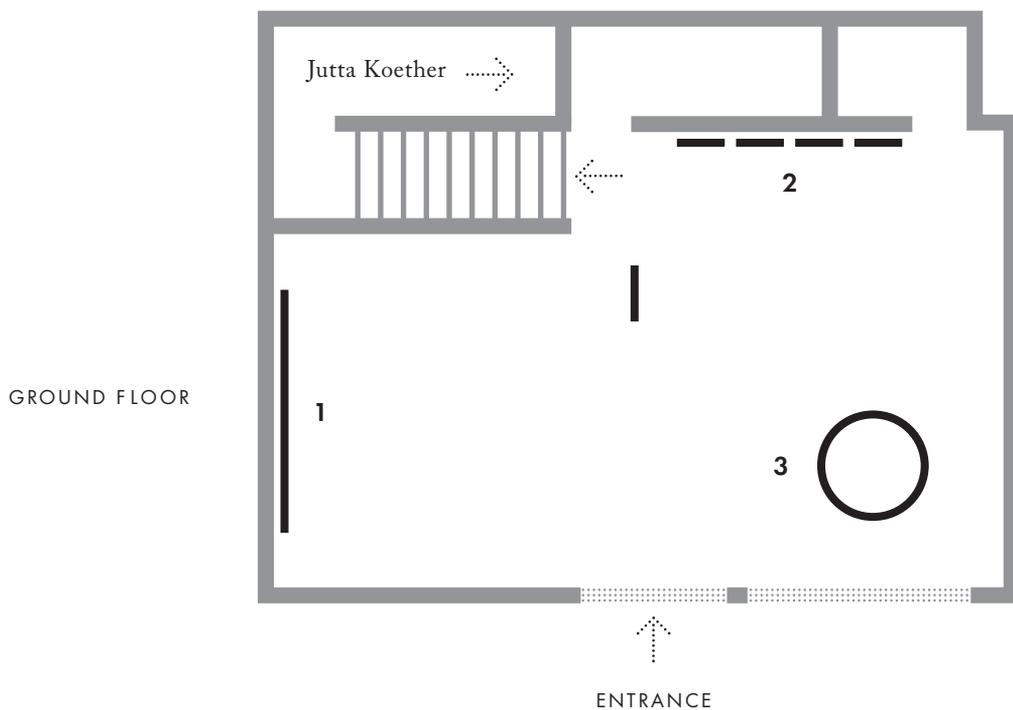
“The only option on the Imperial is a power sliding roof. Every luxury is standard. And there are more luxuries standard than any car in America.” These are the words of Lee Iacocca, former chairman of Chrysler, talking to Frank Sinatra in an advertisement in the November 1980 issue of *National Geographic* magazine. Written as a stilted dialogue barely hiding its high-powered propaganda, Byrne re-stages the text in *Why it’s time for Imperial, again* by having two wooden actors meander in a desolate post-industrial suburbia, uncomfortably stuttering through the technical details of the ad.

Carrying over from the previous exhibition module, a makeshift tree stands in the corner. A reconstruction of a 1961 stage prop by Alberto Giacometti for Samuel Beckett’s play, *Waiting for Godot* (that was never preserved and is thus recreated based on partial documentation), the object is both remnant, sculpture, and prop – a complete, present artwork, as well as lifeless, citational backdrop awaiting its enactment on site.

The source material of the three works spans a period of about twenty years – stretching from the 1980 ad back to the 1961 Giacometti tree. A theatrical clash of familiarity and alienation, Byrne highlights the configurations of the modern subject: from the American dreamer aggressively talking up future supercars in a wasteland void of transportation, to the frail chauvinist-cum-existentialist, to the symbolic Sisyphean fate of Beckett’s everyman, stuck with a naked tree.

**Gerard Byrne** In 2007, Byrne represented Ireland at the 52nd Biennale di Venezia. Other major presentations of the artist’s work include dOCUMENTA (13), Whitechapel Gallery, London, and currently Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm. Byrne lives in Dublin and is a professor at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen.

- 1** *Hommes à femmes*  
(Michel Debrane). 2004.  
Single channel video projection.
- 2** *Why it's time for the Imperial, again.*  
1998-2002. Single channel video, four  
color photographs, Unicol stand.
- 3** A reconstruction based on a tree  
made by Alberto Giacometti for the  
1961 Paris production of *Waiting for  
Godot* (Odéon Théâtre de l'Europe)



## CYCLE 1: GERARD BYRNE

- 31 August – 15 September: Recent works  
 19 September – 29 September: Older works  
 2 October – 20 October: Early works  
 23 October – 17 November: Around that time  
 20 November – 14 December: Just before that