

An aerial photograph of a city, showing a prominent grid street pattern on the left and a complex highway interchange on the right. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent grid pattern.

8-13.10.18

# Suburban Cookie Collector

Michael Dignam

featuring "*Them Three*" by Colm Reynor

## **Rua Red**

South Dublin Arts Centre

Tallaght

Dublin 24

## **Opening Reception**

8th October 6pm - 9pm

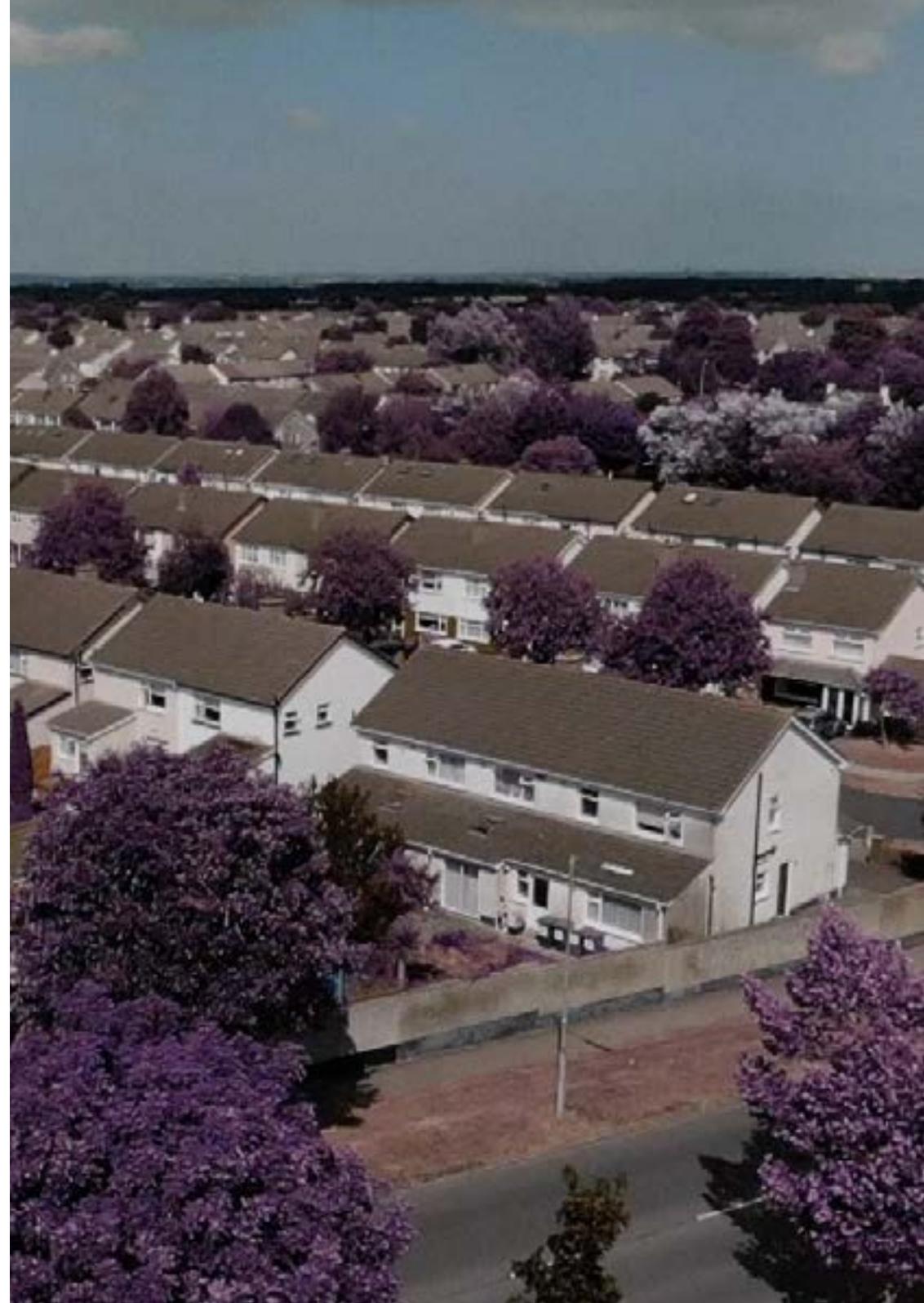
## **Exhibition Finishes**

13th October 6pm

Michael Dignam (b. 1982, Dublin) is an artist based in London. He completed an MFA at Goldsmiths University, London (2016), and a BA in Fine Art Sculpture from the National College of Art and Design, Dublin (2013). He was awarded the NCAD Student of the Year Award in 2013 and a Junior Fellowship in 2016 in the PhD Art Department, Goldsmiths University, London.

Working predominantly with photography techniques combined with moving image and digital manipulations his work explores forms of living and labour. Growing up in Dublin, Ireland, he developed an interest in the metropolitan and has a useful, but not destructive, self awareness of socialisation having been brought up on the fringe of the city, displaced from the inner city in a familiar cycle of 'spent' urban planning. He has shown his work both nationally and internationally.

[www.michaeldignam.eu](http://www.michaeldignam.eu)





What dynamics and social structures form in a constructed space? Does it shape who we are? Are we defined by that place?

To mark the end of his Creative Ireland bursary period, Michael Dignam will exhibit a video work: *Suburban Cookie Collector*. The video resulted from situations set up by the artist through a process of dialogue and collaboration with various individuals from Tallaght.

It explores how Tallaght is constructed, depicted, both stigmatized and celebrated using a mixture of moving image, found footage, photography, and the sonic. The research-based work seeks to look at the conditions, events and histories of Tallaght in an expanded form focusing on a particular starting point from the past and its relationship to the present and the future. Exploring history and geographies, the work identifies physically, psychologically and culturally constructed separations and connections. The motivation for this research is Dignam's own upbringing in Tallaght.

The work is comprised of a short film scored by local producer Alan Keegan, a series of interviews with a number of locals recounting their upbringing in Tallaght, and an accompanying text by local writer Colm Reynor who will also present a creative writing workshop.

## **Suburban Cookie Collector part 1, 5 channel audio, 30min interviews**

### **1. Emmet Kirwan**

Emmet Kirwan is an actor playwright and poet. He has been a feature of Irish theatre, film and television for over 15 years. He is a graduate of the Samuel Beckett Centre, Trinity College Dublin. His first full-length play, Dublin Oldschool has had a series of sell out runs at Project Arts centre, toured internationally and opened in the National Theatre in London in January 2017. Dublin Oldskool has since been made into a feature length film which has been shown nationally and is due to be screened as part of the BFI film festival in London. He is also the recipient of The Stewart Parker trust major bursary award 2014 for Dublin Oldschool, Emmet and actor Ian Lloyd Anderson shared the best performer award for Tiger Dublin Fringe 2014 it was also nominated for the First Forth-night award and The Bewleys Little Gem award. He wrote and starred in the Irish Television comedy series Sarah and Steve for Accomplice Television and RTE, the Irish national broadcaster. Short Films include Escape Plans (Calipo films) Outside (Still Films) Other Plays include RIOT for This Is Pop Baby, Winner of best production Tiger Dublin Fringe 2016 Emmet was also nominated as best performer.

### **2. Paul Chillage**

Radio broadcaster/producer and radio/club dj since 1996 mainly on Dublin's Xfm with the electronic music arts show "The Chillage Idiots" but has also had solo shows on PowerFm and Nova Dance. Has possibly played every club in Dublin and also played internationally in the UK, EU and USA. Music style ranges from classical, ambient and experimental to house, techno and drum & bass.

<https://www.mixcloud.com/paulchillage/>

### **3. Ciara Glynn**

Ciara is a Mental Health advocate and a Peer Support Worker. She is part of the first wave of Peer Support Workers employed by the HSE in 2017. Peer Support Workers are employed to share their own experience of living with poor mental health and recovery to inspire those who still suffer. Ciara's main passion in life is all things mental health - breaking ignorance and stigma whilst promoting social inclusion and equality for those who live with mental health difficulties is top of her agenda. Ciara is currently studying for a masters in Mental Health in Trinity which she believes can only further ignite that passion.

### **4. Pauly Doyle**

Pauly is a DJ, Promoter and the founder of the Bear in Mind. He has been actively involved in the Dublin electronic music scene for the past 6 or 7 years playing various clubs and parties around the city, but after battling with long-term mental health issues he decided to give some of his attention to starting a mental community called Bear in Mind which started in 2016 which ran various nights around the city to highlight issues in regards to wellbeing. Bear in Mind is about to start operating as a social enterprise and will be partnering up with various businesses, collective's and festival's around the country to help promote wellbeing and manage mental health within the creative community from Dj's, promoters, festival goers, writer's, actor's and all manner of creative artists in between. However, Pauly maintains that the doors will always be open to everybody but as there is very little support for the creative industry for mental health so he felt this was where his focus was needed. The aim of Bear in mind is to create awareness within the elements of society that lead to wellbeing and mental health issues and it will be helping to prevent and alleviate this through encouraging talk therapies, physical exercise and other wellbeing relating activities.

<https://www.bearinmind.ie>

## 5. Al Keegan

Born in 1985 Al is a Tallaght native, growing up in Springfield and attending St. Marks junior and community school he always had a keen interest in music. A record collector and bedroom DJ from the age of 14, he soon found himself playing in local clubs as well as hosting shows on pirate radio. Every Friday in 4th year Al would take a day off from school to DJ on pirate radio and at 16 he found himself playing regularly around Dublin city centre and soon started promoting his own events. After leaving school Al worked independently on the Dublin club scene for more than 15 years. With a host of very memorable events, club nights and parties he soon found himself producing his own music and running a record label as a platform for many Irish and international artists as well as being involved in many festivals throughout the country. A long time friend of Michael, this will be his first artist collaboration of this type, his response to the visual piece is heavily influenced by his time growing up and living in tallaght as well as his other experiences and influences working within the Dublin club scene throughout the 90s and 00s.

## Colm Reynor (accompanying text)

Colm Reynor is from Tallaght and works as an Electrical Engineer. He has read his work at the Lonely Voice readings in the Irish Writers Centre, and been published in a number of online journal's and print magazines, such as Wordlegs, Boyne Berries, Headstuff and the New Irish Writing page in the Irish Times. He has been shortlisted for a Hennessey award, the Fish Publishing Prize, the Over the Edge New Writer of the Year Award, and RTE's Francis MacManus Short Story Award for which his Story 'Narcissus' was read by Barbara Bergin for RTE Radio 1.





Suburban Cookie Collector part 2 , single channel moving image, 19.38mins

# Them Three

Colm Reynor

“Hear it?” Danny finished his smoke and flicked it away between thumb and forefinger and watched it land and fade.

“Yeah, sounds alive.” Jay said.

The sound came from up ahead where the road bent and the trees were dark and jagged against a pale and puffy sky.

“That’s defo an animal or somethin’.” Taller than the other two Morgan took the last drag from her smoke and threw it into the bushes that huddled along the roadside. Jay followed it with his eyes. “No smokes.” he muttered.

“Were you not behind the prefabs today?” Danny said. “Shoulda scabbed one ye dope.”

“Was there bu’ Bates came around and stung everyone, I legged it though.”

“Master Bates.”

Jay chuckled. “Interferin’ with himself all day in his office.”

“Sounds like a cat,” Morgan said.

The day was darkening and smelled of the earlier rain, the damp earth. Their breaths misted before them and vanished again in the damp air. “Cumom.” Danny walked ahead. The other two followed. They watched him look about as if trying to find the origin of a voice whose origin was in the dying light of the day itself, and they watched him abruptly become still and cock his head like a bird might. They came up beside him. A cat lay there curled and wet and broken.

“Jaysus.”

“It’s in bits.”

“It’s dead.”

“Clearly not, are you def?” Morgan spoke through her fingers yet

with a force that made the other two look at her.

Jay tucked his thumbs behind the straps of his schoolbag. “Sorry bu’ the things been squashed by a car or... It’s dead.”

“It’s not squashed just...” Morgan said.

“That sound its makin’...” Danny said.

“Yeah it’s comin ou’ its arse. Cumom.” Jay took a step back. He looked at Danny and he looked at Morgan but he didn’t look at the cat. Nobody moved. The cat’s ribs like bony fingers clenching and unclenching.

“Are yiz comin’ or wha’?”

Danny turned to Morgan. Something in him that he didn’t know, knowing something in her that she didn’t know. No words. So he said nothing. Just the keening of the cat and the cat in cold relief against the cold concrete.

“We could bring it down the doctors.” Morgan said.

“You for real?” Jay said.

“It jus’ broke its leg, a vet could fix it.”

“Jus’ broke its leg, its other legs, and its neck. I’ve had Sunday roasts more alive than that thing.”

“It’s not fuckin’ dead.” Morgan’s fingers clenched at her mouth and then moved around her neck to scratch at her shoulder, like an antic imitation of strangling herself. Jay shook his head. Danny said, “How we gonna bring it down the doctors ye mad thing?” Jay laughed. Danny ignored him.

“I’ll carry it.”

“You’ll carry it all the way down the doctors?” Danny wasn’t looking at Morgan, he was looking out over the road and the fields and the grey line of the horizon. The grey smudge of the clouds.

“Gonna rain.”

“I’ll carry it.”

“Go for it.”

Jay threw up his hands and slapped his thighs. “Weirdos.”

Morgan bent and moved one hand around the head of the cat.

So slow she moved as though she and the cat and the road might collapse beneath her. The fur along the cat’s shoulder blade was peeled back slightly. There was blood there, she kept looking at it. Her other hand moved under the cats rear. Then she tried to lift it. The cat made a sudden motion with its mouth and snarled and Morgan screamed and fell back. Jay was laugh-

ing from somewhere behind her. She was angry. Angry at who, what? She looked at the cat. The image of Tracey McGrath crying when she found a Johnny in her pencil case kept interrupting the image of the cat. Weak. I’m not a cat. She stood straight. The straps of her schoolbag had slipped from her shoulders. She shrugged and shifted them back into place.

Jay had stopped laughing. “Are yiz righ’ for fuck sake.” Danny didn’t answer. Morgan was scratching her shoulder again.

“Gonna stay with the cat,” Danny joked, “ring an ambulance?”

“Don’t wanna leave it here,” Mogan said, “dunno...”

“We could kill it.” Danny wasn’t sure he had spoken the words. The thought hadn’t formed fully in his mind, instead just an abstract curiosity, like someone else was in his head with him. He imagined putting his foot on the cat’s neck. Kingadacats. Morgan was looking at him. He scraped the ground with the sole of his shoe, half laughing, half waiting for someone else to say something. Jay half laughed too. The situation confused him. Morgan and Danny and the cat confused him.

“Ye gonna kill a cat jus’ lyin’ there like that?” Morgan said.

“Dunno. Sure it’s fucked anyway.”

“It’s a she.”

“Whatever. Be doin it a favour.”

Morgan let the breath out of her lungs as though some hidden part of her had been suddenly punctured and then bent again to pick the cat up and stopped. A crow was there not two feet away. Not there and then there as though whispered into existence. They watched it. It watched them. Danny imagined himself windowed behind one of those black glass eyes: The world black and white and grainy like an old movie, like everything was scratched into being. All sound scratched too, and all movement jerking and stuttering. What does it see? Death. Same as me. He imagined his foot on the cat's neck again. Not the same. Morgan stamped her foot and the crow flew off. Jay walked up to Danny and punched him in the arm. “It's gonna rain. I'm goin’,” and walked off. Danny made to sneak up behind him and kick him when he heard a shriek. He turned. Morgan was holding the cat in her arms.

“No way.”

“Her claws are diggin’ into me.”

Morgan could feel the cat breathe shallow in her arms, her own breath too. Danny thought she was smiling. They just stood there.

Then Morgan said, “It's cold underneath. Is there blood on me?”

“Jaysus.”

Danny took off his schoolbag and laid it down backside up and said, “Put it on this we can carry it like a stretcher.” Morgan looked at Danny and then looked at the bag. She placed the cat down on the bag. Her hands were shaking. There was blood on them and blood on her coat sleeves. “Shite,” she muttered, “me ma's gonna kill me.” Danny laughed. “Wha' we like?” Morgan laughed too. The cat whined its banshee whine. They walked. Little steps. Danny ahead, Morgan behind. Jay was walking back toward them with his phone to his eye.

“Take one photo an' ill punch the head off ye.” Danny said.

Jay laughed. “Kodak moment or wha'?”

Jay...

“Wha'? Front page of the Tallaght Echo you two. Bleedin' heroes. Seriously though,” Jay said, scratching his head, “Wha' the fuck?” His narrowed eyes directed the words toward Morgan. His narrowed eyes didn't look at the cat. Morgan had no answer, or she had no words to express it. She was aware of her anger. It clung to her like the cats claws had done. The cat just left like that on the side of the road. I'm not a cat. She wondered if the driver of the car had felt the impact. She wondered if the cat was better off never being born, if being born was a decision made, a

decision made and then forgotten. The ghost of the cat's claws still pricked the skin of her arms. She clung to her anger, not the anger to her. At the silence Jay shrugged and put up his hood and walked on ahead.

A hazy rain began to pimple the air. The road turned again and dipped and the fields fell away. Houses appeared. The street lights beginning to burn, small yellow halos in the haze. A car passed and the rain could be seen heavier in its headlights. Big drops began to fall. Jay stopped and stood in against the wall under the trees that overhung the road. He was looking out from under the trees and up into the rain when the other two stopped beside him. He watched them almost warily. They put the bag down. Jay put his palm out and let the rain fall on it. "Yiz gonna walk down with that? In this?"

Danny shrugged. He too looked out from under the trees and up into the rain. The rain on the leaves a soft patter, like quickening footsteps. He didn't hear the cat. He turned to Morgan. She was scratching her shoulder. "She's dead."

Danny wondered when exactly it happened. A moment, alive and then dead. He expected more. He thought about how he had said he would kill it.

"Cumom, Morgan said, might as well walk, it's not gonna stop."

Danny gave her a funny look. "Me bag." He pulled his bag from underneath the cat in a rough jerk and the cat flopped over, like it was grappling at some feigned remnant of its lost life. "Ouch. Musta gotta good smack."

This hidden side of the cat revealed its ribcage like small white teeth emerging from bloody gums. Bits of fur scraped away as though by a child with a blunt tool. Eyes vacant, seeing nothing yet in them could be seen a dull reflected image of the world. Morgan put her hands and sleeves out into the rain to wash them. For the first time Jay came within touching distance of the cat. He leaned in to get a better look. Dead. Easy to be dead. Easier than dying.

"Here, giz your bag." Danny said.

Jay didn't answer.

"Giz your bag."

"Wha'?"

"You stupid. I'm not keepin' this. I'll put me books in your bag."

"You can carry it."

Danny took the bag and put his books in it. He threw his own bag up over the wall into the trees. A rivulet of rain had begun to flow past.

Fallen leaves bunched against the wall. Wet and withered leaves of faded autumn shades that seemed somehow brighter than they should gathered there against the wall, gathered beyond the dead cat. The little river a little Acheron. No ferryman, just them three.

“Cumom will yiz.” Morgan said, rubbing her hands together in the rain.

Danny was already walking toward her. “Get rid of tha’ coat. Cats blood on it an’ all.”

“It’ll wash off.”

“No it won’t ye mad thing.”

“I’ll wash it off.” Danny smiled at her and shook his head. “Hang on. What’s he at?”

Jay was using his foot to push the cat over the rivulet, close up against the wall. He picked up handfuls of fallen leaves letting them fall from his hands without real intent, only feeling, leaning a little as though listening, as though the cat or the leaves or the action itself would reveal to him some hidden part of himself, the world, his place in it. The cat now covered in a tumulus of leaves. He would always remember covering a dead cat with leaves, and always remember wanting to do it, and that

would be enough.

He shrugged when he reached the other two and said, “It looked...” and trailed off confused. Morgan didn’t hear him, she was looking at her hands. “Be grand just to die in your sleep, wouldn’ it?” Danny said. Nobody answered. They walked out into the wet, the rain, the night crowding around them in the speckled dark. Not far down the road Danny began to laugh, and then Jay began to laugh, and then finally Morgan. Each unsure at what it was they were laughing at, and that made them laugh even harder, the sound echoing in the darkness, youthful and mysterious.

The End.





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