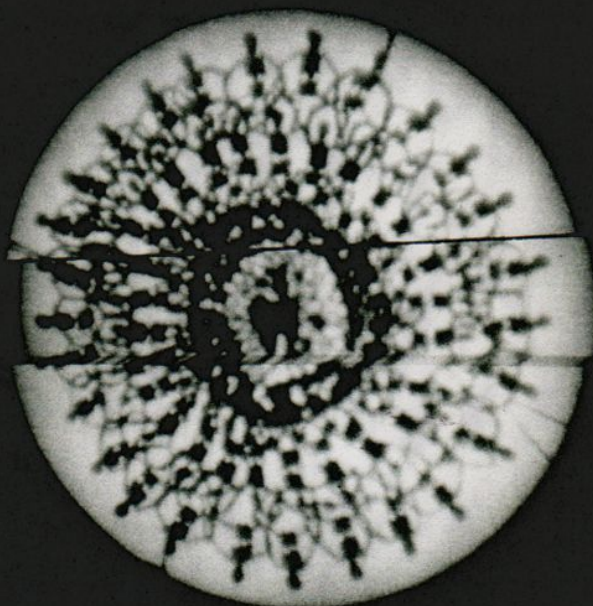


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FEATURES



Light projection in front of City Hall next to St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick Ireland

Angeline Morrison
discovers a variety of art
forms at EV+A 1998

LITTLE things mean a lot. Take for instance the innocuous 'plus' sign in EV+A, dividing 'Exhibition of Visual' from 'Art'. Tiny though it may be, it holds the key to understanding where EV+A, in particular this year's, is coming from. The plus sign was actually put there to symbolise all the senses other than the visual - adjudicator Paul O'Reilly clocked up at least 11 at his last count. Vision in western society has traditionally enjoyed a superior position to its sensory fellows, in terms of the way we apprehend the world itself and the works of art within it. Until of course

Cezanne came along, challenging all of society's pro-vision sensibilities by painting, in the words of R.G. Collingwood, "like a blind man." Paul O'Reilly believes that such a privileging of the visual in art can lead to a poverty of experience, or a lack of response on behalf of the other senses. As a result, EV+A '98 - now in its 22nd year, and pronounced 'Eva', like the girl's name - foregrounds a dizzying variety of art forms.

EV+A '98 reads more like a documentation of what's actually going on in the international art scene. It's an exciting experience but it's also quite overwhelming, especially if you're not into exploring. A grand total of 30 venues around Limerick play host to this year's art - among them St Mary's Cathedral, Slattery's Pub, the new 95FM broadcasting office and the surgery of an obituary dentist

In fact, an eclectic layering of possibilities within contemporary art might be the closest you'll get here to a curatorial strategy. Such things as strategies were deliberately avoided this year, in a conscious break with the past tradition of strongly themed shows. As a result

The first obvious piece of art I encountered was a light projection on the front wall of City Hall. It looked like a monochrome stained glass rose window, circular with subtle patterns. However, a wander into St Mary's Cathedral revealed that it was in fact an intricate gothic masterpiece by American artist, Karin Giusti. Suspended at just above floor level in a dark corner of the church is a delicate, weblike hemisphere. It's actually a *danse macabre* of thousands of tiny, interlocked paper skeletons, all holding on to each other and all with painted features. The effect is mesmerising.

A selection of pieces, ABOVE, from the EV+A '98 exhibition taking place at 30 different venues in Limerick

Another interesting choice for a church is Karl Grimes's 'Blood Cell Memorial'. It is actually two pieces which comprise a series of framed 'portraits' of magnified blood cells. As a protagonist, blood is loaded with significance. As well as being the central theme of Christianity, blood in the age of HIV and Aids is no longer a private matter between oneself and one's cells, but is public and political.

Both Grimes and Giusti are among the artists who make up the biannual 'Invited EV+A' section, where artists of international renown are invited to show their work. They can usually choose their venues, which might explain the ideal positioning of their work.