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## Frances Hegarty, Biographical Entry

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# ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF IRELAND

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FRONTISPIECE

Edward Ambrose, *Psyche discovering Cupid* (detail), 1840, marble, Crawford Art Gallery, Cork [see 33]

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Oliver Sheppard, *The Death of Cúchulainn* (detail), 1911-12, bronze, General Post Office, Dublin [see 356]

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Sculpture studio, Dublin Metropolitan School of Art (detail), c. 1912-14, Oliver Sheppard Collection, National Irish Visual Arts Library [see 403]

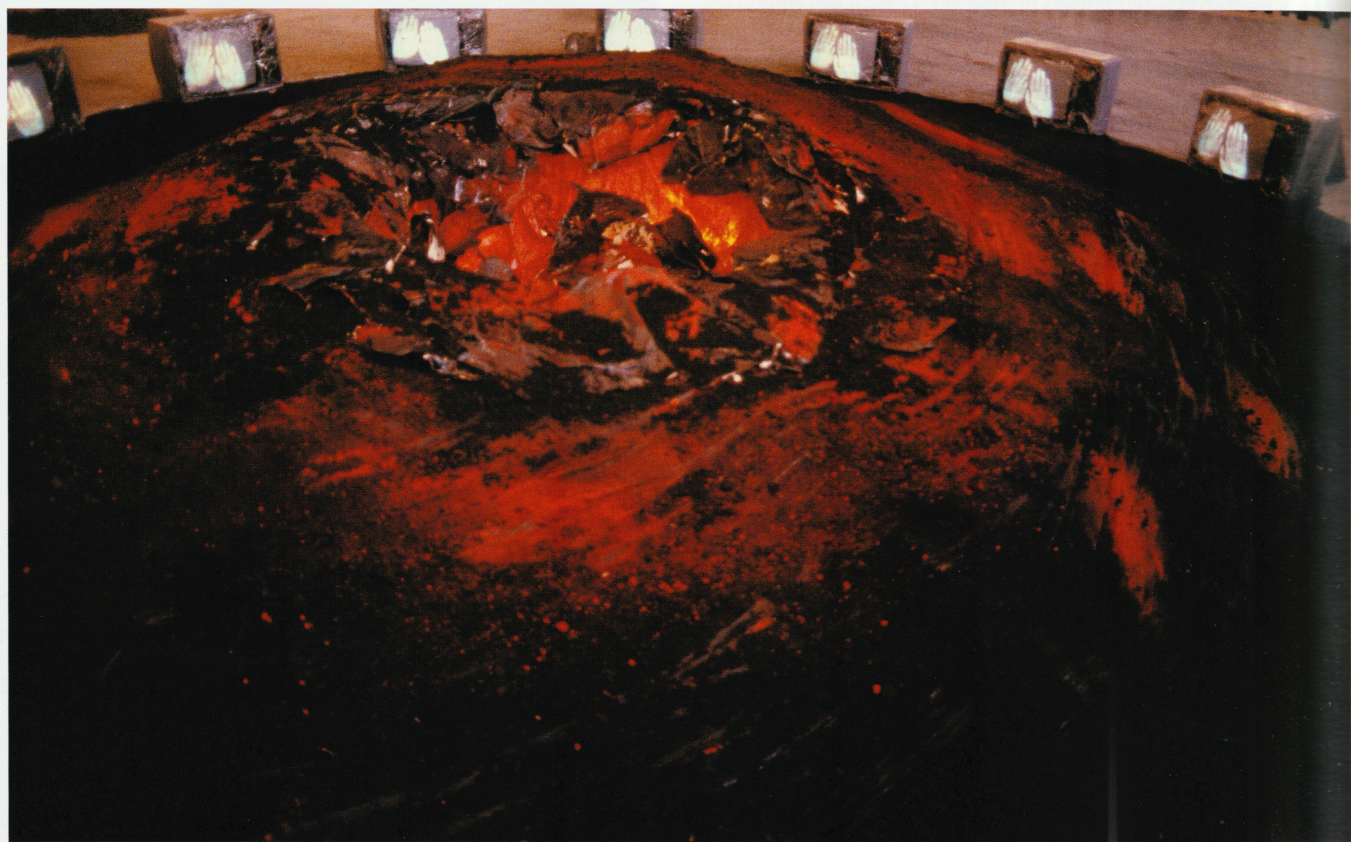
**HEGARTY, FRANCES** (b. 1946). (see also AAI v). Born in Teelin, Co. Donegal, Frances Hegarty moved to Scotland with her family in her early teens. She studied art at Polytechnic Colleges in Leeds and Manchester, before becoming a Professor of Fine Art at Sheffield Hallam University from 1995 to 2003. Hegarty received the first Nissan Art Prize, in association with IMMA, for a collaboration with Andrew Stones, *For Dublin* (1998), and has exhibited widely – notably in representative group exhibitions of Irish art.

Hegarty's practice through the 1980s and '90s was informed by her various residential locations and marked by an interest in figuration. While place-specific in context and biographical in various subject references, her works transcend localized subjects to alternately enrapture and challenge viewers in time-based installations representing universal themes. Hegarty often deployed low tech-resolutions to draw attention to the media she was using. Her enjoyment of time-related art forms was shaped by a desire to possess and experience, momentarily, 'the sensuality of material' and space (0044, 1999, p. 80). Her practice has had a number of transitional shifts: from a series of interrelated sculptures and performed installations to video and audio works, including public and collaborative projects and, since 2005, a focus on graphic mark-making to produce large-scale abstract images.

*Expanded Drawing* (1986) stretched across the exhibition space, imbuing inanimate material with organic qualities, and accentuating the hand-made nature of the objects. Structured from cardboard cut-outs covered in paper, with pastel and wax crayon surface coloration and patterning, plant-like forms appeared to have shed the powder pigments that covered the

gallery floor. While the placement of the elements of the installation was key to the work's overall effect, overt handiwork highlighted a sensitivity to crafting materials. A correspondingly keen awareness of the coded impact of textures and cuts in fabric surfaced in later works. With Andrew Stones, *Seemingly So, Evidently Not, Apparently Then* (1998) was a layered projection in a waiting-room of live video streamed from the platform of Midland Station Sheffield, with a prerecorded performance by Hegarty repeatedly pacing the same space. Hegarty's bodily presence was sculpted by a magnificently fanciful cerise pink dress with caped hood, veil and matching gloves to cover her entire skin – an 'object-dress' (0044, 1999, p. 81). Hegarty outlined her interest in 'fancy dress and masquerade' in the context of psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu's notion of 'skin ego', a playing out of 'glorious primordial skin' through 'auxiliary-corporeal surfaces' (ibid. p. 81). This modification of her physical presence through costume was an element of her practice variously prefigured in earlier works.

For example, in her video/audio installation, *Marital Orders* (1989), generic headgear denoted Hegarty alternately as bride and soldier. *Marital Orders* drew on personal experiences and also referenced violently tragic events at a funeral in Northern Ireland which had occurred in full view of watching media. Mounted on metal, the repeated video stills generated a visual crossfire between bride and soldier, staring from opposite walls in an endless reciprocal gaze with 'the viewer caught in the sight-lines' (*Circa*, 107, Spring 2004, 91). Layering influences from formative experiences in her personal life with current events as represented in narrative-driven news media became central in Hegarty's development of subjects.



141. Frances Hegarty, *Groundswell*, 1987, installation with 20 colour televisions, soil, pigment, fluorescent lighting

Initially inspired by protest actions in the 1980s at Greenham Common, Berkshire, against the storage of nuclear missiles there, *Groundswell*, 1987 [141] touched on the wider theme, in Hegarty's words, of 'how both the body and landscape had been culturally constructed to incorporate similar ideas of perfection, damage and decay' (*Dialogues*, 2005, p. 60). A large mound covered with earth placed in the centre of the Chisenhale Gallery, London, was encircled by 24 TV monitors playing domestic channels. The contrasting textures in the exhibition stressed the qualities of each component: the earth seemed raw and softly messy, while the screens appeared comparatively artificial and awkwardly hard. Hegarty's prioritization of time-based media was evident in the positioning of monitors as the focal point in *Groundswell*.

Interconnections between language, place and identity was the theme of the video installation *Turas* (1992–96), featuring the artist and her mother. The work, however, had a resonance beyond a biographical rumination and proffered a topic that became strongly associated with Hegarty's practice in the 1990s: migration. Commissioned by the British Council, *Voice Over* (1995) recounted the experiences of women displaced by the Bosnian war by unpicking the conventional documentary information. A technically advanced multi-media installation, Dorothy Walker referred to *Voice Over* as 'one of the most accomplished and moving multimedia pieces I have seen anywhere for some considerable time' (*IT*, 12 December 1996). *Gold* (1995) was a projection-based multimedia installation, focusing on the complexity of colonization and emigration patterns and intentionally complicated perceptions of relationships among various immigrant and aboriginal communities. *Point of View* (1996) was a commissioned installation at a tunnel in Heathrow Airport of a series of close-up photographic portraits of airline passengers. Employing the perspective of anamorphic distortion, Hegarty made each face proportionately readable at only one location: a fitting metaphor for the care with which she considered through her works' subjects and forms the social responsibility of contemplating the passing glimpses one has of another person. NIAMH ANN KELLY

SELECTED READING Peter Murray (ed.), *0044 – Contemporary Irish Artists from Britain*, Cork and Kinsale, 1999; Katy Deepwell (ed.), *Dialogues: Women Artists from Ireland*, London, New York, 2005.

**HENNESSY, ANNETTE** (b. 1958). Hennessy was born in County Cork and studied at the Crawford College of Art and Design from 1976 to 1982. Throughout her career she has participated in various group exhibitions, such as *Expo 92* (1992, Seville), and she also held solo exhibitions at the Triskel Arts Centre in Cork in 1988 and 1991. Annette Hennessy's attention as a sculptor is consistently fixed on the human body and its expressive potential. She works almost exclusively in bronze and is known mainly for her public sculptures in several locations across County Cork. These include *Woman and Child* (1990, Douglas Court Shopping Centre, Cork), *Seekers of Knowledge* (1994, UCC) and *Man with Birds* (1995, Rochestown, Cork). Hennessy's public pieces are usually large in scale and contrast with her natural inclination to produce

smaller works for interior spaces. 'I don't believe outdoor sculpture should of necessity be large in scale', she once stated, adding that she 'would particularly like to be involved in placing sculpture in a garden or landscaped area as part of the overall plan' (artist's file, NIVAL).

This aspiration to integrate her work into a natural setting parallels Hennessy's desire to reflect the human race's physical and spiritual relationship with the environment. This desire is satisfied in public sculptures such as *Man with Birds*; a three-metre high male figure in bronze whose outstretched arms act as perches for several sculpted birds. In this piece Hennessy uses the figure's individual physical gesture as a vehicle for communicating the universal connection that exists between human beings and the natural world. *Man with Birds* is a celebration of the capacity of the human form to convey an internal experience through outward gesture, stance and movement. The sense of universality is reinforced by the minimal detailing of the figure's surface, which is consistent with the finished appearance of most of Hennessy's figurative sculptures. *Woman and Child* is another such sculpture. The piece is almost two metres high and depicts a primitive female carrying a small child on her shoulders. It is sculpted in-the-round and is designed without a primary view, so it must be negotiated from a number of angles if the complexities of the physical composition are to be appreciated. Hennessy's arrangement of forms in *Woman and Child* again enables her to probe the human condition. In this instance the sculpture functions as a comment on the universal role of the female figure as a repository of emotional stability, strength and constancy for the child, as symbolized through her gesture of actual bodily support. The title of the work, in addition to the simplification and anonymity of its figures, serves to further extend the applicability of its message to all relationships between women and children.

A more pronounced feeling of inner human spirit, personality and character manifests itself in the forms of Hennessy's small-scale sculptures. These works, rarely more than sixty centimetres tall, act as intimate and joyous celebrations of the human body's representative and communicative power. Human figures are frequently depicted in dance and even in flight. They are thus interpreted as organic agents who seem capable of channelling latent interior energy into dynamic exterior movement. Its expressionist strength aside, Hennessy's work was the subject of controversy in 1997 when a commission for a statue of *St Patrick* [486] on the Hill of Tara in County Meath was revoked in response to local opposition. Hennessy's maquette for the sculpture offered a primitive vision of the saint, free from such traditional trappings as the shamrock, mitre and crozier, which had been features of the original statue, erected in 1829 (the work of Thomas Curry of Navan, *Meath Chronicle*, 18 July 1925), which it was intended to replace. Although the rejection of the piece did little to compromise Hennessy's artistic reputation, the sequence of events acted as a reminder that perhaps the ultimate value judgement of a piece of public sculpture is that which is made by the public for whom it is created. MYLES CAMPBELL