Introduction

I returned many times to the same site until another fence was erected and a new building was put in place of the empty, silent reminder. I wondered about what had happened to the pain and terror that had taken place there. Had it absorbed or filtered into the ground, or was it possible for others to sense it as I did?[1]

If it – learning to live – remains to be done, it can happen only between life and death. Neither in life nor in death *alone*. What happens between the two, and between all the 'two's' one likes, such as between life and death, can only *maintain itself* with some ghost, can only *talk with* or *about* some ghosts.[2]

Two places at once, was it, or one place twice?[3]

In 2013, a decade and a half after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, 'Derry-Londonderry' made headlines as the first UK City of Culture. Strategically branding itself as a town-with-two-names – granting parity-of-esteem to historically polarised perspectives on one place – Northern Ireland's second city used this civic accolade to demonstrate (and build on) many positive developments of the 'peace' era. The official logo for the year-long programme of cultural events, for instance, took the city's striking 'peace bridge' as its inspiration. Opened in 2011, this dramatic, winding walkway over the river Foyle – connecting Derry's broadly nationalist Cityside with its traditionally unionist Waterside – was an urban regeneration initiative emerging directly from the financial dividends of the momentous, multi-party political Agreement of 1998. For years, the geography of Derry had been restrictively defined by sectarian conflict, territorial division and military control. The peace bridge was, therefore, a spectacular and liberating addition to the urban landscape (intentionally 'iconic' in a style similar to the Gateshead Millennium Bridge in the North of England, designed by the same architects) and so too a strong symbol of free movement, social unification and political progress. In the context of the UK City of Culture year, the bridge was also important as a main route to the revitalised and newly accessible area of Ebrington: a former British army barracks chosen as the setting for key events in the 2013 programme. A long-closed site, associated with the enduring conditions of conflict, Ebrington had been opened up as a public space in the context

of gradual 'post-Troubles' demilitarisation; and it became, temporarily at least, highly promising as a location for cultural activity and civic encounter.[4] For some local observers, indeed, access to such previously unused areas of public space in Derry was one of the primary achievements of the City of Culture experience. A Derry arts officer, quoted by the *Guardian*, proposed as a personal highlight of 2013 the fact that 'his 17-year-old son sat out in the park with other teenagers in the sunshine … something that would have been unthinkable when he was growing up in the shadow of the Troubles, when gatherings in the streets meant only riots. "The young people have repossessed the city," he said'.[5]

Among the cultural events held at Ebrington during 2013 was the Turner Prize exhibition (the Tate's annual award to a British artist under fifty) which had travelled to a venue outside England for the first time. Presented in a specially renovated historical building on the Ebrington site, and featuring work by the four short-listed artists (each of whom was well-known internationally), the exhibition offered a fascinating group snapshot of 'British' contemporary art at that moment. The diversity of the selected artists – in both biographical and artistic terms – implicitly emphasised plural perspectives and complex identities in a manner that was surely relevant to the Northern Irish context.[6] If, however, the Turner Prize was the most high-profile exhibition on the City of Culture calendar, it was only one part of a very strong visual arts programme. And, crucially, a notable tendency within this programme – one that corresponds to the wider interests of artists engaging with the culture and politics of Northern Ireland since the Good Friday Agreement – was a focus on finding new ways to reflect on and represent the traumatic legacies of the Troubles. In diverse exhibitions by artists both from Ireland and elsewhere, there were idiosyncratic efforts to bring the complex underlying issues of the post-conflict reality into new varieties of visibility. These assorted shows and artworks sought to situate the problems of the past within the tensions of the supposedly 'peaceful' present, while also, at times, proposing altered frameworks and shifting contexts of understanding. So, for example, a film installation by the Dublin artist Jesse Jones – *The Other North* (2013) shown at the Centre for Contemporary Art, Derry/Londonderry – used appropriated dialogue from a Troubles-era documentary about conflict resolution therapy sessions as the script for a radical re-make set entirely in South Korea (Plate 1). Translated into Korean, and spoken by Korean actors, the contents of the original transcript – which concerned specific experiences of sectarianism and violence in Northern Ireland – were displaced and defamiliarised. New geographical connections were made just as a jolting disconnection with a prior means of narrating the Troubles was proposed. In a project for the Void Gallery by Spanish conceptual *provocateur* Santiago Sierra (known for deliberately staging ethically questionable performative situations, often with groups of people drawn from socially marginalised or underprivileged backgrounds) the history of the Troubles was addressed through discomfiting engagement with former combatants. Recorded inside one of the derelict, demilitarised Ebrington buildings, Sierra's intense, frightening film *Veterans* (2013) featured a noisily buzzing drone-camera flying along corridors

and into run-down rooms where it encountered strange human presences, all with their faces to the wall and backs to the camera. These were British soldiers who had previously been based at the barracks; but here they are uncomfortably confronted from the perspective of an intimidating, hovering, disembodied gaze. Sierra brings them ambiguously into view, but via an invasive medium of contemporary surveillance that is increasingly central to the depersonalised engagements of twenty-first century warfare.

Numerous other projects during 2013 sought to take on the historical leftovers of the Troubles in unconventional terms.[7] But, without doubt, it was a retrospective of work by Derry artist Willie Doherty that had the most profound meaning and impact in the City of Culture context. Entitled *Unseen*, this survey show covered a range of important pieces, from early black-and-white photographs of urban backstreets and borderlands, through to the remarkable 2013 film *Remains*: a chilling account of the ongoing phenomenon of punishment shootings in Derry that is, in a manner consistent with Doherty's long-standing methods, both elliptical and hard-hitting (Plate 2). In the context of the justifiable celebrations and excitements of the City of Culture year, Doherty's *Unseen* made a distinct, disruptive claim for cultural attention. Here was evidence of a stubborn need to confront the unsettling presence of the traumatic past. Despite, in 2013, an understandable, broad-based effort on the part of City of Culture organisers to show the positive outcomes of the peace process in Derry – and in the North of Ireland more generally – artists such as Doherty were insistent in their desire to open up problematic, unresolved issues. Doherty's work has long maintained such commitments, consistently searching for traces of 'that which is forgotten', for 'something that evades language'.[8] In his work – and in that of other visual artists prominently represented in Derry's City of Culture programme – it is the ghosts haunting the spaces of the progressive present that are of most pressing interest. It is all that *can't* be left behind, all that remains traumatically unanswered in private lives or in the collective history, that becomes the essential subject and shaping influence for art.[9] If the City of Culture year offered opportunities to look ahead hopefully, it also included artists who turned our attention to lasting effects of the past, and to the paradoxes and uncertainties of present-day, 'post-Troubles' Northern Ireland.

The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 marked the culmination of a long, difficult peace process and, it was hoped, the conclusion of the thirty-year Troubles. But progress since then has been uneven, and the outcomes of political deals often ambiguous or unstable. There has been no official process of 'truth and reconciliation'. Many facts about the painful past remain undiscovered or undeclared. So much that has troubled the society remains unsaid or unseen. The work of Willie Doherty and other artists in Northern Ireland has therefore been recurrently engaged with the anxieties of progress and with the uneasiness of peace. A great deal of art during this period has required returning to the neglected histories of particular places. It has been an art of compulsive repetition that at times resembles the types of wayward 'ghost-hunting' identified by Hal Foster as central to

the work of artists from other parts of the world such as Tacita Dean and Joachim Koester – artists who, Foster writes, are 'drawn to blind spots in which the turns that history has taken, and might still take, are sometimes revealed to us'.[10]

Foster's use of the anachronistic and superstituous metaphor of the *spectre* is more than incidental to the contents of this book. Indeed a specific interest in the figure of the ghost has been inspired by the identifiable spectral turn in Willie Doherty's work. During what I am hesitantly calling here the 'post-Troubles' period, Doherty's film works have sought to draw attention to all that *haunts* the present moment and the promise of progress – and this persistent interest has been both prompt and pivot in the preparation of the broader discussion developed here. In films such as *Closure* (2005), *Empty* (2006), *Ghost Story* (2007), *The Visitor* (2009) and *Buried* (2009) there is an explicit effort to create images, narratives and atmospheres with strongly spectral associations. These features of Doherty's film works unsettle any straightforward sense of material and spatial reality. In such films – and related photographic series – we see how Doherty is almost always concerned with 'old haunts': his works often depend on repeat visits to places that are well-known to the artist. There is a compulsion to return, to move forward by going back. So too then his art deals with the potentially uncanny effects on consciousness of the most familiar locations. Nicholas Royle writes of how 'it is impossible to conceive of the uncanny without a sense of ghost-liness, a sense of strangeness given to dissolving all assurances about the identity of a self'.[11] In Doherty's work – and most especially in *Ghost Story*, a film which will be the subject of extended discussion in Chapter 3 – a sense of subjective and spatial uncertainty is linked to the challenge of registering the lingering signifi-cance of historical events in specific places, at a time when, in the context of post-conflict regeneration, many traces of past events are in the process of being erased.

These particular points of symbolic reference in Doherty have also, however, become crucial in creating a more general approach to reflecting on art from the North of Ireland during this period. For in considering the art that has appeared in the 'post-Troubles' years, Jacques Derrida's comment that we must 'learn to live with ghosts' has become acutely relevant.[12] This claim is, first of all, a call for fidelity in politics to those 'who *are not there* … those who are no longer or who are not yet *present* and *living*': a commitment of anxious allegiance to the ghosts of our histories and our possible futures.[13] And secondly, the insistence on 'living with ghosts' implies a requirement in *theory* that we address the 'spectral' element that haunts our knowledge of the world – what we might also think of as the 'blind spots' in our vision – and as such it necessitates attending to 'the non-contempo-raneity with itself of the living present', and to 'that which secretly unhinges it'.[14] This is, then, a book about art and haunting. It is an argument *for* haunting, and for the contemporary art field as a specific sphere of haunting and hauntedness. The book proposes that the art of the post-Troubles period addresses itself to a speculative 'public space' in which certain spectres, often unwelcome elsewhere in the culture, might be accommodated or confronted. At the same time, the art-works selected for discussion here can also have their own spectral quality. They

are characterised by a heightened sense of in-betweenness and representational, spatial or temporal instability. Caught in the anxious present, between a troubled past and an uncertain future, positioned between difficulties and identities determined by local conditions and the pressures and possibilities of increasingly evident global forces, much of the art discussed here is not sure of its place in the world.[15]

The work of many contemporary artists during this period has involved tentative investigation of how we might access or address what has been repressed in order to facilitate progress. Often it has been an art of uneasy experimentation with ways of making visible the lost, forgotten or the marginalised: those stray images, issues or stories that are now incompatible with official visions of the post-conflict society. These offbeat aftermath studies undertaken by visual artists have sometimes shadowed more mainstream forms. In some instances, visions of the changing (and in important ways unchanging) society are proposed that acknowledge the conventions of wider media coverage but that operate with different intentions, employing alternative models of presentation and distribution – in ways that may have disconcerting, unpredictable and defamiliarising effects. Such artworks are determinedly indeterminate 'after-images' that may prioritise fretfully subjective forms of viewing or precarious modes of composition and display. They are strategically uncertain in forming an account of the historical moment.[16] Equally, artists have been driven again and again to seek out what may persist *in the shadows* of the new post-conflict landscapes. The art of the post-Troubles era in Northern Ireland has been acutely concerned with uncertain conditions of site and situation. This focus is consistent with a widespread emphasis in contemporary art on 'experience as a state of flux which acknowledges place as a shifting and fragmented entity', as Claire Doherty has noted in her introduction to a collection of essays, interviews and case studies reflecting on models of 'situated' aesthetics.[17] Such practices, Doherty says, frequently involve heightened attention to the paradoxical condition of being simultaneously situated and 'displaced'. In an essay included in the same volume, Miwon Kwon observes that

> the breakdown of spatial experience in both perceptual and cognitive registers – being lost, disoriented, alienated, feeling out of place, and consequently unable to make coherent meaning out of our relation to our physical surroundings – is the cultural symptom of late capitalism's political and social reality.[18]

Such a condition of being 'out of place' can of course be understood in negative terms: these circumstances may have radically debilitating effects on 'our psyches, our sense of self, our sense of well-being, our sense of belonging to a place and culture'.[19] And yet, as Kwon argues, contemporary artists might choose to make a virtue of being in 'the wrong place': acknowledging that 'it is only from the position of being out of place that we can attempt to develop new skills … to map the new hyperspaces wherein we have to survive'.[20] Conscious of bearing 'the burden of the necessity *and impossibility* of modelling new forms of being in-place, new forms of belonging'[21] [my italics], many contemporary artists in Northern Ireland

have recognised the disruptive, productive potential in becoming alert to what we might also call here the 'unhomeliness' of home. Related bodies of place-based (or 'wrong-place-based') art from Northern Ireland have been devoted to searching through neglected zones of towns and cities, imagining 'other' geographies, conceiving of alternative, subjective and collective, senses and sign-systems of place to those shaped by sectarian identifications or prescribed 'from above' – from, that is, those potentially repressive influences on the shape and experience of city space, ranging from residual Troubles-era security protocols to post-Troubles urban regeneration planning. This has been an art of patient street-level detective work, an art of estranged ordinariness discovered through idiosyncratic urban wandering.[22] Absorbed by evidence of the past as well as sensitive to shifts in the present, these multiple versions of post-Troubles *flânerie* have involved extensive travel through time as well as space. If such artists have found ways to become both deeply embedded in place and strategically 'out of place', they are also, like ghosts, out of sync with the ordinary flow of time.

In articulating this view of art in Northern Ireland since the 1990s, there is an implicit presumption that the activities of contemporary artists might have critical potential and political relevance. In advancing such positions, I have drawn from arguments made by Chantal Mouffe both about the possible role of a 'critical art' – as a means of finding ways to 'make visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate'[23] – and the need for a 'return of the political', understood as a crucial requirement of an expanded, more inclusive and open-ended version of democracy. For Mouffe, the political is defined as 'the ineradicable dimension of antagonism that exists in human societies' and a post-political society – which is, she argues, the ideological orientation of neo-liberal globalisation – is thus one in which productive opportunities for disagreement are diminished.[24] A function of 'critical art' can be to 'foment dissensus'[25]; but this must be understood as having necessarily ambiguous and disorientating effects. The range of artistic reflections and interventions addressed here includes much that is concerned with locating or creating cultural space for alternative perspectives. These are often contrary or uncomfortable responses to situations of change and stasis in the post-Troubles period. In such art there is an emphasis on apprehensively making visible information which may otherwise be neglected in wider mass media contexts.

An inevitable complication in considering contemporary art on these terms arises from the question of how today's artworks might claim to instantiate 'political' potential while being at the same time specific expressions of the current conditions of cultural globalisation. To ask this question is not merely to acknowledge the lessons of a 'social history of art', which remind us that any work of art must be understood in terms of its complex situatedness, its unique position at a specific historical conjuncture. Rather, there is a need, as Mouffe indicates, to signal the extent to which the forms and methods of contemporary art (at all levels, from production to distribution) have become intricately intertwined with the 'flexible', 'creative' systems of late capitalism: 'nowadays artistic and cultural production play a central role in the process of capital valorisation

and, through "neo-management", artistic critique has become an important element of capitalist productivity'.[26] On the one hand, the much-debated 'end of art' (prominently theorised by Arthur Danto as the post-pop, postmodern 'paradigm-of-no-paradigm' that marks a departure from a modernist focus on the constraints of certain disciplines and mediums[27]) can be seen to correspond to the conditions of capitalism at the 'end of history'; the former following the rules of the latter. As Hal Foster writes, 'this "end of art" is presented as benignly liberal – art is pluralistic, its practice pragmatic, and its field multicultural – but this position is also not-so-benignly neo-liberal, in the sense that its relativism is what the rule of the market requires'.[28] On the other hand, important trends and attitudes within the field of art since the 1960s (its era of unending aftermath according to Danto) can be seen to have in fact *influenced* key contemporary capitalist practices in profound ways. Mouffe's allusion to the relation of 'artistic critique' to 'capitalist productivity' comes via sociologists Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello whose arguments concerning 'the new spirit of capitalism' include the proposition that the critical values informing the work of progressive cultural producers in the 1960s have been incorporated into today's corporate discourses.[29] Where once 'the values of expressive creativity, fluid identity, autonomy and self-development were touted against the constraints of bureaucratic discipline, bourgeois hypocrisy and consumer conformity', such libertarian commitments are now absorbed into an 'emergent order whose ideal figure is a nomadic "network-extender", light and mobile, tolerant of difference and ambivalence'.[30] We might easily be confused today as to whether this description of the perfect 'producer' within what Boltanski and Chiappello call today's 'connexionist' systems, represents the quintessential corporate capitalist or the globally networked, post-conceptual artist.

With such complications and compromising situations in mind, how should we understand the place of a critical art practice today? And how should we assess the potential of the 'haunting' of the structures of the stable present that has defined the recent era of art in Northern Ireland? If the art field is to be appealed to as a distinctive form of 'public space' it must also surely be recognised as a *problem space*,[31] circumscribed by forms of capitalism that neutralise critique through incorporation. As the artist Liam Gillick has written, 'art is nurtured via cultural permission to be the space for what cannot be tolerated but can be accommodated under the conditions of neo-liberal globalization'.[32] This is, he adds, art's 'strength and weakness'.[33] Contradiction is crucial to our understanding of what the critical, political and public potential of contemporary art might be. Gillick advocates in this regard that artists must both parallel the systems of the dominant culture and at the same time seek out 'grey areas', which he claims 'are easier to expose and occupy through art than with most other activities'.[34] Stefan Jonsson has written in related terms about the widespread and often politically motivated employment of documentary modes in the work of contemporary artists over recent years (a subject which, in relation to the art of Northern Ireland, forms the content of Chapter 4 here). Jonsson argues that unorthodox documentary forms such as these – occupying a hesitant position between art and non-art, existing on the

edges of established disciplinary definitions – assist in creating and contributing to 'a public sphere of inbetweenness': a place where 'the contradictions and potentialities of globalisation', might be made, temporarily at least, differently visible.[35]

Gillick's interest in 'grey areas' and Jonsson's emphasis on the 'in-between' are pertinent as we begin this extended reflection on the predicament of art in Northern Ireland in the 'post-Troubles' era. These are terms that connect usefully to immediate concerns of this book regarding, for instance, the relation of local to global, the contest between historical fact and representational fiction, and the tension between the burdens of the traumatic past and the forces of the progressive present. Moreover, the shaded spaces proposed in these commentaries on contemporary art, with their suggestion of productive paradox and affirmative indeterminacy, also of course correspond to the Derridean understanding of spectrality. The undecidable figure of the ghost – 'a paradoxical incorporation', neither entirely past nor present, neither fully in one place nor another, 'neither soul nor body and both one and the other'[36] – gives rise in Derrida's thought to a shift from 'ontology' to 'hauntology': the spectre serving as a vital figure for the subversion of any final resolution of a meaning, identity or philosophical position, arising out of the deferral of full closure, representing the impossibility of complete, authoritative presence. The spectral then, provides vital means of challenging, as Fredric Jameson has written, 'belief in the stability in reality', unsettling our sure sense of a 'reality that is supposed to rebuke us by its changelessness'.[37] Derrida's ghosts are, Jameson says, 'these moments in which the present – and above all our current present, the wealthy, sunny, gleaming world of the postmodern and the end of history, of the new world system of capitalism – unexpectedly betrays us'.[38]

So in proposing contemporary art practice as a form of cultural production and provocation that might allow for the 'making visible' of repressed elements within the current post-Troubles socio-political circumstances, while acknowledging that the global art world is itself one significant system within the globalised fields of force shaping these new circumstances in Northern Ireland, this book will stress a certain power of *instability* and *indeterminacy* in art's appeals to politics and public representation. Following a 'spectral' deconstructive logic, it is necessary to acknowledge the *impossibility* as much as the possibility of art as a 'public space'. Indeed, in a way that accords with Mouffe's argument that the impossibility of 'full' democratic presence – a politics free of all antagonism – is in fact the very basis of a progressive case *for* a radicalised and pluralised definition of democracy, this book echoes those theories that have emphasised the value of a 'phantasmal' concept of public space. In asking what it might mean today for art to adopt a public role, Rosalyn Deutsche, for instance, draws on Claude Lefort's understanding of public space as the product of the necessarily uncertain conditions of democracy as a form of social organisation. Democracy, Lefort says, is a system 'instituted and sustained by the dissolution of the markers of certainty', which in the modern era has inaugurated 'a history in which people experience a fundamental indeterminacy as to the basis of power, law, knowledge, and as to the basis of relations between *self* and *other*'.[39] Out of this basic difficulty – and

unpredictable potentiality – of democracy arises 'public space' which, as Deutsche notes in response to Lefort, 'is the social space where, in the absence of a foundation, the meaning and unity of the social is negotiated – at once constituted and put at risk'.[40] With this notional 'space' of common encounter what is at stake is 'the legitimacy of debate about what is legitimate and what is illegitimate'.[41] This is therefore one way in which a notion of 'the public' and a 'sphere' of inclusive public participation and representation may be understood and valued as phantasmal: 'democratic public space', Deutsche says, 'might be called a phantom because while it appears, it has no substantive identity and is, as a consequence, enigmatic'.[42] Such 'enigma' offers a point of vital correspondence back to the proposition that contemporary art might offer, in its most potent critical moments, appropriately contingent spaces of complex public address and encounter. For the recent art practices that constitute the primary subject of this book reflexively offer, in relation to the post-Troubles predicament, contingent formations, speculative articulations, provisional proposals: they are often obliquely dissenting forms of practice that echo aspects of Deutsche's preferred vision of phantom public space:

> If the public space of debate appears with the disappearance of an absolute social basis, public space is where meaning continuously appears and continuously fades. The phantom public sphere is thus inaccessible to theories that refuse to recognise events – like new social movements – that cannot be grasped in pre-conceived conceptual terms or without recourse to final intentions. The phantom public sphere is invisible from political viewpoints that limit social reality to the contents that fill social space but ignore the principles generating that space.[43]

The art to be considered here certainly connects, in various ways, to these suggestions of precarious meaning or indeterminate intention and effect. Equally, these forms of art diversely demonstrate attention to conditions of medium, institution or situation – to the 'principles generating' the specific 'spaces' they have sought to provisionally construct or occupy.[44] Artists in Northern Ireland have developed a deep understanding of the institutional and social frameworks within which their work is formed – and their efforts have often prioritised creating unexpected effects and unusual actions in carefully acknowledged contexts. The stress throughout this book on the uncanny unpredictability of the spectral – in proposing an approach to space and ideas of the public that are (in a phrase of Nicholas Royle's) 'affirmatively phantomistic'[45] – is, then, to prioritise, to *promote*, doubt and difficulty. In imagining a 'phantom public sphere', Deutsche says, 'man is deprived of the objectified, distanced, knowable world on whose existence he depends and is presented instead with unknowability, the proximity of otherness, and, consequently, uncertainty in the self'.[46] Such disorientating circumstances are central to the predicament contemplated by the significant art to have emerged 'after' the Troubles in Northern Ireland: a range of art that potentially 'harbours threats and arouses anxieties' as it offers alternative, unorthodox reflection on the uncanny landscapes of returning 'normality', on the ghostly interference of

the past in the smooth progress of the present, and on unavoidably phantomistic forms of public collectivity at this supposed 'post-political' moment.[47]

This book's propositions arise from sustained engagement with the ongoing practices of contemporary artists. The points of departure for the analyses and arguments have been found in the particular challenges of artworks, projects or exhibitions, as well as from ongoing conversations with art practitioners working in Northern Ireland. A majority of the artists (and curators) addressed in the book have been spoken to about the key concerns of their work and about the artistic priorities of particular films, photographs, paintings, installations, exhibitions or events. Though I have not always stayed true to the main motivations of these artists (developing ideas in a manner that sometimes departs significantly from their declared intentions), learning from each about ongoing and varied interests has been a source of continuing inspiration. A related point, perhaps, is that the book does not set out to provide a comprehensive account of contemporary art from Northern Ireland during this period. Rather, I have followed particular paths, scrutinising specific evidence and making a case for the importance of certain recurring tendencies. The book might be thought of less as an historical overview – in the manner of Fionna Barber's impressively expansive *Art in Ireland Since 1910* (2013) – and more as a tendentious historical *under*view, at least in the sense that the priority has been to highlight art concerned with what present-day history in the North of Ireland might sooner forget. (And a worthwhile future project would be to build on the historical work done in Barber's text and study further the art of the Irish Republic during the Celtic Tiger era: the period that ran roughly in parallel with post-Troubles developments in the North.) Worth noting too is that in this study of post-Troubles issues, the art of the prior *Troubles* era in Northern Ireland is not addressed in depth, though some examples of relevant artists' work appear where appropriate. (Many of the main themes relating to Troubles art are explored in Liam Kelly's *Thinking Long: Contemporary Art in the North of Ireland*, published in 1996.) But the book is in other ways a wide-ranging account. An effort has been made, for instance, to represent the work of artists who are at different stages in their careers and who have gained different levels of profile and critical acclaim. A generous spectrum of art media is also covered: from video and photography (which undoubtedly dominate) to painting, sculpture, performance and other forms of social, situated aesthetics. (Arguably the most thoroughgoing, medium-specific research on Northern Irish art of this era has been in the area of photography – and Colin Graham's *Northern Ireland: 30 Years of Photography* is the most substantial work produced yet in this field.[48]) What's more, among the case studies included here are several group exhibition projects that have themselves offered differently 'representative' accounts of art from Northern Ireland. These exhibitions (as we shall see in Chapter 2) aimed to present distinctive group portraits of art from Northern Ireland in international settings.

A vital issue in discussing such group shows has been to explore how 'Northern Irish art' has emerged in dialogue with international art during this post-Troubles period. Indeed, it has been important to ask what happens when we

see post-Troubles artworks as specific manifestations of a complex global network of cultural production and promotion – as forms of art shaped in profound ways by broader considerations. In this regard many of the key points of reference in the book come from debates about the predicament of contemporary art today – about art's current place and purpose in the world, and about the politics and aesthetics of its dominant modes of display and distribution. But just as importantly, it has been essential to acknowledge the distinctive challenges of the social, political and cultural situations faced and foregrounded by artists in the wake of a major 'local' conflict. For this reason, Chapter 1 concentrates on the social and political developments pertinent to a study of post-Troubles art – pondering what it means to talk in 'post' Troubles terms at all – and turning at various moments to consider especially relevant contemporary art examples (projects by Shane Cullen, Phil Collins, Paul Seawright and Seamus Harahan) that offer distinctive, purposefully plural and ambivalent perspectives on post-Troubles realities. An effort has been made here to weave together fundamental background details on the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement with questions regarding the political and theoretical framing of this process of negotiation – keeping in mind the broader international contexts of a notional 'post-Troubles' situation. This widening of the frame has been understood as vital in developing an adequate account of the art of this era, but diverse local outcomes of the Agreement are nonetheless acknowledged: from ongoing political problems caused by the ambiguities and inconsistencies of the accord, to material manifestations of 'peace' in the built environment. Chapter 2 begins with thoughts on how 'Northern Irish art' of the post-Troubles era might be critically approached and appraised in light of broader contemporary conditions, before moving on to discuss ways in which artists from Northern Ireland have been positioned and presented internationally over recent years. This chapter takes the 2005 exhibition of art from Northern Ireland at the Venice Biennale as the departure point for an extended examination of how the representation of 'local' concerns is shaped in relation to wider cultural and economic forces.

Much of the book, however, concentrates more directly on the manifold forms of 'ghost-hunting' undertaken by artists during the post-Troubles period. In Chapter 3, several significant works by Willie Doherty are singled out for close-reading: photographic series and film narratives that are powerfully undecidable and uncanny in their oblique, unnerving evocations of the landscapes of Belfast and Derry. This extended reflection on Doherty's work considers in detail the strategic indeterminacy of his photographic art and addresses the shift in key film works towards explicitly 'spectral' themes. Chapter 4 follows this discussion of the haunted spaces of Doherty's practice by reflecting on artists' approaches to time and history. (If the spectral is an idea that proposes disturbances in the perception and condition of material reality, it also introduces problems about temporality: about the certainty of a linear unfolding of time.) This part of the book highlights artists who have adapted conventional forms of documenting and archiving in order to speculate on alternative temporalities and histories of

Troubles and post-Troubles life. In addition to analyses of artworks by Duncan Campbell, Miriam de Búrca, Daniel Jewesbury and Aisling O'Beirn, attention is also paid to some curatorial attempts to historicise Northern Ireland's art. The final fifth chapter then turns to the unpredictable sphere of the *socius*, taking case studies of wide-ranging art projects – by Susan Philipsz, the Bbeyond collective, Phil Collins, Brian O'Doherty, Philip Napier and Mike Hogg and artist-group Factotum – that, in variously performative and relational modes, have involved staging, proposing or entering provisional situations of social encounter and collectivity. These events and interventions, it will be suggested, exhibit varying degrees of sensitivity to the challenges of the uneasy post-Troubles predicament. But in notable instances we find artists striving to make space for unorthodox perspectives and unheard voices, asking what it might mean to be part of a 'public' in post-Troubles Northern Ireland, and attempting to making visible – often in understated, ambiguous or anxious ways – what might otherwise remain hidden.

Notes

1 Willie Doherty, text from the film *Ghost Story* (2007), printed in *Willie Doherty: Ghost Story* (Belfast: British Council, Arts Council Northern Ireland & Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure, 2007) [Artist pages unpaginated], published on the occasion of the Northern Ireland exhibition at the 51st Venice Biennale, curated by Hugh Mulholland.

2 Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. xvii–xviii.

3 Paul Muldoon, 'Twice', in *The Annals of Chile* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994), p. 12.

4 For many Derry-based artists and arts professionals, plans for the long-term future of Ebrington as a cultural site failed to build on the major investment that had been made. Rather than maintaining the area as an arts and culture destination in Derry, the organisational body responsible for realising City of Culture plans had decided that the museum standard galleries developed to host the Turner Prize (at a cost of £2.5 million) would become office-space at the end of 2013. Interviewed by the *Guardian*, Willie Doherty argued that it was 'ludicrous that a town spending that amount of money would let it last just four months and not take the opportunity to build upon it'. Following the City of Culture year, Doherty said, 'it will feel like the lights have been switched off again in Derry'. See Charlotte Higgins, 'Derry artists fear triumphal gains from City of Culture title will be squandered', *Guardian* (21st October 2013).

5 Higgins, 'Derry artists fear triumphal gains from City of Culture title will be squandered'.

6 I will declare an interest here as one of the four judges of the 2013 prize. The other judges were: Annie Fletcher, curator at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven; Susanne Gaensheimer, Director of Frankfurt's Museum of Modern Art; Ralph Rugoff, Director of the Hayward Gallery, London. The four selected artists were: Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, who has a Ghanaian family background; Laure Prouvost, born in France but based for some years in London; Tino Sehgal, born in London, but brought up abroad and now based in Berlin; and David Shrigley, born in Macclesfield but based for many years in Glasgow, and, subsequently, Brighton.

7 Among the numerous other projects that could be cited here are several commissioned and staged by the Void gallery as part of the 2013 programme. These include Jonathan Cummins's *When I Leave These Landings*: a series of film-installations based on conversations with four anti-Agreement Republican prisoners; these challenging recordings, presented on a large scale across multiple screens, provocatively ask us to consider what political viewpoints can be accommodated in public discourse during the post-Agreement period. Other notable Void commissions include three projects relating to gardens by Katie Holten, Locky Morris and artist duo Ackroyd & Harvey: public artworks that, respectively, created a new community garden space in a gap between neighbouring factory buildings (Holten's *Factory Garden*), developed a site-specific sound installation for a dead tree in a city park (Morris's *Dead On*) and entirely covered a former military barracks building at Ebrington with grass (Ackroyd & Harvey's *Cunningham*). In addition to these Void contributions, visual art programming in Derry during 2013 also featured Rita Duffy's *Shirt Factory* project – a temporary, playfully mocked-up museum concerned with the history of female labour in Derry.

8 Willie Doherty, 'Some notes on problems and possibilities', in *Willie Doherty: Buried* (Edinburgh: Fruitmarket Gallery, 2009), p. 155.

9 This is also the case for some of the ways that art has been represented and historicised during the post-Troubles period. An ongoing exhibition series at Belfast's Golden Thread Gallery entitled *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art* has sought to quite deliberately embrace 'overlapping and sometimes contradictory versions of history'; see Peter Richards, 'Foreword', in *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art: Icons of the North* (Belfast: Golden Thread Gallery, 2006), p. 7. Exhibitions from this series will be discussed in Chapter 4.

10 Hal Foster, 'Blind spots: on the art of Joachim Koester', *Artforum*, April 2006, 212–17.

11 Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 16.

12 Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, pp. xvii–xviii.

13 Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, p. xviii.

14 Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, p. xviii.

15 Another useful resource in developing these ideas has been Mark Fisher's writing on 'hauntology' and popular culture. Some of his essays on this topic have been collected in *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2014).

16 In this way, they correspond, on occasion, to tendencies such as that identified by Nicholas Bourriaud in post-1990s international video art, in which an artist might self-consciously shape their practice according to an 'amateur' logic: 'privileging raw documents and shaky images and restricting itself to the most rudimentary editing'; see Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, trans. James Gussen and Lili Porten (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2009), p. 88. Similarly, Maria Lind and Hito Steyerl have described other manifestations of contemporary lens-based art which involve artists drawing on the 'ambivalent nature' of documentary as a means of representing and constructing reality. 'Hovering between art and non-art', Lind and Steyerl say, documentary has 'contributed to creating new zones of entanglement between the aesthetic and the ethic, between artifice and authenticity, between fiction and fact'; see Lind and Steyerl's introduction to *The Green Room: Reconsidering the Documentary in Contemporary Art* (Berlin/New York: Sternberg Press/Bard College, 2008), p. 16.

17 Claire Doherty, 'The new Situationists', introduction to Claire Doherty (ed.), *Contemporary Art: From Studio to Situation* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2004), p. 10.

18   Miwon Kwon, 'The wrong place', in Doherty, *Contemporary Art*, pp. 34–5.

19   Kwon, 'The wrong place', p. 30.

20   Kwon, 'The wrong place', p. 35.

21   Kwon, 'The wrong place', p. 41.

22   Nicholas Bourriaud suggests that in a wider context art processes of this kind have become central 'compositional models' within international contemporary art. See Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, p. 98.

23   Chantal Mouffe, 'Artistic activism and agonistic spaces', *Art and Research*, 1:2 (2007). Available at www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/mouffe.html [last accessed 02/08/16].

24   Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London/New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 119.

25   Mouffe, 'Artistic activism and agonistic spaces'.

26   Mouffe, 'Artistic activism and agonistic spaces'.

27   Danto's version of an 'end-of-art' narrative is recounted in *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). The phrase 'paradigm of no paradigm' is used by Foster in the essay 'This funeral is for the wrong corpse', a text which has been a useful prompt for a number of the ideas explored in this book. See Hal Foster, 'This funeral is for the wrong corpse', in *Design and Crime (and Other Diatribes)* (London: Verso, 2002) p. 128.

28   Foster, 'This funeral is for the wrong corpse', p. 125.

29   See Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliot (London: Verso, 2007).

30   Sebastian Budgen, 'A new spirit of capitalism', *New Left Review*, January–February 2000, 153.

31   Though I am using 'problem space' here merely to signify a sense of the somewhat *problematic* disciplinary/ideological context for 'critical' contemporary art, it is a phrase that also has a more precise usage, which has some relevance. David Scott has outlined a use of this phrase which entails the demarcation of 'a discursive context' for critical practice. A 'problem-space' is thus understood as 'an ensemble of questions and answers around which a horizon of identifiable stakes … hangs'. For Scott, 'what defines this discursive context are not only the particular problems that get posed as problems as such … but the particular questions that seem worth asking and the kind of answers that seem worth having'. See *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 4.

32   Liam Gillick, 'Berlin statement', in Nicolaus Schafhausen (ed.), *How Are You Going to Behave? A Kitchen Cat Speaks* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2009), p. 98.

33   Gillick, 'Berlin statement', p. 98.

34   Gillick, 'Berlin statement', p. 105. Gillick's reference to 'grey areas' also calls to mind an allusion to the writing of Primo Levi in Susan McKay's explorations of the legacies of Troubles violence: 'Primo Levi wrote about the impact brutality had on relationships between people in the concentration camp. It was not black and white, he said. There was a "grey zone" which we needed to try to understand "if we want to know the human species, if we want to know how to defend our souls …"'; see Susan McKay, *Bear in Mind These Dead* (London: Faber & Faber, 2008), p. 11; and Primo Levi, 'The grey zone', in *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Vintage, 1989), p. 26. McKay's powerful book has been another important inspiration for my own responses to post-Troubles culture.

35   Stefan Jonsson, 'Facts of aesthetics and fictions of journalism', in Lind and Steyerl, *The Green Room*, p. 179.

36   Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, p. 5.

37   Fredric Jameson, 'Marx's purloined letter', in Michael Sprinker (ed.), *Ghostly Demarcations* (London: Verso, 1999) p. 38.

38   Jameson, 'Marx's purloined letter', p. 39.

39   Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory*, trans. David Macey (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1988), p. 19.

40   Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, Mass./London: MIT Press, 1996), p. 273.

41   Deutsche, *Evictions*, p. 273.

42   Deutsche, *Evictions*, p. 324.

43   Deutsche, *Evictions*, pp. 324–5.

44   Where there is concern for medium-specific questions in the book, the tendency is towards a 'worldly' understanding and positioning of medium. There is, as Hal Foster has noted of wider strains of contemporary art, a commitment to 'formal transformations – as long as these transformations also speak to extrinsic concerns'; this is 'formal transformation that is also social engagement'; see Foster, 'This funeral is for the wrong corpse', p. 130.

45   Royle, *The Uncanny*, p. 67.

46   Deutsche, *Evictions*, p. 325.

47   Deutsche, *Evictions*, p. 325.

48   It is also worth giving credit here to Justin Carville who has produced a number of significant essays on photography in Northern Ireland, including 'Re-negotiated territory', *Afterimage,* 29:1 (2001), 5–9. *Source Photographic Review*, under the editorship of John Duncan and Richard West, has also supported a great deal of work on the subject: in addition to texts by contributors such as Colin Graham, Aaron Kelly and Daniel Jewesbury, examples of other relevant work include Fiona Kearney's 'Alternatives to propaganda', *Source*, 17 (1998). The book *Where are the People? Contemporary Photographs of Belfast 2002–2010*, edited by Karen Downey (Belfast: Belfast Exposed, 2010), is another intervention in this area, featuring texts by Graham, Kelly, Jewesbury, Pauline Hadaway, Stephen Bull, Liam O'Dowd and poet Ciaran Carson. (Notably, Bull's essay is entitled 'Spectres and the city'.) Outside of specific critical discourses on photography there is also valuable scholarship within the wider field of Visual Culture studies: such as, for instance, Vikki Bell's discussion of Anthony Haughey's post-Troubles photographs in the essay, 'Contemporary art and transitional justice in Northern Ireland: the consolation of form', *Journal of Visual Culture*, 10:3 (2011), 324–53, and Derek Gladwin's essay 'Third space in Willie Doherty's photo-text diptychs', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 15 (2014), 104–22. A special issue of *Visual Culture in Britain* (10:3, 2009), edited by Fionna Barber, focused on 'Visual Culture in Northern Ireland since the ceasefires' and included Colin Graham's essay 'Luxury, peace and photography in Northern Ireland', alongside contributions from David Brett, Suzanna Chan, Sarah Edge and Aisling O'Beirn dedicated to other art forms.