

*Of every place, a centre*

Switch is both verb and noun. It can be understood as an exchange or a shift, the act of changing one thing or position for another. Equally it indicates a device that links separate paths, connecting and disconnecting established circuits.

The public realm is a complex place, composed of closed and open spaces, vertical and horizontal surfaces; it is defined by an invisible architecture of regulations, laws and customs, socially acceptable behaviors, norms and taboos; it is governed by a multiplicity of signs and symbols. In the act of traversing such a place we each read the signs, adopt an attitude, select an approach, navigate a route.

The more familiar the place, the less likely we are to think about those choices that we make, operating on a kind of auto-pilot, experiencing ourselves as separate from all that is around us; the 'subject' self distinct from the 'object' environment through which we pass. While this binary distinction of 'subject' self and 'object' environment is useful for our survival, it also impoverishes us. We 'forget' our continuity with all of existence, 'forget' that we are composed of the very same materials that we see around us. We 'forget' that what happens around us is also what happens to us. What does it take to switch from forgetting to remembering? What kind of switch can disconnect the circuits of dull habit, trip us from one circuit to another?

In its capacity to surprise and confound us, to confuse and perplex us, art can be one such switch. It can flip our perceptions of where we are, so that where we are is no longer where we were.

*Switch* then, this very moment. It's Nenagh, it's October; the light is fading from the skies, the heat is seeping from the land. There is culture and commerce, there is bustle and night-life. Shops open, shops close, people congregate and disperse, economies rise and fall. Daily life has its rhythms and routines, its dramas and dreams deferred.

Into this moment comes something unexpected, something unlikely; eight artworks inserted into places where they should not be. Their purpose is not to distract or entertain us; they do not promise to answer any questions or confirm any positions - instead, they stop us in our tracks, ask of us that we reconsider where it is that we think we are. Artworks are things, but they are not only things. Sometimes, they are conduits for the forces that pass constantly around and through us.

Most of us long for those moments when the world fills us up, when our self becomes continuous with our environment, making of every place a centre. North Tipperary Arts Office embraced *Switch*, this artist-led initiative, so that people going about their business in Nenagh on a dark autumn evening might find themselves, unexpectedly, at the very centre of a world; they might find themselves present, continuous, remembered.

*Fiona Woods, 2008*