

Messengers of Yesterday

Cynthia O'Dell

DePauw University, Professor of Art

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Please contact Craig Hadley with questions or to reserve the exhibition
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Website: <http://messengersofyesterday.wordpress.com>



Traveling Exhibition Dates: **spring 2015 – fall 2017**

Rental Fee: \$1,500 plus round-trip shipping via fine art shuttle or local/regional pick up

Number of works available: 37-48 (239-298 linear feet)

Archival pigment prints mounted on Dibond

- Ready-to-hang artwork with French cleats and hardware
- Formatted exhibition labels (digital file)
- Handouts
- Press Release
- Artist Available to Speak

Exhibition images can be edited at site institution to accommodate space needs

Please contact Cindy directly if you would like her to visit your institution.

Description:

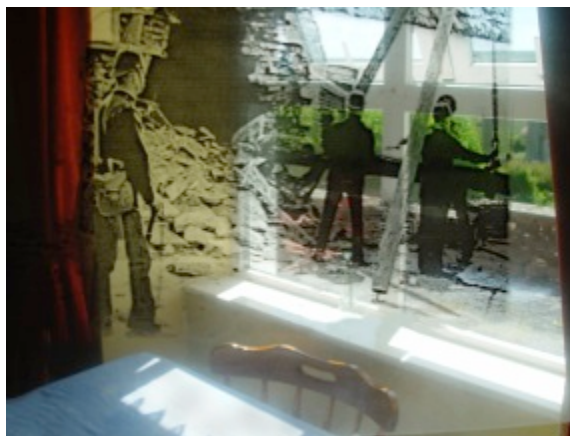
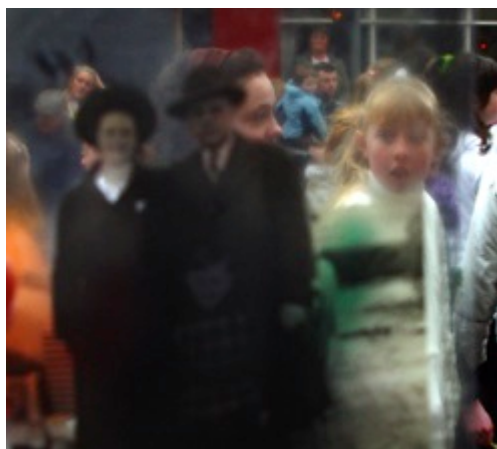
Messengers of Yesterday is a collection of photographic works, exploring the legacy of Ireland's 1845-1852 famine, also known as An Gorta Mór (The Great Hunger), and the perpetual migration narrative that has shaped Ireland's identity since that great trauma. The project seeks to validate the cultural memory of a community, explores the lineage of colonization, and examines a legacy of dislocation.

This work began as a journey into O'Dell's family archive as well as a journey to Ireland and is an attempt to understand her Irish American identity in the midst of the famine. As a child, her own family's narrative was one of dislocation, due to lost homes, expulsion from rental properties and disrupted family dynamics. This prompted a nostalgic longing for a vague Irish heritage. This early life experience dovetailed with stories of her ancestors being forced to leave Ireland, and so her empathy for that kind of dislocation and loss of place continually draws her there.

Photographs of her ancestors, evictions, engravings from the *Illustrated London News* and quotes taken from the "1937 Schools' Folklore Scheme," commissioned by the Irish Folklore commission have been transferred to transparencies and re-photographed in the contemporary Irish landscape. Some images are also made into a combination portrait, or layered with imagery from historical famine sites and quotes from the Schools' Folklore Scheme. The quotes give privilege to folk memory and those who attempt to remember this great trauma in Irish history and the illustrations from the *Illustrated London News* (published between 1845-52) demonstrate the significant changes to the land since then. Simultaneously,

the photographic transparency layered over the contemporary landscape becomes a metaphorical device, exploring dislocation and absence.

All quotes taken with permission from Co. Clare Schools Folklore Scheme 1937-38--National Folklore Collection University College Dublin, Published in Clare Local Studies Project, 1997



The people were dying so fast he used to have a coffin with a false bottom.





Cynthia O'Dell Biography cindyodell.com

O'Dell was born in Oregon and grew up in Iowa. She has had a camera in her hand since she was 13. She is a photographer and video artist, who employs an experimental documentary style to counter traditional modes of representation, particularly in relation to class and gender. She has shown her films and photographic works extensively throughout the United States and Europe-- including, over twenty solo exhibitions and sixty juried group exhibitions. Solo exhibitions include sites such as the Pfizer headquarters in Mid-Town Manhattan, and the Viewing Room Gallery (formerly in Chelsea). In addition, her project *Messengers of Yesterday* debuted in Ireland (May 2013) at Quay Mills in Kiltrush, Ireland in conjunction with the 2013 Famine Commemoration.

She has received numerous awards such as best experimental documentary at the 2003 New York International Film and Video Festival, and was recently a finalist in the London Renaissance Photography Prize Exhibition as well as awarded second prize in exhibition at the Contemporary Photography Programme at the Archisle Institute in Jersey (Channel Islands). She has received three Indiana Artist Grants, a GLCA Melon Foundation New Directions Grant and extensive internal grants from DePauw University including a Fisher Fellowship (given to one faculty member per year) and a University Professorship (the highest award at her institution). Interviews have been conducted by the Denver Channel 4 News, several NPR radio station affiliates in the U.S. and clare.fm and Radio Corca Baiscinn in Ireland. Her work has been reviewed by numerous newspapers and magazines including the Rocky Mountain News "...O'Dell hits the target: Often Art that tries to make a statement on illness becomes more self-indulgence than self-expression, but O'Dell's *Common Threads* carries a real impact on the topic of breast cancer: Her huge embroidered velvet "frames" have a strong emotional center. No bathos, just connection." Her work has been published in numerous exhibition catalogues and monographs including

the award winning project by Portuguese Scholar Susana Noronha, *A Tinta, a Mariposa e a Metástase: a arte como experiência, conhecimento e acção sobre o cancro de mama* [The Paint, the Mariposa and the Metastasis: art as experience, knowledge and intervention on breast cancer]. She has lectured on her work at over thirty sites in both the U.S. and Ireland. And has been an artist in residence at the Burren College of Art, (Ballyvaughn Ireland), Colorado College, The F. Holland Day workshops for women living with breast cancer and the University of Colorado at Boulder book arts program.

She is a Professor of Art at DePauw University, where she has taught since 1998. She received her B.F.A from the University of Iowa with honors in 1993 and her M.F.A from the University of Colorado, Boulder in 1998 (with additional study at Arizona State University).



Cindy on Clare Island, in County Mayo and talking with the President of Ireland, at the 2013 Famine Commemoration.