

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS



Ailbhe Ní Bhriain, *An Experiment with Time*, 2022, two screen film installation, color, sound, 37 minutes 18 seconds. Installation view. Photo Alan Dimmick.

Ailbhe Ní Bhriain

CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS (CCA)
350 Sauchiehall Street
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In this compelling, dreamlike presentation, Ailbhe Ní Bhriain examines institutional power and imperial systems of representation to draw out their connections to anthropogenic decay. The show projects a ruinous future, montaged from the present. The two-screen film installation *An Experiment with Time*, 2022, nods to a 1927 book by J. W. Dunne that speculated on parallel timelines. Ní Bhriain applies the same strategy she used to create *Reports to an Academy*, 2015, in which slow panning shots survey spaces altered with CGI to look flooded with water.

Here, the deluge envelops a German anatomical theater, an Italian church, and an English computing museum. These hypnotic scenes are interspersed with fragments of esoteric text and sections of black-and-white archival footage showing, among other things, women crying, an automaton, and a lone fighter jet. Together, they convey, in essayistic terms, a sense of apocalypse—the aftermath of an environmental catastrophe, perhaps. The two screens face each other, looping an out-of-sync and not quite identical sequence, heightening the sense of disorientation and fracture.

The film’s mournful soundtrack—composed by Susan Stenger—bleeds into the adjacent gallery, where the aura of breakdown extends to “Intrusions,” 2022, a striking series of monochromatic tapestries featuring a collage of ruined buildings. Their fabric evokes the granular quality of media images from a warzone. In another room, a set of arcane objects, some fruitlike and painted black, others cast in bronze, is housed in Perspex display cases, suggesting a provisional museological order. As elsewhere, these disparate and manipulated elements elude clear interpretation, offering a poetic lament for a conflicted time.

— Calum Sutherland