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CATÓLICA
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“ON POSSIBILITIES OF FRICTIONS”:
AN EXHIBITION AND QUEST FOR CURATING
CRITICAL CIRCULATIONS OF IMAGES

Project Report presented to
Universidade Católica Portuguesa to obtain
a Master’s Degree in Culture Studies,
specialisation in Management of the Arts and Culture

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Abstract

Images circulate globally, either through market logic, nation states' cultural diplomacies or through online exhibitions and exchange platforms, such as PHROOM, an international research platform for visual culture. The surplus of images consequent to digitalisation, social media, and the capitalist fast consumption of information, has been causing numbness and indifference, affecting the way art photography is perceived by people, both globally and locally. Over the last years of the Covid-19 pandemic, the online dimension has increasingly substituted the offline, physical world, resulting in an opportunity for artists and institutions to engage with wider audiences. As the pandemic-related restrictions are easing the online still offers interesting alternatives in order to tackle sustainability issues in regards to people national or transnational movements and artworks production, transportation and disposal.

This research analyses how curating plays a key role in activating critical circulations of images. Central to the research is the concept of “friction” (Tsing 2004), understood here as a form of performative imagination able to transform difference in a collective counter-narrative. Indeed, as circulations are regulated globally by mainstream and hegemonic logic, rendering alternative narratives through curating both online and offline sites of exchange is important to activate critical interconnections between differently situated photographic art practices. As an example of this, I present and examine *On Possibilities of Frictions*, the exhibition I produced and curated with the support of PHROOM in Dublin and on the platform to test how a glocal curatorial approach and counter-narratives could be fundamental tools to disrupt the anaesthetisation of the contemporary subject who perceives images, and thus art photography, in the fast-paced global flows and circulations.

Keywords: glocal curatorial practices; counter-narratives; friction; images circulations; 21st century photography

Resumo

As imagens circulam globalmente, seja pela lógica do mercado, pelas diplomacias culturais dos Estados-nação ou por meio de exposições online e plataformas de intercâmbio, como o PHROOM, uma plataforma internacional de pesquisa sobre cultura visual. O excesso de imagens resultante da digitalização, das redes sociais e do rápido consumo capitalista de informação, tem causado entorpecimento e indiferença, afetando a forma como a fotografia de arte é percebida pelas pessoas, tanto a nível global como local. Nos últimos anos da pandemia de Covid-19, a dimensão online substituiu cada vez mais o mundo físico offline, resultando numa oportunidade para artistas e instituições se envolverem com públicos mais amplos. Uma vez que as restrições relacionadas à pandemia estão a diminuir, o online ainda oferece alternativas interessantes para lidar com questões de sustentabilidade no que diz respeito a movimentos de pessoas nacionais ou transnacionais e produção, transporte e descarte de obras de arte.

Esta pesquisa analisa como a curadoria desempenha um papel fundamental na ativação de circulações críticas de imagens. Central para a pesquisa é o conceito de “atrito” (Tsing 2004), entendido aqui como uma forma de imaginação performativa capaz de transformar a diferença em uma contranarrativa coletiva. De facto, como as circulações são reguladas globalmente pela lógica dominante e hegemónica, renderizar narrativas alternativas por meio da curadoria de sites de troca online e offline é importante para ativar interconexões críticas entre práticas artísticas fotográficas situadas de forma diferente. Como exemplo disso, apresento e examino *On Possibilities of Frictions*, a exposição que produzi e fiz a curadoria com o apoio do PHROOM em Dublin e na plataforma para testar como uma abordagem curatorial glocal e contranarrativas podem ser ferramentas fundamentais para romper a anestesia do sujeito contemporâneo que percebe as imagens e, portanto, a fotografia de arte, nos fluxos e circulações globais em ritmo acelerado.

Palavras-chave: práticas curatoriais glocas; contranarrativas; atrito; circulações de imagens; fotografia do séc. XXI

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1. Introduction

“Art as photography and photography as art is a busted flush trumped by the Internet and its networks. The job now is for the cultural institutions of modernism, galleries, museums and universities to seriously plug into the network and its users. Artists, photographers, curators, students and academics have a great opportunity before them to collaborate and co-create with network users and groups, in order not only to make the networks of power visible but to create new publics based upon equality of knowledge, access and experience.” (Dewdney 2018).

Is curating a possible tool to critically circulate images and art photography? If so, how? At a time when photography has become “a democratic, accessible and readily reproducible way for people to share lives with others” (Burbridge 2020, 302) through exchange platforms, and images constantly and infinitely circulate globally, it is important to question the nature of these images and either consider art photography dead (as some do) or find ways to revalue it and its circulations.

The immense number of photos taken each day has caused not only spectators’ numbness and indifference, but also photographic artists to stop taking photos as a reaction to the surplus of meaningless images. Meaningful photographic languages have thus been lost because of the digital revolution and the appropriation of the medium by publicity and capitalism’s means of communication.

Moreover, within the last two years, we have been exposed to major shifts to the digital world, as the Covid-19 pandemic has forced the entire world to live in isolation as an act of care and thus activities have been transposed in the liquidity of the online, to quote Zygmunt Bauman (2000) renowned term.

This report is based on my project developed within PHROOM, and brought out from August 2021 to January 2022. The focus of this report is the analysis of *On Possibilities of Frictions*, the exhibition project I developed to research how curating can play a role in activating critical circulations of images. The exhibition took place in Dublin (19th-22nd January 2022) and on PHROOM platform (November 2021-present), as the project was supported by this organisation and international platform for the study of visual culture.

The exhibition was conceived and produced in a hybrid form, meaning online and offline, as the time when it took place was one of uncertainty and the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions were still in place. This hybrid condition, moreover, allowed a deep analysis and investment in the concept of “glocal” (Robertson 1996), which has been revived in these last two years, as it has been the *modus operandi* for people all over the world.

Central to the research and the exhibition is the concept of “friction” (Tsing 2004), understood here as a form of performative imagination able to transform difference into a collective counter-narrative. Indeed, as circulations are regulated by global mainstream and hegemonic logic, making diverse photographic narratives and languages come to face is hypothetically a way to enhance their difference and establish a dialogue over the frictions they bring to place. Their meaning and *raison d'être* will eventually emerge from the frictions created by their encounter. My concern with this matter of meaning and art photography images came to the surface when I witnessed a certain anxiety in the art photography world of producing constantly to be seen by others. Two questions came up to my mind: “What is the point in seeing photographic art from elsewhere if photography is being emptied of meaning and relevance?” and “What if curating could address this emergency and find a way to reconstitute meaning to art photography?”. Thus the need I felt to start a project and a research on this matter.

Why are *critical* images circulations important? I like the conception that mathematics and physics have of the term critical as something “relating to or denoting a point of transition from one state to another” (Lexico, n.d). Indeed, this is what I wanted to research on through my project and report, a possible transition from flat and homogeneous images circulations to different, yet heterogeneous and frictioning ones. Curating critical images circulations is thus a tool to shift the understanding of visual culture and art photography to the contemporary context and its meaning and possibilities of future employments, risks and opportunities.

My project report lies at the intersection of the curatorial and research. According to Irish curator Paul O'Neill, the “interrelation between ‘the curatorial’ and ‘research’ appears to be essential at a moment when there is such a focus on artistic over-production, and when the discursive field around curating is riddled with attempts to limit, or at least

narrowly define what curating should be, or seeks to be, and to determine which bodies of knowledge shall have enduring consequences.” (2019, 500).

The methodology applied to this project report ramifies into different natures. This research methodology is mainly rooted in the project analysis, which stands as a case study for my research question. Literature review is widely employed throughout the text and specifically relevant in the construction of this analysis theoretical framework. Moreover, the methodology is qualitative and transdisciplinary. On the other hand, the project followed a mixed methodology: of qualitative and quantitative nature, as the project aimed to increase PHROOM’s audiences and brand awareness. In addition, structured interviews were held with PHROOM platform’s Deputy Director Matteo Cremonesi and Irish writer and photography critic Darren Campion, who were very helpful in providing key notions to understand and frame respectively international and Irish contemporary photography.

Investigating curating’s role in mediating art photography in the contemporary panorama of hybrid contexts, between the online and offline, and the local and global, was a need that came from my personal experience as both a photographic artist and curator, and my latest project and working experience. Indeed, to research on this topic requires a certain degree of direct practice and responsibility. The goals of the project itself were, as briefly mentioned before, to increase PHROOM’s audiences and brand awareness and, in addition, to develop its long term research in Ireland, thus reaching out to new artists and audiences, not only digitally but also physically. The aimed target for the number of visitors to the exhibition in Dublin and the online traffic were set respectively around 25 people and an increase of 5% in content interaction, profile visits and website clicks on Instagram (and consequently, the platform itself) in the span of the whole project timeline (November 1st 2021 - January 22th 2022¹). The research’s expectations were, on the other hand, to prove curating and specifically glocal-oriented curatorial practices, a tool to replace photographic images in circulations paying attention to their context of production and diverse layers of meaning.

¹ The timeline was set between the first publication date on the platform and the exhibition closing date.

The first chapter will focus on 21st century photography and images circulations, not only considering the hybrid nature of these circulations which happen between the online and offline worlds, but also the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, when a major attention to the local has been revived. For art photography's understanding of contemporary context of production and circulation, the phenomenon of cultural surplus and excess is analysed, as a result of capitalism logic.

Continuing in the second chapter, images circulations' analysis will delve into the distinction between online and offline spaces, respectively considered spaces of "visibility" and "appearance" (Arendt 1985), which I will introduce as opposed characteristics. Departing from here, I will introduce the case study, which is to say my exhibition project, and contextualise PHROOM and contemporary photography in Ireland, to then explain the need for the project to be developed. Moreover, I will explain the concept of "glocal" (Robertson 1996) and how it informed my curatorial strategy. At last, I will explain the planning and making of the exhibition.

Consequently, the third and last chapter presents the exhibition's curatorial approach and formal choices, and focuses on why social documentary photography has been chosen as a genre to test curating's ability to mediate critical images circulations. Central to the curatorial approach and research is the concept of "friction" (Tsing 2004) understood here as a form of performative imagination able to transform difference in a collective counter-narrative. Indeed, all the photographic projects featured in the exhibition are diverse in the visual language and narrative utilised by the artists, thus forming a whole heterogeneous narrative of social issues across the world. As circulations are regulated globally by mainstream and hegemonic logic, rendering counter-narratives and minor photographic languages through curating both online and offline sites of exchange is important to activate critical interconnections between differently situated photographic art practices. Furthermore, I will add my reflections on the success and limits of the project, also considering some future points of improvement and research development.

2. 21st Century Photography and Images Circulation

2.1 The Aftermath of the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic unearthed the underlying tensions of the global circulation of contemporary art, asserts Kuba Szreder (2021, 2), bringing to the surface its “self-contradictory, exploitative and inherently unstable character.” (Ibid.). The Covid-19 pandemic has served as a catalyst that revealed the fragility of a system, that of the global artistic circulation, sustained by a precarious work force and underwritten by some beneficiaries who accumulate social, cultural and economic capital. As Szreder writes, “[t]he pandemic has been a major event, further destabilising an already unstable (and extremely unjust) global economy. Its aftermath holds an urgency that should provoke renewed efforts at enacting better, more equal and sustainable after-globalisation.” (Ibid. 4-5).

Much of the physical mobility of art workers’ bodies, as art pieces and economical transactions, have been substituted by online movements, while precariously surviving the pandemic times, addressed as non-essential workers by many governments and so not deserving an economical support. Life before the pandemic has been proven unsustainable, if we think about the overall mobilisation of art workers, for example, to go to biennials and fairs, to look for as many opportunities as possible all around the globe mimicking the patterns of the flows of international capital, and taking for granted their right to travel and trespass borders as far as Western European are concerned.

The pandemic, for example, has been a time of questioning and reflecting over any dimension of life and photography as a discipline has not been excluded. Its meaning has been questioned over and over, while some photographic artists have stopped practicing and others have found inspiration in the limbo we were experiencing. As our lives completely shifted to the virtual world, even for those who always rejected it, digital, algorithmic images have shaped our everyday to stay in touch with others, to keep informed about the world outside, to get entertained and escape the reality of things, to list a few. The curator’s job has also gone through such questioning in a world where

everything, and art too, is made ready to be consumed on and by social media and digital platforms, where art is getting lost in the fine line between itself and the language of communication, in an attempt to become more digestible, easier to be grasped and faster to be consumed.

“How do we coexist, and above all, where do we stand in relation to the contemporary phenomenon of the circulation of, and the economy created by, images?” (Ponsa 2019, 57). What should curate do to practice critical circulations? What should it do to be interdependent with the changes the world is going through, especially under the light of what the Covid-19 pandemic has proven to be assets of what could be called a new world, which is constructed over revised paradigms such as the online and technological advancements (e.g. the metaverse powered by Meta) and the crisis of the global and Western-centric world order. We have been witnessing a reaction to globalism in the form of the march and success of the populist Right, anti-internationalism and xenophobia. According to Simon Sheikh (2017), this is “after-globalization, and as such not an actual political alternative to global capital but rather a cultural response to the breakdown, after decades of absolute hegemony, of neoliberal deregulation and globalization.” (28).

“The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.”, once wrote Antonio Gramsci (1971, 276). The pandemic does not seem to have resulted in greater measures to cure the contemporary world issues, as greater disparity, further nationalist, neo-fascist measurements and no real de-acceleration of climate change have come into place.

Contemporary art, and art photography in particular as this research focuses on it, is undoubtedly part of an international system of exchange, and as such mirrors globalisation and the world (dis)order.

2.2 21st Century Photography

Philosopher Peter Szendy points out that with the hypercirculation of contemporary images, these have “consisted in their exchangeability with others or with other versions (formats) of themselves, but the speed of their exchanges was slow enough to make them

seem completely stable and self-contained, whereas it now tends to accelerate to the point where it overshadows the image itself.” (2021, 202). As images are intrinsically relational, bringing together the photographed, the photographer and the spectator, ““whether they change places every millisecond or have to wait several centuries,’ images can never be considered as definitely individualized entities [...]” (Ibid.) and their circulation relies on what he calls “iconomic infrastructures”, from Marie-José Mondzain’s idea of “iconic economy”². Contemporary image-exchange society is indeed based on words and images reduced to fast information and in need of being managed. Technical images being captured and stored increases in a way that is paradoxically directly proportional to the decrease of our ability to decode them. In his collection of essays *Words Not Spent Today Buy Smaller Images Tomorrow* (2014), David Levi Strauss stresses the importance of spending words and discussing images, “to stimulate more and better images, and to resist control through images.” (10).

Technical images, thus photography, as capital, operate by means of technology, reproduction and potentially infinite exchange. Contemporary photography no longer contains the conditions of the real and is freed from the burden of representation: it addresses a new human economy in which the real turns into chaotic and randomised information (Dewdney 2018). The investigation of social media use of images such as Instagram, Facebook and TikTok or of Google, for example, seems to be a good point of departure for a deep and relevant photography understanding (and, therefore practice). Likewise, to investigate photography is a way to understand society as it has always been. Indeed, in philosopher Daniel Rubinstein’s words, “[t]he reason photography was the most suitable visual form to reflect on the changing face of society, as it was reshaped by industrialisation, is that it itself is a product of the same industrial processes that replaced human and animal muscles with motors and pistons, accelerated movements to ultrasonic speeds and exchanged craftsmanship with mass-production.” (2018). Instead, nowadays photography reflects the “Age of Information”³, the emergence for another kind of

² As Mondzain demonstrates, the concept of “iconic economy” designates the “organization, administration and management of all visibilities” (2005, 34). For more, see Mondzain (2005).

³ The information age is a historical period that began in the 70s, characterised by a rapid shift from industrial production to one based on information and computerisation.

machine that replicates the human brain. Rubinstein asks: “[...] what becomes of photography when the locus of power shifts from the optical nerve to the fibre-optic cable? What becomes of the public space - the heart of any European city - when it is invisibly but relentlessly morphed by multinational capital into privately owned space with public access, and when sovereignty, citizenship and autonomy find themselves under threat from multi-national corporations [...]” (Ibid.). Photography has indeed a long history of both spectacle for the masses and surveillance for rulers (Sontag qt. in Ibid.) and matters of freedom and ethics are embedded in it since its origins. Photography is still about representation, although in a diverse way. Even when it is still a replica of reality, it reveals the bio-techno-political developments behind it and a new layer of consciousness in which new configurations of the role of images and agency are emerging. “21st Century Photography is not the representation of the world, but the exploration of labor practices that shape this world through mass-production, computation, self-replication and pattern recognition. Through it we come to understand that the ‘real world’ is nothing more than so much information plucked out of chaos [...]” (Ibid.).

Art photography does not avoid being subjected to the burden of information and algorithmic flows and large stream of data. Prints has disappeared apart from some galleries, fairs and art markets. In its place there is now the fluid image which appears and reappears on different types of screens and contexts. What is now called art photography originates from the historical canon of photography, in essence the Western photographic canon defined by modernism. In the passage from Modernity to Postmodernity, art and culture become part of the information system, which fruition created the neologism “infotainment”. Postmodernity has caused a progressive distancing from material production and an increasing investment in immaterial goods and services, as for example in the information sector, and thinking of art photography, I would specify, as the most sublime and complex example of information is not difficult (Meneguzzo 2012, 36). Indeed, information and entertainment have fused and art has become the event that people do not want to miss. It is the “I was there” affirmation to give people a status symbol and make them feel in an exclusive environment. Through image-making and sharing they can

prove their existence in relation to the event which they are witnessing and thus participating in.

“The tsunami of images and information that we now face is an issue of sheer scale and incommensurability, but alongside it there are other, more intimate developments to note. The manner in which photography has come to pervade the local sites and small moments of everyday life increases, and new kinds of practice evolve as ever lighter and mobile apparatuses become connected, even attached, to the human body.” (Lister 2020 [2014], 16).

Photography, which has been conferred the status of “art” only in the 1980s, is a liminal medium as it shares a double nature: it is a creative means of art production and at the same the most used communication tool. It is common to think of photography as a tool to describe the world and express a personal vision, and the device, the camera, is democratic in the sense that, according to the history of this technology, it became available for the masses with Eastman’s Kodak camera in the late 19th century. Amateur photography started from being settled in ritual logic connected to family festivities and recurrences, to strengthen the family and the sense of community and unity, existing by virtue of the parental function (Bate 2019 [2016]). The public and the private have happened to merge in snapshots shared online with a community of people that extends beyond the local. Globalisation of photographic images and the context of their showcase are today an essential part of the way we perceive our and other people’s lives.

To be more precise on the globalisation of photography, it is necessary to take into account the very root of its diffusion in the 1850s. Indeed, photographic images first movements across places and the photographic technology accessibility are traceable in that period of time. As David Bate argues (Ibid.), this phase of photographic technology passage to a global use and the subsequent reconfiguration thanks to the advent of the World Wide Web have paved the way to its global flux. While drawing a short history of photography globalisation process, Bate highlights the wider context of the European imperialist economic project. Moreover, in the 1870s, in Japan grew a high enthusiasm for the West, which led to the acceptance of new technologies in the arts too.

Relevant to this study is the first international photography exhibition *The Family of Man*, curated by Edward Steichen at MoMA in 1955. Although it has been object of a wide critique, influenced mainly by Roland Barthes' essay *The Great Family of Man* (1991 [1957]), because of Steichen misunderstood role as an omnipotent author aiming to depict the human species as a family and a whole global community with no local differences. Nonetheless, it is interesting to see Ariella Azoulay's reading on this exhibition (2013, 19-48) as she takes in consideration both the single images and the bigger picture as "a visual universal declaration on human rights" (40) through the multiplicity of the photographed situations and they juxtaposition. *The Family of Man* exhibition displayed photographs associated almost automatically with documentary genre, all in black and white and without any information displayed: "[t]he lack of concrete, circumstantial information is apparent, especially regarding each individual photograph. The systematic lack, however, not preferring nor discriminating any particular photographed person or geographical area, enables their reading as statements threaded together in a text that might articulate something else." (Ibid. 36).

The major critique embedded in the exhibition is thus that of aiming to reach a universal picture of human kind but through the flattening of its diversity. What Azoulay argues, though, is that universality is grasped in the exhibition as a whole, which is made up of particular views, situations and subjects which together make, in her own words, "a universal declaration of rights".

This example brings to the foreground a problematic matter that became of bigger scale under the project of globalisation: the risk of homogenisation embedded in the encounter and intermingling of the diverse. In her essay *Scaling Up - Local Densities and Global Arts Circulations* (2020), Irit Rogoff talks about the dilemma intrinsic to the global circulation of art and knowledge, which is the impossibility to "transplant knowledge and cultural practices that come from such different trajectories, and think that they might just be able to signify somewhere else [as] culture always radiates outwards, travels and connects, but such fluidity does not presume instant comprehension and effective translation." (Ibid.). Rogoff's concern with a post-colonial understanding of globalisation and the consequent damage inflicted to local forms of knowledge is undoubtedly an

insightful perspective. Indeed, it points out the risk run by society and knowledge production practices to be flattened and homogenised when benefitted at a global level. For example, it is a fallacy to think about art as of a universal that could be exported anywhere and have an impact on people from elsewhere although it is assumed to be good art when capable of transcending the conditions of its production and raise equal responses of its spectators (Ibid.).

Globalisation offers a totalising perspective, which seeks the flattening effect of proliferation of universal humanism as a suppression of all world-forming (Nancy 2007 [2002]). In the society of capitalist consumerism individuals are rendered passive by the spectacle of images, and the illusion of easy access and specific information as always available. Images circulate globally either through market logic (e.g. art fairs and galleries, international exhibitions and publications), nation states' cultural diplomacies, or through the formless liquidity of online exhibitions or exchange platforms, which particularly aggravate the market emphasis on circulation and fast consumption of information.

According to Szreder (2021), circulation “might seem chaotic as it is in continuous transformation, expanding through the proliferation of connections, its networked apparatuses spinning without respite. But this relentless movement only serves to mask some pretty solid structure of privilege.” (54). Indeed, the autonomy of art has weakened⁴, since the traditional bohemian beliefs in its value have been swallowed and appropriated by market, policies and mechanisms of capitalism. The time artists spent in society sharing ideas and forming movements, living the bohemian life, is now spent on social media aiming to broaden their reach and followers, more opportunities and, eventually, money.

Art production is today ruled by the market's need, thus in the frame of a globalised art world, it is infested by competition. In fact, “contemporary globalization is the direct opposite of the model ideal of internationalism and universality. [...] Rather, it is the world of the global competition of everybody against everybody. This competition pushes the subject who participates in it to mobilise his or her own human capital.” (Groys 2015). Moreover, to be recognised internationally, artists must create artworks based on the

⁴ According to Pierre Bourdieu (1996) art was an autonomous field as it was directed by poetry, intensity, creativity and passion and relatively sheltered from external value judgements and influences.

standards of the Western world - something that is hopefully being dismantled thanks to decentralised artistic methods and networks which have their own internal logic based on the local while reflecting upon global issues.

Art photography is not left behind in this competition. On the contrary, it is in the lead of the discourse, having to deal with the acceleration of competition through the online fluxes of information and the overproduction caused by the democratisation of the medium. Not to mention, the wide use in communications has brought most art photography to adapt to that language, losing its peculiarity and hybridising art with communication.

2.3 Excess as a Power Tool

Images circulations prevail over the content of the images (Fontcuberta 2016, 51). We have lost sovereignty over the photographic matter and we strive to get it back. Excess and access follow the logic of capitalism, yet rendering the collective senses jaded, overwhelmed with anxiety of constant attention. At the same time, so much is produced and condemned to obscurity.

These circulations regulate our lives from day to day. Images constitute our social space, thus it is highly important to understand how to not let them submerge with their “fury”, in Joan Fontcuberta words (Ibid.).

Surplus surrenders us not only online but also offline: thousand of artists and cultural producers flocking the same city, producing more than people can consume and overwhelming them with abundance of things to do and attend to. Art-writer and cultural critic Enos Nyamor asks: “How do we deal with excess in our information age?” (2020). He describes cultural surplus as “a threat to existing power structures” (Ibid.), as it renders masses well informed and cultured, yet non-manipulable. It is through the same free circuit of information though that people get manipulated. Indeed, especially online, people are not as free as they think, as what they see and what they do not see is regulated by the algorithm and, ultimately, money. Companies and individuals thus pay for their content to reach us, feeding excess with excess. Capitalism has moved effortlessly from the

consumption of products and services towards the consumption of consumption turning excess into its life source. Not to mention, “[c]ommunicative capitalism⁵ has used today’s abundance of images as ideological cover for radical entrenchment of neoliberal social relations and global inequality.” (Burbridge 2020, 302). What simply shows off as an available participatory and democratic culture of image-exchange and fast information, therefore hides the underlying regime of 24/7 production and data extraction for the profitability of some. “The infrastructure on which interactions with images occurs is entwined with the political and economic interests of multi-national corporations.” (Ibid. 298).

Photographs lose value in the age of social media, victims of their own success. Like the diminishing power of fiat currencies, images circulations create a division between those who make profit out of inflation, and the pool of people still depending on them. The labyrinth of the digital expands every time a new image is put into circulation like central banks issuing currency (Salemy and Moraes 2021, 31).

Excess brings emptiness, mainly of meaning, and is a tool of power for those who are better off under capitalism. Multinational corporations, small-medium companies and individuals never stop to put into circulations images to exchange their values, products and services, thus subtly exploiting and appropriating of people’s time, the most valuable of sources.

In a techno-capitalist society, excess of images destroys memory and disconnect from the present. The internet shifted from being democratic to a more controlled ground. Indeed, privacy is exploited with our consent, images get censored and the more the algorithm gets sensitive to violent or sexual content, the more people become subject to sensorship, or the suppression of senses, yet emotions. Indeed, corporations see people as commodities and offer an over-abundance of jobs related to sensitive content review. People have grown so untouched by images that they have become machines capable of

⁵ Jodi Dean in her work *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies* (2009) gives a definition of what she calls “communicative capitalism”. She states that it is a political-economic formation in which there is talk without response. Indeed, if we take as an example internet activism, it only causes an increases awareness but no actual change.

not feel anything in front of violence. And if people still have not become capable of bearing those visions, they will soon be to cope with them.

Mondzain argues that thinking about images, thus discussing about their state of the art, “is to respond to the future of violence” and interrogate “the political future of our emotions.” (2008, 41-42). Indeed, images politically control passions (Ibid. 21) through their visibility as they have the power to make us act or to not make us act, as senses are getting numbed by the constant exposure to them. Images require an act themselves in order to appear, which is either an act of exploitation or exploration. Media speculate about which images people should have to handle, while moulding contemporary visual languages and art photography too.

The content and form of images relate with the economic conditions in which they are produced and consumed. Technical images’ significance appear in the surface, yet it remains hidden as image-illiteracy grows also as a consequence of the visual pollution humanity is subject to. Photographs are indeed ubiquitous as are the screens they are mediated through. There are channels for indicative photographs such as reportage magazines or scientific publications, channels for artistic photographs and political and commercial advertising photographs but all of them convey in social media platforms such as Instagram or in the web as a whole. Artists take photographs and assemble images in projects having their eye on specific channels of the distribution apparatuses and “encode their images as a function of this channel.” (Flusser 2000 [1983], 54). On the other hand, they all merge their photographs in the same virtual spatiality of Instagram, for example, thus allowing them to vanish into the algorithm and ignoring the fact that the channel determines the significance of the photographs (Ibid. 55). Some other times, they produce images only for the sake of circulation and visibility in the virtual world. “[...] Photographs are silent flyers that are distributed by means of reproduction, in fact by means of the massifying channels of gigantic, programmed distribution apparatuses. As objects, their value is negligible; their value lies in the information that they carry loose and open for reproduction on their surface. They are the harbingers of post-industrial society in general: Interest has shifted in their case from the object to the information, and ownership is a category that has become untenable for them. The distribution channels, the

‘media’, encode their latest significance.” (Ibid. 56). It goes without saying that to understand today’s art photography and image culture it is compelling to analyse their mode of distribution, thus contexts of production as they lose value while making society so dependent on them.

In the same way people ignore the familiar, images are growing redundant and uninformative. Therefore, the visual is suffering from the capitalist excess system, and artists which use photography as a medium get swallowed by the entropic force. “Entropy” is indeed a concept that best describes the state of the art of the photographic universe, being it a force associated with a decline state into disorder, randomness, or uncertainty. Visual pollution passes through our eyes and consciousness without being noticed, yet penetrating the unconscious and programming our actions: “[t]he photographic universe is a means of programming society - with absolute necessity but in each individual case by chance (i.e. automatically) - to act as a magic feedback mechanism for the benefit of a combination game, and of the automatic reprogramming of society into dice, into pieces in the game, into functionaries.” (Ibid. 70).

If we take into considerations the apparatuses of the photographic action, thus the technology that circulates images and produces them, emerges the reversion of agency from humans to automated machines. Photography has traditionally been used to reconfirm and legitimise power through archives, for example. The World Wide Web and existing social media could be considered as infinite archives where images are stored for data extraction, thus another power is legitimised: that of multinationals and the capital. Human intention has vanished and people are left with being programmed to act a certain way and automatically. Images are only surfaces beyond which lies the neoliberal project of culture (and people) as a commodity in infinite production, as post-modern critics believe.

2.4 Poor Images

German filmmaker Hito Steyerl wrote a defense of what she calls “poor images” (2009), which are the contemporary world images that violently circulate the world, between the real and the virtual and gets uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted,

reedited, printed and discarded. The poor image, she asserts, is not about the real but its conditions of existence: “about swarm circulation, digital dispersion, fractured and flexible temporalities.” (Ibid.). Constantly shifting their resolution and format, losing names and credits along the journey, and violently dislocated and dragged around the globe as commodities they spread information, if people can still manage to decipher it in a three-seconds look. Poor images are thus digital, sometimes poorly resolved image copies which proliferates every second on the internet, often deprived of context and image information. Information is not only what images carry but also what their made of in their digital form: units, or pixels, containing a definite amount of information limited in spatial and tonal resolution.

Much of digital information relies on visuality: “[I]n today’w world meanings circulate visually, in addition to orally and textually. Images convey information, afford pleasure and displeasure, influence style, determine consumption and mediate power relations.” (Rogoff 2002 [1998], 25). Steyerl describes a contemporary hierarchy of images in which the poor images are at the very bottom. Poor images, though, are all the images that circulate in the web, from advertising to fashion photography, photojournalism to user generated content, art photography to amateur practices and not only.

One of the paradoxes intrinsic to photography is that the medium, believed to be a direct, realist representation of reality, also has a special relation to the invisible, or in Roland Barthes’ term, it has a connotative dimension (1977). This paradox is exploited by all photographers and image makers to some extents, somehow resulting in manipulative tools to get people's attention and direct their behaviour. Poor images, in the current interminable flux of images, sometimes get remember “because they make your unconscious desires and fears physically visible” (Levi Strauss 2014, 150), some others - or most of the times - they get forgotten because of that amnesia mechanism that comes to play to protect us from excess of exposure to images.

More and more people know how to edit, yet manipulate images, especially on their smartphones and most people have thus become aware of the possibilities of deceptions that images can generate. If we think, for example, of the filters available for selfies and

pictures, we can easily prove how people have abandoned the notion of the image as a “transparent window on the world.” (Mitchell 1984, 504).

Returning to Flusser’s ideas, it is relevant to raise his belief that the ultimate effect of the photographic universe and all apparatuses-based universes is “to robotize the human being and society” (1983, 70) to therefore reprogram people into functionaries. Whether considerably too pessimistic or not, conspiracy-driven or not, his criticism of apparatuses and images is to be taken as a departure point to analyse this restructuring of experiences and society to create a space for human intention. It is thus equally important to review and analyse images circulations modalities as a methodology to further engage in art photography’s challenges in the present.

2.5 Modalities of Circulations

The ways in which such circulations take place across various formats and media can transform the viewing experience. Since the 19th century, science, technology, and industry undoubtedly has played a key role in the transformation of images circulation, the processes of creation and conditions of viewing. The democratisation of art enabled by reproductions was one of the consequences of the shift from an art world supported by patronage by an elite to one rooted in the marketplace and the markets for visual works grew across regional and national boundaries (Delamaire and Slauter 2021). The ability of artists, owners of artworks, to control the circulation of a given work and its commercial exploitation has become more uncertain, paving the way to issues related to reproductions ethics and intellectual property in the fine art scene.

“[...] analysis in terms of circulation necessitates an approach that accounts for not only economic dimensions but also for geopolitical, geographical, and sociological” assesses Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel in her essay *Circulation and the Art Market* (2017), thus setting the basis for my research to focus on the geopolitical circulation of fine art photography rather than its economic aspects.

Auction catalogues and exhibition catalogues constitute a broad body of fine art photography circulations. Sometimes accompanied by critical texts, or even

advertisements, they are an important source of information about an artist's works and personal background all collected in books, which allow for greater circulations outside the premises of auctions and exhibitions, although the former are more and more shifting to online platforms. These catalogues, in Joyeux-Prunel's words, offer concrete data on the art market trends and on the structures that support the fine art photography system and work at a local, regional and international levels.

Physical exhibitions in galleries, museums, festivals and other institutions and private spaces that try to elevate themselves through the acquisitions of art pieces tend to be more connected to local and regional circulations, although the fact that they attract people from abroad and reach vast audiences⁶ through social media platforms and online presence in different forms expand their scope. Physical circulations through transportations then take place when artworks get loaned between institutions or have to be exhibited outside the region or country where they are produced. While more independent spaces look to promote and support artists from elsewhere as local artists, more institutionalised centres are not always benevolent and with transnational outlooks. Indeed, if they engage with international artists is mainly because of existing agreements between the countries and economic and political advantages are at stake. Therefore, non-circulations can be influenced by legal regulations and international agreements.

In contemporary photographic art panorama, it is not always the most-known and valued artists whose work circulate the most. The nature of value is indeed "fluctuating and circumstantial rather than the numerical price of artworks" (Ibid.). Especially in the online flow of artworks between different but looking almost the same platforms, the more photographic artworks circulate, the more their possibility to circulate increase. Artists' presence and participation in offline exhibitions and social sites increase their credibility and reputation, while the value given by the art market diminish of importance in the frame of a flourishing of more affordable photographic art collections and publications.

⁶ The term "audiences" is here used as in relation to the different target audiences or specific group of people chosen to be reached with social media channels.

2.5.1 NFTs and the Issue of Authenticity

Nonetheless, with the advent of NFTs⁷ the market value of fine art photos has changed currency and use as well. The photography market has undergone major changes due to technological advancements. “Initially steered by commercial galleries such as 291 in New York City and nurtured by iconic photographer Alfred Steiglitz, the medium began to establish itself within the larger fine art world. In 1930, the Museum of Modern Art in New York began collecting photographs. And by 1940, MoMA established one of the first departments in an art museum dedicated to photography. Today leading photographers are part of the broader contemporary art market, which in 2021 was valued at over 51 billion dollars.” (Haq 2022). Social media, smartphone cameras and the making of photography as the dominant factor in the visual culture has been a factor of the dramatic rise in the traditional fine art market over the last few decades. Consequently, NFTs have made photographers in greater control of their authentic images and their reproductions. Transactions are thus possibly made directly to artists, leading the role of the intermediate buyer, auction house or gallery to fade as the critic’s.

The concern is how the evaluation parameter of art photography is changing because this new digital market has opened up. “The maturing of blockchain and other Web3 technologies is enabling solutions to these challenges - tracking the creation of the work, and its movement to the primary and secondary markets, and hence preserving and growing its value. This is not to say there is no potential for Fraud, but it is much easier to verify authenticity with NFTs than with traditional print photographs.” (Ibid.) Things like colour, texture, tone and technique might be substitute by conceptual, technical and formal qualities parameters, or the photographer’s significance and critical appeal in the contemporary landscape (Ibid.). Not to mention, the price history of their work is still an important factor of evaluation.

The world of NFTs is surely a revolutionary element in the history of art photography, and as such is affecting its present and future circulations’ route change. Like a specific

⁷ “NFT stands for non-fungible token, which allows an artist to take an easily reproducible digital object, like a photograph or a video, and mint it to become a *unique* digital object.” (Brooks 2021).

image number on a roll film, each image a photographer mints as an NFT is unique and authentic, so their copyright is protected. The concept of authenticity, which got lost in a digital space blooming in copies, can this way be reintroduced and so artists' recognition (and their ability to earn money directly without any percentage retention). Why is authenticity still needed? How do digital original photographs differ from their copies? These questions can raise spontaneously from a close analysis of the case of NFTs, rendering the reintroduction of authenticity questionable and the NFTs a mere instrument to legally protect artists. Indeed, along the line of Walter Benjamin's thoughts on mechanical reproduction, the loss of the aura came with the loss of authenticity, thus revolutionary changing the experience people have of artworks (1969 [1935]). Even if an image is sold as authentic in the form of an NFT, it will still be present on multiple platforms, saved in different storage rooms etc in the digital world, so why would authenticity matter? Photographic artists are usually more concerned about their art pieces being printed than about them being published multiple times on different platforms, which shows how authenticity is still connected to the physical rather than the virtual form of images.

To move forward, the frictionless dissemination of art photography over the World Wide Web not only has mined the recognition and authorship of artists, but also has caused a certain stagnation and lack of innovation in the field, not only because of difficulty to earn, but also because of the homologation nurtured by algorithms that have "nothing to do with art and everything to do with grabbing attention" (Brooks 2021) to raise numbers and revenue for social media companies. What matters is user engagement, and social media companies strive through creators' contents.

In the following chapter I will delve into a more detailed analysis of online and offline sites of images circulations, to then introduce the case of the project I have developed in the course of the third semester.

3. Organising a Hybrid Exhibition: the Glocal as a Roadmap for the Present

3.1 Images Circulations between the Online and Offline or Spaces of Visibility and Appearance

In order to continue the discussion on images circulations and curating exhibitions not only in a post-globalisation context but also in the light of the changes of directions brought by the Covid-19 pandemic, it is relevant to bring to the surface the notions of “space of appearance” (Arendt 2018 [1985]) and space of visibility, which I introduce here as opposed to the former.

Images circulate in public spaces of collective fruition and private ones, where individuals encounter them in the solitude of their own screens. Moreover, hybrid spaces of collective experience through technological devices are offered more and more often even in art institutions and cultural events. Indeed, storytelling, understood here as the process through which visitors and users build their experience, is widely used in the cultural sector for marketing, social, didactic and innovation purposes (Salmon 2007), mainly via social media and technology-based means of communication.

According to Kenneth Mølbjerg Jørgensen (2020), storytelling implies the possibility of a “space of appearance” (Arendt 2018 [1985]) in which the subject acts and co-exists with other subjects in a public environment. For Arendt, therefore, the space of appearance exists wherever individuals inter-exist politically, “wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action.” (Ibid. 198-199).

The space of appearance must be continually recreated by action; its existence is secured whenever actors gather together for the purpose of discussing and deliberating about matters of public concern, and it disappears the moment these activities cease. It is always a potential space that finds its actualization in the actions and speeches of individuals who have come together to undertake some common project. It may arise suddenly, as in the case of revolutions, or it may develop slowly out of the efforts to change some specific piece of legislation or policy. Historically, it has been recreated whenever public spaces of action and deliberation have been set up, from town hall meetings to workers’ councils, from demonstrations and sit-ins to struggles for justice and equal rights. (D’Entrèves 1993).

I would add to the list cultural institutions and exhibitions as public spaces of action and cultural and social (ex)change, even though they appear as private places on the premises of walls, sometimes monumental stairs bringing to the entrance that suggest the nowadays obsolete idea of art and culture as a temple for a few initiated and privileged attendees. Institution buildings, thus architecture, where curatorial practice takes place, have therefore called “to extend beyond form and function to consider their role in global markets, the flows of goods and capital, notions of identity, and so on”, argued Curator of Design and Architecture at M+ (Hong Kong) Aric Chen (2013) in a personal communication to Adrian George (2015, 10)⁸. Institutions though, are essential in order to ensure freedom within the public space to persist and iterate webs of relations between humans, acts of resistance and personal and collective growth. “Hence Arendt’s account of freedom within the public space is an account of institutionalized freedom: public spaces will very often vanish without stabilization. [...] Wherever they exist, these spaces of freedom and action are especially fragile and endangered. Moreover, such spaces have vanished in modernity. Reasons for their decline are manifold, but Hannah Arendt blames it foremost on the lack of interest in public life, the alienation from the value and dignity of such a life, and the alienation from the meaning of the political as enabling freedom.” (Thuma 2011, 2-3).

Technology and the shift to the online might be addressed as one of the causes of this “alienation from the meaning of the political as enabling freedom” (Ibid.), as the internet and social media are felt like a place, although virtual, of freedom where people have the choice to express themselves and their beliefs. Social turmoils and opinions are nowadays mostly online, they become viral and get shared and re-shared by improvised activists. “If we view the public space as a facilitator of agency, the denial of agency becomes a denial of publicness” believes Thuma (Ibid. 6), bringing to the surface the public nature of agency, which exists in public spaces, thus “spaces of appearance”. Does that mean that agency is not possible in online spaces, which I would call spaces of visibility? One could argue that the online is a space that virtually replicates the public while being intrinsically

⁸ Arin Chen in an email to Adrian George, 5 August 2013, quoted in George, Adrian. 2015 George, Adrian. 2015. *The Curator's Handbook*. London: Thames & Hudson.

private, as it offers individual fruitions of the world or any other possible worlds, even when joint goods and services are offered to users. Radical democrats have though used images and their circulation online to mobilise people, as in the case of Black Lives Matter, Abu Ghraib, and the Arab Spring among many others.

Visibility though is not only the act of being viewed and viewing others in incognito but rather a political, identity-shaping factor. “Visibility is essential to power not only because it is put to use by power in order to control people, but perhaps more importantly because it is power’s condition of possibility.” (Gordon 2002, 132). Within the spaces of visibility different mechanisms of power, surveillance and non-freedom coexist in the form of personal data collection, tracking browser history, and information is delivered to us depending on what the devices have listened to from our conversations or held from previous searches. What we read through is thus filtered, made for us, while the other is obscured, as those people who think differently and have different opinions.

Visibility is nowadays part of our self-affirmation, identity and relational dynamics in the real world. People sometimes feel freer to express themselves on social media rather than in physical public spaces. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought much of our life online, whether for work, education or leisure since it hit in March 2020. From its creation in 1989, the World Wide Web has brought infinite possibilities for individuals and groups. As technologies merge in certain social contexts and serve human beings in a particular time and space, the web is a kind of non-space, yet space of visibility, where images are nowadays the main communication tool among people, as stated in Chapter 1. People communicate instantly through GIFs, memes, photos, and videos besides text or audio messages, feeling near while being physically distant. When reflecting on technologies such as the web or photography itself, criticality is needed in order to discern the benefits and the disadvantages, the risks and opportunities brought to society at both an individual and collective level, in the present and future times. The virtual keeps people together, and the world has recently been through times where technologies have helped do what was physically not possible, as the pandemic has hit locally and globally.

The art world has specifically reacted to moving programmes online, from workshops to talks, from exhibitions to performances. Museums have digitalised their collections and

developed online resources such as video tours, curatorial talks, and discovery activities to strengthen their already-existing communities and attract new interest globally. Some festivals and fairs have also moved online through virtual viewing rooms or 3D exhibitions. The first lockdown that started back in March 2020 fostered the need to explore and invest more in the possibilities given by technology while bringing to the foreground questions and debates on accessibility and privilege associated with a virtual world access. Seeing or not seeing has proven a key indicator of privilege and power, as the current Ukraine-Russia war is showing.

Seeing means becoming a spectator of the image our hands produce to signify the trace of our passing. The image of the world then gives us speech. Seeing an image means grasping the vestige of a passing and finding in that trace the place of the spectator that we will become, that is to say, of the speaking subject. Being humans means being a spectator of the image, that is to say, occupying the fleeting and ceaselessly mobile site of a diaphaneity: that of a subject removed from himself but who, by participating in the apparition of the world into light, gains less by this very fact to the experience of his existence for and in this world. (Mondzain 2010, 314).

What the online can promise, thus, is a constant nearness and freedom of being informed, consequently to have a say on the world's events and be part of them through the liquid form of digital or digitalised images. Art exhibitions have been contaminated by technology and contaminated it, have promoted networking, and made space for a playground where to experiment and think differently and critically to construct rather than disrupt any (im)possible future, although, as Jean Baudrillard puts it, “[w]hen the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning” (1984, 257). This nostalgia has brought exhibitions to go back to their original presential format, while they have transformed and hopefully re-emerged from the web with more consciousness about their social power. The use of technology must indeed serve as a way to evolve the experience of an exhibition and the works of art, rather than merely substituting the physical and translating that format into a virtual one.

What the web culture has prompted, together with what Kerstin Smeds (2012, 65) calls “radical individualization” of exhibitions visitors, is a change of practices in exhibition-making due to technological development and the breakthrough of “self-formation” and “self-performance” (Hammershøj cited in Ibid. 66). “Self-formation is an aesthetic practice

of the self, concerned with the unfolding of the personality. Whereas in the classical concept of Bildung, the individual (ideally) assimilates the universal values and becomes part of the larger, and then returns to his or her own particularity, Self-performance is, consequently, the way an individual seeks on a 'social stage' to perform the personal qualities she has gained." (Ibid.). Nonetheless, in Western society is a shift to the "age of formation and storytelling" (Jensen 1999), from national narratives to multiculturalism and globalisation, which is closely connected to "radical individualisation", "since if there are no 'objective truths' it is up to the individual to establish her own principles and standards." (Smeds 2012, 65).

The decentralisation of information and the dissolution of a universal truth has led to a new awareness of physical exhibitions and cultural institutions at large, of them being a bridge between cultures, dialogical actors between communities and people, and meeting places for social interactions and networking among others. Innovations in network technologies have brought interesting resources to individuals and groups, and visual culture has become a key player in critical thinking strategies and other different contexts of consumption, entertainment, social networking, and political actions, from small to big screens interactions, from individual image consumptions to collective experiences.

Visuality, which is the construct of vision as a cultural, social, and political phenomenon (Mirzoeff 2006; Mitchell 2005), is central to our image-exchange society, and images constitute a filter of how we see and are seen. Thus, everyday seeing constitutes an important part of visuality, and art and curating have either been mined or reinforced by the new name of images and the new possibilities brought to the table by technological advancements. "This is the challenge of engaging contemporary visuality: digital innovations have driven an image-rich world that draws from our everyday imaging, and so critical thinking must derive equally ubiquitous moments of criticality. It is not enough to deconstruct the latest action movie or develop an analysis of a contemporary artist's work if these activities are devoid of engaging the performances of everyday imaging and playing in the photostreams of participatory culture." (Knochel 2013, 18). Consequently, to reflect on the curatorial without engaging with everyday imaging and mediations is to not seek a deep, critical practice that engages with the contemporary.

In a world where techno-capitalism relentlessly sovereigns and inclusive global (art) world order is hard to reach, where new forms of fascism sprout and take hold due to people's numbness and apathy, inflation of information, meanings and images need responsiveness and responsibility. Resistance can only start singularly, locally and through the materiality of bodies gathering and appearing as one body politic. Arendt's formulation of the "space of appearance" (1958) is thus brought into being through political action. On that matter Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou's book *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (2013) closes, as Butler says, "[i]n a way, the collective assembling of bodies is an exercise of the popular will, and a way of asserting, in bodily form, one of the most basic presuppositions of democracy, namely that political and public institutions are bound to represent the people, and to so in ways that establish equality as a presupposition of social and political existence." (196).

3.2 PHROOM's Research in Ireland: A Glocal and Hybrid Strategy for Curating Critical Images Circulations

There is a false binary notion that creates chaos in politics and social environments: that of "national" and "international" which leads to extremisms such as "nationalism" and "internationalism". As Ben Eastham (2022) writes, "[t]hese caricatures align with conventions of centre and periphery" while "one is either a cosmopolitan 'citizen of nowhere' committed to a homogenising global culture or the parochial defender of an essentialising national identity." (2). Yet each time people gather in the peripheries of the world for local issues, these are not amplified by major media, as if something like issues of wider relevance exists. He continues: "This springs from a critical prejudice that is no less obvious for being unexamined: that it is in the peripheries that cultures uncorrupted by globalisation persist, that here some purer form of identity has been preserved, and that regions should therefore focus on the conservation of culture rather than its production." (Ibid.).

These were the premises of the ideation of *On Possibilities of Frictions*, my project for PHROOM aiming to focus the research on a specific territory - Ireland - to render the

photographic languages, policies and aesthetics and understand these in the bigger picture of the global flux of images which passes through PHROOM platform itself too. Indeed, no territory is left uncorrupted by global circulations. While some communities might be more effective in preserving their local identity, some others might be swept away by those forces. Speaking of culture, there is no danger in contaminating and being contaminated by others, as long as local features and histories do not get abandoned and forgotten but rather enhanced and valued in their difference.

Globalisation has transformed art too, the conditions of its production, and the possibilities of its diffusion and dissemination. Globalisation has put pressure on institutions and artists to reposition themselves in a globalised world. Aesthetics and cultural narratives have been questioned and revised. For example, the exhibition *The Global Contemporary. Art Worlds After 1989* (2011-2012), curated by Andrea Buddensieg and Peter Weibel at ZKM | Museum of Contemporary Art in Karlsruhe (Germany), turned the museum in a place where local narratives subverted the unity of the universal space and time, serving as “a utopian ‘factory’” (e-flux, n.d.) and “civic laboratory” (Bennett 2013, 49-69). Indeed, the exhibition thematised the conditions under which not only art and institutions’ policies, but everyday life has been shaped by globalisation. This exhibition is an example of an event that nurtured and accelerated the raising of the question of the meaning and necessity behind presenting contemporary art from elsewhere in a particular place, which is the same question that inspired *On Possibilities of Frictions*.

What globalisation also provoked, was a contrary movement of return to the local, seeing institutions, for example, redefining their storytelling and artists promoted in what are called “regional exhibitions”. Researcher and Curator Henrietta Y. Mansfeld (2021) describes them as “a typology of exhibition-making which redefines contemporary art with geographic connotations.”. These exhibitions are risky, because they might iterate the homogenising of aesthetics while addressing multiplicity, inclusion and heterogeneity in failing terms if they do not integrate the global and the local. Consequently, the topic of “integration” should somehow substitute that of “inclusion”, and that of “visibility” should be wiped away by the more relevant one of “equality”. Indeed, promises of visibility and inclusion are sometimes traps offered to artists who are finding it difficult to emerge and

are ruled by the slogan that any opportunity to showcase their work is “better than nothing”.

3.2.1 PHROOM

PHROOM platform, on the other hand, is an example of an independent, non-profit organisation whose mission is to promote visual artists, mainly photographers and video artists, that stand out in the wide, international panorama of mainstream image-making. Thanks to a continuous investigation, PHROOM’s research team, which I am part of, selects and presents projects from all over the world, outlining through its archive, exhibitions, curatorial and editorial projects, the profile of a panorama that sees photographic research and video art as protagonists of a continuous linguistic and cultural evolution.

PHROOM is intrinsically digital, as it does not take the form of a physical gallery or office. Its digital strategy goes beyond the “mechanism of pumping content into the fuel tank of the attention economy” (Graziano, Mars and Thurston 2022, 2) and makes use of it as an opportunity for free knowledge sharing over image culture.

Contemporary life takes place on screens, in a flux of images to which people are almost indifferent. Technology advances with image culture, spanning from surveillance cameras to personal webcams, from satellite pictures to medical images. Television still filters the life of many, while commercials besiege everyone on several fronts. The “pixelated image” (Mirzoeff 1999, 17) of the television or the technological devices’ screens, transmits photos of any kind, from low and high culture, creating a mixed flow of images from anywhere at our fingertips.

The local, subcultural approach of visual studies and cultural studies at large, cannot ignore the complexities of an integrated, global system and culture of postmodernism. Arjun Appadurai (1990), notes a consistent tension between the local and the global, as they influence each other in a constant interaction between homogenisation and heterogenisation (32). Thus, it no longer makes sense to locate culture and art solely within regional or national boundaries, for the mere fact that they are not produced in isolation but

all breathe the same global cultural flow, in the dimensions of ethnoscape, technoscape, ideoscape, financescape, and mediascape (Ibid. 33). As Irit Rogoff observes, individuals create links and visual narratives in everyday life from “the scrap of an image [which] connects with a sequence of a film and with the corner of a bill board or the window display of a shop we have passed by” (2002 [1998]). Here I insist on highlighting how the local and global intermingle: every day, people unconsciously think per images, merging local visions with visions from elsewhere, from a Hollywoodian movie, or an Instagram post of a breathtaking view of the Dolomitic Alps. Those images people encounter in the fluidity of the online world are here and not here at the same time. “In this complex interface of reality and virtuality, there is nothing everyday about everyday life anymore. Visual culture used to be seen as a distraction from the serious business of text and history. It is now the locus of cultural and historical change.” (Mirzoeff 1999, 18). This change is particularly hitting communications and the way information is shared. The coming of the World Wide Web has rebuilt the world by producing a system of other symbols and languages.

PHROOM is a project rooted in this change and new possibilities offered by the web. Gallery manager and entrepreneur Giangiacomo Ciria and artist and professor Matteo Cremonesi’s shared interests in exploring this new and captivating context such as the web, moved them to build the platform and start a long-term research. Moreover, they felt the need to escape the local, Italian (and more specifically, Milan-based) art scene, as it seemed to be stuck in a bubble.

For an author, the opportunity to circulate their work online means giving themselves a chance to establish new relations with people that are geographically and culturally distant from them. This encounter can be risky, as it could remodel a particular artistic language according to references that are distant from artists’ necessities and urgencies. Artistic practices have to partly be resistance practices, stated PHROOM co-founder Matteo Cremonesi during an interview conducted with him (Appendix A).

“I created PHROOM not to be the most famous project but to be an authoritative voice in its field.”, stated Ciria when interviewed for Culture Volt (2021). “PHROOM’s audience is large as a result of this. Thanks to the quality proposed, we can make clear [that] how to

deal with photography today is not just something for those working in the field but rather represents a way to deepen our contemporary life, increasingly composed of images” (Ibid.).

PHROOM constitutes an observatory from which to analyse, understand and participate in the evolution prompted by the web, digital language, which is characterised by a peculiar ability to mutate and be unpredictable. The project’s mission is today unchanged, as it still aims to build an archive through which it is rendered and readable the most interesting shapes of contemporary visual culture. Nonetheless, in the course of their practice, PHROOM’s team has indulged particular interests in local photography scenes, such as the Greek or Ukrainian, to give some examples. Most of the time it was about indulging an intuition that rendered a territory particularly interesting for the social and cultural tensions that were traversing it. These tensions were visible in the authors’ works and in the way their choices and voices were felt differently from any other around (Cremonesi 2022).

3.2.2 Framing Contemporary Irish Photography

It was this particular attention at the root of PHROOM’s foundation, this care for the local dimension of visual culture’s production that led me to think about focusing my project’s research on the Irish territory, which was never explored by the platform. Indeed, up to date, there was only one Irish art photographer published on the platform. I have had a quite long relationship with Ireland, in terms of the network in the field of photography I have established and the understanding of the photographic artists’ practices. Moreover, I recalled Joseph Beuys’ definition of Ireland as the “Brain of Europe”. He travelled around the country to give lectures in Derry, Coleraine, Cork, and Limerick. Beuys’ indication on one of the blackboards that Ireland was the “Brain of Europe” would tend “to turn this political geography and its centre-periphery logic on its head, implying that in looking to the ‘forces’ emanating from Ireland for new ideas, London and indeed, the rest of Europe would benefit.” (Walters 2012, 276). Ireland is indeed an interesting country where to study the relationship between the global and local, because of its history of conflicts

against the British subdual and its great historical heritage comprising language, monuments from different historical ages and art too. Moreover, there is currently a great governmental investment in the arts and culture sector, which defines many opportunities of action and dialogue with the Irish artistic panorama.

Photography in Ireland has not a long history of local support, preservation and education. It was only in 1978 that the major supporting institution - namely, Photo Museum Ireland, formerly The Gallery of Photography - was founded by John Osman. New organisations for photography have emerged in recent years in Dublin city, primarily PhotoIreland, and other major institutions like the National Gallery have started to collect photography but still invested a relatively small amount of time and resources in its preservation, promotion and education. Photo Museum Ireland remains a backbone of the sector, given its mission and complete dedication to promoting and showcasing Irish and international photography, and its recent growth into a museum-standard organisation. Indeed, Photo Museum Ireland has recently launched the National Photography Collection to provide a comprehensive overview of contemporary photographic practices in Ireland and to support artists in archiving their work, something they have identified as a major issue for practitioners, stated Irish writer and photography critic Darren Campion in conversation with me (Appendix B). Campion was chosen as an interviewee to understand more about Irish contemporary photography as he has recently written a text charting key aspects in the development of contemporary Irish photographic practices, which was commissioned for Photo Museum Ireland exhibition *In Our Own Image: Photography in Ireland, 1893 to the Present* (forthcoming).

To continue on the topic of Irish contemporary photographers' support in Ireland, third-level institutions on photography as Source Magazine are positively shaping the future direction of the medium, also creating opportunities for emergent photographers. Although governmental funding and institutional support are highly available in Ireland, the visual arts, and photography in particular, still lag behind the performing arts and literature (Campion 2022).

When I asked Campion on Irish photography aesthetics and politics intersection, he described it as divided into two streams of practices, a distanced, objective one, especially

linked to the representation of the built environment, and a more subjective approach that is still very much politicised in the sense that these photographers engage with the conditions of Irish society. The former “is in keeping with international trend within photography of course, but it is also perhaps a reaction to the origins of Irish art photography within reportage and photojournalism.” (Ibid.). He continued:

For many years it seemed that the 'typical' Irish art photograph was a static view of a man-made landscape made with a medium or large format camera, which can be best understood as a reaction to - or interrogation of - the conventional understanding of the 'beautiful' Irish landscape. (I'm thinking here of work by Anthony Haughey, Paul Seawright, David Farrell, Padraig Murphy, John Duncan). In that sense, Irish art photography is politicised because it has circled so insistently around the issue of Irish identity - the question of what does Irishness look like and how it might be best represented. This shows photographers reacting to an uncertainty in the culture at large, acknowledging that national identity is never fixed or finished, and that we always in some way at odds with our history. (Ibid.)

This Irishness was not only searched for in everyday life but also in the aesthetics and approaches deriving from black and white reportage and photojournalism of the origins, as previously stated. This reaction was at the same time counterbalanced by approaches that were influenced by trends in the UK and Europe, towards, for example, “the use of colour and self-conscious artistic strategies, while remaining a concern with the same ‘socially engaged’ subjects.” (Ibid.). This happened since the beginning of the growth of photography as an art practice in Ireland in the late 1970s.

Irish photographers have achieved recognition and exhibited on an international level but this has not been matched with investments by supporting institutions. Champion stated that while there are some organisations that have helped counteract this lack of support in wider European creative networks to showcase already existing works. A more productive avenue for the future, he said, would be the collaboration on an international and cross-European basis to encourage creative exchange and dialogue leading to the production of new projects: “This would set the development of Irish photography far more clearly in the global context, something that is less certain - or at least much less formalised - at present.” (Ibid.). These possibilities of mutual, organic contaminations and dialogues would thus lead Irish photography - or any other minor photographic practice worldwide - to go beyond limits such as a narrowness of outlook that can apply to both the kind of subjects or

the way the medium is been used. Conservatism, as Campion defines it, is perhaps a reflection of the few institutions dedicated to photography, which causes a consensus of style, which stems from a relatively small education (Ibid.).

As previously stated, there is a false binary notion that leads the discussion about globalisation to be entered on the opposition of homogenisation versus heterogenisation. This dichotomy is unhelpful as it “draw[s] us into an imagery in which the global is homogeneous precisely because we oppose it to the heterogeneity we identify as locality.” (Tsing 2004, 58).

According to Roland Robertson (1996) when studying globalisation and locality the question should be *how* the two can be interrelated rather than *whether* they can be (28). Robertson thus introduced the concept of glocalisation into the social-scientific discourse to replace the concept of globalisation, which per se involves different modes of glocalisation processes, as it entails the particularisation of universalism and the universalisation of particularism.

Taking a cue from this consolidated concept, Robertson proposed it as a strategy to overcome the local-global problematic and analyse the way the two are indeed part of the same process, as projects of glocalisation are constituting the feature of contemporary globalisation. Indeed, there is an increasingly globe-wide discourse of locality, community, diversity and integration, especially catalysed by the conditions set by the Covid-19 pandemic, which constrained people to refocus on their surroundings, and their neighbourhoods and towns, while also nurturing global connections thanks to technology and online events.

What local and global interrelations create is a dialogue wherein local forces adapt their system to suit their own needs while remaining part of a global domain. The reductive view of postmodernism and thereafter often involves placing great value on the heterogeneous, meaning the recognition of different cultures, peoples, and societies, while failing to articulate a context - that of a glocal, integrated world - that would make more meaningful the difference intercutting in the whole picture. Not to mention, according to the publication *Culture | 2030 Indicators* (UNESCO, 2019), there is no global, universal

culture, and local knowledge and community participation are key to achieving sustainable development.

3.3 The Case of Biennials⁹: Where Local Art Encounters the Big Pool of International Art Discourse

To critically curate images and art in general and their circulations, involves a work of imagination and decentralisation in thinking about where to locate major global art events. The case of biennials is an important one to bring in the foreground, as they are the main stage where local art encounters the big pool of the international art discourse.

It is only recently that the West has seen the rise of Asian and young Latin American nations (firstly Brasil) into the flux of the global art market, something that has brought a multiple, heterogeneous scene that has relativised the Western hegemonic visions. Hegemony is thus a "struggle for consensus and consent: for a specific legitimate yet imaginary cartography of our world. This symbolic struggle is simultaneously carried out in local, national and transnational contexts." (Marchart 2020, 22). As biennials mediate those three dimensions, they are important advocators for the legitimisation of minor narratives, thus local artistic practices and knowledges. According to Anna Tsing (2004) "knowledge of the globe, and globally traveling knowledge" (87) depend on the friction at play among multiple universals. In Paul O'Neill's words, "[a] critical imaginary for visual culture(s), then, is one that addresses diverse practices of art and curating with respect to salient questions of autonomy, identity, inequality, locality, geopolitical change the reassertion of nation-states. And the hardening of national borders, the escalation of untruths, and the violent diminishing of citizen and denizen rights across the globe." (2019, 371).

To address all these questions is an attempt to imagine a post-global curatorial practice and art-making which acknowledges global connections across difference and interrupt dominant stories. As curating has a high educational component, we could address this

⁹ I am using "biennial" as term for the overall exhibition form, independently whether it is a biennial, triennial, or follows different cycles.

imagination of a post-global curatorial practice, thus pedagogy, as an “education of the future” (Morin 2001). As the author Edgar Morin asserts (Ibid. 30-32), to have meaning, information, words, and art, for extension, need to be placed in context and confront the complexity of contemporaneity, which is the relation between unity and multiplicity. To negate multiplicity is thus an exercise of reiterating imperialist, colonialist structures. What biennials’ presence on a global scale leads to, is the production of canonical works of art and projects, even though there are flourishing examples of biennials being active advocates for decolonisation and deglobalisation movements. In his essay, *The Globalisation of Art and the “Biennials of Resistance”*: *A History of the Biennials from the Periphery* (2020), Oliver Marchart states to borrow curator Ranjit Hoskote’s term “Biennials of Resistance” (22) to address radical, peripheral biennials that are making use of art as a platform to demonstrate their cultural and political power (e.g. Havana Biennial, São Paulo Biennial, Gwangju Biennial, Johannesburg Biennial). Many biennials thus contribute to marketing cities and strengthening the tourism industry to make cities more attractive locations for businesses located in those places (Marchart 2020, 22). Although Biennial culture is a vital condition for the production and circulation of contemporary art, including art photography, those at the “periphery” have contributed to “opening up new public spaces for artists’ production outside the dominant market” (Ibid. 28). Still, the majority of alternatives to the dominant market circulations are external to the institutional. Digital platforms, radical curatorial collectives and artist-led not-for-profit spaces are indeed on the front line of the decentralisation of art circulations.

Pure decentralization is utopia, as there would be no decentralisation without a centre, and from the process of decentralising, another centre will soon flourish. The only possibility is the co-existence of different centres, which then collaborate and grow in interconnectedness.

Decentralisation of sharing knowledge as the act of making common or letting information through visual forms circulate, has been boosted by technology and, particularly, blockchain and cryptocurrency technologies. What I focused on in view of the project *On Possibilities of Frictions* was more the technological infrastructures given to circulate art photography and knowledge of local and global cultures rather than the

blockchain and cryptocurrency technologies. Indeed, as the aim was that of shaping a global strategy to curate critical circulations, I sought PHROOM platform's support as it has been invested in the decentralisation and commoning of visual culture for several years, as Cremonesi pointed out in the interview. My point was thus that of curating a hybrid exhibition for educational and artists' promotion purposes rather than selling their art. This is why the exhibition did not showcase their original artworks but reprinted artworks that were meant to be discarded after use, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Taking a cue from the urgent need to critically integrate the local and the global, to then substitute the notion of the "universal" with that of the "universals", the project I proposed to PHROOM to support was thought of as the method to practice a critical circulation of images and decentralisation of knowledge. Indeed, the platform infrastructure was a channel for me to drive PHROOM's international and digital audiences¹⁰ to focus on the singular - the Irish territory - and bring it into the multifaceted, complex reality of the contemporary. Not to mention, to use technologies of displays such as online infrastructures, is one of "the modalities for organisation and reinvention [which] are the very material of these trans-local and trans-disciplinary infrastructures, and it is through them that they establish a public between the near and the far." (Castéra 2021, 13)

Consequently, the project was designed as both an occasion for Irish art photography to be integrated into an international setting and for PHROOM to reach new audiences (both locally and globally), improve brand awareness, and grow the number of followers. As PHROOM's team is used to give lectures, and organise workshops and exhibitions, the proposal was in line with their long-term mission of educating people about contemporary visual culture in hybrid forms, through the archive of written and visual materials, and the offline presence in festivals, lectures, and solo exhibitions.

¹⁰ The term "digital audiences" is used in relation to PHROOM as it is a digital platform with its engaged individuals and potential people interested in it.

3.4 The Planning and Making of *On Possibilities of Frictions*

Once the scope and goal of the project were set, metrics for success had to be laid out, both from my perspective as an independent curator and from that of PHROOM. Metrics were both qualitative and quantitative. The former included press and media coverage, collaborations and partnerships built up during the exhibition planning and after the project's closure, while the latter was made up of the number of visitors online (on PHROOM platform and social media channels, mainly Instagram), and the number of pre-bookings. The newsletter subscriptions' number was not taken into account as PHROOM was still undergoing its implementation process. Not to mention, qualitative feedback from stakeholders and further opportunities for myself and PHROOM were counted.

Quantitatively, the aimed target for the number of visitors to the exhibition was set around 25, as the exhibition was a new product in the market, it was a pop-up exhibition and possible restrictions due to the pandemic might have affected the opening and the exhibition run. Moreover, the platform's content interactions and online traffic increase were set around +5%, considering that it would not have been possible to distinguish the growth relative to the project related content or to other content published, as the platform did not allow for data collection for legal reasons, for example, although looking at the insights on Instagram helped understanding the engagement and reach in terms of "top posts" and "top stories", in the long run, from the project launch on November 1st, to its end on January 22nd, on the exhibition closing day. Not to mention, the increase of followers was considered too, although it might not have been directly prompted by the project itself.

In terms of success, delivering the project on budget was also considered a metric. The budget was 1350 euros, and it was entirely coming from personal funds. Indeed, accessing the Irish government's funds or obtaining cash sponsorships proved impossible due to several circumstances. Firstly, the Irish Arts Council requirements to apply for funds were not possible to meet in such a short time (e.g. a Personal Public Service number was required to set up an account on their platform). Secondly, PHROOM's policy did not allow for artists to pay a fee to participate, as they were invited to take part in the project.

The only possible cash or in-kind sponsorships were those coming from printers, such as Hen's Teeth, or the Italian Cultural Institute based in Dublin. While the first sponsorship was agreed upon, the second did not happen. Indeed, the Italian Cultural Institute had no funds available at the time to support external projects. Moreover, the Institute's policy seemed that of only accepting pre-prepared and tested exhibitions coming from other Italian institutions and featuring mainstream photographers and artists, to not have to risk anything in terms of people's reception and not have to invest time and budget in proposing well-thought, critical, and contemporary exhibitions. Instead of resulting in an obstacle, this episode gave me more motivation to pursue my project, as it proved essential in the poor context of the mainstream, travelling and decontextualised exhibition formats. My proposed exhibition was indeed conceived "as a form of resistance to the primacy of the practice of curating as resulting in a fixed exhibition-form [...]." (O'Neill 2019, 501). On the other hand, it would have been strategic for both PHROOM and the Italian Cultural Institute to start a partnership as PHROOM is an Italy-based organisation with high numbers of followers worldwide and an interesting proposal in the visual culture panorama, and the Italian Cultural Institute is associated to the Italian embassy in Dublin, which could have opened several opportunities for PHROOM and I as an individual in the long term, both in Dublin and in other cities where the Italian Cultural Institute is located.

The pre-settled budget was respected (Appendix C), although leftover money could have been used to better plan a marketing and promotional campaign, which was not possible because as an independent curator supported by PHROOM, I could not make major changes to the way communication is delivered on their social media. Despite that, a small portion of the money was spent on Instagram and Dublin Art Life promotions, while major media coverage was too expensive to afford. Moreover, if there would have been more time, the project could have been preceded by market segmentation and research to see if the product was worth the money and work.

Overall, the benefits expected to be resulting from the project were bilateral and both tangible and intangible. Firstly, from the point of view of PHROOM, the major foreseen benefits were: (a) locally and globally increasing reach, (b) gaining short or long-term new Ireland-based partners and contributors, (c) increasing brand awareness, (d) developing

more alike projects based on the integration of local talents with the international ones archived on the platform. Secondly, the Irish artists' wished benefits were: (a) increasing visibility internationally, (b) exhibiting in Dublin in a new context (PHROOM's first appearance in the country) and after the Covid-19 pandemic break. The benefits were decided to be managed through constant project evaluations and team meetings, feedback from stakeholders, which were mainly the artists, tasks' completion, and hoped quantitative results' reach. At the same time, risk management practices were implemented and threats individualised, such as: (a) absence of public funds, (b) scarce public engagement, mainly related to the physical exhibition, (c) larger and established competitors' offers, (d) the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, (e) difficulties in finding a space for the exhibition due to high rent costs and high demand after lockdown, (f) insufficient online traffic and long-term engagement with the resources, (g) seasonal storms, which could have caused the impossibility of opening the exhibition space.

In the definition of the project's stakeholders, consumers, services providers, financial players, collaborators, PHROOM's volunteers and groups of interest were considered. The target was set around Dubliners and international people based in Dublin or not, between 18 and 60 years old with an interest in photography. It was consciously a broad demographic target as my previous experience as an intern at the Photo Museum Ireland showed me that photography in Dublin and generally in Ireland attracts people of different ages and backgrounds. In addition, the platform's Instagram insight showed the same demographics. Before kicking off the project, lists of print companies and studios, public or private funders, venues for hire, media partners and newsletters providers were prepared.

The project management tools utilised in the project were a work breakdown structure (Appendix D) and a Gantt chart (Appendix E). The former gave a precise understanding of the tasks and subtasks to accomplish in order to reach the set milestones and overall goals, while the latter gave a time-based, weekly, realistic plan to follow and adjust when needed. To sum up, the goals were overall two: to promote a selected group of Irish photographic artists on PHROOM international platform and to organise a PHROOM exhibition in Dublin as a strategy to increase brand awareness and reach new audiences. Consequently,

the major milestones and deliverables were those of creating an online curated space with artists' interviews and projects (Appendix F) and an offline exhibition in a physical venue in Dublin. While the former did not need any budget or infrastructure, such as a webpage creation, the latter did and required more preparation and precise risk assessment.

After kicking off the project with a team meeting between myself, the directors and the platform editor, I started researching artists in PHROOM's archive and across Ireland, via galleries and artist-in-residence studios' websites, magazines, and artists' websites that I already knew about. After making several cuts to the artists' list, I made my final decision s in agreement with the team, and at the start of September 2021 I invited the selected artists to take part in the project. Emails were sent by me to the Irish artists and by PHROOM's Director Giangiacomo Cirila to those who had already contributed to PHROOM's archive. Simultaneously, I started looking for a venue where to exhibit and lay down the calendar for the Irish artists' interviews and publications on the platform.

The location scouting was given a ten-week time to be found and contracted, while the projects' publications were set to be uploaded between the first week of November and the last of December, to allocate one artist per week and relaunching the project with the physical exhibition announced only one week after the latest publication. During the project development, the publications schedule changed because not all the artists contacted replied to the invitation, so the number of Irish artists was lower than expected.

After several proposals sent to different venues in Dublin City, its outskirts and even other Irish cities such as Limerick and Carlow, in the first week of November I managed to get a positive answer from the managers of A4 Sounds, non-profit artist-run space and gallery in North-inner city Dublin. A4 Sounds' venue offered the perfect space: a white cube with a slightly industrial look. Even though my first options were outdoor spaces or non-white-cube venues, A4 Sounds resulted in being a good fit because of their mission aiming "to transform the means by which cultural works are produced, accessed and understood in Ireland" and their values "guided by feminist, anti-racist, anti-capitalist, and LGBT-inclusive politics." (A4 Sounds n.d.). Indeed, those characteristics were in line with the project's and PHROOM's mission. Moreover, the gallery's white walls were perfect for the kind of exhibition, which had embedded in itself a lot of information, and the design of

the installation, which comprised of unframed prints of different sizes which otherwise would have gotten lost in a different space.

From the first week of November to the last of January - when the exhibition would have closed - I collected data from Instagram only, as it was revealed to be the only possible way to do so (cf. Chapter 3).

Due to the uncertain times because of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions at play in Ireland at that time, I decided not to look for sponsorships in kind for beverages for the opening reception. Indeed, in the end, the reception happened to be impossible to have, as gatherings were prohibited and the number of people allowed in the venue at the same time was limited to five. Moreover, finding sponsors to fund the project was difficult as it was the first edition of a PHROOM exhibition in Dublin. Anyway, the project kept on budget and even though sponsors would have helped make the event bigger in terms of reach and importance, they were not that needed from an economic point of view.

Once the first milestone was reached, and so the online part of the project was completed, in the first week of January, the exhibition was announced. The already prepared press materials, which comprised of a press release and a graphic poster, were sent over to the previously set mailing list and physically spread in different cultural centres, institutions, universities and cafes around Dublin city centre. Bookings were recommended by the venue policy but not essential, as long as the venue's capacity was respected. Meanwhile, the prints were ready a week before the opening and stored carefully and tight to prevent humidity to ruin them.

On the opening day, January 19th, 2022, I reached the venue in the morning and managed to install all the works on the gallery walls, following the exhibition layout that I had previously prepared on digital sheets. Everything was ready as previously scheduled, two hours before the opening time.

In the next chapter, I will delve into the project's curatorial method and outcomes, while previously stating its context of production and criticalities.

4. *On Possibilities of Frictions*' Curatorial Method and Outcomes

4.1 Open Display and Friction as Performative Civil Imagination in Social Documentary Photography

In the context of a world overcrowded with images, where photos are no longer what they used to be, what is the meaning of photography exhibitions and why organise them? These are the questions that mostly strike photography curators nowadays. The way images are used and shared today substantially affects the work of institutions devoted to photography, its understanding and its appreciation.

An exhibition consists of the physical presentation of documents, art pieces, concepts and reflections on certain issues, and as Marta Ponsa states, it is not problematic to bring together artworks from different times and places as long as it is explicit the purpose of the proposed subject (2019, 56). As she also quests the need for such photography exhibitions to exist, she claims that “diverse formats, hybridisation, transversality and interconnection, without leaving aside a feeling of uncertainty about the acceleration of the present” (Ibid. 58) can serve as a method to face the current evolution of images and not ignore their continuous technical evolution and “social demands” (Ibid.).

In exhibitions everyday life is offered, publicly displayed and shifted to another context, that of the museum or any cultural space whose ambition is that of bringing the public attention to a certain subject of interest. This subject is mediated and mapped by what Mieke Bal calls “expository agency”, or the subject - not to be intended as a real person but rather as a matrix of cultural processes - whose beliefs are brought out through the act of producing arguments and meanings (1996). The expository agent transforms the interaction between visual and verbal representation, constructing a sign system in interaction with spectators¹¹.

¹¹ The term “spectator” is used here according to Marie-José Mondzain use of the word in relation to the act of seeing (cf. Chapter 2), and Roland Barthes’ (2000 [1980]) notion of “Spectator” as the viewer of a photograph, in relation to the “Spectrum” (the photo), and the photographer, in his term, “Operator”. Not to mention, this research follows Ariella Azoulay’s thoughts and thus her use of “spectator” as who acts as a receiver of the act of photography.

If curating gets to be taken into account as “research” rather than a sterile setting up of exhibitions and other modes of display, “art (as an object, as a concept, or thing, in whatever form it manifests itself) becomes part of an explanatory process of transformation through a process of being in motion, moving from one state of being toward another [...]. Rather than perceived as static, art is itself changed by this movement, by becoming public, by ‘being exhibited’.” (O’Neill 2019, 502). Consequently, by being exhibited, art becomes “art is ‘becoming’ or ‘being-with’: a movement and evolution, ‘changing to something or someone’ and a being ‘in motion’ [...]” (Ibid. 503), if curating prioritises this research-based approach and the inherent temporarily cooperation and co-production through a collective discourse, between curators, artists, artworks, and spectators.

The “agency” behind *On Possibilities of Frictions* is aware of the technological and social transformation that has been accelerating in the last two years of the Covid-19 pandemic. Indeed, it has acknowledged the fact that the online world cannot be considered a substitute but complementary to on-site exhibitions. Therefore, the project has considered the benefits and criticalities of both the formats, as previously discussed, to care for the selected image-based narratives and tell a larger, communal story.

The exhibition started in November 2021 as an online weekly publication on PHROOM, where the nine Irish artists published their respective projects within an interview or critical text conducted or written by myself. Moreover, in the dedicated platform’s section under the name of *On Possibilities of Frictions* too, one, two or three images from every project were laid out in the black space of flow of the platform to create a free flux of contrasting languages and subjects bounded by being all concerned photographs, or social practices. In the same fluid way, a selection of images were printed out and positioned on the A4 Sounds gallery walls maintaining each artist’s pictures close, although still inter-existing with the other narrations (Figure 1).



Figure 1. *Installation shot of the exhibition “On Possibilities of Frictions”, A4 Sounds, Dublin, January 19th - 22nd, 2022. Courtesy of the Author and the participating artists.*

The type of copyright release form (Appendix G) stipulated with all the artists required the images to be printed out exclusively in connection with the project, on a non-profit basis, and to be dismantled after the exhibition. Therefore, the images were printed out on gallery-quality fine art, archival paper with a matted Giclee printing method, which gave them a great, professional look for a reasonable, on-budget price. Moreover, a 20% discount on the prints was agreed upon with Hen’s Teeth Print Studio in return for their logo to be displayed on the exhibition press release, digital and physical posters and flyers.

Following Wolfgang Tillmans’ early 1990s intuition of exhibiting photographs of different sizes on open display, the images in the exhibition were hung as sheets of paper simply taped to the walls, with a special biadhesive tape that was tested before both on the walls and prints. As it would not harm the surface of the wall and leave the prints unmodified in the course of the four exhibition days, the tape resulted being a neat, low price solution for the hanging of the works, also permitting me to hang all the photos in the span of a single morning, right before the exhibition opening. The fact that the pictures

were unframed enabled an immediate and unfiltered viewing experience and emphasised “fragility and endurance, circulation and access” (Ault 2006, 136). As on the platform, where the images appear in a flow without frames and in a loose structure, the physical exhibition offered the spectators to relate to each image in their own way, to wonder about their meanings and situatedness.

Art photography “gets to escape from being ‘just’ itself through being ‘exhibited’ [...] it moves from private to public, from concept to realization, and into the here and now.” (O’Neill 2017, 503). He continues: “The gallery” - being it virtual or real - “ plays its own cameo role as the ‘THAT WHICH IS NOT HERE,’¹² where the exhibition is a kind of game and the game becomes a kind of gallery of activities, actions, social relations and multiple modes of spectation and consumption.” (Ibid. 507). Indeed, the place of display becomes a game for players, or agents seeking to free images from their form and continuous travelling through space and time.

It is through the act of imagination, through its performativity, that spectators cooperate in the forming of the meaning of an exhibition. It is a form of imagination that becomes “political” because it “exceeds the grasp of the individual mind - it is a form of imagination that transcends the single individual alone and exists *between* individuals and is shared by them.” (Azoulay 2012, 5). The political nature of this imagination, as Ariella Aïsha Azoulay argues, “stems from the sheer fact that fruits of the imagination are exchanged between people, emerge into existence between them, take on different concrete forms and play a role in the shaping of their lives” (Ibid.), rather than emanating from its relation to what is identified as political. Along this line, she assesses that the ontology of photography is political too, because, in her words, it is an event that puts in relation those present in the situation of photography, the technology itself, the photographer, and least but most importantly, the spectator. The latter is indeed the agent who ensures that the event of photography is never over: they hold the possibilities of the gaze and action in a civic sense.

¹² O’Neill (2017, 503) believes that exhibitions are always “somewhere else” and they are “THAT WHICH IS NOT HERE” in the sense that they display that which has already been in other time and place.

It is relevant here to bring attention to Azoulay's notion of this "civic skill" at stake in the viewing of a photograph: "This skill is activated the moment one grasps that citizenship is not merely a status, a good, or a piece of private property possessed by the citizen, but rather a tool of a struggle or an obligation to others to struggle against injuries inflicted on those others, citizen and noncitizen alike [...]" (2008, 14). Citizenship, which originally describes the relationship between an individual and a state, is, according to Azoulay, the form of relations of individuals in the event of photography. Therefore, photography, and particularly social documentary photography - which is what Azoulay's focuses on - "is an apparatus of power" (Ibid. 81) that entails diverse actions that goes from the production to the consumption, from the distribution to the exchange (Ibid. 82). Photography's citizenry is one of coalescence and empathy, from the photographers, not elevated to a higher position, and from the spectators, which are called to advocate for a non-passive receiving of images to abolish "the place of the other in the construction of a 'seeing together'." (Mondzain 2009, 42).

Although senses are numbed by the constant exposure to "images that politically control passions by the community" (Ibid. 21), aesthetic and curated views have and should have the power to awaken society because what happens locally has an impact on the global and vice-versa. As Marie-José Mondzain sharply observes, images have the power to make us act, not because they are at the origins of our acts, but because, as free subjects of our actions, people have the freedom to be critical of what they see beyond the visible, thus to let the awakened emotions transform into "a critical deconstruction" (Sekula 1978, 862) of the documentary constructed genre. Thus, documentary photography in its social declination, "has simultaneously contributed much to spectacle, to retinal excitation, to voyeurism, to terror, envy and nostalgia, and only a little to the critical understanding of the social world" (Ibid. 863) because of the depoliticisation of images on mass media (which are wholly spectacular).

This civil type of intention in the act of looking, which consists in showing concern for "a shared world" (Azoulay 2012, 110) invites to exercise a certain degree of imagination and transgress the given boundaries of the field of vision (Ibid. 111), which concerns the mere identification of objects. The civil imagination can rise from a close and slow

encounter with images, where the spectator's gaze movement and the subject of photography come into contact. In this precise moment, the products of imagination and those mediated by photographers "emerge into circulation to create friction among one another" (Ibid. 4) and "sparks of surprise, astonishment, wonder, shock, consternation, enthusiasm, horror, incomprehension or disruption may emerge in the consciousness of at least some of the participants involved in the given interaction, as products of the imagination." (Ibid.).

American anthropologist Anna Tsing has a very interesting take on this concept of "friction", which has inspired the exhibition here analysed. Indeed, in her book *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (2004), she uses the term to capture the dynamic through which different cultures encounter in the stream of globalisation and its culturally homogenised product. Language is the proof of this: people all speak English as a way to standardise communication transnationally, whether indigenous languages or national dialects die under a new form of Western imperialism spreading all over the global South and minor Western nations themselves. Indeed, globalisation erases differences and entails a process of homogenisation through the institution of a technical language in the broader sense. But the global, therefore the universal is made up of heterogeneous elements which can be identified in the narrowness of close encounters. Friction is more like a gerund, an action *in fieri* that results from a form of resistance at play in encounters across differences. "Speaking of friction is a reminder of the importance of interaction in defining movement, cultural form, and agency. Friction is not just about slowing things down. Friction is required to keep global power in motion. It shows us (as one advertising jingle put it) where the rubber meets the road. Roads are a good image for conceptualizing how friction works: Roads create pathways that make motion easier and more efficient, but in doing so they limit where we go. The ease of travel they facilitate is also a structure of confinement. Friction inflects historical trajectories, enabling, excluding, and particularizing." (Tsing 2004, 6).

Exhibitions, whether large or small-scale, mirror global encounters in gathering together artists and artworks from across the globe in one site of display "akin to an organic global cooperation" (2004) in curator Hou Hanru's words when interviewed by

O'Neill (as cited in O'Neill 2016 [2012], 63)¹³. From the sometimes awkward juxtaposition of heterogeneous elements, deliberately such, constellations of singularities emerge and disrupt the empty void of homogeneous globalisation. "Singularities that act in common" constitute what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri define as "multitude" (2004, 105). For them, "[t]he multitude too might thus be conceived as a network: an open and expansive network in which all difference can be expressed freely and equally, a network that provides the means of encounter so that we can work and live in common." (Ibid. xiv). The concept of "multitude" brings to the table a possibly positive acceptance of globalisation and transnational encounters of people and products, as "the creation of new circuits of cooperation and collaboration that stretch across nations and continents and allow an unlimited number of encounters." (Ibid, xiii).

The situation created by online and offline exhibitions such as *On Possibilities of Frictions* allows for the multitude to flourish as a whole organic body made up of cooperative and convergent subjects who produce art, engage with it, and assemble and mediate it. "[...] art originating from different cultures and global information networks is suggestively put forward as a kind of critical 'multitude' [...]" (O'Neill 2016 [2012], 66) which is key to resisting globalisation and the techno-capitalism quest for excess and the consequent loss of value and meanings of things and relationships. Technology has left the territorial Nation-State behind and is actively pursuing global virtual networks and communities, especially in the current pandemic context, where the online has proven to be an infinite resource of connections and a possibility of virtual expansion. At the same time, this hunger for reaching a global scale has been slowed down by a strong tension towards the local, as the pandemic has forced people to not move and focus on their surroundings, on the peripheral. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated what Danish social analyst Lars Geer Hammershøj has theorised as "self-formation" (as cited in Smeds 2012, 66), which is typical of today's information society. Exhibitions have widely borrowed structures and principles from the World Wide Web and have acknowledged the change in the spectators' behaviour and expectations and *On Possibilities of Frictions* was no exception.

¹³ Hou Hanru, interview with Paul O'Neill. January 26, 2004. Paris, quoted in O'Neill, Paul. 2016 [2012]. *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Leaving space for interpretation and the possibility to explore more content and read materials even after the exhibition experience, days later, at home or on the bus, for example, was thought of as a way to make a reflexive exhibition, with multiple sources available and ways of experiencing it. The display chosen to exhibit the images was “open” not only because the prints were flowing on the gallery walls with no frames and no particular geometrical structure, but also because they were accompanied by a short introductory text (Appendix H) which was meant to contextualise and give a simple hint about the whole narrative. Moreover, a QR code was included in the text printed on recycled paper to give access to the online exhibition, where the full projects, interviews and explanatory texts were. “[...] the contemporary visitor could be resembled with ‘path finder’ sniffing and ‘hunting’ interesting quarries, or a modern collector gathering pieces of universal ‘knowledge’ according to their own desires, afterwards to make their own decisions, conclusions and interpretations about the contents. Among resources, narratives and contexts provided, the visitor has but to choose.” (Smeds 2012, 68). Not to mention, people are now consuming information fast, and long texts are either ignored or read with no particular engagement even in exhibitions. Open-ended ways of curating should be privileged to create spaces and opportunities for artists and their works to merge with society and be moulded by the people who constitute it. The curator’s role, above others, should be that of creating unexpected encounters, and frictions, as discussed previously, as to resist mainstream exhibitions that do nothing but give people what they expect.

Moreover, I was always present in the exhibition space and available to dialogue with the spectators if they felt the need to ask something or know more about the artworks, projects, the way they were dialoguing, and the artists.

4.2 Counter-Narratives and Minor Photographic Languages: The Exhibition and Curatorial Approach Explained

“All texts involve an economy of meaning,” argues Henrietta Lidchi, “foregrounding certain interpretations and excluding others, seeking to plot relatively unambiguous route through meaning.” (1997, 166). Texts could lead to preconceptions around artworks and a

sort of equal positioning, which denies responsibility, claims Donna Haraway (1988, 584). In O'Neill's analysis of global curating, it emerges that by privileging curatorial subjectivity and semiconstructing community of viewers, institutions and biennials in particular, have been able "to avoid any potential critical positions outside of the constructed narrative and its constructed viewing" (2017, 60). Although, he argues that "[t]o see the public under construction, in turn, provides the exhibition with agency that can affect the social - specifically, the kinds of public spaces in which we socialize and are socialized." (Ibid. 61).

To reflect the complexity of the contemporary global conditions it is necessary to give way to multiplicity of visual narratives and aesthetics in curatorial approaches, and so to make space for counter-narratives and "minor"¹⁴ languages, as I call those narratives and photographic languages in this case, which are not identifiable with established and mainstream aesthetic, which are nowadays highly influenced by capitalist excess logic, imitation games and loss of expression. To destroy the system of similarity imposed by the mainstream is an exercise of deconstruction, and as such a method of critical analysis of images' position in the contemporary widespread image illiteracy.

I have spent a considerable amount of time looking into PHROOM archive and Irish online resources, magazines, studios, and galleries to find what I have called minor languages and counter-narratives of social issues in the Irish country and internationally. The reason why I considered counter-narratives those selected, is because they do not circulate in biennials or primary art markets, thus major art circulations, and because they provide spectators with subjective and peculiar views on social issues. Indeed, I privileged those social documentary projects that I recognised going beyond classical reportage expressive realism, towards a more peculiar relation between the aesthetic and the political, "in the very basic sense of human coexistence in the plural." (Azoulay 2012, 95). Moreover, social documentary photography is the most developed genre in Ireland, due to the origins of Irish art photography within reportage and photojournalism, as argued in

¹⁴ I use the term "minor" as it implied by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, as "the revolutionary conditions [...] within what we call the great (or established)" (1983, 18). They specifically refer to minor literature, which they prove characterised by "the deterritorialization of the language, the connection of the individual and the political, the collective arrangement of utterance" (Ibid.). Likewise, minor photographic languages present the same features.

Chapter 2. The aim of the exhibition was that of gathering images in which different styles were colliding and creating friction as a whole.

Nine Irish artists and thirteen from PHROOM's international archive were selected: Mandy O'Neill, Simone Sapienza, Miguel Brush, Enda Bowe, Justyna Górnica, Kate Nolan, Antoine Larocque, Garry Loughlin, Nick Ballón, Dara McGrath, Marco Barbieri, Becks Butler, Michael Hicks, Miriam O'Connor, Tito Mouraz, Shia Conlon, Liza Ambrossio, Isabella Convertino, Marisol Mendez, Jamin Keogh, Ludovica De Santis and Jean-Pierre Attal. Differing in time and place of production, their projects have stood out for the strong imageries and interesting narratives because of the subjects, topics, and metaphors implied by the photographic artists. These imageries and narratives have opened up particular and at the same time universal, or global, social insights and brought to the table questions around under which conditions humans live, given capitalism as the paradigm which is ruling contemporary society.

The artists selected are situated in specific work conditions, distinct from each other, and are at the forefront of a diffuse quest “[...] to reimagine what a response to a hegemonic ideology of work might look like, how we define our health, and what it means to have a body at this particular time”, as Rebecca Sharp (2020, 20) puts it. We are all bodies in relation to others, although we spend a great amount of time with the mind in a virtual realm, by simply working on a laptop, using social media platforms, buying online and many other activities. Still, we interact with this alternative reality through vision and touch, as bodies in contact with technological objects.

The question on how photographers interexist with camera devices and their portrayed subjects is a relevant one, as it is related to ethics, objective knowledge, and subjectivity. “Vision is *always* a question of the power to see - and perhaps of the violence implicit in our visualising practices”, argues Haraway (1988, 585). “Positioning” oneself in a particular and situated practice is to claim for responsible knowledge-making, one that is about communities and isolated individuals: “[...] local knowledges have also to be in tension with the productive structuring that force unequal translations and exchanges - material and semiotic - within the webs of knowledge and power.” (Ibid. 588).

In the conversations I had face to face or via e-mail with the Irish artists, the topic of education to responsible photography practices came out often, which is an interesting point considering the Irish Arts Council's dedication and ten-year strategy (2016-2025) to support the development of the arts in the country with a focus on the people and place, thus their engagement and education (Arts Council, n.d.). To the question on how her role as an artist was understood by students and how the "implicit contract" (Azoulay 2008) between her and her portrait sitters came about¹⁵, Mandy O'Neill answered:

I don't think my role was understood initially. The students are used to an artist coming in and teaching them how to make things – or in relation to photography they often experience this as some kind of media/news interaction. It took me almost a year of 'hanging around' for them to accept that I was just interested in recording the everyday happenings at the school and that this was an 'art project'. There was some resistance. A lot of the young people are self-conscious about their image, and also wary of surveillance. I had to respect this and didn't photograph anyone who objected. I suppose the 'implicit contract' emerged based on how I tried not to impose myself – even while in class I would ask individuals if it was ok to photograph them. For any direct portraits I had model release forms and consent from both participants and parents. (2021)

Aware of the complex history of documentary photography and the colonial uses of the camera, O'Neill decided to give the project "more ambiguity - in a way to force people to think more and fill in the blanks" (Ibid.) by alternating non-forced portraits of students from different primary and post-primary schools of Dublin with environmental and moody, almost abstract images of the disadvantaged schools themselves (Figure 2). The purpose of her residency, was multi-stranded, as it resulted in an exhibition at the Gallery of Photography in 2019, a public art installation at Larkin Community College and a series of workshops around the topic of self-representation and images circulation as part of the "Belonging Transition Programme" which aimed to ease the transition of first years into secondary school. *Quiet At The Back*, her ten-year long enquiry supported by the Irish Arts Council on Dublin schools during the decade most impacted by the austerity measures that followed the global financial crisis and Irish banking scandals, was put into dialogue in the exhibition with Simone Sapienza's work *Charlie Surfs on Lotus Flowers*, which also

¹⁵ Mandy O'Neill's *Quiet At The Back* project is thus the result of a mix of formal residencies supported by the Arts Council of Ireland and more local arrangements in keeping with the dynamics of school life from year to year.



Figure 2. *Photo from the exhibition “On Possibilities of Frictions”, A4 Sounds, Dublin, 19th - 22nd January, 2022. From left to right: Mandy O’Neill, “Quiet At The Back”; Simone Sapienza, “Charlie Surfs on Lotus Flowers”; Miguel Brush, “The Black Pool”. Courtesy of the Author and the artists.*

covers the topic of economic crisis and how it affects people, but rather than in schools, in an entire population, the Vietnamese.

As a guest in the Vietnamese territory, Italian photographer Sapienza embarked on a journey to understand Vietnamese contemporary society almost forty years after the Viet Cong’s victory over the United States and the collapse of Vietnam’s socialist model. Sapienza applied a metaphorical approach to his research on apparent economic freedom, a “Hollywoodian limbo between the rise of the free-market economy and the Communist only-one Party that still rule with uncontested power”, as he refers to it (Sapienza, n.d.). Between fiction and reality and a different relation to his subjects, Sapienza still shows a certain degree of collaboration with the Vietnamese people and an awareness of what the truth is about the way they feel better off under capitalism despite the consequent inequality and corruption (Figure 2).

Similarly, Miguel Bruschi's *The Black Pool* (Figure 2) depicts social precariousness caused by the economy in Blackpool, one of the most popular seaside resorts on England's northwest coast. Beyond the luxurious attractions placed for tourists, drugs, unemployment and monotony rule the other half of the town. Bruschi's empathy and dialogical practice emanate from the pictures, which are contextualised and not contributing to stereotypes. Instead of perpetuating the dominant narrative of Blackpool from the perspective of the rich, it gives voice to those people affected by stating the truth about certain economic dynamics being hidden because uncomfortable.

Being at the centre of the exhibition space and staring at the multiple visual languages proposed, and subjects portrayed was a relational experience: the diverse gazes pointing in different ways created tension and called for attention and discussion, while some aesthetic elements were repeated throughout the particular narratives, referencing to each other, merging in the same, global flow of meanings. Small and bigger prints were activating a playful engagement from the public, which continuously changed perspective by getting closer to the particular and distancing to seize the universal narrative. Indeed, it was a curatorial choice that of playing with sizes and perspectives, thus bringing the spectators to visually and spatially engage with the images.

Turning around from Bruschi's diptych, one could find themselves facing the most piercing portrait of the exhibition: Jamin Keogh's portrait of a man of Moyross, a suburb and council estate in Limerick, Ireland (Figure 3). Moyross, like Blackpool, is plagued by

unemployment, anti-social behaviour and crime. “This cycle of decline resulted in a landslide of overwhelming negative, stereotyped and degrading media coverage on the communities and young people of Moyross being disseminated nationally and internationally [...],” assessed Keogh in our interview (2021). The artist said to have started *Moyross Study* project “as a curiosity” and “reflexive need to tell a story of displacement, oppression, intergenerational trauma and societal inequalities.” (Ibid.). Keogh’s portraits are gentle and violent at the same time, proposing a documentary approach that relies on mutual trust, deep research and “site-responsive physical engagement” (Ibid.), although he mentioned he first resisted to include portraits within the project but did because they were pivotal to engage with the community (Ibid.).



Figure 3. Photo from the exhibition “On Possibilities of Frictions”, A4 Sounds, Dublin, 19th - 22nd January, 2022. Jamin Keogh, “Moyross Study”. Courtesy of the Author and Jamin Keogh.



Figure 4. *Photo from “On Possibilities of Frictions”, A4 Sounds, Dublin, 19th - 22nd January, 2022. Ludovica De Santis, “Tusca Vacua”. Courtesy of the Author and Ludovica De Santis.*

In order to bring out an ethical research project, it is necessary and urgent to collaborate with the referred community, as photographers Susan Meiselas and Wendy Ewald identified in their questioning of photographers’ position in their work: “Collaboration in photography cannot be limited to the question of how to engage others in the event of photography but must also ask how the photographer herself engages with the act of photography.” (Azoulay 2016, 191). Thus, groups’ and individuals’ empowerment, marginality revelation, or claims of abuses and violence are possible through the acknowledgement of the presence of the photographed person. This “acknowledgement” inspired the curatorial practice adopted for this exhibition. Indeed, as the curator of the exhibition, it was important to me to understand the story of the photographed people (and places too), to acknowledge them and respectfully place them in the overall narrative to give them the right relevance and do not treat them as pure objects to be looked at.

New iconographies arise from the collaboration between the photographer and the community, as in Ludovica De Santis' *Tusca Vacua* (Figure 4), a straightforward and harsh black and white reportage on Viterbo, a province in central Italy that corresponds to Tuscia historical region. As a person born there, De Santis depicted her perception of the boredom, close-mindedness, and isolation that still persist in the Latium countryside. Photography has served her as a tool to connect deeper, and better understand herself through the other, which she looks at without judgement.

It is interesting to draw a line between this project and Antoine Larocque's *Mai banquerote* (Figure 5), which also shows the boredom and stillness of his unmentioned hometown in France with a bold, provocative language, both in colour and black and white. No matter the spatial coordinates, what he calls "a social climate of boring conformism" (Larocque, n.d.) marks psychologically the life of many who adopt behaviour and attitudes of the environment they happen to be in, both as a response or as an intergenerational kind of trauma.



Figure 5. Photo from “On Possibilities of Frictions”, A4 Sounds, Dublin, 19th - 22nd January, 2022. Antoine Larocque, “Mai Banquerote”. Courtesy of the Author and Antoine Larocque.

This is what Kate Nolan’s long-term project *Lacuna* (Figure 6) is about: the Irish-UK border and the way it affects young people living alongside it. Her body of work is a collective research carried out with young people from three different schools and two different youth groups in the towns of Carlington Lough, Pettigo and South Armagh. She defines the Irish-UK border as a space in flux, as two-thirds of it is water. Borders reproduce geographies of exclusion and inclusion and have a great impact on people’s psyches and bodies although some beliefs and behaviours are inherited, as in the case of the Irish-UK border, being it invisible, yet tangible in the social dimension of the places alongside it. Even along the same border, the perceptions of it differ from person to person, group to group and Nolan noticed that she had to apply different methodologies in her practice depending on the place she was situated in.

So Pettigo is a rural community very different from Derry, the big city where the Troubles started. A young woman, whom I interviewed lived in Brittons Bar, which is

a pub on the border, physically hanging over the river. Her grandparents lived there during the Troubles and had a little garden plot on the north side, so the granny would put on her wellies and illegally walk through the river to go there. The bridge would have been a difficult space to find yourself in, as anything that crosses the river is. There would have been bombs that would have gone off and would blow out the windows of that pub. So when I met with her, asking her what she thought the future of this place could be, she was then telling me about how she'd hated if that happened, because the windows of her home could be blown out again. She was seventeen and talking about bombs and windows being blown out. She hadn't seen it but it was still within her social, historical, familial memory. While if I speak to the young people around Carlingford Lough, in Cooley Peninsula, for example, being so far away from the border they would give me different answers. I thought after working in Pettigo for about three years, that I could transfer my practice into this other space but it was completely different, cause they have no concept of the border. What happened is not their cultural history. Their concept of it doesn't exist. It's two different worlds. That's when I started looking into this Celtic mythology and C.S. Lewis' creative writing. This is the way I found to play with it and think about the scope, the scale and the history of borders. It's a very short time if we think about it, one hundred years of partition. (2021)

In the course of seven years working on *Lacuna*, Nolan's practice has transformed and adapted, resulting in being responsive to the people and situations she has been facing. Photography has been to her a means to a deeper connection with groups of young people, to be complemented with dialogues around the meaning of borders, stories, education to images, video making, and a lot of imaginative work to be carried out together in an organic flow. Moreover, the artist recalled how, when Brexit happened, her work started "going alongside the political conversation" happening in Pettigo at that time. Indeed, being Pettigo a town crossed by the border, the media were all concentrated in that tiny village that happened to be in the spotlight from one day to the other. Brexit brought fear and anger and suddenly made the border tension come to life again after the Troubles and the partition in 1921.



Figure 6. Photo from “*On Possibilities of Frictions*”, A4 Sounds, Dublin, 19th - 22nd January, 2022. Kate Nolan, “Lacuna”. Courtesy of the Author and Kate Nolan.

Another city divided by an emotional and historical border is Belfast, in Northern Ireland, where Irish photographer Enda Bowe documented “youth life on either side of the ‘peace lines’, taking as his starting point the symbolic bonfires of the 12th and 8th August, which mark the recurrence of King William of Orange’s victory in the 1690 Battle of the Boyne and the 1971 imprisonment of 342 nationalists. Yet, the bonfires’ warm light expands in the whole series, elevating Bowe’s documentary to a poetic and subtly symbolic level.” (Bowe, n.d.). When looking at his pictures (Figure 7), questions on the aestheticisation of reality and oppressed people, and the ethics of this act arise. What is peculiar in Bowe’s practice though, is that aesthetics are used to foster human connection and the consequent understanding of the vulnerabilities of others.

Love's Fire Song series constructs a site for the recognition of powerlessness against geopolitics and the undeniable, universal desire for longing, which in cases of displacement is still at play in the repetition of rituals, such as bonfires or Crimean Tatar dance Haytarma performed by Crimean Tatars, which is documented in Polish photographer Justyna Górnica's *Haytarma* series (Figure 8). Górnica and Bowe question the conditions of possibilities for a group's identity to preserve itself against political and religious repression. They appear to be distant, yet engaged and connected observers of the communities they portray to produce a counter-narrative to media narrations of those displaced groups.



Figure 7. Photo from *"On Possibilities of Frictions"*, A4 Sounds, Dublin, 19th - 22nd January, 2022. Enda Bowe, "Love's Fire Song". Courtesy of the Author and Enda Bowe.



Figure 8. Photo from “*On Possibilities of Frictions*”, A4 Sounds, Dublin, 19th - 22nd January, 2022. Justyna Górnjak, “Haytarma”. Courtesy of the Author and Justyna Górnjak.

To continue, some artists have explicitly used subjectivity as a method and acknowledged it as such. In the case of Shia Conlon, Isabella Convertino, Marisol Mendez and Liza Ambrossio this is particularly visible (Figure 9). Conlon’s *Against Domestication* is a restaging and rewriting of memories connected to trauma and body oppression by the power that ruled over his body “in its many shapes: the family unit, the state, religion, and normative views of gender and sexuality.” (2021).

He documented, through the remaking of visual memories, how he had been socialised as a child in the socialscape of working-class, Catholic Ireland, where he was born. Being himself part of the of trans and queer community, his practice aim is an imaginative work on “what it would be like to take back some power over these trauma and narratives” (Ibid.), believing in images’ possibility to recreate traumatic memories. Indeed, he follows Ulrich Baer’s idea “that trauma registers in the brain in the same way as a photograph is taken.” (Ibid.).

Isabella Convertino’s *To Shoot The Sun* similarly takes cue from her personal “trauma and experiences with masculine energies.” (Convertino, n.d.). She thus investigates male privilege in American suburbia and the way it is performed. Indeed she is overall interested in the interplay between gender and familial constructions.

Not only trauma but also culturally shared beliefs and prejudices can be traced in photographs, especially archival, historical pictures, as Ambrossio sustains through *The Rage Of Devotion*. In her words, it is a “voodoo project capable of reconstructing a part of personal and contemporary history of many women willing to emancipate themselves from the social structures that have been predisposed for them.” (Ambrossio, n.d.). Creating nexuses between self-portraits, family archival images, and manipulated visions of her adulthood, Ambrossio renarrated the figure of women in Mexican culture, where the feminine has long been associated with witchcraft, immortality and threat. To her, the women of her family and not only, have practised witchcraft as a form of psychological defence against machismo, which is still so widespread in her culture that women inherited machist behaviour. Ambrossio experienced that with her mother, and through the deconstruction and rearrangement of a world - the Mexican one - that does not allow her to grow and create, she tells of not only her but every woman in Mexico facing a societal structure that relies on men’s world-order and perspective.

Bolivian artist Mendez also constructs a discourse around women’s representation in her culture, which remains nowadays “whitewashed and phallogentric” (Mendez, n.d.). Reconnection rather than disruption, as in Ambrossio’s work, is at the centre of Mendez project *MADRE*, which also brings together past memories and current observations in a contemporary, cinematic style. Catholic iconographies intermingle with Bolivian female

divine imageries: the indigenous collides, yet merges with colonial, inherited traditions. Womanness crystallises in representations to the point it turns into an icon of idolatry featuring antiques, dressing in beautifully handmade clothes, or mythological elements that reconnect to the original cult of mother Earth, the fertile, the humble, nature in an attempt to repotentialise Bolivian history.



Figure 9. Photo from “*On Possibilities of Frictions*”, A4 Sounds, Dublin, 19th - 22nd January, 2022. From left to right: Shia Conlon, “Against Domestication”; Isabella Convertino, “To Shoot The Sun” (up); Liza Ambrossio, “The Rage Of Devotion” (down); Marisol Mendez, “MADRE”; Kate Nolan, “Lacuna”. Courtesy of the Author and the artists.

For Miriam O’Connor and Becks Butler, this human connection with nature has become a whole research - in fact, their respective projects *Tomorrow Is Sunday* and *Loopies Field* explore bodies and agro work, repetitive performative acts and changes in Irish agriculture work demanded by capitalist logic of production (Figure 10). Moreover, they both come from the farming community and depict agro-labour, although in different ways. While Butler’s research started off as an investigation on how agri-economy has affected farm size, social living and attitudes within farms, O’Connor’s project was

prompted by her brother's loss and her consequent come back to her family farm to keep things afloat and help her mother.

O'Connor's current photographic research, thanks to this project, has become about the photographic medium itself, being interested in the medium as "a 'functioning' agricultural tool, rather than something that 'represents' agricultural life." (2021). Self-portraits, repetitive sequences of farming tools, landscapes changing over seasons, and written notes merge in O'Connor's diaristic documentary.

Diversely, Butler intersperses digital, staged images of farming techniques with sociologists McKinney and Green's documentation of Irish rural life. As kind of "work portraits" (2021) she lingers around bodies as if they were sculptures moulded by technological advancements, as much as architectures are.

Portuguese photographer Tito Mouraz also deals with bodies as sculptures in his work *Fluvial* (Figure 10), where Portuguese and emigrant workers from Northern European countries are depicted in leisure. In his own words, "[...] bodies, trees, trunks and riverbed rocks are made to resemble small sculptures (some of which anthropomorphic); the human body, here almost amphibious, is often reduced to the simple form, to the submerged surface, either adopting the stream bed as an optical instrument, or by shaping it with light." (Mouraz, n.d.).



Figure 10. *Photo from “On Possibilities of Frictions”*, A4 Sounds, Dublin, 19th - 22nd January, 2022. From left to right: Miriam O’Connor, “Tomorrow Is Sunday”; Tito Mouraz, “Fluvial”; Becks Butler, “Loopies Field”. Courtesy of the Author and the artists.

While Mouraz searches for humans moving through nature, American photographer Michael Hicks focuses on characters in manufactured landscapes. In his project *Something More Than Night* (Figure 11) identities are shaped by roles performed in society and he searches for their intersection with the seeking for meaning in a world devoid of it (Hicks, n.d.). Playing with reality and fiction, Hicks transforms the people he casts into mannequins and the truth about the world we live in emerges clearly: people are performers seeking to impress, keep up with a world where appearance is all and nothing at the same time. The ultimate meaning of life is void of meaning and purpose, while people’s life becomes a fetish for other people to look at and entertain themselves.

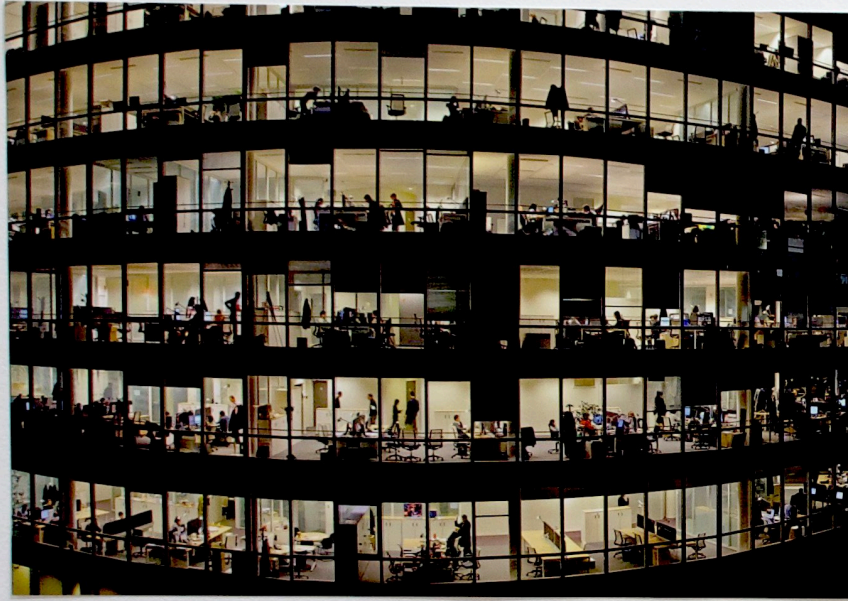


Figure 12. Photo from “*On Possibilities of Frictions*”, A4 Sounds, Dublin, 19th - 22nd January, 2022. Jean-Pierre Attal, “*Alvéoles*”. Courtesy of the Author and Jeanne-Pierre Attal.

Not to mention, people all perform for non-human eyes surveilling our words, movements and beliefs. In Jean-Pierre Attal’s *Alvéoles* project this is further made explicit: the photographer merges with the mechanical eye of the camera and neutrally represents people working in offices, each in its own cell, observed from the outside in close detail (Figure 12). As an anthropologist, he brings out a sociological investigation highly rooted in the reality of urban codes and mechanisms, spanning from its architecture to the way it shapes human lives.

Italian-Czech photographer Marco Barbieri's *Everything In Its Right Place* (Figure 13) is also an investigation of the urban environment - in Japan - and its structure, which makes everything look in its right place. Views emptied of humans still tell about society from the way public spaces and the city at large are designed, preventing or facilitating people's movements.

It is interesting here to compare Barbieri's project with Dara McGrath's *For Those That Tell No Tales* since they both deal with empty spaces but with different layers of meaning and purpose (Figure 13). Indeed, McGrath's work is a cartography of Cork and its county which highlights unmarked sites where women, men, children, members of the British forces and Irish Volunteers lost their lives during the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921). Historical events have long been narrated through iconic images and words spread by mainstream media and narratives, although digital media have enhanced the power of images to share alternative narratives. Quoting Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites (2007), "[t]he iconic organizes public memory around a very few signals events as the exponential increases in information availability overwhelm individual processing capacity. A few dominant images can reflect either a scarcity of images or the reverse: an overabundance that has to be ignored if one is to function at all." McGrath's counter-narrative of the Anglo-Irish war seeks to shed new light on each of the events and reconnect the present to the past to unlearn and re-understand history. Speculation becomes here a form of thought, a pattern that leads to imagining new narratives in order to recontextualise what has already been said and repeated without any debate.

In the work of Garry Loughlin, particularly *The Clearing House*, speculation's role is interrogated "as a tool of the powerless", given that "when information is withheld, speculation is all we have until it is released." (Loughlin 2021). The project explores the use of invisible borders in Ireland, specifically one that crossed four counties in the Republic during the Cold War which was unknown to the general public and imposed travel restrictions at the request of the British government, as they feared that the presence of Soviet officials in Ireland would be a threat. Particularly, the narrative unfolds around a Russian diplomat named Victor Lipasov, who was expelled from Ireland while working at the Russian embassy because believed to be involved in activities deemed unacceptable.



Very little information was available at the time, and so now, although Loughlin draws his speculation around official documents, newspapers, local hearsay from both the Irish and British national archives, and photographs captured by him along the invisible border (Figure 13).

Figure 13. *Photo from "On Possibilities of Frictions"*, A4 Sounds, Dublin, 19th - 22nd January, 2022. From left to right: Antoine Larocque, "Mai Banquerote"; Garry Loughlin, "The Clearing House" (up); Nick Ballón, "Armada" (down); Dara McGrath, "For Those That Tell No Tales"; Marco Barbieri, "Everything In Its Right Place"; Jamin Keogh, "Moyross Study". Courtesy of the Author and the artists.

Along the lines of overlooked historical narratives, Bolivian artist Nick Ballón's *Armada* unravels the Bolivian navy unusual nature, as the country is landlocked due to the loss of its only coastal territory in a war with Chile more than hundred-thirty years ago.

Many other paths could have been chosen to link and make a cohesive discourse on the selected photographic artists' works. Indeed, I am myself a spectator among other spectators, bringing to the images my ways of seeing and other kinds of knowledge (Rose 2016, 25). The way the images were uploaded and put into dialogue on PHROOM platform and laid out in the exhibition space was based on aesthetic or topic coherence, from my point of view, although served as a prompt for viewers to start off discovering further in-depth each image, series, and photographic artist's positionality. Similarities and frictions can only be activated by subjectivities questioning and engaging with images and so other people's conditions and views.

Closely observing the diverse and at the same time cohesive visual languages brought together in the exhibition, for example, certain features of Irish and non-Irish contemporary social documentary practice emerge, together with particular visual aesthetics and structures of representation. Aesthetic territories are indeed produced locally: authors are thus mediators of a certain time and space through their gazes and sensibilities, which are constructed culturally and at the same time constitute the culture of a place. In Irit Rogoff's words (2020), "[...] culture always radiates outwards, travels and connects, but such fluidity does not presume instant comprehension and effective translation". Indeed, here lies what I called friction, in the encounter of cultures and different aesthetics that put in the crisis established, mainstream codes of fast-paced art for the sake of maintaining the integrity of minor (or non-mainstream) cultures. Rendering such minor contemporary visual languages in Ireland and from PHROOM archive for the purpose of a glocal exhibition in Dublin, was a way to call for a "powerful critical language" (Ibid.) in the arts and facilitate its comprehension and effective translation through curating.

A "critical language" is one that gives the tools to escape codification and territorialisation (Deleuze and Guattari 1983) with the intent of offering an alternative to the totalising perspective of globalisation, which seeks the flattening effect of the

proliferation of universal humanism as suppression of all world forming (Nancy 2007 [2002]). Nancy's "world-making" is a process of constant forming and is an act of opposition to "a general equivalence", which is the flattening effect. Through friction-making, curating is capable of transforming different languages and positionalities into larger, although non-totalising narratives which can be used to restore past and present histories.

What these minor languages create is a counter-narrative, or an aggregation of counter-narratives, which are narratives that imply a space of resistance against dominant and mainstream ones, and provide alternative points of view. Narrative and counter-narrative are methodologies that framed *On Possibilities of Frictions* and the series gathered. The idea of counter-narratives and the inclusion of minor languages and stories as a mode of inquiry and praxis in curating offer a methodology grounded in the peculiarity and diversity of the social realities and lived experiences of these communities and photographic artists. According to Daniel G. Solórzano and Tara J. Yosso (2002), counter-stories can be created from "(a) the data gathered from the research process itself, (b) the existing literature on the topic(s), (c) our own professional experiences, and (d) our own personal experiences.

In the case of the exhibition, the first form of data came from primary resources, namely individual interviews with the Irish artists and key players in the field of Irish photography. I searched and sifted through these data for examples of the concept I was seeking to explore around Irish contemporary photography practice and societal issues. Next, I looked to other sources for secondary data analysis related to these concepts in the contemporary documentary social photography literature and international photography practices. From there, I started to draw connections between the sources and added my own experiences related to the concepts and ideas, still leaving space for other voices to participate in the debate. Through sharing, listening, and reflecting a counter-narrative on both certain social issues tackled in contemporary photography and Irish photography aesthetics and practices have emerged to the surface, always contextualised and grounded in real life. Moreover, according to Solórzano and Yosso (32-33), counter-narratives can be shaped by personal or other people's stories, as the projects described and featured here

prove. While the former sees including autobiographical reflections within the context of a sociopolitical critique, the latter seems to reveal experiences with and responses to particular discriminatory behaviours and state policies, again in relation to institutions and within a sociopolitical and historical context.

Counter-narrative as a research method turns into a tool for exposing, analysing and constructing new perspectives over established narratives historically consolidated around privileged individuals, groups, institutions and states. Narratives have indeed been at the centre of human happenings. To quote Jerome Bruner (1991, 4), “[...] we organise our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative - stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing or not doing, and so on. A narrative is a conventional form, transmitted culturally and constrained by each individual’s level of mastery and by his conglomerate of prosthetic devices, colleagues, and mentors”. Indeed, as William J. T. Mitchell points out in the foreword of the publication *On Narrative* (1981, vii-x), it is important to acknowledge that “[t]he study of narrative is no longer the province of literary specialists or folklorists [...] but has now become a positive source of insight for all branches of human and natural science.” (Ibid., ix). Consequently, as narratives are made up of languages that might differ from text-based or orally transmitted stories, it is possible to engage with narratives and especially counter-narratives “as a source of socially conscious qualitative research” (Mora 2014) and curatorial practices in visual arts.

Social consciousness is strictly connected to what Prem Krishnamurthy and Emily Smith (2019) define as “responsive curating”, which “starts from an empathetic position of not knowing, rather than from a position of authority.” (481). Curating is a relational practice that should take into account both observations on the subject matter and their own reactions to it and those of other participants (Ibid. 482). Krishnamurthy and Smith lay out ten modes and memos to articulate a creative and responsive curatorial method whose foundations are listening and reflecting among others. In their own words, “[t]his consciously non-judgemental, non-hierarchical state helps one access more nuanced narratives of influencing factors, counter-motivations, latent desires, and even the interpersonal dynamics at hand.” (Ibid. 481). According to them, there is a narrative step of responsive curating which comprises the storytelling of pieces of information to construct

an integrative narrative or narratives, and the process of formation of the narrative structure, which unfolds non-linearly and closely to the curator's own background and cultural baggage (Ibid. 484-485).

Ultimately, these narratives should remain open to change, reconfigurations of the relations between objects, their meaning, and people, as in *On Possibilities of Frictions*, which narrative(s) aspired to be open to different interpretations and engagement levels, as no authoritative instructions were given in the physical space or on PHROOM platform.

4.3 Assessing Success and Limits

Hybrid exhibitions like *On Possibilities of Frictions* offer the chance to analyse and weigh the differences intercurring between online and offline contexts of production, aimed goals, people's engagement. Comparison is not a way to define which of the two is best but is an occasion to find the opportunities and limits of critically circulating images, and improving PHROOM's brand awareness, and grow its number of followers and reach.

As previously stated the online gives more opportunities for images to travel and encounter people, which could be helpful for artists to reach more people and potentially get more opportunities to exhibit, and for a brand such as PHROOM to grow its visibility and presence both online and offline. While constituting an exciting opportunity, this potentially infinite visibility can lead to a loss of image meaning, artists' exploitation, and brand inconsistency. Thus, the Irish artists' publication on PHROOM platform came with an in-depth understanding of the projects through interviews and critical engagement with the other artists already archived, whose images were reactivated through the organic dialogue extended to a physical exhibition, which also helped PHROOM to gain physical presence in the Irish territory. According to the artists' personal feedback, being able to participate in a physical exhibition at a time when many of them were stuck because of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, turned out to be a great opportunity. Moreover, they were invited without any fee or any request to send their artworks, as everything was printed for the occasion. Moreover, PHROOM's Director and Deputy Director, namely Giangiacomo Cirila and Matteo Cremonesi, found it interesting and ideal to re-rooting PHROOM's

research in a specific nation, as the platform started back in 2015 with a focus on Greek photography and then lost its territory-linked research.

Going back to the metrics of success presented in Chapter 2, the targeted number of spectators was reached and surpassed. The aimed target for the number of visitors to the exhibition in Dublin and the online traffic were set respectively around 25 people and an increase of 5% in content interaction, 10% profile visits and +9% website clicks on Instagram (and consequently, the platform itself) in the span of the whole project timeline (November 1st 2021 - January 22th 2022). The first target was reached and surpassed as the number of visitors hit the number 56, while the latter reached respectively +12.6%, +10.5%, and +43% vs up to three months before the launch of the project (Appendix I). Although Instagram revealed to be the best traffic data collector, in terms of customisation and easiness of collection, it did not permit tracking data geographically because the timeline was customised, which is something that was not checked beforehand. Moreover, the platform itself did not allow the collection of data both geographically and numerically for privacy reasons, as Director Cirila stated after the project kicked-off. As the project was thought of as glocal, it would have been interesting to compare the number of Irish and non-Irish people engaging with the platform and the content shared. Also, as the project related content and non were mixed on the platform, it would have been interesting to know the insights of the project only.

Pre-bookings revealed to not be a useful metric. The reason why it had be considered as a metric, was that the venue's policy required people to pre-book to assure that the capacity of 5 people per time was respected. Despite that, pre-bookings were not essential as long as the capacity was respected. The only people who pre-booked did not show up, while the people who visited the exhibition did so because of word of mouth, invitations sent by me or the artists, and our media presence. Unluckily, the venue did not allow random people to pop in, as it is located in an uncrowded and dark street, and resulted being unknown by most of the visitors. Not to mention, the venue's managers resulted in not being supportive, as they did not extend the invite to the exhibition to their network, which would have been useful for us both. Indeed, while the exhibition and PHROOM would have gained more visibility, they would have possibly attracted old and new people

to the venue and artists' studios after two years of almost zero gatherings. Their move, though, was dictated by their policy of not showing their logo and not promoting events that are not part of their own programming, which is something understandable although not clearly stated before agreeing upon them hosting the exhibition.

As previously mentioned, media coverage was decent and helped spreading the exhibition invitation. Indeed, local magazines, art institutions and art news platforms such as Source Photographic Review, the Photo Museum Ireland, and Visual Artists Ireland shared the exhibition's press material on their Instagram accounts and newsletters, while Dublin Art Life was paid to list the exhibition on their website and social media platforms. Moreover, some of the magazines, artists' studios and individuals based in Ireland contacted via email, gave me a feedback and shared the invitation with their networks. The event announcement and opening attendance, though, was slightly shadowed by the Photo Museum Ireland announcement of their event for the launch of their new National Photography Collection, which included all the Irish artists that were taking part in the exhibition. Unluckily, their event was only announced a week before *On Possibilities of Frictions'* opening, which prevented me from arranging at least a different opening time. This was not considered in the risk management conducted beforehand. Also, engagement and reach on Instagram was affected by the inevitable re-posting of the content relative to the exhibition announcement due to a misunderstanding with the A4 Sounds' managers. Indeed, although they sent me their logo knowing that it would have been used for the exhibition's press material, they told me not to use it only after I published the content online, because they did not want to be associated with an event that was hosted by them but not part of their own programme.

In terms of collaborations and partnership, as previously stated, we managed to partner with Hen's Teeth Studio to get a discount on the prints in exchange of their logo presence on PHROOM's platform and the event's press material. This did not attracted more people to the exhibition though, as they did not share the content on any of their social platforms, while they put the exhibition's flyers on display in their café.

The group of spectators reached and attracted to the exhibition in Dublin were curious and diverse in terms of age and background, as it comprised people who surprisingly did

not come because they knew PHROOM platform already, art workers and non-art-workers, amateur and professional photographers. People engaged in interesting conversations with me, each other and the artists, when they were present. The exhibition daily opening until 8:00 pm permitted more people to visit it, as peak times were registered after 5:00 pm, the time when people usually finish working in Ireland.

Last but not least, what I gained in terms of collaborations were a few job proposals coming from the Photo Museum Ireland, the artists I met in person, and the Wexford-based Presentation Arts Centre, whose manager showed her interest in displaying *On Possibilities of Frictions* and organising a public engagement programme as part of the arts centre 2023 programme. In addition, this opportunity will be useful to integrate my research with topics such as accessibility and public engagement.

Overall, the project success was met, sometimes expected and under control, some others surprisingly and opening up new opportunities to repropose and improve the project and the research at large.

Curating a hybrid exhibition has been a challenging and thoughtful experience that led me to question the independent curator's job itself and their positionality when exhibiting images, in this case. Indeed, it is not easy to find a balance between the position as a guest of certain topics and as a rhapsodist of the narrative(s), between being an observer and storyteller of others' stories and art. As Rogoff assesses, though, "embodied criticality" is key to a curatorial practice that permits to shift from "the analytical to the performative function of observation and participation." (2006, 2). She calls this "a smuggling practice" (Ibid., 4), or the method that quietly resists to boundaries and binary notions such as global and local, exclusion and inclusion, and that "allows the curatorial to become a cross-disciplinary field without any relation to a master discipline [...] to put entities in relation of movement to one another." (Ibid., 4). Knowledge and perception merge then in unity, organically in balance and opening up to the world and its interpretations while giving information and visible, material objects to analyse and from which to act critically.

Curating is mediating and it is an art itself. It is the capacity to grasp the potentials inherent in artworks and the power to activate them in the act of facilitating experiences for those who will experience them, either online or offline. "The medium of [curating] is

communication.” (Verwoert 2010, 24). Therefore, the tools for this communication online and offline should differentiate as communication is built in different ways in the two context, and often complementing each other.

Moreover, as the medium of curating is communication, it is important and preliminary to any curatorial project to understand to whom the communication is aimed, although curating the online is faced with the lack of “control” in the digital flux, or better, the lack of personal encounter with the private viewers. Indeed, there is a certain degree of control in the online, as content can be delivered to precise targets, while this does not apply in the in-person format, where spectators are still unpredictable in an independent context of exhibition-making.

There is a tendency, Jan Verwoert argues, “to attribute all cultural potential to the apparatus itself [that] can be seen at play in media strategists who propagate the idea that it is the *platform*, not the content, that matters” and to think that “[c]ontent is merely semi-disposable filling for the format” (Ibid. 26). This is indeed the risk occurred by art photography content on platforms: to be used as filling to grow the platform and thus incur into being superficially scrolled by people and insufficiently promoted or made visible by those platform that sell themselves as important exposure sites for artists. Exposure, a currency nowadays valued more than money.

In the case of the project analysed, the online was meant to be a complement of the exhibition, aiming to extend the experience of spectators outside the gallery walls and in the space itself, as aforementioned, to provide them with a tool to explore the exhibition by themselves in the moment, before or after its physical visit. Moreover, art photography is mainly developed in projects rather than single pieces as sculptural or other plastic art works. Thus, it is important to mediate photographic projects in their wholeness to make deep sense of them. What I reckon, is that the online exhibition did not tried to innovate anything in the field of digital exhibitions, as sources like time, money or expertise were lacking. This project served as a “test”, a hint, to further explore the topic especially as the world evolves and the Covid-19 pandemic and post-pandemic contexts get further analysed from a distance.

As spectators differ, their expectations from the online and offline change too while their need for being educated and entertained at the same time might stay the same. Irit Rogoff once wrote about the “educational turn” in curating (2010, 32-46) and invited to “think of education as all of the places to which we have access [which] is the ability to formulate one’s own questions, as opposed to those that are posed to you in the name of an open and participatory democratic process, for it is clear that those who formulate the questions produce the playing field.” (Ibid. 41). Curating, as a form of educating, should thus permeate every place to which people have access, and the online should not indeed be excluded. Also, curating should not only flourish in private spaces but invade and contaminate public spaces. If curators would be able to transpose their practice from the private to the public space, not only for the occasions of open-air art festivals and art installations, but also for the sake of curating public spaces now contaminated by hybrid visual pollution, people could then grow less tired of aesthetic visions and eventually images would enter critical glocal critical circulations.

5. Conclusion

I started this project and report to answer the question: “How can curating play a role in critically circulating images?”. At a time when the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions were still present and severe, I felt the need to practice and see myself what it means to curate art photography in such conditions, which have reaffirmed hybrid exhibitions and glocal events in the foreground. The concept of “friction”, taken from Anna Tsing (2004), has been vital for both the exhibition and project report, as it has been the anchor of my research argument in showing how curating can activate criticality in images circulations through this concept and the method of counter-narratives. Upon the conclusion of this report, not only I do believe this is the case, but I also believe that is a method to be reiterated for critical exhibitions and circulations of art photography outside cultural spaces.

Firstly, I would like to briefly address the resulting limits and further opportunities intrinsic in the search for critical images circulations through curating. This research, comprising the project and the report, has been developed during and after the Covid-19 pandemic peak, and as such, it has been produced on an ambiguous and continuously changing ground. Not to mention, as already stated in the conclusion of Chapter 3, the digital exhibitions which complemented the physical one, is without any doubt only an

embryo of wider research I aim to develop on how to complement the two dimensions. Indeed, issues related to time and financial resources did not permit me to experiment with the online format. What a more complex online exhibition could provide, is also a better tracking of spectators' interests and journey through the physical exhibition. In addition, digital exhibitions should try not to be a mere transposition of the physical space but add a different experience to the spectators' visit. Indeed, one limit intrinsic to the project and this kind of research is the difficulty to assess the effectiveness of the method in proving curating as a critical mediator of images circulations, thus able to recontextualise art photography and remake sense of the narratives depicted. On the other hand, I am convinced that curating as the act of mediating and shedding a light on precise images and narratives, can be a critical tool to guide people to make sense of images in their context and become more aware of them and their meaning in the long term.

Can we still assume photography's role in an image-saturated world? This is the concern that nurtured this project and research. Although photography's recipients have degenerated into passive consumers, and art photography has been swallowed by capitalism and its excess mode of production, curating can play a role in opening up to participating and including new audiences and ideas to lay a foundation for understanding new forms of images circulations and sense-making starting from the commonality of the local to reach the global.

On Possibilities of Frictions was conceived and developed with the awareness of the fragility of counter-narratives and micro-languages in respect of the mainstream, homogeneous flow of images regulated by algorithms and information flows. Within images circulations, thus, all that should be solid tends to melt and lose meaning in the infinite reproduction of its form. What curating can do as an educational tool, is mediating images and reintroducing them in the flow making the photographed, the photographers, and the spectator active and relevant players in the equation.

Through the methods of counter-narrativity and "friction", as a form of performative imagination, the project has shown a possible roadmap for curating images and caring for them. Counter-narrativity and friction thus allow for speculative juxtapositions and critical encounters that activate nexuses between heterogeneous visual languages and subjects,

which then result in being part of a whole. As PHROOM shows, being an international platform for visual culture, art photography is dependent on counter-narratives and particular visions to survive the risk of being swallowed by capitalistic homogeneity.

The success of this project for PHROOM has been proven as a possible way to implement its care for art photography, not only through a meticulous archiving of valuable artists and their projects but also through exhibitions that recontextualise those projects and reconfigure their meaning and relevance in different places. Through these recontextualisations, some would argue that photographs are used and exploited to talk about certain topics to serve institutions or curators' ideas because the original meanings get lost to fit in a theme. That is not to deny the artists' authorship and need for expression, but it is through perceiving and understanding all the diverse stories, in working with all those images taken, after curators having been spoken with artists, that curating becomes responsive and a true practice of care. Rather than a search for an umbrella under which to put all the images to resonate with one another, it is a search for openness and multiple-meaning creation. Consequently, curating becomes performative and dialogical, and photography exhibitions transform into spaces of constant renegotiations between those involved.

The exhibition space, both online and offline, thus symbolises a collective dimension for art as a socialised and open work, with participation conceived of as taking part in the process of art photography evaluation and relevance in the here and now of every spectator. Indeed, in the physical space, artworks become objects of discussion, a reason for people to come together and engage in informal conversations between works, artists and spectators. On the other hand, in the online space artworks are potentially infinitely reactivated whenever a spectator accesses the platform from their phones, tablets, computers, or in public talks or dialogues with other people. The online exhibition does not result in only being a documentation of the physical, nor a mere transposition of it in a digital space. It offers another experience, another layer of engagement and responds to different needs than the physical format: it expands the lifespan of the art pieces' exploration and the spectator's engagement with the exhibition, or, in the case of people who do not experience the physical space, it allows more spectators to encounter the

artworks. In addition, I am aware of the “dark side” of the online world, which can in some cases cause exclusion. Exclusion is the dead end of circulation and as such prevents artists from being acknowledged and spectators from participating in the act of knowledge and information sharing.

From the perspective of PHROOM, then, to become physical in a specific locality that matters to the art pieces shown results in making its archive matter and be benefited at different levels and by different spectators and collaborate and co-create with them all on different fronts.

In conclusion, curating results in being an essential tool for critical images circulations when considering its intrinsic function of putting different agents in relation and letting them resonate with the spectators. Now that cultural institutions have explored further the online world as a reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic situation, curators who hope to continue to evolve and serve larger social and cultural missions should engage deeper in the variables and specificities brought to light by the online to not detach from reality as if the online was not existing and was not so present in our daily lives. Rather, the task is to explore the online and how curating can act in that world in a distinctive way but still in connection to what has always been the aim of curating; bringing images, art and people together.

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Appendix A.

Interview conducted by Author with Founder and Deputy Director of PHROOM Matteo Cremonesi (Cremonesi 2022), on May 17, 2022, via Skype.

Author: How did the PHROOM platform come about? From what need and context?

Matteo Cremonesi: PHROOM is a project that arose mainly from the meeting and confrontation between entrepreneur and gallery owner Giangiacomo Cirila and Matteo Cremonesi, artist and lecturer. In a way, the genesis of this project was immediately nourished by the confluence of these two visions and vocations, the entrepreneurial, pragmatic character and the need to produce artistic and cultural insight. The circumstances that contributed to the realisation of this project were diverse and not all of them are entirely clear even to us. I believe we both felt in a different way the urgency to inhabit an overwhelming and new context such as the one presented by the network, and at the same time, still in a different way, we both suffered from the local dynamics linked to a certain Italian or perhaps more specifically Milan-based art scene. A territory that then, as now, seemed to us to be held within rituals and attentions that was in part not very nourishing. In addition to these ideas, I think at the beginning there was also the simple desire to find a voice, to know, select and write about things that interested us in the hope of finding other people who were interested in our research.

A: What are the opportunities intrinsic to online images circulations?

MC: The opportunities are many and far-reaching. I believe that our generation is still going through a radical and significant change in the structure of communication and information exchange from which it is difficult to think of being able to disregard, and in which the opportunity arises to overturn the rules that underpin our paths. The advent of the network recasts the world by producing a universe of signs and languages that approach the world in order to produce this and with this a different verse. The opportunity to sketch out paths of exchange, knowledge, collaboration and mutual aid between different people all over the world, I believe, is the most seductive and interesting aspect, as well as the most obvious. For an author, the opportunity to circulate their work online, I believe, fundamentally means giving oneself the chance to establish plans for comparison and exchange with people who are geographically and culturally distant from the territories in which the creative process has developed. This confrontation with a distant, often other, gaze offers the possibility of confrontation and interaction where one would otherwise not have the opportunity. Obviously, there is always the risk that this kind of relationship can be somewhat suffocating and induce language to discipline itself according to models that are far removed from its real need and urgency; I believe that artistic practices must also be in part practices of resistance.

A: What relationship does PHROOM have with the offline? Do you have a physical presence? If so, why?

MC: As PHROOM over the years we have often been invited to participate in talks, exhibition projects and other cultural initiatives in Italy and abroad. It is always extremely pleasant and exciting to cross-cultural territories and meet authors whose work we had often written and known before online. With many authors we have published on the platform we maintain close correspondence and when the opportunity to meet in person arises, it is always very nice. That said, our project has from the very beginning conceived its development precisely from the peculiar possibilities offered to us by the network.

A: Has there ever been a local approach in PHROOM's research? Or rather, research on specific territories to map the specific languages of certain national communities?

MC: Yes, in the course of our history we have often found ourselves wanting to learn more about the work of artists from a particular geographical area. More often than not, it was a matter of indulging an intuition that saw a place as particularly interesting because of the social and cultural tensions that ran through it, a tension that was reflected in the work of the authors and the way in which their choices were characterised as different from everything else around them. One could see that the work of authors from a particular place had something peculiar and strongly characterising about it. In this sense, among many others, the exchanges we had with Greek and Ukrainian artists were very important.

A: How has PHROOM's mission evolved and will evolve in the face of constant changes in technology and communication media?

MC: There are several aspects and perspectives that concur within the platform, the continuous evolution and change of means have seen us many times engaged in a reformulation of the strategies and practices related to the work, as well as the formal and graphic set-up assumed by the articles. However, I believe we can say that the platform's main vocation today is still the initial one, to constitute and continue to enrich a living archive through which to read some of what we consider to be some of the most interesting instances of contemporary visual culture. Having said this, there is no doubt that the revolutions taking place in the cultural and technological spheres do not leave us indifferent or inactive. PHROOM constitutes an excellent observatory through which to investigate, attempt to understand and participate in the evolutions imposed by digital language and the web, a language characterised by its peculiar ability to present a changing and unpredictable form. Part of our work and effort over these years has also been to try to foresee and accommodate in advance the form that communication might take.

Appendix B.

Interview conducted by Author with Irish Writer and Photographic Critic Darren Campion (Campion 2022), on May 4, 2022, via Skype.

Author: Could you describe the general aesthetics and politics of Irish contemporary photography?

Darren Campion: As with any creative practice, it's important to be wary of thinking just in terms of national styles, but there are definite trends in Irish photography and definite preoccupations that arise from the social and political circumstances of Irish life. I think the major stylistic trend we can point to is the use of a distanced, 'objective' mode of picture-making, particularly when it comes to representing the built environment. This is in keeping with international trends within photography of course, but it is also perhaps a reaction to the origins of Irish art photography within reportage and photojournalism. Photographers wanted to distinguish their work from that of their immediate predecessors and find new visual languages to express their concerns. For many years it seemed that the 'typical' Irish art photograph was a static view of a man-made landscape made with a medium or large format camera, which can be best understood as a reaction to - or interrogation of - the conventional understanding of the 'beautiful' Irish landscape. (I'm thinking here of work by Anthony Haughey, Paul Seawright, David Farrell, Pdraig

Murphy, John Duncan). In that sense, Irish art photography is politicised because it has circled so insistently around the issue of Irish identity - the question of what does Irishness look like and how it might be best represented. This shows photographers reacting to an uncertainty in the culture at large, acknowledging that national identity is never fixed or finished, and that we always in some way at odds with our history. It is also worth noting that in recent years that there has been an expansion of the styles we see in Irish photography, including much more obviously 'subjective' approaches to picture-making. This has always been a somewhat latent strand (we could point to the early work of David Farrell especially) but it has come to the fore with people like Ciarán Óg Arnold, Clare Gallagher, Dorje de Burgh, Enda Bowe. It is still very much politicised in the sense that these photographers are engaging with the conditions of Irish society, but they express it with a different visual language.

A: Which are the major supporting institutions for photography in Ireland?

DC: The major supporting institution for photography in Ireland is Photo Museum Ireland (formerly The Gallery of Photography, founded in 1978 by John Osman). While new organisations for photography have emerged in recent years (primarily PhotoIreland) and other major arts institutions like the National Gallery have begun to collect photography, Photo Museum Ireland remains a lynchpin of the sector, given its mission to promote an awareness and appreciation of photography as a creative practice in Ireland by supporting and showcasing the work of Irish and international artists. Photography as a medium occupies a relatively small niche in the visual arts in Ireland, and visual art as a whole often lags behind the performing arts and literature in terms of funding/ institutional support. This is reflected in the fact that photographic institutions emerged at a relatively late stage in Ireland when compared to other countries - for example, the first publicly funded touring exhibition of Irish creative photography (titled *Out of the Shadows*) only took place in 1981. This slow start has marked the continued development of photographic institutions in Ireland but there are positive signs for the growth of Photo Museum Ireland in particular into a museum-standard organisation, which would be a significant step forward for the sector. I think it is also important to mention the influence of third-level institutions on photography in Ireland as these shape the future direction of the medium

and contribute to the critical culture around it, something that established publications like Source have also been crucial in defining.

A: Photo Museum Ireland has recently launched the National Photography Collection. Could you talk a little about it? What urgency was felt to have a collection, what's the main mission, how do you select the artists?

DC: The National Photography Collection is an exciting new initiative for Photo Museum Ireland, in the first instance because it demonstrates our seriousness about becoming a museum organisation, and secondly because it offers the opportunity to define a collection dedicated solely contemporary Irish photography. At present photography is included in collections of contemporary art, which is exciting in itself as it shows a new level of regard for the medium, but in those cases it is just one medium among many. The purpose of the National Photography Collection is to provide a comprehensive overview of contemporary photographic practices in Ireland and to support artists in archiving their work, something we've identified as a major issue for practitioners. Over time, and as distinct from existing collections, the National Photographic Collection is focussed around assembling portfolios of photographic projects rather than finished pieces. This is based on a recognition of the fact that photographers tend to produce thematic bodies of work that need to be viewed together in order to be fully appreciated. The selection of artists is being carried out in consultation with our advisors, reflecting the artists' contribution to the growth of Irish photography, and also on the extent of the artists' collaboration with the gallery in the past. There is also an element of identifying future talent to support through artists' fees for the purchase of prints and also with the implementation of archival practices. Looking forward, the NPC will grow into an archive repository of contemporary photographic practice as a cornerstone of the museum's plans to become Ireland's first museum space dedicated to the medium.

A: How would you describe the relationship Irish photography has with the global photography panorama?

DC: This relationship exists, but is difficult to quantify. Historically speaking the growth of photography as an art practice in Ireland beginning in the late 1970s is marked by the influence of trends in the UK and Europe. This is shown by a common trajectory away from more traditional photographic styles (b&w reportage documentary) towards the use of colour and self-conscious artistic strategies, while remaining a concern with the same 'socially engaged' subjects. This shift was not without controversy particularly in the UK, but left a lasting influence on Irish photography and clearly demonstrates the extent to which Irish photographers were conversant with wider trends. That exchange has been continued in subsequent years through formal collaboration between institutions, as well as on an individual basis, particularly by photographers engaging with educational opportunities abroad. The fact that Irish photographers have achieved recognition and exhibited on an international level over the last number of shows the creative strength of the sector but this has not always matched by investment in supporting institutions. New organisations have helped counteract this to a certain extent but this depends on participation in wider European creative networks to showcase work that already exists. A more productive avenue for the future would be the collaboration on an international and cross-European basis to encourage creative exchange and dialogue leading to the production of new projects. This would set the development of Irish photography far more clearly in a global context, something that is less certain - or at least much less formalised - at present.

A: Do you feel there are any gaps to fill in the field of photography in Ireland?

DC: Inevitably there are many. Being critical we might say there can be a narrowness of outlook in the practice of Irish photography that applies both the kind of subjects that tend to be addressed and to the way that photography is being used by creative practitioners. The concern with the nature of Irish identity that I described earlier also has the potential to be a constraining factor for creative photographers as it circles around a particular set of issues that leaves little space for addressing other issues or even for looking at that question of national identity from different points of view. It often seems that there is an unwillingness among photographers to push the limits of their medium and to think about how it might be used differently or in an 'expanded' manner. This conservatism is perhaps a

reflection of the few institutions dedicated to photography as there inevitably tends to be a consensus of style, which also stems from a relatively small educational context. Admittedly this is slowly changing as wider perspectives on the medium become more available, particularly through digital platforms, but there are still absences and blindspots, particularly in terms of what kind of work and subject matter are visible in major institutional spaces (not just photographic spaces, but also for the visual arts as a whole). Representations of more diverse experiences would also be welcome in the context of art photography in Ireland, particularly around sexuality and ethnicity, as these would be reflective of the changing nature of Irish society. The new photographic strategies that have emerged in recent years set a promising example of what might yet be done with the medium in Ireland providing the institutional support is available to continue this trend.

A: What are the limits and opportunities of Irish photography?

DC: The limits are primarily institutional and sectoral. There are few institutions and organisations dedicated solely to photography and as yet no museum for contemporary photographic practices. Early-career photographic artists have few clear opportunities for progress due to the absences of mid-level photography spaces for exhibition. Similarly within education there is only one MFA for photography on the island of Ireland (Belfast School of Art) and although this has an excellent reputation more diversity is needed in terms of progression for graduates. There is also a notable shortage of critical discourse around contemporary photography in Ireland with very few critics/ academics addressing the subject and few specialist publications or platforms to distribute the writing that does exist. The lack of institutional space is compounded by a lack of discourse and has inhibited the growth of the photography sector in Ireland. These are real limits that need to be overcome before Irish photography can reach its potential. That being said, there are opportunities for existing institutions to take productive new directions and the fact that there are so few photography organisations currently means that there is still plenty of scope for new thinking on how to support artists and new ways of reaching audiences. In terms of individual practices, photography is the defining medium of contemporary life and one that offers immediate access to how we experience it on a daily basis, so photographers are plugged into the most pressing issues that we face today. This level of

access provides opportunities to address and to question the experience of contemporary life in a way that is unique to photography. We are increasingly seeing photographers rise to this challenge and in Ireland we now need a level of critical and institutional support that will continue to facilitate this.

Appendix C.

Physical exhibition budget chart.

Money In	
Private funds	€1 350
Total income	€1 350

Money Out	
Venue rent	€720
Artworks production	€318
Flyers + poster	€53
Tape + spirit level + measurement tool	€55
Dublin Art Life Promo + IG	€20
Exhibition text prints	€10
Total expenses	€1 177

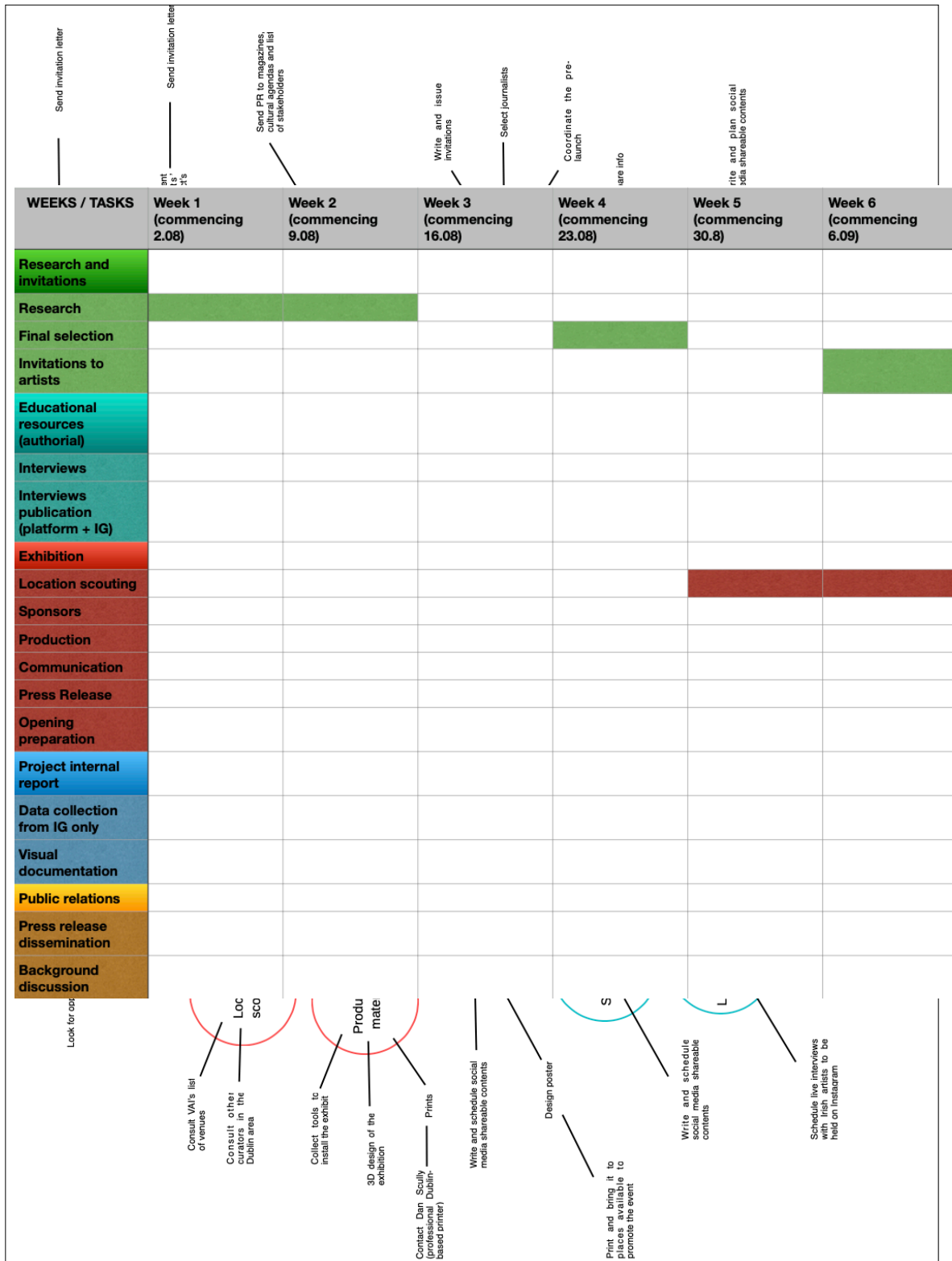
Money Left Over	
Income minus expenses	€173

Appendix D.

Project work breakdown structure.

Appendix E.

Project Gantt chart.



WEEKS / TASKS	Week 7 (commencing 13.09)	Week 8 (commencing 20.09)	Week 9 (commencing 27.9)	Week 10 (commencing 4.10)	Week 11 (commencing 11.10)	Week 12 (commencing 18.10)
Research and invitations						
Research						
Final selection						
Invitations to artists						
Educational resources (authorial)						
Interviews						
Interviews publication (platform + IG)						
Exhibition						
Location scouting						
Sponsors						
Production						
Communication						
Press Release						
Opening preparation						
Project internal report						
Data collection from IG only						
Visual documentation						
Public relations						
Press release dissemination						
Background discussion						

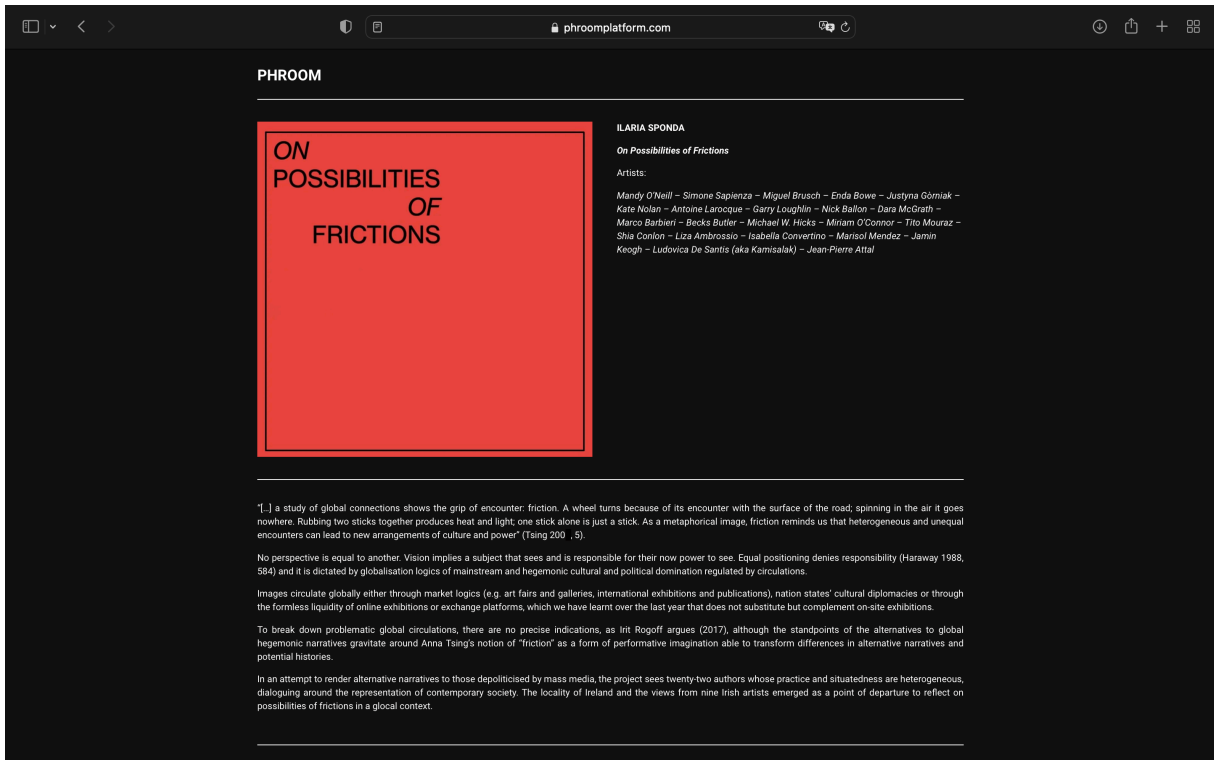
WEEKS / TASKS	Week 13 (commencing 25.10)	Week 14 (commencing 1.11)	Week 15 (commencing 8.11)	Week 16 (commencing 15.11)	Week 17 (commencing 22.11)	Week 18 (commencing 29.11)
Research and invitations						
Research						
Final selection						
Invitations to artists						
Educational resources (authorial)						
Interviews						
Interviews publication (platform + IG)						
Exhibition						
Location scouting						
Sponsors						
Production						
Communication						
Press Release						
Opening preparation						
Project internal report						
Data collection from IG only						
Visual documentation						
Public relations						
Press release dissemination						
Background discussion						

WEEKS / TASKS	Week 19 (commencing 6.12)	Week 20 (commencing 13.12)	Week 21 (commencing 20.12)	Week 22 (commencing 27.12)	Week 23 (commencing 3.01)	Week 24 (commencing 10.01)
Research and invitations						
Research						
Final selection						
Invitations to artists						
Educational resources (authorial)						
Interviews						
Interviews publication (platform + IG)						
Exhibition						
Location scouting						
Sponsors						
Production						
Communication						
Press Release						
Opening preparation						
Project internal report						
Data collection from IG only						
Visual documentation						
Public relations						
Press release dissemination						
Background discussion						

WEEKS / TASKS	Week 25 (commencing 17.01)	Week 26 (commencing 24.01)
Research and invitations		
Research		
Final selection		
Invitations to artists		
Educational resources (authorial)		
Interviews		
Interviews publication (platform + IG)		
Exhibition		
Location scouting		
Sponsors		
Production		
Communication		
Press Release		
Opening preparation		
Project internal report		
Data collection from IG only		
Visual documentation		
Public relations		
Press release dissemination		
Background discussion		

Appendix F.

Online exhibition and interpretation materials. Accessed June 11, 2022. <https://phroomplatform.com/on-possibilities-of-frictions-ilaria-sponda/>.



Appendix G.

Copyright release form sample.

COPYRIGHT RELEASE FORM FOR WRITTEN WORK, IMAGES, ARTWORK

I hereby grant to **Ilaria Sponda** permission to use the following copyrighted material (listed below) in digital and printed format. I am granting the permission for non-exclusive

rights to use the written work(s) and image(s) described below in this and future editions of the following project:

Project name: *On Possibilities of Frictions*

The copyrighted material will be used on PHROOM platform and social media and the upcoming exhibition at A4 Sounds, Dublin (19th-22nd January 2022).

Description of Copyrighted Material (name of the series)

-

I certify that no other individual or parties hold copyright interest in the work(s) described above, that I hold all rights to the works listed, and that the license granted herein does not violate any third-party rights or applicable laws. I hereby certify and covenant that I am of legal age (a parent or legal guardian must sign for a minor), or if applicable, that I am authorised to sign on behalf of the entity listed below.

PHROOM platform declares that the images will be used exclusively in connection with the project curated by Ilaria Sponda and will be printed on a non-profit basis (the works will not be sold).

Artist name (owner of the images):

Date:

Signature:

Appendix H.

Offline exhibition text.

Appendix I.

Instagram-based project's insights.

'On Possibilities of Frictions'

Curated by Ilaria Sponda



19th - 22nd January 2022

Opening: Wednesday, 19th January 2022, 4:00pm - 8:00pm

A4 Sounds | St. Joseph's Parade | Phibsborough, Dublin

Gallery opening hours: 12:00pm - 8:00pm

PHROOM is thrilled to present 'On Possibilities of Frictions', an exhibition curated by Ilaria Sponda with works by: Mandy O'Neill, Simone Sapienza, Miguel Bruschi, Enda Bowe, Justyna Górnica, Kate Nolan, Antoine Larocque, Garry Loughlin, Nick Ballón, Dara McGrath, Marco Barbieri, Becks Butler, Michael Hicks, Miriam O'Connor, Tito Mouraz, Shia Conlon, Liza Ambrossio, Marisol Mendez, Isabella Convertino, Jamin Keogh, Ludovica De Santis (aka Kamisalak), and Jean-Pierre Attal.

The exhibition sees twenty-two authors whose practice and situatedness are heterogeneous, dialoguing around the representation of people in the contemporary socialscape and related issues. The locality of Ireland and the views from nine Irish artists emerges as a point of departure to reflect on image circulation and globalisation, whose equal positioning and false promise of democratisation do not permit subjective visions and alternative narratives (yet potential histories) to rise.

"Speaking of friction is a reminder of the importance of interaction in defining movement, cultural form, and agency. Friction is not just about slowing things down. Friction is required to keep global power in motion. [...] Friction inflects historical trajectories, enabling, excluding, and particularising." (Tsing 2004, 6). Friction, as a form of performative imagination, is able to activate differences and establish a critical image exchange, where the binary notion of local and the global do not exist anymore, but get deconstructed by the simple act of looking and subjectively participating in the event of photography.

Admission is free and you can pre-book tickets or drop in.

Please e-mail reservation@phroomplatform.com.



22 Jan

7,196
-12.2%

15,988

84

794

