

Aidan Dunne Visual Art

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■ Top: a still from Niamh O'Malley's film *Nephin* at the Douglas Hyde Gallery
■ Above: Richard Proffitt's *Wild Cries of Ha-Ha* at the Kevin Kavanagh Gallery

skeletons, feathers, beads, candles, coloured light bulbs, old watches or clocks, portable cassette machines playing incantatory, repetitive music, incense, fabric fragments, figurines, badges, hand-drawn symbols, printed texts and anomalous bits and pieces – many singed by fire.

Hallucinogenic substances could well be involved, you feel, in whatever rites were going on. There's a curious mixture of fussy precision and chaotic, even deranged DIY to the way things are assembled and ordered. You're catapulted into the obsessive mind of a devotee, someone possessed and transported, or perhaps a seeker desperate to believe.

“Visit Richard Proffitt's show and it's as if you've stumbled on to the residue of some arcane cult gathering

Proffitt draws on ancient belief systems and much more recent countercultural variations. He doesn't parody or condescend. And there's an anarchic, political dimension as well as a mystical one. It could be that he's attracted to the weird, psychic energy bound up in these bold attempts to find alternative paths and whatever the aftermath, it's a genuine energy, full of potential and possibility.

In his informative essay, Michael Hill points out that the show's title, *Wild Cries of Ha-Ha*, is an approximate translation of the name of one of the “charnel grounds described in Hindu and Buddhist spiritual texts”. Living and dead commune in these highly charged places. Only a spiritual elite can be comfortable there. Equally, Hill elaborates, Proffitt emphasises the mundane nature of what is involved, the “ordinary scraps of discarded junk” that become “tools of divination and magic”. That sounds a lot like art.
kevinkavanagh.ie

Richard Proffitt: *Wild Cries of Ha-Ha*
Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, Dublin

★★★★

Visit Richard Proffitt's show – and you really should – and it's as if you've stumbled on to the residue of some arcane cult gathering, recently abandoned. His atmospheric installations typically incorporate assemblages of emblematic objects and materials. They might include rough wooden constructions, driftwood, fragments of animal