

Laragh Pittman, National College of Art and Design, MA (2010 degree-show text)



Laragh Pittman: *The Journey of Frances D'Aran 2009 - 2010*, installation shot; photo Aoife Giles; courtesy the artist

Laragh Pittman's captivating installation *The Journey of Frances D'Aran 2009 - 2010* consists of an archive of materials related to her great great grandmother's voyage across Ireland. Motivated by the African travels of Thomas Heazle Parke, another of the artist's ancestors and the first Irishman to cross that continent, the work has been realized as a visible storage exhibit that lets viewers peruse various stacked arrangements. Mock scientific names such as *Lego Pyxidis*, which denotes a tower of travel cases, delineate categories. Unusual juxtapositions also pepper the proceedings. In the *Rego libri*, copies of Conrad's *Heart of darkness* and Parke's *African journey* sit next to a volume on Irish Railways and *Regnum lapideum* contains few mineral artifacts. The *Mappi mundi* also reflects the vertical ordering of items. The colourful bits of patterned papers set out in this composition are not only arrestingly exotic, but the layout also echoes the shape of Brancusi's *Endless column*. Several video components and items such as *Flora digitale* - a CD that has been transformed into a flower - bring the journey into the digital realm.



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D'Aran's imagined trek assumes significance by causing us to ruminate on the differences between domestic and foreign landscapes and cultures both in terms of the past and present day. It not only tests our assumptions by asking us to reconsider the world around us, but also speaks of the historical inequality between men and women. Most importantly, the intelligence that suffuses this witty departure from the conventions of material-culture presentations drives its success.



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