



JAKI IRVINE
DUBLIN + BLANCHARDSTOWN, IRELAND

While elements of the picture are consistently called on within his work through process—that is, he uses pixels to generate abstraction—it is not always forthrightly evident. With the *Digital_d* series, a passel of black, green, and white prints mounted on aluminum, Pomara's use of the picture becomes much more evident—beautifully blunt in the silhouette of a female head. In another resolved play of figure through ground, a black pate-like and hirsute form—think Farrah instead of Wolfman—emerges amid white and spearmint green lines.

As a consummate painter—in many ways, of the AbEx persuasion—Pomara is also a colorist. Whereas his palette has ranged broadly over the last decade, with stellar use of 1950s yellows, greens, and blues in the rendering of abstract architectural form, he pares down to the slick *Blade Runner* triumvirate of black, green, and white in the new figural forms. This palette is delightfully retro—full-on 1980s—and altogether complementary to the figures rendered. It works not so much in terms of a nostalgic return to something that was good thirty years back. Rather, the 1980s-ness of these pictures works because the Pictures Generation look and message is neither completed nor exhausted. The copy without origin—the mainstay of Pictures Generation artists—is at the core of our being-in-the-world in the twenty-first century. At the same time, and far less philosophically, Pomara's new figural pictures look good and make sense because they also strike a sense of forgotten album jacket design—the graphic for a Devo, Kraftwerk, Brian Eno album that never was but should have been.

It is this combination of the profound—difference from repetition—and the profane—Pat Benatar—that makes Pomara's work simultaneously brilliant and Pictures-esque.

—Charissa N. Terranova

Even in the safest cities, dark deserted streets evoke mystery and harbor prospects of danger. Most feel that society's most vulnerable citizens should avoid such locations. Though this attitude involves issues of personal safety, it also operates as social control. But in Jaki Irvine's *City of Women*, 2009, numerous women have gathered in just such a setting [The LAB, in collaboration with Draíocht; January 15—February 27, 2010]. On a small out-of-the-way street in a large city where they are hemmed in by a high fence on one side and a brick wall on the other, they engage in casual conversation, laugh, compare trinkets, and whisper things into one another's ear—conduct that belies the time and place. The camera moves randomly from group to group. The screen briefly fades to darkness after each scene. The film suggests that we are party to the proceedings, but neither the content of the conversations nor the purpose of the meeting can be discerned. The ambient noise of the city overrides what the women are saying. Irvine ultimately gives us a seemingly disconnected string of gestures.

William Hogarth's *The Harlot's Progress*, a series of six etchings produced in 1732 and on loan from the Irish Museum of Modern Art, accompanies the film. Although not obvious in visual terms, their presence underscores the fact that they—by way of a joint invitation from The LAB and Draíocht—operate as the film's source. Portraying the fall of a young woman into prostitution and her early death, this tragic tale of decadence and debauchery not only referenced contemporary scandals, but also depicted individuals familiar to the public at that time—factors that fueled its commercial success. In terms of movement, the story progresses choppily with the majority of the scenes weighted toward the victim's decline. The images can also be enjoyed individually. Michael Rosenthal, in fact, has described the plates as “hermetic tableaux,” each brimming with interest. Irvine's response to this visual potboiler involved zeroing in on a secondary aspect of human behavior evident

throughout the sequence, which conveys emotion and exaggerates the drama. After rehearsing the gestures with a group of volunteers, the film was shot just outside The LAB's premises.

Irvine's film both mirrors Hogarth's prints and rejects them. The brief intervals of blackness between scenes, for example, mimic the cadence of Hogarth's plates. Many of the gestures, though individually adapted by the participants, are also easily recognized. The narrative presented in the film, on the other hand, follows no logical path. Men and animals, but for one dog, are absent and though we perceive differences in age, racial background, and styles of dress, the participants' status, ties or reason for meeting at such an unusual time and place cannot be ascertained. Complicating our relationship to the film is the camera's continuous movement. Sharply diverging from the single viewpoint offered by each of the prints, it provides multiple perspectives of the film's subjects in a manner that is intimate and naturalistic.

Operating on a number of levels, the film acts as a bridge linking past and present as well as the interior and exterior of the Dublin City Council Arts building. It also projects an impression of women being free to be themselves, albeit under the cover of darkness and only when they are unhampered by the demands of home, work, children, and men. Moreover, the result of Irvine's visual excavation compels us to consider the significance of gestures. No longer merely a visual adjunct to verbal communication, this absorbing film inspires contemplation of their multiplicity, historical evolution, and pervasiveness as both psycho-physical and socio-cultural phenomena.

—John Gayer

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: John Pomara, *Arrival and Departure no. 7*, 2009, oil enamel on aluminum, 47.5 x 36 inches (courtesy of the artist and Barry Whistler Gallery, Dallas); Jaki Irvine, still from *City of Women*, 2009 (courtesy of the artist and The LAB, Dublin)