

Crossing the Park, Michael Hanna at CCA Derry~Londonderry

Wednesday 11 September, 2024

CCA Derry~Londonderry is delighted to present a solo exhibition of artist Michael Hanna's long term project *Crossing the Park*, launching on Saturday 5 October 2024 and running until Saturday 21 December 2021.

In *Crossing the Park*, Michael Hanna takes himself as the subject in a project that sees the artist attempt to change his deep-set allegiance from Everton Football Club to their arch rivals, Liverpool. This process, which has taken place across the past three years, highlights the strong negative social pressures against such a change, as historically Northern Irish football fans choose an English team to support for life when they're young. By swapping allegiances, Michael explores urgent questions surrounding loyalty, tribalism, empathy and identity, and investigates the psychology of group behaviour.

The term 'Crossing the Park' comes from the pejorative phrase applied to players who have played for both Everton and Liverpool Football Clubs. Their home grounds are separated by Stanley Park and so, in switching teams, they cross the park.

The project began with a series of rituals and superstitions that helped begin Michael's attempt to learn to love Liverpool. These early works were developed for *URGENCIES (2021)* at CCA and included gestures such as using red body paint when Liverpool played, buying his newly born child Liverpool kit and eating the same match-day meal ritual as goalkeeper Pepe Reina.

The project has developed over the years and the exhibition includes filmed conversations with the artist. Michael talks with a psychologist about group behaviours and how to change, and also with Liverpool taxi drivers on friends, family and football fandom. Central to the exhibition is a text outlining seven activities based on social psychological theory and research which will help to promote affinity with Liverpool Football Club and reduce affinity with Everton developed by Professor Rhiannon Turner from Queen's University Belfast. These activities have informed the actions and works in the rest of the exhibition as he continues his pursuit of becoming a Liverpool Football Club supporter.

Crossing the Park is commissioned by CCA Derry~Londonderry, Centre Culturel Irlandais and F.E. McWilliam Gallery. It is supported by the National Lottery through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's Commissioning Programme, Derry City & Strabane District Council, An Chomhairle Ealaíon, Temple Bar Gallery + Studios and the Elephant Trust.

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