

IRISH LINEN

The Canberra Times |
Wednesday February 11 2004 p.27

The fabric of 30 years of The Troubles

By Meredith Hinchliffe

The Irish Linen Memorial — Transformation of Tears. A multimedia work by Lycia Danielle Trouton at Craft ACT Craft & Design Centre, Level 1, North Building, London Circuit, until February 15. Open: 10am-4pm, Tuesday to Friday; 12 noon-4pm, Saturday and Sunday.

THE LOSS of some hundreds of lives would, in many situations, constitute a disaster.

It always seems strangely misleading that the violence that we have become familiar with

over 30 years in Northern Ireland is known as The Troubles.

Lycia Danielle Trouton, who was born in Belfast and grew up in Canada, has recently come to Australia to take up doctorate studies at the University of Wollongong.

She travelled to Belfast and around the same time read a book titled *Lost Lives* by several Irish writers. It reads like a series of obituaries — short narratives of what people were doing and the circumstances of their killing.

Trouton has had the names of the dead stencilled on to white linen handkerchiefs — the size generally used by women — and has hung these on strips of white, torn linen linking them into a continuous line. The metaphors

are powerful: handkerchiefs mop up and wipe away the tears, stop the bleeding — albeit temporarily — and wipe up the blood; torn strips of linen used as bandages.

The use of linen, a traditional Irish textile, adds another metaphorical layer. There are strong connotations of nurturing, traditionally a female role.

Other elements to the installation include a digital print of a grave digger on linen and a long board covered in green fabric on which a series of hankies embroidered with names are displayed.

This latter work is titled *Bleaching Greens*, referring to the traditional way in which woven linen was bleached. I find this work the least resolved.

Tom Fitzgerald, of Melbourne, composed the haunting music that plays in the background, and Elizabeth Cameron-Dalman and Vivienne Rogis performed at the opening.

The exhibition has been shown in Seattle, US, and was developed with financial assistance from the Canadian Government.

A comment sheet from a previous show is on display which eloquently states, "A very peaceful way to transform a public space into a personal space and back again into public."

The installation is poignant and moving and a forceful, though gentle, reminder of the personal tragedies and futility of war. Its resonance is even more moving in the current environment.