



Exhibition «James Joyce's Dublin»  
09/05/1995 - 02/07/1995

## An experiment

It is an experiment. An essay, if you will. *James Joyce's Dublin* is the first in a series of exhibitions which the CCCB hopes to programme yearly about a city and a writer. It is not a question of providing a more or less detailed biographical approach to a writer's life, his family, his friends, his work table, the pen, the manuscripts and his death bed. Nor is it a question of hanging the city as a back-drop to the life of a writer. Our aim is to set out to look for a city and a writer at that point where they meet in the construction of a symbolic space where the writer makes the city his own—while painting himself—, and the city, worked by the writer's imaginary world, finds certain signs singularized, according to that Deleuzian idea that the part of literature, like of love, is to identify singular signs which would probably otherwise be lost in anonymity, oblivion or indifference.

Naturally, the meeting of writer and city takes place in literature. Literature is, in short, the privileged place of the writer's experience. To seek out that meeting, to attempt to singularize those elements which add most to a definition of a city's specific traits and, most of all, to express an atmosphere, the atmosphere in which the writer and the city find the same refuge, the sense that they are mutually necessary; this is the aim of this experiment.

The exhibition is the central element of the exercise. But words, sound and image turn around it, helping us to understand a relation of mutual construction between city and writer. Because the writer creates himself within the city, but at the same time, the city shows its forms as they are sculpted by the writer. In Joyce's case, words are abundant, there is music to accompany them and we are even in luck with the image, particularly with Huston's extraordinary film *The Dead*, an exceptional exercise of our project's aims.

Detecting this common symbolic territory between the city and the writer, discovering how and where the writer creates the city and how and where the city creates the writer do not make for a conventional exhibition, a thesis in which an iconographical series is used to express an idea, nor is it a simple accumulation of images, memories and descriptions of a city and a life. It is a creative exercise in the apprehension—necessarily subjective—of this territory on which the city and the writer meet. And in how the city expresses the traces of the man of letters. This is the challenge of the experiment we are considering today. The exhibition, not as an instrument for description, pedagogy or information, but as a small work of art. Woven out of the materials which have been sought and found in the word and the experience of the writer, of the stuff and life of the city. All in all, with the idea of erecting a cityscape which the writer has given to it or, rather, has discovered and singularized on the basis of his direct experience and the imaginary world of some streets, people, an atmosphere, a character, a time, a world.

«15 April: Met her today pointblank in Grafton Street. The crowd brought us together. We both stopped. She asked me why I never came, said she had heard all sorts of stories about me. This was only to gain time. Asked me, was I writing poems? About whom? I asked her [...]» (*Portrait of the artist as a young man*). A street, the crowds, her, stories, the meeting, I, a series of things which go to create an unrepeatable event and which mark the meeting between the writer's experience and the imaginary world of the city. Finally, cities are also topographies of memory and feeling, and that too is the aim of this experiment which is opened by Joyce and Dublin, and which will be continued by Pessoa and Lisbon. With all that the attempt involves in daring: the attempt to create, by means of the genre of exhibition,



Prologues by Josep Ramoneda to the CCCB's catalogues

a different language, in which literature and city find material expression, away from the street and on this side of the word.