

Cecilia Danell  
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology Degree Show

Michaële Cutaya is an  
artist and writer living  
in Galway.

Cecilia Danell  
*Is this Utopia?*  
2008  
installation shot, GMT  
courtesy the artist

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It probably was the title that did it: in these days of atrophied imagination, in which fears stand in for political program, the very mention of Utopias is enough to suggest times when a better future was still being dreamt.

The initial impression of Cecilia Danell's show is one of a brightly coloured playfulness. The show is suffused with 1960s imagery, from the geometric designs of the wallpaper covering the installation room to the photographed retro objects, which are part of the artist's collection. It is however more pointedly to modernist architecture that Danell's work refers through

painting and animation.

In a five-minute animated short, *Is this Utopia*,<sup>1</sup> a curvilinear-patterned world is the set for a series of arrangements of urbanistic elements, the construction and deconstruction of buildings using Lego blocks – themselves a legacy of that 1960s optimism that the world is ours to be built in endless colourful possibilities. The alienating effects of such planning are pointed to by having round Maltesers-looking creatures attempting to inhabit this cubic world.

The top-down thinking underlying modern

urbanism is furthered alluded to in a series of one-metre-square paintings. In the luridly idealistic colours of an advertisement are represented views of Stockholm's suburbs which are disrupted by prominent areas of splashed and dripped paint. The featureless spaces left in the painting seem to suggest the ultimate unfathomability of the inhabitants.

Alternatively, these vacant and uncertain shapes superimposed over the representation of places which were inspired by modernist utopias, could be left to be filled by future ones.

<sup>1</sup> *Is this Utopia?*, as well as images of her paintings, documentation of work in progress can be viewed on Danell's website, [www.ceciliadanell.com](http://www.ceciliadanell.com)