

The Touring Tama

By Miriam McConnon

June 14th-24th 2013

The Touring Tama is an outdoor installation by Irish artist Miriam McConnon. For ten days a huge cloth measuring 500 sq. metres will envelop this large tree in the centre of Merrion Square. The cloth, known as the *Tama*, is made up of handkerchiefs and pieces of traditional lace that have been collected by the artist from the people of Cyprus and Ireland. The installation is supported by Dublin City Council in celebration of Ireland's 2013 Presidency of the European Union. The huge cloth was commissioned and previously exhibited as an outdoor installation at the ancient tree of St. Solomoni at the UNESCO heritage site in Paphos, Cyprus in September 2012 to celebrate Cyprus' presidency of the EU. The tree, known as the hanky tree, is a place where people have visited for centuries to hang handkerchiefs in memory of loved ones who have passed away or who are sick. *Tama* is the Greek word for the handkerchiefs that are hung onto the tree.

Miriam Mc Connon has now brought the *Tama* to Ireland where it will cover this large London Plane tree here in Merrion Square. Those who visit the installation are invited to hang handkerchiefs around the trunk of the tree. These handkerchiefs will be sewn onto the *Tama* by the artist after the installation ends, allowing it to grow even bigger before it hopefully travels to Athens, Greece in 2014.

The covering of the tree is less motivated by the symbolic meaning behind the wrapping and more by the aim of the artist to bring the ancient Cypriot custom of the hanky tree or wishing tree to Ireland. The cloth is made up of handkerchiefs and traditional lace that has been sewn together by the artist herself. The cloth itself has become the artwork. It has developed its own identity and has a strong, distinctive smell. It has become something bigger than the artist. There is a strong domestic element to the artwork as it is made up from lace and cloth that lived in the domestic lives of those who donated them. Each handkerchief has been a personal possession of somebody and therefore carries its own individual story and many of them have inscriptions to loved ones written on them.

Miriam McConnon was born in Dublin 1977. She graduated from The National College of Art and Design, Dublin in 1999. In 2000 she completed a postgraduate diploma at the Cyprus College of Art. Miriam's recent projects include, *My Mackintosh Box*, a solo painting exhibition at The Talbot gallery, Dublin (2012), participation in The 8th Beijing Biennale at the Chinese Museum of Contemporary Art (2012), International drawing Biennale and Symposium, Pilsen, Czech Republic, Biennale of Drawing, Wroclaw, Poland (2012). Miriam currently lives in Cyprus.