

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2014

## Art in Review

### Brian O'Doherty

'Connecting the . . .'

P!

334 Broome Street, between  
Bowery and Chrystie Streets,  
Lower East Side

Simone Subal Gallery

131 Bowery, between Broome and  
Grand Streets,  
Lower East Side

Both Through April 20

Brian O'Doherty would fit right in among the artist-writer-curators and assorted polymaths of this year's Whitney Biennial. At various times a medical doctor, television host, novelist and art critic (for The New York Times, among other outlets), he has also been making art for more than half a century, much of it under the pseudonym Patrick Ireland.

His latest solo show is largely devoted to the earlier conceptual and language-based projects he made under his own name from the 1950s through the '70s. Filling two Lower East Side galleries, it also includes a brand-new "Rope Drawing" that articulates one of his major concerns, the interaction between art and the "white cube" of the gallery space. At P!, a series of "Structural Plays" — scripts for performances that were meant to be executed on taped grids on floors — invoke kinds of power games, everything from chess to sex. In the related "Vowel Grid," staged at a fort in Donegal, Ireland, and seen in a riveting video, two men in white suits with beaklike hoods march around shouting vowels from the Ogham language of medieval Ireland.

Other Ogham-inspired works are at Simone Subal, along with more conceptual objects and documents: a framed cardiogram of Duchamp's heartbeat, for instance, which seems to pulse through many of Mr. O'Doherty's other works. The highlight is "Rope Drawing 120: Here and Now," which uses white string to create optical vibrations between two parallel geometric wall paintings.

On the whole, the art in these shows looks most vital when considered of a piece with Mr. O'Doherty's writing. His well-known essay series of 1976, "Inside the White Cube," is an early-postmodernist classic that remains intensely relevant in our age of branded mega-galleries. Among its prescient observations: "We have now reached a point where we see not the art but the *space* first." KAREN ROSENBERG