

## **Les Fleurs du Mal**

Futures, RHA (2014)

The title of Aoibheann Greenan's body of work for Futures 14 is borrowed from Baudelaire's 1861 poem collection. Translated as 'The flowers of Evil,' the latter may be read as a journey through self and society in search of some impossible satisfaction that forever eludes the traveller, an idea that resonates strongly with Greenan's work. Writing in the era of decadence, Baudelaire expressed a fascination with the dark side of nature and the human condition.

So too is the notion of the abject made manifest throughout Greenan's exhibition. In particular the artist examines her deep suspicion towards the self-declared authenticity of 'spiritual tourism' and the 'backpacker trail.' Psychtrance music and stoner culture provide the backdrop against which distinct cultural motifs become assimilated and reduced to mere signs and appendages. The installation amalgamates Greenan's own disconcerting encounters with full-moon parties in Thailand, the backpacker trail in Northern India and an Ayahuasca ceremony in Brazil. Various props and performative elements mimic the modes by which backpackers are lured to raves or rituals. However, in Greenan's sinister metaphor of cultural voyeurism it is ultimately the backpacker who generates and feeds the entire system. The consumer becomes the consumed, self-othering is enacted to the point of self-disintegration.