

Smoking without real fire

SUSAN MORRIS: BETWEEN HITS
Accident

IT'S easy to see what can be done when a painter turns his attention to the medium and tries to express the problems of rendering three dimensions in only two. These are formal problems that artists have worked with highly self-consciously for over 100 years now.

It is harder to see what can be done with sound and video recording technology, which has only become available to a mass market in the past 20 or 30 years. Susan Morris' show is perhaps most interesting in this light.

Her work is led by these investigations and plays with all the possibilities of loops, repetitions and delays. Ultimately, however, it seems led down the garden path on a dark night and consequently the content is more than a little difficult to discern.

The show consists of a sound-piece, a recording of a conversation, and five video pieces, four appearing on closed circuit TV Monitors, one of which is projected on the wall.

The conversation provides perhaps the best way into the rest of the rather soulless, opaque videos.



● Susan Morris has themes of urban ennui and confusion.

It is a warm and friendly banter on the dead end question of why people smoke. As well as providing a concrete title for the show, it comes closest of all the works to conjuring the moods driven at by the exhibition as a whole.

There is ennui; chatter about time passing and how to pass time. Smoking. Lighting up and smoking. And there are the strangest of confusions and coincidences brought about by the long delays set up within the conversation. One character jokes – delay – the other laughs.

The show, as the blur suggests, is about how “contact between one thing and another is maintained or deferred”. This is vague, to say the very least. One can see these ideas in the sound recording, but this doesn't seem to help the piece as much.

The problem is the same with

the videos. Technical fiddling provides the content: the irritating lack of narrative, lack of beginnings and lack of endings. Meanwhile the actual visuals are pure CCTV material, an unwanted repetitive monotony.

In those with only light entertainment, the sun goes down, in the real action thriller, nobodies wander past. The work's interest derives from intellectual conundrums, formal, technical interventions and moods evoked. But if the themes emerge as urban ennui, dissatisfaction, irritation and confusion, the result for less patient viewers may be less understanding of the theme than feeling it pressing down like a wet blanket.

At Accident, 40 Underwood Street, until November 23.

M.F.