Is the desire for invisibility and absence in the visual arts an expression of “Zeitgeist”? 

• This paper aims to enhance the understanding of current tendencies and strategies of disappearance within visual arts. It is the outcome of strategies and observations about invisible art.

Ralf Sander, Reader, University of Ulster, Belfast
THE MYSTERIOUS MEMORIAL
(1961 - 1986)

In 1956 a memorial mistaken as a depiction of George Washington was removed from the location. The 7 feet marble sculpture of unknown origin was found in 1963 in an abandoned building after the Civil War. Later the sculpture was identified as a portrait of George Washington.

In 1956 William Coach in Collee's Encyclopedia could state evidence that the monument was a portrait of Johann Adam Weishaupt (2 April 1748 - 18 November 1804), a philosopher and founder of the Order of the Illuminati.

The sculpture could have been executed by the order of his supporter Duke Ernest II of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg, when the Society was founded by the government of Karl Theodor, Elector of Bavaria, in 1784.

Coach discovered stylistic links to the German-born sculptor Ilami Pome, a banished American sculptor (originally named Harald Kraft July 28, 1805 - June 27, 1873) who learned in the studio of Frederic Eckstein.

The sculpture disappeared without a trace in 1857.
Shadows of the past is a remake of the shadows removed or destroyed monuments and memorials could have cast, and still cast in collective memory. The image is made in water and gel lasts just short time. It is an ongoing project of art in urban space.

Roaring “Hugh Hanna”, Carlisle Circus, Belfast

- Shadows of the past is a remake of the shadows removed or destroyed monuments and memorials could have cast, and still cast in collective memory. The image is made in water and gel lasts just short time. It is an ongoing project of art in urban space.

Removing of Queen Victoria from Dublin
Schroedinger’s Cat

...once the suitcase is open the image disappears. The portrait is printed in Cyanoblue, used in early photography.
• **Entanglement**

In this way, perhaps the image is telling us something (by, perhaps, ironically saying nothing or being unaccessible!) – by refusing to answer the questions that we traditionally pose, it is perhaps ‘saying’ that we are simply asking the wrong questions.

• It is a series of images and prints, closed in dark boxes/suitcases. Once the images are exposed to light they disappear.

They are portraits, secret portraits, people of public interest.
Emptiness and absence in monumental sculpture
A solid piece of sculpture occupies space. In this case I made the opposite. I investigated possibilities of shaping the empty space. Sometimes images want to be perceived at certain times of the day or year (i.e. in certain light, during certain weather, etc.). Or, perhaps, they want to be experienced multiple times, in different times of the day/year, thereby providing a different experience each time.

Here is a distinction between the object that is present and the image. The image is the void between two objects, the form constituted through emptiness.
Seen from a particular position the image becomes visible but it is the empty space. Although the object is clearly figurative, it refers to the location in that the figure is actually defined by what’s behind it. The absence is highlighted.
The Wanderer

Commission: Drogheda Civic Trust, part-financed by the European Union’s Programme for Rural Development (PERDIP)
Contact name and phone number: Michael D Crowell +353 872430723
Commission value: €75,000
Dimensions: 400 x 200 x 300 cm
Material: corten steel

The Wanderer refers to the long history of migration and wandering and division in Ireland. As Drogheda has now a vibrant new community from worldwide locations and it also has a resident local population a change but it might also evoke memories of historic migration.

The sculpture consists of two large iron pillars. The artist is modelling the empty space in between. Seen from one side a Lady becomes visible in the empty space. Another perspective reveal a migratory bird.

A solid piece of sculpture occupies space. In this case Sander did the opposite. Although the object is clearly figurative, it refers to the location in that the figure is actually defined by what’s behind it. The absence but at the same time presence of the object evokes memories.
“Denn die einen sind im Dunkeln Und die andern sind im Licht. Und man siehet die im Lichte Die im Dunkeln sieht man nicht.”

Mack the Knife by Berthold Brecht 1928

Some are in the shadows and others in the light

You see those ones in brightness

The others are out of sight
Vanishing man

The rotation caused by wind makes the sculpture disappearing