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In Charity Scribner's book "Requiem for Communism," the author describes how artists, curators and institutions have tried to recuperate the legacy of the former Eastern Block in the form of memory work. Street signs and public monuments that now exist only as anecdotes become the substance of artworks, and massproduced ephemera from everyday life in the former Communist states surface as museum displays. In Otto Berchem's commission for EV+A, the artist attempts something similar, working with a group of young Irish musicians who sing Love Your Brother a hit from the former GDR. However unlike Scribner's book which is steeped in melancholia, Berchem's project invites us to suspend our cynicism and to sing the song once more with a feeling in an act of willed naivety. This generosity towards the past and (the work would seem to suggest) towards the future concurs with the themes of generosity, giving, sharing and social exchange, which are explored in E V+A 2006 — the annual large scale exhibition which takes place across Limerick — this year curated by Katerina Gregos.

Participating artists interpreted these themes in a number of ways, the most popular being the 'vox pop' the 'platform' and the 'gift.' The first occurs in the many works that hand the mike over to the audience. Fiona Mulholland's project asks people to define their notion of success in response to a poll in the Economist putting Ireland at the top of the league. Artists variously develop the notion of the platform, as a space to display the talent of regular citizens (for example Ciara Finnegan's collaboration with dancer Jenny Roche and a group of older people) and as a sculptural proposition (in Seamus Nolan's elegant viewing structure). The gift appears in the usual paraphernalia of freebies and giveaway literature that accompany large-scale exhibitions, a recipe for brewing beer and most interestingly in an offer to come round to your house and cook dinner; a project which is archived as the "Limerick Cookbook." One discovery was the Daghda Dance Company's studio, conceived as a year-round open house and public resource for the city, now temporarily accommodating EV+A — its ethos forming a natural fit with the exhibition's thematic.

Overall the exhibition benefits from a clarity of intent and the muscular application of its objectives. The open and invited elements cohabit more equitably than in previous years, helped by the many new commissions, by the curator's investment in each project and by the fact that the artists have been able to converge around a curatorial agenda that is both affirmative and strongly demarcated.