

Dreamtime Ireland

a project by Sean Lynch

6 June – 31 August 2025

Exhibition guide

VISUAL Centre of Contemporary Art | Carlow County Museum

Carlow Arts Festival & Artworks 2025

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Main Gallery

John Carson & Conor Kelly

Evening Echoes, 1993–5

Photographs, text and audio

John Carson and Conor Kelly's sprawling installation *Evening Echoes* is seen, heard and read throughout the gallery spaces of VISUAL. Made over thirty years ago during the height of an era where newspaper sellers could be seen on the streets of Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales selling evening editions, Carson reveals more:

Between 3 and 5pm on any weekday in the British Isles, newspaper vendors in various cities are calling out to attract attention. Some have been on the same pitch on the street for decades. Over the years, some have become more economical with their cries, shortening newspaper names into indecipherable utterances whilst others choose to embellish their calls into musical chants, guttural squawks or melodious yodels. In each call in each city there is contained some trace of the name of the newspaper, together with the regional accent and personal voice of the vendor. I decided to enlist the help of composer and musician Conor Kelly to document and celebrate this disappearing phenomenon and we toured to twenty-three cities in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales recording and photographing newspaper sellers.

Life-sized photographs of the vendors, their recorded calls emerging from the streetscape, and a wall text transcribing these sounds as a phonetic phenomenon all feature at VISUAL, alongside archival and additional photographic material. In a CD release made as part of the project, which toured extensively to public galleries in Ireland and Britain in the 1990s, artist and educator Noel Sheridan considers the

anthropological nature of Carson and Kelly's endeavour:

While the main aim of *Evening Echoes* is to celebrate a living culture, in bringing that culture from outside to inside a gallery context, the freight is not simply one-way – forms mix and each world throws the other into sharper focus as signs, symbols, and languages contrast and clash... *Evening Echoes* is centrally about memory, but it is not about a soft nostalgia for the past. As art should, it brings to the forefront of our minds a knowledge we seem always to have had, an intuition, in this case, of a strange culture of elemental human cries. We somehow recognise these people, we seem to know these sounds. But who are they? And what languages are these?

Evening Echoes seems to pre-empt the decline of printed papers; in 1986, media mogul Rupert Murdoch had already broken the trade unions, putting typesetters out of work with the opening of a new printworks in Wapping, London equipped with advanced computer and electronic technology. With the eventual rise of the algorithm and digital platforms, *Evening Echoes* answers Sheridan's questions in a quizzical, primordial and strangely humanistic reply – REENYGEEP SEXTALLEUKTALLEUK KOKOKO ONLYWANLEP EENTOIMES PAW HERDLEOPPRESSORARLIDIA TELEOLE HEEDLEEDDEEOP ERDLEDDAH STENNIT ATESENTIFINUL LATESTAH KRONNIKULE EHKO NALLAINLEH EEENPO RONNGEH AYEHOI POHHS ESTAHEEH EEEPO NOTMANNYLEF STADELEHLEHT THULATEFIENULTYE AAARGH

Richard Collier

DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL – Wood Quay Excavation Set, 2025
Sculpture, video

Richard Collier's *HIBERNO TOYS* is an experimental toy company exploring the highways and byways of history in

playful and unexpected ways. *HIBERNO TOYS* produces mostly one-off, packaged action figures and playsets that mimic the look and feel of mass-produced toys. However, beneath their glossy surfaces lie rich narratives, spotlighted by Collier with an often-wry and ironic twist.

DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL – Wood Quay Excavation Set presents itself as a mass-produced, commercially available children's craft play set, alongside an accompanying video demonstrating its use. A scale plaster model of Dublin City Council's Civic Offices, built upon an ancient Viking settlement at the city's Wood Quay can be dissected and 'excavated' using a small hammer, chisel, and brush to find miniature medieval treasure replicas inside.

In 1974, during routine excavations for the construction of the new Dublin Corporation (now City Council) offices, archaeologists uncovered a massive Viking settlement dated to the year 841. The sprawling site uncovered centuries of inhabitation and streets, giving an extraordinary insight into everyday life of Viking Dublin. Campaigners, including the archaeological community and general public, fought in the courts to stop the development of new building at the location. Yet, the Irish State invoked the National Monuments Act of 1930, a then-obscure law that allows the government to effectively destroy any national monument it deems fit, all in the pursuit of modern progress. Subsequently, the city concreted over what many considered the best-preserved Viking site in the entire world.

Brian Connolly and Maurice O'Connell

Temple Bar Action, 1994

Sculptural maquette, photographs of a durational performance courtesy Annette Hennessy

During the summer of 1994, artists Brian Connolly and Maurice O'Connell (1966–2018) would arrive at unscheduled times into Temple Bar in Dublin, setting up temporary road

blocks at street junctions, and painting a sequence of red dots onto the road surface to mark out the boundary of the area. They adapted a shopping trolley into a makeshift work station, and a collection of signs, traffic cones, paint, barrier tape and surveying poles all pointed to the urgency of their labour. The dots were rendered using a circular template and each artist took turns painting on their knees. Brian Connolly remembers that they wore workmans' clothing and appeared 'official', but if one were to closely inspect their tools and equipment, and think for long about what they were doing, they would have detected something was amiss. 'The guards only tackled us on a few occasions', he recalls. During this time, the artists and commissioning curator Jobst Graeve spread rumours about the red dots and their meaning – certain new restrictions or impacts might follow as a result of this urban re-zoning action, an activity potentially led by the now defunct quango Temple Bar Properties, who had funded the project.

Connolly notes the complex relationship between artistic work and the wider urban regeneration schemes at play in 1990s Dublin:

By mapping out the new 'Temple Bar Area' directly onto the streets, we were attempting to draw attention to how this new 'creative' zone within the city of Dublin was setting itself apart from the rest of the city. Both artists were angered at the fact that Temple Bar Properties were using the arts and creativity as a means of gaining/levering European funding in order to conduct urban renewal and property development, regardless of the impacts on the artists and organisations originally living and working in the area.

Paddy Critchley

Gav Sending the Football Text, 2024 **Oil on Canvas**

Paddy Critchley's painting portrays Gav Fahy, holding his mobile phone and sending a weekly group text message to participants of one of the Sunday football sessions he organises in Dublin. Fahy is founder of 1815FC, an innovative club which encourages people to join together for kickabouts on pitches around the city that are frequently unused, locked up or made publicly inaccessible. While Fahy continues the project to encourage a shared love of the sport, an underlying critique of Irish urbanism is also part of 1815FC's approach.

Critchley writes of his own experience partaking in the initiative:

The importance of 1815FC is huge. It has firstly a very important social role to play for people in Dublin. For example, upon moving to Dublin last September, my first weekend was action-packed with the yearly tournament where over one hundred people participated. They managed to play on every public pitch in Dublin and finished with the final in Basin View, a pitch that needed a week's work to bring back to being playable. The emphasis is not on competition, but to break boundaries within football and what it means as a sport to bring people together. Thirty-year-olds are on the same team as kids who live in the flats, and their parents shout on from the sidelines. It is also quite political. The reason that Sunday football is played on public pitches is to stop the council from taking them away, and building hotels on the grounds.

Martin Folan

Funeral for a Friend / Funeral for a Sparrow, 1979

Images courtesy of Nigel Rolfe / Rolfe Archive and National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL), Dublin

Take Away The Stone, 1991

Slide projection documentation and audio performed by Gina Moxley and Mairead Byrne

Duration 10 minutes

Image courtesy Seamus Nolan / travellercollection.ie

The Dream Factory, 1992

**Photodocumentation of various events in Limerick City
Images courtesy of Martin Folan Estate**

A trio of art projects made by Martin Folan (1955–2014) are a cornerstone of the research, spirit and public ambition of art that *Dreamtime Ireland* aspires to communicate. His work as an artist and educator is fondly remembered by communities in Limerick and Dublin and always, in his own words, challenged the Enlightenment ideal of ‘I think, therefore I am’. For Folan, a more empathic worldview was needed. ‘I feel, therefore I am’, he digressed during his teaching, thoughts and actions.

His 1979 performance *Funeral for a Friend / Funeral for a Sparrow* saw Folan arrange a funeral for a dead bird he found in Dublin, during his time as a student at the National College of Art and Design, then headquartered on Kildare Street.

Made as part of Project Arts Centre’s Open Air Show of Irish Sculpture (OASIS), a hearse and invited funeral cortege marked the passing of the bird, with a ceremony originating at NCAD, passing nearby government buildings and involving a burial on the former grounds of the old Fitzwilliam Tennis Club in Wilton Place. Artist Nigel Rolfe documented Martin’s ceremonial action, and recalls more about Martin’s statement on NCAD’s lack of involvement and permission given to the project, as expressed in the photo-info panel produced as documentation of the performance: ‘I think this was about permission and powers,

about the hearse outside the Dáil and Kildare Street. He and we went ahead anyways and the college porters turned a blind eye as he was much-loved by the community there.’

In the early 1990s, Folan worked with the Traveller community of Limerick. At that time, and today throughout Ireland, large stone boulders are placed in various areas of roadside parking and traffic lay-bys to prevent Travellers stopping at such locations. The boulder, in this form, represents exclusion from mainstream society. In the summer of 1991, *Take Away The Stone* was realised by Martin and collaborators in Limerick – a fibreglass replica of a large rock was constructed, mounted on a trolley, then pushed for the 137km length of the Third National Traveller Pilgrimage, over seven days from Limerick City to Gougane Barra in County Cork. Before the journey began, two Travellers John Pratt and Eileen Hartnett carried sacks of stones over Limerick’s Thomond Bridge and into St. Munchin’s Church for a short ceremony, representing their burdens and the oppression Travellers experienced in Ireland. People filed to the altar to collect a stone expressing solidarity and the Travellers anthem ‘We’re a Freeborn Clan of Travelling People’ was sung. ‘He Ain’t Heavy, He’s My Brother’ was recited.

A crowd estimated at seven hundred convened at Gougane Barra at the sixth-century island monastery. Beside an unmarked, and unknown, Traveller’s grave, the journey ended with the smashing of the mock boulder, a symbol of the end of oppression and as a sign of hope for the future – proper halting sites, decent housing and equal opportunities. The final scene was recalled in one of several newspaper articles on the event, where ‘Men, women and children converged – by foot, cars and HiAce vans – on the serene and sacred surroundings of Gougane Barra. Celtic music reverberated in the valley as the mist hung about the corrie lake set under the dramatic wooded crags’.

At VISUAL, a single image projected is the only material artefact found remaining from the project. Poet Mairead Byrne

and her and Martin's young daughter Marina travelled on the pilgrimage, alongside one hundred and fifty people. Mairead wrote a collection of poems inspired by the events, read out in the gallery alongside media reports voiced by Gina Moxley.

Years of living in America and post-punk culture further influenced Folan, as he went on to front The Dream Factory, taking over an industrial unit in Limerick to convert an old car into a 'B52 Stealth Bomber', flanked in a parade in the city by a group of local artists dressed up as aliens. When interviewed in the local newspaper, Folan grinned and said, 'Art could begin to address a much wider audience'.

Paul Gregg

Payload Prototype, 1995

Sculpture

Reconnaissance and Delivery (Waterford Parachute Project), 1998

Sculpture, video and documents

Following his studies at UCLA, California taking art classes from prominent figures such as Charles Ray, Paul McCarthy and Richard Jackson, Paul Gregg's move to Ireland in the 1990s introduced new forms of artmaking influenced from the sprawl of the American west coast to a sculptural scene in Ireland still predominantly concerned with more Eurocentric modernist approaches. An early small sculpture, *Payload*, appears in *Dreamtime Ireland*, showing an interest in aviation, technology and DIY rockets, leading to his participation in the penultimate public art project organised by Garter Lane Arts Centre and artist Garrett Phelan in Waterford in 1998.

In *Reconnaissance and Delivery (Waterford Parachute Project)*, Gregg flew to Moscow, acquired a collection of Russian parachutes with Cyrillic text and an identifying serial number. He brought them back as oversized luggage to Ireland, and set about making a structure to attach to them. In its centre

one could see shards of Waterford Crystal glass cast in bronze and silverplated, and soil and water in a glass container akin to a large test tube. Unannounced, he placed seven such sculptures in public places around the city in the early hours of Monday 5 October. Soon the guards were investigating why UFOs had landed. They called in Met Éireann, and the army bomb squad came to examine Gregg's work. With the story spiralling, Garter Lane stepped in to explain it was public art.

The event was widely covered by the media. *The Munster Express* called it 'a brilliant conception', misquoting Shakespeare in its praise; 'All the world's a stage in which everyman must play his part'. They also thought that it was great value, as the budget for the project was only £2,500. *Phoenix Magazine*, noting the local Garda Superintendent's claims of wasted time on the investigation, proclaimed, 'what was done with these parachutes was an attention-getting device which succeeded way above and beyond expectations. No one was hurt. Nothing was damaged and the city received huge media attention. All art by its nature is a "waste of time". The Eiffel Tower is a pile of iron. The Sistine Chapel is a pile of stones.' National broadcaster RTÉ took a more sober tone, featuring it on main evening news and misreporting that the sculptures fell from the sky.

Archival video footage of afternoon TV programme *Open House* is presented in *Dreamtime Ireland*. There, presenters Marty Whelan and Mary Kennedy brought one of the sculptures into the studio and adopted an increasingly passive-aggressive tone towards their guest Annette Clancy, then director of Garter Lane. Playing to their audience ratings, Whelan and Kennedy sardonically use words such as 'strange', 'harm', 'elaborate hoax' and 'sinister', and mention that they heard a file was being prepared for the Director of Public Prosecutions. They also repeated that the sculptures were dropped from the sky onto the ground. An angry viewer, Molly, asked who will pay for Garda time on the incident. Admirably holding her composure on live TV, Clancy coolly interjects throughout and dispelled their

questions one-by-one, pointing to the value of art to surprise, provoke and create new meaning. On the back foot, Kennedy acknowledges the need for access to the arts following Clancy's replies, but can't bring herself to see Gregg's work as art, finishing the segment by calling it a 'public awareness project'.

Raymond Griffin

Reconstruction of the Christmas Crib at Dublin Airport in 1964, 2025

Mise-en-scène with ten wooden sculptures, newspaper clipping

Woodworker and art fabricator Raymond Griffin is a long-standing confidant of the Irish artworld, for years assisting artists in realising their often-complex and demanding plans for cultural production. In *Dreamtime Ireland*, he presents a collection of figurative timber works based on remaining photographic documentation of a Catholic nativity scene presented to the public at Dublin Airport in 1964. The reconstruction offers a resilient tribute to the craft and artisanal ability of Fergus O'Farrell (1918–2008), whose work ruffled the feathers of then-Archbishop of Dublin, Most Reverend Doctor John Charles McQuaid, resulting in a subsequent and very public censorship.

McQuaid ordered the removal of Farrell's crib from the church at Dublin Airport due to the modernist, non-representational carved wooden figures rendered, intervening on the site despite the fact that both the new building and crib were paid for by staff and management of the airport. A spokesman for McQuaid, standing at the Archbishop's door, told news reporters that 'the crib had been removed for two reasons: (1) The figures were beneath the level of human dignity in that they were not human; and (2) it was an offence against Canon Law and the proscriptions of the Holy See to propose for public veneration figures purporting to be sacred without the previous sanction of the Archbishop'.

An airport employee said that some people felt, at first, that they were certainly a big change and unconventional, but that on further reflection, and viewed in the modern perspective of the church, that they were very effective and evocative. The newspapers all fell in line with McQuaid's stance, only reporting that some people did quietly intone that he should have waited until the Christmas season was over and then intimated quietly that the crib should not reappear the following year. *The Irish Independent* editorial was scathing of the situation:

Before every self-imagined liberal in the land rises to the bait let it be clearly understood that the Archbishop of Dublin was right. Right, remember; not merely within his rights. The crib at Dublin Airport was quaint and unusual, but these qualities are insufficient of themselves to constitute sacred art. String orchestras are not normally permitted in Catholic Churches, nor are jazz bands; and that goes for the very best jazz bands and orchestras. In other words, a thing may be excellent of its sort but is not necessarily appropriate to ecclesiastical surroundings. Figures of the type in the crib at the Airport church which earned the Archbishop's ban, have a delightful folksy charm which makes them ideal as souvenirs or mantel decorations; it is a distinction of kind, not of quality, which leaves them unsuitable for church use, as unsuitable as a Staffordshire Toby jug or a Jack Yeats landscape. It should not, however, be imagined that the issues raised stop at the Airport. Can we honestly say that most of our cribs, and most of our church statuary for that matter, is sacred art? Anaemic Virgins, curly-haired Babies whom any mother would identify as two-year-olds; are these sacred art? Or the plaster saints in the niches of half-a-thousand Irish churches?

O'Farrell noted that similar cribs he made had been sent to Britain and the U.S. He had not attempted to make human-like figures because it was not the figures which were adored but what they stood for. He said he thought it was a pity that a stop was being put to a small breakthrough in this type of modern design in Ireland. 'To express a crib nowadays and at the same time avoid the Gothic, Florentine and Spanish styles identified with cribs, I endeavoured to go back to pure, basic shapes, which would create a tableau to be mnemonic of the Christian story', he said. 'I did not attempt to portray Christ or the Virgin or Joseph. I endeavoured to remind the public to think for themselves of the knowledge they already have of Christ, the Virgin and Joseph.' If people had prayed to his statues, he would have considered it idolatry, he said. 'My whole objective was to make people search within themselves for their own image.'

Kerry Guinan and Avril Corroon

Freedom of Entry, 2013

Documentation of event

In 2013, Corroon and Guinan were invited to exhibit in Foundation 13, a contemporary arts festival in Tullamore, County Offaly. They write, 'The festival was based in the many empty buildings and businesses in the recession-hit town. Instead of exhibiting work in an allocated unit, we decided to give away keys and deeds to the building to local residents, to raise awareness of vacant buildings and spark people's imaginations about how they could be used.'

On the opening morning of Foundation 13, Corroon and Guinan secretly, without permission, distributed the keys and deeds to Meath House on High Street into one hundred letterboxes in a half-mile radius. 'The artefacts were enclosed in a symbolic brown envelope, a term frequently used in public discussions about the Irish property market. The envelopes contained no explanation for the gift, but

a planning permission-style notice on the building's front door gave key-holders 'permission' to do what they please with the building.'

The artists watched as people left their homes to consult their neighbours about the mysterious envelopes. As they hid away in a shopping centre, they noticed somebody bring one of their envelopes into a Citizens Information centre. Ultimately, a group of key-holders banded together to test the keys in the building. Upon realising that they were functional, they contacted Offaly County Council. The project was shut down and the locks to the building changed by the end of the day.

Léann Herlihy

The Long Internecine Quarrel, 2025
Sculptures and video

The Long Internecine Quarrel is a newly-commissioned artwork, formed as a series of autofictional bureaucratic encounters Léann Herlihy navigated during a two-year District Court case against Ireland's taxman, the Revenue Commissioners. In a whirlwind of administrative chaos, Herlihy was denied Artist Tax Exemption for a photograph they displayed as a large billboard mounted outside Project Arts Centre, Dublin in 2022. Revenue's feedback premised it was an advertisement, a form of self-promotion; devoid of all artistic merit required for the scheme. After several unsuccessful appeals, Herlihy gathered a folder of evidence and initiated court proceedings, winning the case in the latter half of 2024.

Initiated in 1969 by then Minister for Finance, Charles J. Haughey, the Artist Tax Exemption aims to support and encourage creative endeavour in Ireland by providing a tax break for artists, composers and writers. In its infancy, few artists in Ireland made enough money to pay tax, and the scheme was initially given a lukewarm reception by the cultural community. A prominent artist of the time submitted

a letter to *The Irish Times* claiming that it ‘will attract the art parasites of Europe to our shores’. The rumours were that Haughey was more interested in attracting late modernist figures such as sculptor Henry Moore to live in Ireland, whose substantial wealth could be untaxed while giving a boost to the international profile of the Irish art scene.

The title of Herlihy’s work, *The Long Internecine Quarrel*, stems from a transcript they located of Haughey’s 1972 speech at Harvard University where he claimed that ‘the taxation and financial aspects of the Artist Tax Exemption were of less importance, than the clear and unambiguous signal it gave that the long internecine quarrel between the State and its artists had come to an end.’ Herlihy counters: ‘Through a mirage of bureaucratic forms and bounce-back emails, *The Long Internecine Quarrel* attempts to highlight how these State entities have somehow made real the categories necessary to sustain themselves.’ This series of encounters were restaged in the Irish Architectural Archive in Dublin utilising office supplies, coffee cups, emboss seals, archival boxes and computer monitors.

The Long Internecine Quarrel was produced in collaboration with artist Michael Holly alongside Jennifer O’Brien, Nicholas Sidarchuk and Scott Brown.

Jane McCormick with Kieran Brehan, Terry Cartin, Annette Hennessy, Hugh Lorigan, Leon Lynch, Dervilla Masterson, Bernard Mortell, Nick Ryan, Anne Brit Soma Reienes

Kingscourt Brick Sculpture Symposium, 1992
Photographs

Jane McCormick’s archive document one of several artist symposia organised through the Sculptors Society of Ireland nationwide in the early 1990s. Initiated by McCormick, Kingscourt Community Council and Cavan County Council, a group of artists selected by an open submission process worked for an intensive three weeks in the midst of Kingscourt

brick factory in Cavan, experimenting with the medium as a sculpture. Mingling with factory staff onsite and finding new techniques, an open day at the factory showcased a variety of relief artworks, figurative pieces and architectural constructs. Many pieces, such as Annette Hennessy's and Terry Cartin's presentations, emphasised brick as a primordial structural material, while Leon Lynch, Nick Ryan and McCormick produced artworks that all broadly addressed themes of life, death and spirituality. Bernard Mortell's *Kingscourt / Dun Na Rí* appeared on the grounds of the factory in the shape of an enormous head of a king, akin to postmodern styles of architecture rarely seen in Ireland at the time.

Maurice O'Connell

***Marathon Man*, 1998**

Postcard, artist proposal. Courtesy Garter Lane Arts Centre, Waterford

As part of an unfolding series of public art inventions around Waterford City in the late 1990s, commissioned by Garter Lane Arts Centre and curated by artist Garrett Phelan, Maurice O'Connell (1966–2018) commuted there by train from Dublin, before setting off wearing 'a tracksuit of questionable stylistic value and some ridiculous lime green runners' to run a circuit of the city centre and outlying housing estates. In an approach adopted by Phelan and fellow artists throughout the programme of commissions, each profiled in *Dreamtime Ireland*, no press release, promotion or public announcement accompanied Marathon Man. O'Connell considered the work to be 'top secret', and intended to enact this activity each day over several weeks, becoming an anonymous figure ensconced into the rhythms of everyday life of Waterford. Anyone who would encounter him as he ran, who might know he was making an artwork, would invalidate O'Connell's intention and the project would, in his mind, fail to be art. He digressed, 'Part of my interest is developing broader ways in which an artist can work with an

audience and say, a city itself, without having to work under the current constraints of funding which means you have to be highly visible, highly accountable.’

Tina O’Connell

***Peckham Pothole*, 2004**

Acrylic block on mirrored steel with plinth

Etchings on Paper

***Unseen, In Dublin (1999)*, 2025**

Dual video projection, duration 164 minutes

***Retelling, In Dublin (1999)*, 2025**

Audio recording of a text written by Michael McWilliams

***A Horse’s Tale*, 2025**

Victorian granite horse trough repurposed into a broken street bollard, bitumen

Tina O’Connell’s investigations in sculpture seep over, in and under the cracks of urban existence. Based in London since the late 1980s, her work informs *Dreamtime Ireland* as a lucid and ever-curious series of tactile encounters with industrial materials and infrastructure. 2004’s *Peckham Pothole* is a cast from a South London roadside puddle, its negative shape turned into a shimmering impression, almost jewel-like, within a transparent acrylic block, seemingly preserved for eternity. A series of accompanying etchings of more potholes of London appear like portals or gateways in and out of the urban experience.

In Dublin, shown in the Studio Gallery, was first presented at The Barley Mow, a disused pub mooted for demolition on Francis Street in 1999, commissioned by Project Arts Centre as part of a citywide programme of public art curated by Val Connor. Having reinforced the ceiling of the bar and cut a hole through to the room above, O’Connell and her team assembled from Dublin’s art scene of the time heroically manoeuvred one tonne of bitumen upstairs. The bitumen, a sticky black material and byproduct of the petroleum industry, solid in composition

yet unable to hold any shape, then proceeded to sink slowly through the hole onto the ground below, much to the delight of a gathered audience below who ran bets on what time it would hit the floor of the bar. Previously unseen CCTV footage of the event has now been digitally restored and presented in VISUAL alongside an audio description of the scene.

A Horse's Tale is debuted in *Dreamtime Ireland*. A discarded Victorian granite horse trough was reworked and reshaped by O'Connell and stone carver Matthew Hammond into a representation of a broken traffic bollard, here seen with a drip-dropping of bitumen arriving down from a suspended tin in the gallery. The piece suggest a lineage of the broken, discarded and outmoded, one that stubbornly refuses to disappear in an increasingly streamlined and algorithmic age.

Seán O'Riordan

***All is Lavender*, 2024**

Sculptures

Seán O'Riordan's artwork explores desire and value, and the iconographic histories of consumption. Architectural and industrial techniques mingle with hand-formed craft and found materials in what O'Riordan describes as 'rebellious environments'. In *All is Lavender*, discarded scratch cards appear holding up architectural structures akin to an enlarged casino slot machine. Clay figures, referencing the archetype of the trickster found on fairground tokens, take up residence as impish, imagined characters carrying a quietly menacing presence. Several artworks of O'Riordans are placed at VISUAL's bar, further spurring on the social contexts *All is Lavender* desires: 'They create a space populated by characters and architectural fragments that function as both portals and barriers, gateways into imagined realms... caverns of joyous queer abandon: a currency of no value to those who can't read it, yet meaningful for those proficient in evading banality'.

Ravensdale Park

19th century

Dismantled architectural model. Collection of Irish Architectural Archive

Ravensdale Park, also known as Ravensdale Castle, was an early Victorian mansion made of granite and rendered in an Italianate style, sprawling over the Louth landscape and dominated by a tall campanile where one could survey the terrain for miles around. Following the death of Lord Carlingford, it was rented for several years by a wealthy London tea merchant named Gilbert Augustus Tonge. The 1901 census records that he was not in residence, but had ten servants at Ravensdale, occupying forty-three rooms. This opulence came to an abrupt end after the house was destroyed by fire in 1921, like many such mansions during the revolutionary period of Ireland. The Irish Free State sold off the stone, and it was reused in the building of a church nearby in Glassdrummond in 1927.

Little historical information is available on the wooden architectural model of Ravensdale featured in *Dreamtime Ireland*. The model appears stylistically different than the house did – it might have been used for a proposed Gothic Revival style makeover at some stage during the nineteenth century, or maybe features extra details that were never built in the first place. Claw scratches are seen in numerous places around window openings – at some stage in the last two centuries it was taken over by rats, living inside its many miniature rooms and corridors.

John Reardon

Disappearing Mural, 1996–2001

Wall drawing in Mayfield, Cork

Crash, 1997

Exhibition realised in collaboration with Declan Kennedy at Triskel Arts Centre, Cork

Project Mongrel, 1999

Public art proposal for Patrick Street, Cork, realised in collaboration with Declan Kennedy and participants Anne Ryan, Connor Moline, Magma Jarzabek, Mel Ziegler, John Redhead and Anke Zurn.

Votes for sale, 2000

Performance

An overview of John Reardon's art made around the 1990s and early millennium are presented in *Dreamtime Ireland*. Photodocumentation culled from the artist's archive reveal a series of artworks, each critically aware of and addressing the tenuous relationships between art and wider society.

In *Disappearing Mural*, Reardon was one of many artists involved in an extensive public art programme developed around public housing development and renovation in Cork, and worked with the City Architect's Department on the refurbishment of a large 1970s housing block in Mayfield. Taking a wallpaper pattern found in one of the flats before renovation, he enlarged its motif across the outside of the new brickwork of the entire estate, painting it with a special varnish where the pattern would appear on dry days, yet disappear and fade into the building once raindrops wetted its surface. He writes 'I spoke to residents who I discovered needed various forms of support that I was unable to offer or it was not my place to offer. With this in mind, along with the experience of it having rained on every visit I made to the estate, I began to develop a piece of public art around the notion of enchantment and how I could capture something

of that childlike surprise we have when we make something appear-disappear and appear again.'

The following year Reardon, in collaboration with Declan Kennedy, realised *Crash* at the Triskel Arts Centre. After renovations to the gallery space on Tobin Street, Reardon was invited to create 'something provocative'. He recalls:

What followed was a work in three parts: Part one designed for an audience consisting of the gallery director and cleaning staff who witnessed a 550cc motorcycle drive through the newly built wall of the main gallery into the adjoining office space. Part two designed for gallery staff prior to the exhibition opening who witnessed a motorcycle ramp in the gallery space (before it was removed), the breached wall in the gallery (before it was covered up) and an upended motorcycle in the adjoining office space (before it was removed). Part three designed for the general public who encountered a freshly cleaned gallery and a large piece of black polyurethane covering the section of the wall which the motorcycle breached. The upended motorcycle remained in the office for the opening night only. After the opening night, the gallery was then left with something potentially 'provocative' which they had asked for, but something they would have to work at communicating to the visiting public as this was in the form of an anecdote. Apart from images of the freshly cleaned gallery, no documentation of the work was available for one year after the exhibition.

1999's *Project Mongrel*, realised with Declan Kennedy, declared a statement of intent – 'we believe public art to be a symptom of a corporate strategy to gentrify and aestheticise the inner city, to control public space, while offering a model of public life which can be repeated globally'. Reardon and Kennedy used a percent-for-art scheme to create a bespoke residency programme to explore this claim. They wrote a

brief, advertised it in art and architecture journals, set up a selection panel and selected six artists and architects. Kevin Barry visited the group on several occasions, writing that ‘a gang of six has been caged in a recently built, all-mod-con apartment in Cork City. It’s their base for a month, as they attempt to kick the Mongrel into life.’ Barry notes that creative friction and dialogue abounded with the group, as they workshopped potential ideas. City planners, archaeologists, sociologists and attendees at a local soup kitchen were all consulted by the group during the days leading up to the unveiling of a final proposal – the placement of razor-sharp barbed wire, dangling above Patrick Street, attached using the existing hooks typically reserved for Christmas decorations that run the entire length of Patrick Street. The proposal hit a nerve with the officialdom of Cork, and erupted into media coverage – *The Evening Echo*’s front page saw portrait profiles of each participant, complete with a razor wire motif framed around the article. The project was immediately closed down by City Hall and the remaining budget confiscated.

In *Votes for sale*, one of several public performances realised after Reardon’s move to London, a week-long endeavour saw him hold a placard aloft, offering his and a friend’s vote for purchase during the run-up to a general election in the UK. One of a series of Reardon’s performances in London at this time, he recalls that language and accent played a vital role bringing him into direct contact and conversation with random members of the public, and revealing to a greater or lesser degree where he ‘came from’, that he ‘didn’t belong’ there and what ‘belonging’ might ultimately mean in a city like London.

Theo Sims

Oh When The Saints Go Marching Out, 1998/2025

Archival photographs and documents, footballs scarves and shirts

Oh When The Saints Go Marching Out was realised within a flagship series of public art projects commissioned by Garter Lane Arts Centre in Waterford and curated by artist Garrett Phelan. Theo Sims utilised his budget to sponsor Saint Joseph's AFC, a football team long-established in the city since 1923. This took the form of the team wearing a new kit, with the word 'ART' emblazoned across the shirts. Sims recalls the despondent last game of the 1997–98 season, in which Saints Joseph's lost every match. In the first game of the next season, wearing the new jerseys, they won 8–0. As part of *Dreamtime Ireland*, newly-minted football scarves and an enormous football shirt has been made by Sims, with a reunion occurring between today's club members in Waterford and the artist, now based in Canada.

Lily Van Oost

The Cockle Bus, 1988

Drawing and photograph. Collection of Grace Wells

After relocating from Antwerp to Ireland in the 1970s, Lily Van Oost (1932–97) worked from a cottage studio nestled into the remote Black Valley in Kerry. For several decades she produced an esoteric and extensive body of artworks evoking the intrinsic relationship between feminism, inhabitation and nature, weaving her own wool to make wall hangings and clothing. In later years, when wool became too expensive and the moths too insistent, she forged a productive relationship with Killarney's Pretty Polly hosiery factory, and acquired leftover nylon tights to construct a series of large-scale gallery installations. Considered a provocateur of both Irish society and its art scene, she once proposed knitting a straightjacket for Margaret Thatcher, while her contribution to 1988's Open

International Sculpture Exhibition in Dublin was a giant knitted geansaí fitted onto a double-decker sightseeing bus, seen in *Dreamtime Ireland* in an early sketch by Van Oost and a press image documenting its eventual making.

Despite numerous prominent exhibitions in the 1980s and 1990s, her practice had faded from critical view until recent times, before a group of artists, poets and writers, realising the value of her work in today's ecological crisis, have collectively spurred on research into her legacy. Jes Fernie writes that Van Oost's work 'fits more comfortably in today's visual art landscape, with its interest in the body, the ravages of our planet, the relationship of humans to animals, and the unbridled libidinous energy of the female body... inhabiting fantastic futures that have not yet been constructed'. Poet and writer Grace Wells came to live with Van Oost in the early 1990s after seeing a man in London wearing one of her weaved coats, which Wells remembers as a 'web of three-dimensional appendages that might have been mountains or running water or human forms – into the fabric of that coat she sewed the bleat of sheep, and the sound of the wind blown over black lakes'.

Link Gallery

Ruth Clinton & Niamh Moriarty

A Collection of Disarticulated Bones, 2025

Photographs, stone fragment of the Giant's Causeway in the collection of Dr. Robert Raine and courtesy of the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland

Ruth Clinton and Niamh Moriarty question the constructions and complications of Irish heritage. Introducing the Giant's Causeway, the island's most famous rock formation and subject of their presentation in *Dreamtime Ireland*, they write:

Located in County Antrim on the northern coast

of Northern Ireland, the Giant's Causeway is approximately forty thousand interlocking basalt columns, the result of an ancient volcanic fissure eruption. According to legend, or its own 'geomyth', the Irish giant Fionn Mac Cumhaill was challenged to a fight by the Scottish giant Benandonner, which he accepted, and so he built the Causeway across the North Channel so that the two could meet. It is currently among the most popular attractions in Northern Ireland, receiving roughly one million visitors a year. The Crown Estate, a collection of lands held by the British monarchy, is its legal owner.

Attracted more by the microhistories rather than the main touristic event, three large photographs show recent fieldwork by the artists, finding a replica Causeway in nearby Coleraine, plonked surreally in the car park of an ASDA superstore. An actual stone fragment from the Causeway sits on a plinth nearby, loaned from the collection of the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland, further confounds the situation. Stone has been extracted from the site for a multitude of more unexpected reasons, as the artists note:

Fragments of Giant's Causeway rocks can be found in public, museum and private collections across the world. There is a small mounted column at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston, presented to the President 'from the people of Antrim' upon his famed 1963 visit to Ireland. Seven enormous hexagonal basalt columns (reportedly once shielding Rathmore Golf Club in Portrush from IRA car bombs) went under the hammer at auction for over €20,000 in 2010.

Clinton and Moriarty continue to chase – two columns from the Causeway once adorned the entranceway to the British Museum, as detailed in 1809's catalogue of the museum's contents. They have since been lost...

The artists thank Mark Patton of the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland, Aimee Smith of the Natural History Museum in London, Coleraine Historical Society and artist Matt Calderwood in the realisation of *A Collection of Disarticulated Bones*.

Avril Corroon

2000, 2025

Artefact, artist text

In January 2025, the shovel breaks through the frost-hardened ground in the churchyard and after digging through for several feet with an almighty duff they strike the can. Heaved out by the men, it is taken to the school hall, where Ronan tries to beat the lid off with a hammer, while my Da and Brenny hold it steady.

When the time capsule lid finally cracks, hands are reached in and names are called out. They are written with childish handwriting, read for the first time in a quarter of a century. Each Beaver, Cub and Scout of the year 2000 Milltownpass, County Westmeath troupe had been asked to include a letter and items in a small box or bag. As adults, we pulled out the mementos, including such stuffs as money, stamps, grocery receipts for the big shop, sweets, and millennium occasion relics, primarily a holy candle distributed by the parish to celebrate two thousand years of Christ.

—Avril Corroon

Alan Counihan

Falla na Sióga / The Wall of the Fairies, 1993

Tulach na Tóirsí / The Mound of the Torches, 1995

En Las Mareas del Tiempo / In the Tides of Time, 1995

Drawings, photographs, wooden model made by Paddy Wilkinson, Blackstairs Timber

With skills acquired in the act of stonemasonry, Alan Counihan realised a substantial series of public artworks in the 1990s throughout Ireland, the UK and the United States. He describes a process of ‘pushing and rearing’ stone into place as his method, as if his works rise up out of the landscape to acknowledge its rich nature. A collection of technical drawings from the artist’s archive for pieces in Cork and Waterford feature in *Dreamtime Ireland*. *Falla na Síoga / The Wall of the Fairies* sees stone shaped into a large monumental circular loop, framing Dungarvan Bay in the distance. On either side, cavities inside stone hold chimes for hilly wind to sound through. Today, to the artist’s frustration, the work is in disrepair and surrounded by overgrowth, with thousands of automobiles passing by the piece each day on the N25 road. Waterford County Council have acknowledged the need for remedial works – *Dreamtime Ireland* asks and advocates for this to urgently occur. Another roadside artwork, *Tulach na Tóirsrí / The Mound of the Torches* was removed by Cork County Council to make way for a sign for the Wild Atlantic Way tourist route in 2018. Requests to view the piece in storage during curatorial research for *Dreamtime Ireland* could not be facilitated.

The social purpose of *En Las Mareas del Tiempo / In the Tides of Time*, an expansive installation sited by the Pacific Ocean in Santa Cruz, California, continues as a site for congregation. Dedicated in its making to those who come to seek refuge and prosperity in America, Counihan inscribed in stone a poem in Spanish and English, acting as a retort to a Republican Party-sponsored ballot proposal during 1994 elections in California to deny healthcare, social services and education to undocumented immigrants and their families:

In the tides of time
We have found safe harbour
Here, on this western shore,
Where the waves ebb and flow restlessly
And the seasons, in their old harvest hulls

Have borne us ripe cargoes of plenty
With enough fruit for all.

In the context of *Dreamtime Ireland*, Counihan, alongside Sean Lynch and Los Angeles-based curator Aurora Tang, will think and act on this continued relevance within the Trump administration's authoritarian aggression.

Bernadette Kiely

***Branding Irons*, 2004**

Oil on canvas

***Towards a new hearth I & II*, 2017**

Acrylic and charcoal, digital print

Known for her portrayals of the fragility of the natural world and humanity's interaction within it, a selection of works from Bernadette Kiely point to her enduring and empathic practice. 2004's *Branding Irons* in the artist's words alludes to 'the insidious branding and commodification of absolutely everything in our present age of the "capitalocene" – late-stage capitalism which has destroyed the planet and continues to do so'.

Toward a new hearth, incorporating a diagram found in a 1997 issue of *The Journal of Irish Archaeology*, acts as a bridge between past forms of dwelling in Ireland and its future paradigms. The shape of an ancient circular enclosure points to basic essentials that human beings and animals need to thrive – a solid structure and communal living space. Can such a shape, akin to Rudolf Steiner's architectural ideal of 'no hard corners or shapes' now offer a typology for future inhabitation and embrace proofed for climatic instability?

Sarah Lincoln

***M50 (north – south)*, 2024**

Ink on paper

On average 150,000 automobiles drive on the M50 motorway

circulating Dublin every day – it is the island’s most utilised piece of infrastructure, yet its cultural significance is yet to be written – what does the M50 mean, one might ask? Does infrastructure rhyme with culture? While the genre of psychogeographic novels such as Iain Sinclair’s 2002 *London Orbital* have asked this of the M25 around London, the Irish artistic psyche is for the most part still stuck down bohereens and hedgerows.

Countering this desire, Sarah Lincoln’s drawing urgently render the shape of road junctions that lead onto the motorway, seen from above or as they appear on maps. Each is an individual shape, a feat of construction engineering now commandeered by the artist into a motif. She ponders, ‘I wondered what unexpected meaning might emerge by approaching a sophisticated and logical shape (like the junctions on a city ring road), using less high-tech tools (stick and ink). Maybe a strange, yet indecipherable, text is revealing itself?’

Sean Lynch

***Adventure Capital*, 2015**

Video, sculpture, photographs and digitally-generated images

Adventure Capital was first presented at the Venice Biennale in 2015. Grouping together diverse topics ranging from An Gobán Saor, Ireland’s mythical builder, to today’s skyscrapers, airports, stone quarries and more, *Adventure Capital* considered themes of cultural history, societal structures, the contemporary environment and the role of the individual agency in a meandering narrative, and is in many ways a precursor to the explorations of *Dreamtime Ireland*.

An excerpt of the project is presented in Carlow with a special emphasis placed on sculptor John Burke (1946–2006), whose large abstract metal sculptures are still seen in locations in Dublin, Cork and his hometown of Clonmel. His oeuvre is a key example of the International Modern style, taken out of its native environment of the museum sculpture garden or skyscraper plaza and transposed to Ireland of the late

twentieth century, a place that had no such contexts. His 1988 artwork *Uniflow* was removed from a housing estate in Cork following protests and a petition to the local city council by residents. They were concerned about children climbing up on the sculpture and falling off its sharp metal edges. They also claimed that the sculpture was facilitating late night 'cider parties' in its shadow. Photographs detail the condition of the sculpture, found half-buried in a hole on the edge of the city, while a scale replica and digital renders are also positioned as part of *Dreamtime Ireland*, creating a speculative form of rehabilitation for *Uniflow*.

NAMACO

Mega Dreoilín, 2024

Video game

NAMACO is the collective work of Donal Fullam and Han Hogan. With interests in DIY and contemporary algorithmic cultures and the zoological sciences, their anthropological and activist gaze has focused upon Ireland's housing crisis. In *Dreamtime Ireland*, they present *Mega Dreoilín*, a 16-bit 'edutainment' video game designed for the demographic of 'Generation Rent'. Titled after the Gaelic word for the wren, a bird that in Irish folklore foregoes its diminutive status to trick the eagle of imperialism and ascend to revolutionary dominance, *Mega Dreoilín* allows gamers to explore, in NAMACO's words, 'the bureaucratic land dominance imposed on Ireland by successive waves of colonisers, corporate landlords and global multinationals, as well as the strategies required for collective resistance against these powers.' *Mega Dreoilín* features a cast of characters based on real life interviews, including musician Ian Lynch from the band Lankum, writer and documentary maker Manchán Magan, politician Rory Hearne and artist Avril Corroon. At VISUAL, the game is available to play and is additionally seen as a preview video.

Rónán Ó Raghallaigh and George Hooker

An Tobar agus an Chloch, 2024

Video, duration 23 minutes

Rónán Ó Raghallaigh's video, made in collaboration with filmmaker George Hooker, documents a performative artwork critiquing archaeological discourse and sites of pre-Christian spirituality. At the Blessed Well in Dunlavin, Wicklow, a badly damaged passage tomb, or maybe stone circle, was discovered in the 1800s with one stone bearing a carved spiral motif. Removed from the site, today the stone resides in the National Museum of Ireland with no reference to it at the original location. Ó Raghallaigh observes the stone has been reused for a museological display of a passage tomb, together with another two stones from Newgrange.

How might spiritual function be honoured when artefacts such as this become museum objects? Ó Raghallaigh's video sees him bring a granite stone back to Dunlavin's Blessed Well, today still a sacred site, to leave there as a new offering. During this action, he carved a spiral on it by repeated hitting with a piece of quartz, a method used in Neolithic times. The new stone took some time to be accepted at the site – in the first few weeks after its creation it was thrown outside the fence surrounding the well on three separate occasions by unknown members of the public.

Juana Robles & Michael Higgins

Robert Hartpole Goes Home, 2025

8-channel video work across 12 screens, duration 19 minutes

Single-channel video, duration 23 minutes

Robert Hartpole Goes Home is a newly-commissioned artwork by Robles and Higgins, sited both at VISUAL and Carlow County Museum beside the effigy of sixteenth-century soldier Robert Hartpole. Dubbed 'The maintainer of rebels', Hartpole was an English sheriff of Laois and Carlow, infamous for

orchestrating the massacre of Irish chieftains and their families during supposed peace negotiations at Mullaghmast, Kildare in 1578. According to legend, a dying priest there laid a curse upon him and his descendants. His tomb effigy, rediscovered in marshland in Carlow in 1809, was decapitated in an act of posthumous rejection. The head was never recovered, and the effigy moved out of town for over two hundred years before its recent return to the county museum.

Robles and Higgins' multi-channel videos reimagine the return of Hartpole to the present. Embodied onscreen by medieval enactment actor and tour guide Dylan Nolan, he drifts through a transformed landscape, searching for meaning in a country that no longer welcomes him, taunted by a jester played by the renowned Clown Johnie K. Haunted by legacy and dislocation, this representation finds only absence, a lineage erased, his head perhaps lost forever at the bottom of the Barrow river.

Robert Hartpole Goes Home is additionally realised thanks to Eoin McDonnell, Leonard Fennell, Carlow Rowing Club, The Fennell Family, Cillian Roche & Gowlle Farm and Deegan Fresh Produce, Kilkenny.

The Seven-Headed Hydra of Limerick Stone carving dated to 1753, photographed

A large photographic print details Ireland's only known historic carving of a seven-headed hydra, seen on the Sexton family tomb outside of Saint Mary's Cathedral in Limerick City. Considering its location, on top of a hill overlooking the beginning of the Shannon river estuary, the carving holds special significance as a place where trade, foreign influence and access to medieval Irish society could all be had. Journeys from afar were completed here, new influences and potential revolutions could be ignited. While some beliefs consider the hydra as a representation of the dragon who guards the entrance to the underworld in Greek and Roman mythology,

the hydra also acts as a symbol for the dispossessed, to those who are excluded from Eurocentrism and its imperialist and extractive stance, now coming from the ocean beyond to disrupt the social construct that marginalises them. For every head chopped off by a war hero defending the status quo of the crown and sovereign, another two would grow in its place.

Hermione Wiltshire

***Alien*, 1998**

Centrefold spread in *The Munster Express* newspaper, in a museum-standard display case

Alien appeared in Waterford's local newspaper, encountered as a double-page spread intervening weekly news, sports events and entertainment listings. No explanation of its contents, or that it was an artwork, were presented, a strategy common to the public art projects commissioned by Garter Lane Arts Centre and curated by artist Garrett Phelan there in the late 1990s. The image of a pregnant belly is seen, heavy with black ink, doubled and mirrored on each page to produce something reassembling the shapely head of an extra-terrestrial alien. In an initial proposal, the image would appear several times in the newspaper over a period of time, with the pregnancy advancing more on each occasion. Yet budget restraints caused by with *The Munster Express*' insistence on charging their standard advertising rate resulted in a single intervention appearing on Friday 13 November 1998.

Around Wiltshire's graphic, a collection of newspaper stories are seen, each more incredulous than the next. Instead of contemporaneous accounts of Waterford occurrences, the reports first appeared in the pages of *The Munster Express* in 1898 and 1930. Wiltshire worked with local historian and tour guide Jack Burtchaell to find and refine this atemporal editorial. They point to a culture of repression, histories of vagabond and ruffian behaviour, phrenologist services available in the city, and a warning about the evils of 'modern'

dancing. The overarching tension in the work was further elaborated by the artist, projecting these social traits into the future ahead. She writes of the time,

As we approach the millennium, giant fears seem to be flying about as if it is Armageddon coming and not the turn of the century. Our futures seem threatened by everything from ozone to technology. It seems to me that one of our greatest fears is being out of control of our bodies. This inevitably manifests itself in our psyche. Genetic technology is advancing on us at an incredible rate. The sheep has already been cloned...

Studio Gallery

John Carson and Conor Kelly

See entry on page 3

Tina O'Connell

See entry on page 18

Seán O'Riordan

See entry on page 19

Robin Price

I thought you wanted what I was giving you, 2023

Maquette and multichannel video installation, duration 12 minutes

Robin Price's scaled gallery maquette shows a fictitious exhibition planned around his unrealised public sculpture. A narration by Price, presented on miniature video screens, incorporates a filmed walk around the location of *The Horn*, a large underwater listening device he made for the shores of Lough Neagh. Its final siting was called off at the last moment in a series of Kafkaesque encounters with local government, ifs, buts, and maybes of planning permission, and metal

fabricators who are unsure what Price is attempting to ultimately achieve.

The experience drove the artist to a philosophical position, one where *I thought you wanted what I was giving you* ‘embodies the complexities and challenges of the artist’s position, artistic ambition, expectation and unrealised potential that constitute the creative process of translating an idea into a physical reality.’ Price writes reflectively of these absurdities, ‘We may laugh at the outcome of confused circumstances and thwarted ambition, but know that we can all miss our mark, then have to try and live the good life in spite of failure’.

Digital Gallery

BKD (Burke-Kennedy Doyle) Architects

The Sonas Centre, 1996

Architectural model and newspaper print. Collection Irish Architectural Archive

In the mid-1990s, The Sonas Centre (translated from Irish as The ‘Happiness’ Centre) was proposed to be built on the edge of Dublin. A football stadium, conference centre, twenty-five-storey hotel, concert and leisure facilities would all rise up on the site of the old Phoenix Park racecourse. Backed by Ogden Entertainment Services, a company based in Las Vegas, local developers were insistent that the project could only go ahead with the inclusion of a casino. Impressed by the wherewithal of Ogden CEO Norman Turner, the Irish government initially sought a report on the casino’s viability, with the intention that its taxable profits could in turn be used to fund a public contribution to build a national convention centre.

Strenuous opposition soon surfaced from the surrounding upper-middle-class suburbs around the development site, with Turner noting, ‘I must have heard the words drugs,

prostitutes and mafia more times than enough in the past few months.’ Nonetheless, he played hardball and made it clear that none of the development would proceed without a casino, which would be the only one of its kind in Ireland and given an exclusive trading license for ten years. Country folk could avoid the city centre of Dublin and spin off the motorway to play tables and slot machines. Major rugby and football matches would draw big crowds to the casino afterwards. After-conference drinks could turn into dinner, then morph into a late-night Texas Hold ‘Em session.

By 1996 a revised plan with a smaller hotel and casino, more landscaping and an artificial lake was developed by Burke Kennedy Doyle, architects known for their work on large-scale urban infill and corporate greenfield site development. An Bord Pleanála then granted planning permission. Turner pushed for government aid of £50 million to assist. Eventually the Rainbow Coalition of Fine Gael, Labour and Democratic Left shot down the plan – the casino’s presence would require substantial changes in Irish gaming laws, something the government of the time were unwilling to enact.

Subsequently, a large model showing Sonas, reported to have cost £30,000 to make, was salvaged out of a developer’s office by the Irish Architectural Archive. In *Dreamtime Ireland*, it reappears in its constituent parts, with 1990s fashion boutiques, art galleries, and an Op Art installation akin to the work of Bridget Riley. In an area close to the complex’s bus station and back entrance, a stone circle originating in forms of the ancient megalithic age was proposed to be built. Its presence would give heady casino punters and corporate clients a place to rouse their spirits, meditate on their next move or simply watch the sun setting to the west over the M50.

John Carson and Conor Kelly

See entry on page 3

Kerry Guinan

***Peaces*, 2022, remade 2025**

Flag

Peaces is a white cotton peace flag, first seen installed in 2022 on top of the Curfew Tower in Cushendall, Antrim, a historic building now repurposed as an artist residency centre by artist Bill Drummond. Guinan digresses, ‘At a distance, it looks like an ordinary peace flag, but the public were invited onto the roof to take a closer look, where subtle details reveal themselves. The white patterns from the Irish tricolour and the British union flag have been applied onto the surface, barely visible against the white background.’ Guinan worked closely with Drummond and local community activists over the sensitivities of the flag, eventually receiving permission for its appearance during a time of complex Brexit negotiations and heightened social tensions due to a general election. She notes:

The contested state of Northern Ireland has no flag of its own and is rife with flag politics. This flag acts iconoclastically in this setting, bringing to light the contradictions in familiar patterns and symbols. It speaks to the status of peace in the state and the unresolved tensions that still lurk beneath the surface. The flag was inspired by the history of the Curfew Tower and the vision its builder Francis Turnley had to make Cushendall ‘the world centre of peace.’ He implemented a curfew in the town to curb anti-social behaviour and built this tower, complete with watchman and prison cell, to ‘keep the peace.’

Yvonne McGuinness

***WHAT’S LEFT US THEN*, 2023**

Film, duration 26 minutes

Yvonne McGuinness’s essay film considers the use and

materiality of concrete as a building material in rural Ireland, where in her words, ‘the meeting of the bucolic with the brutalist is often contested’. While experts in the building trade and architectural profession often appear with polemic opinions and thoughts on the subject, McGuinness’s narrative drifts away from any kind of hard fact – rather she trusts in encounters throughout the countryside to open up a wider experiential and ecological discourse, moments that might be otherwise lost, or undervalued. With an emphasis on the west coast, various structures often in a state of ruin were encountered during her drift – a stone quarry, an abandoned building site once destined to be a hotel, and Ireland’s only World War 2 bunker on the Shannon Estuary all appear. Clare man Jackie Whelan, who meets the artist while her and her film crew trespass on his land, begins to chat – a famous wheeler-dealer in the region and the man that, McGuinness discovers, supplied eight million tonnes of concrete to build Moneypoint, Ireland’s largest power station and carbon-emitter nearby, today still burning imported Columbian coal.

Tom Molloy

Lottery, 1997

Public artwork, documented by an artist book and newspaper articles

Hundreds of phantom unscratched lottery tickets are surfacing from the pages of books at Waterford City’s Public Library. The bizarre phenomenon came to light when Tom Bailey from Model Farm Road, Cork, wrote to the Munster Express after pocketing £100 having discovered a lottery ticket whilst browsing through a book during a recent visit to Waterford.

Believing the incident to be a freak occurrence, he was amazed to discover his wife had also found an unscratched ticket bookmarking the book – and the lucky pair are not alone! The mysterious appearance

of hundreds of unscratched tickets in books, on the shelves in all sections of the library and even on the floor, has staff and patrons alike puzzled! Staff have been quizzed by confused readers who are stunned to find the lottery tickets tucked away in their books. And the search is now on to find out just what exactly is going on amidst the volumes of knowledge that are housed behind the doors of the city's library.

Richard Fennessy, City Librarian said he had not really thought twice about the strange happening when he first discovered some scratched lottery tickets in the 'Waterford Room', believing them to simply be discarded. He was startled to discover a deluge of lottery tickets hidden in the books and put it down to a possible 'fairy godmother' of the library. The library's caretaker, Colin Cosgrove, said he has come across lots of unscratched lottery tickets over the last few weeks and suspects there are more to be unearthed from the shelves. The unsuspecting Glenn Behan was surprised to find the treasure trove of tickets amongst the books when he was cataloguing various books. Damien Dullaghan, library assistant, wonders why he has not been a lucky winner at the hands of the 'strange philandering' that's going on. "I wouldn't mind coming across a few winning tickets," he said.

Whatever is going on at Waterford City Public Library it is summed up perfectly in the words of Rantzau who said of books: "Golden Volumes! Ricihest treasures! Objects of delicious pleasures!" So don't forget, just maybe – it could be you!

—From 'Mystery benefactor litters library books with scratch cards – search is on for fairy godmother' by Niamh Nolan in *Munster Express*, 27 June 1997

Tom Ó Caollaí

Alternative Arrangements, 2023

Photographs, Irish and UK road signs, concrete blocks, a polyurethane architectural column, Donegal Quartzite crazy paving, heavy good vehicle curtainside

Tom Ó Caollaí's research bridges idioms of art, architecture and landscape – a topographic practice. Here, this encompasses photographic fieldwork at the site Ordnance Survey mapping in Ireland began, to the famous Janus stone carving of Boa Island, and The Rainbow Ballroom in Leitrim. On these sites and more, Ó Caollaí arranges a ramshackle collection of objects in front of his camera lens, ranging from road signs, crazy paving slabs, and a freight truck tarpaulin displaying a graphic of the border line bisecting a house. All juxtaposed with canonical literary sources including John Montague, Brian Friel and Seamus Heaney.

His *Dreamtime Ireland* presentation arises from these juxtapositions, embroiled in the historical contestations of the island, creating a palimpsest of thought and a non-hierarchical space for contemplation. He notes 'the UK–EU Brexit agreement called for 'alternative arrangements' for goods and services, my work shifts the emphasis to making 'alternative arrangements' out of contested historical, material, and spatial fragments. The materials were identified and manufactured along the border, unfixed from their sites of origin, and reinserted into sites of historic or spatial significance, doing so in order to create space to imagine the island of Ireland differently.'

Lobby Gallery Landing

Michele Horrigan and EVA International

GET ART, 2023

Board game

Working with EVA International, Ireland's contemporary art biennial based in Limerick, Michele Horrigan sifted through a forty-year archive, considering the role public art has played in the organisation's extensive history in the Midwest. Horrigan writes:

GET ART recalls the 2016 launch of a version of the popular board game Monopoly dedicated to Limerick City, where players were given the opportunity to roll dice to buy and trade local city properties and build houses and hotels, all the time aiming to drive their opponents into bankruptcy. In making a comment about the reduction of the city's image to financial circulation and speculative investment rather than as a cultural entity and a place of lived life, archival research sees decades of EVA artworks made in the urban fabric of Limerick re-imagined to replace property and financial transaction. Exhibition memories are recalled as a journey and interaction with the city.

GET ART is on permanent display at the EVA International office in Limerick and available for the public to play. It features artists Xu Bing, Paolo Canevari, Mark Clare, Minerva Cuevas, Fausto Delle Chiaie, Luc Deleu, Joyce Duffy, Jacob Gautel & Jason Karaindos, Liam Gillick, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Cao Guo-Qiang, Nancy Hwang, Nicholas Keogh & Paddy Bloomer, Patrick Killoran, Jason Middlebrook, Eduardo Navarro, Áine Phillips, Deirdre A. Power & Jacki Hehir, Jochen Schmith, Santiago Sierra, Superflex, Charlene Teters, Humberto Velez and Eimear Walshe.

County Carlow Museum

Seanie Barron

***Star Wars Man*, 2016**

Sculpture

Seanie Barron carves and shapes wood in a workshop at the rear of his house in Askeaton, Limerick. His creations, made with basic handtools and an intuitive approach, are borne out of his understanding of nature and often-humorous interpretations of the environment around him. He roams down and around bohereens, undergrowth and ditches, all the time looking for the right branch in a field or underneath a bush to then shape into surreal forms referencing seahorses, weasels, dancers, extra-terrestrials, dolphins, foxes or swimmers. Driftwood found by the Shannon Estuary morphs into film characters and talismanic sculptures who accompany him inside his studio. His *Star Wars Man* is located on the ground floor of Carlow County Museum, a figurative sculpture placed beside a small collection of carvings by the woodworking maestro Thomas Lawlor of Muine Bheag, including a chair and small table wondrously made out of matchsticks.

Barron's friend and confidante Michele Horrigan writes:

Seanie was a manual labourer all his life and worked for Roadstone, Ireland's biggest construction company. Before retiring, he squirreled away a collection of cat's eyes, hard-wearing reflectors used as road markings for night driving. He had a feeling that they might come in useful and today they stare out at you from his creations in the background of his dimly-lit workshop. If you half close your eyes, you take a journey with him, walking through arboreal countryside, feeling the grain of the timber that reconnects it back again to its earthiness... it's the spark that created the universe!

David Beattie

Tokens, 2024–5

Sculptures and descriptive museum text

David Beattie's subtle installation is seen within a display of Carlow archaeological finds, wall panels and descriptions of Ireland's past that feature in *Journeys in Time – The Archaeology of the Carlow By-pass*, an exhibition in Carlow County Museum. The extensive display was created by the museum in association with the National Museum of Ireland and Transport Infrastructure Ireland, who excavated many historical sites, all subsequently steamrolled over, during the building of the M9 motorway in the 2000s. In this context, Beattie's small spherical steel sculptures mingle in a display case with objects from the collection of Carlow Historical and Archaeological Society including stone lamps, bronze swords and pots.

Akin to a future form of post-petroleum, post-apocalyptic archaeology, *Tokens* are the result of Beattie's smelting and extraction of metal from catalytic converters in automobiles. He notes, 'Promoted as an efficient way of reducing air pollutants in vehicles, catalytic converters contain precious metals that are resold to extract the value of these metals. Having been heavily processed initially to manufacture the original catalytic converter, the "scrap" car part is then later put through another round of extractive processes to obtain the miniscule amount of rare metals.' Criminal gangs are often reported stealing catalytic converters, before setting up makeshift smelting operations to distil their bounty. Beattie reflects that 'in a constant state of becoming something else, these minerals highlight the commodification of natural resources, and the environmental impact of mineral extraction.'

In addition, an excerpt of Sean Lynch's 2019 installation *The Rise and Fall of Flint Jack* is presented. Originally commissioned by the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds, the artwork explores the oeuvre of Edward Simpson, a

notorious 19th-century antiquarian forger whose fake Stone Age artefacts still populate museum collections throughout Britain, and Ireland's National Museum. In Carlow, video footage is recast into an educational idiom with flint knapper Carl Lee demonstrating in slow motion the act of shaping flint into a sharp tool, above a display case of arrowheads and scrapers, axeheads and blades from the Mesolithic era in Carlow, dated to 6700 B.C.

Nollaig Molloy

***A Confection of Photographs, 2022* Publication**

Nollaig Molloy's *A Confection of Photographs* investigates the assembly of archives and Ireland's labour histories. Almost one hundred images, each scanned and reproduced from a single storage box found in Carlow County Library, depict the now defunct production of sugar beet Ireland. This resource, found by Molloy bunched together inside brown envelopes and pinned with paper clips, encompass moments from the 1920s to early 2000s. Images range from the harvesting of crops, infrastructure development and lives of workers. With an essay by the artist and the incorporation of handwritten notes found alongside these unearthed photographs, a beguiling number of haunting relationships emerge beyond the cogs of industry. Copies of the publication sit beside Carlow County Museum's extensive exhibition display lamenting another disappeared industry in the region.

Olivia Plender

***The World Upside Down, 2018* Collaborative drawing**

Stockholm-based British artist Olivia Plender is known as an investigator of the social structures that bind together community life. An artwork, appearing as an instructional school poster, was realised in collaboration with children

in Askeaton, Limerick and Lismore, Waterford. In asking groups of five-to-eight year olds to imagine alternative versions of their respective towns, a world upside down emerges, akin to speculative fictions developed by Utopian socialists in the nineteenth century such as William Morris' *News From Nowhere* or Charles Fourier's visions for a new order free from inequality. Plender's workshops evoke how children hold their own surreal perspective, one sensitive to social and power dynamics. In their thoughts, no one dies but difficulties arise about how to feed an ever increasing population; gravity and the difficulty of ploughing upside down are discussed; and conversations abound about whether gender still exists. *The World Upside Down* is located on the ground floor of Carlow County Museum, placed in proximity to a display exploring the history of education in the region where artefacts include a historical document outlining guidelines for the use of corporal punishment in Irish schools.

Juana Robles & Michael Higgins

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Dreamtime Ireland

A Project By Sean Lynch

**VISUAL Centre for Contemporary Art
Carlow County Museum
6 June – 31 August 2025**

Dreamtime Ireland integrates Artworks 2025, VISUAL's annual open call exhibition made in collaboration with Carlow Arts Festival. Artworks are selected from an open call by Sean Lynch; Benjamin Stafford, Curator of Visual Arts, VISUAL; Aurora Tang, Independent Curator and Program Director, Centre for Land Use Interpretation; Emma Lucy O'Brien, CEO and Artistic Director, VISUAL; and Benjamin Perchet, Director, Carlow Arts Festival.

Exhibition texts are assembled and written by the artists of *Dreamtime Ireland*, Sean Lynch and Benjamin Stafford.

Sean Lynch acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land of the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung and Bunurong Boon Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nation, a place where he has worked and walked upon since 2019, for inspiration and resilience in the making of Dreamtime Ireland.

Sean Lynch thanks Raymond Griffin, Niamh Moriarty, Michele Horrigan and Emily Horrigan Lynch for their continued patience and dedication in the assembly of Dreamtime Ireland. Invaluable support is additionally received from the estate of Martin Folan, Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, Dublin, Garrett Phelan and NIVAL – National Irish Visual Arts Library, Dublin.



Dreamtime Ireland is an exhibition and research project by Sean Lynch at VISUAL Centre for Contemporary Art, Carlow County Museum, and Artworks 2025, in conjunction with Carlow Arts Festival.

Drawn from historical and contemporary artworks and artefacts, presentations are spread throughout Carlow's gallery and museum spaces, each exploring art's potential to provoke, investigate and critique the shape and purpose of Irish culture. With an emphasis on public art, social and conceptual practice, ***Dreamtime Ireland*** reveals an undercurrent of exchange and interaction between art and society, proposing artmaking as a way to live, make and share the complex world and environments we encounter today.