

A hand is visible at the top, holding a complex, tangled sculpture made of thin, dark wire. The sculpture consists of numerous loops and spirals, some forming dense, ball-like structures. The background is a solid, vibrant teal color. The overall composition is abstract and artistic.

Artist Interview Series

Speaking of Which

Why artists make art—in their own words

**SPEAKING OF WHICH
ARTIST INTERVIEW SERIES**

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A very special thanks to the artists taking part in this series
Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh, Jamie Cross, Ellen Duffy and Kate Murphy,
Atoosa Pour Hosseini, Gemma Browne, Louise Manifold, Austin Ivers, Jackie McKenna, Eve
O Callaghan, Ann Maria Healy.



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Introduction

This book is a companion piece to Speaking of Which, a series of short filmed interviews with eleven contemporary Irish artists who are at different stages in their careers. It is intended to be used together with the filmed interviews in an educational setting by teachers and arts organisations both as a starting point for conversations with young people to talk about their own creativity, ideas and inspirations and as a tool for teachers and educators to devise workshops and other practical activities for their classes. The project was led by The Dock in Carrick-On-Shannon, in collaboration with The LAB Gallery in Dublin. Nine of the featured artists received commissions from The Dock and four have worked with The LAB Gallery.

The inspiration for the Speaking of Which project came from the desire to create an opportunity for young people to engage and connect with visual arts culture and to give them a unique insight into arts practices, methods and motivations through the words of contemporary practising artists. Its aim is to give young people an understanding of why artists make art, how they make it, how it makes them feel and where they find inspiration. The series also provides a platform for artists to communicate with a young audience.

“Being an artist is the best thing an artist can be, and it is all they can be”



The artists involved are emerging artists at the beginning of their careers and more established artists taking risks in their practice. They each bring a unique perspective to their work, and they are all motivated by ideas and observations and ways of looking at the world which will be of interest to all students.

The artists were interviewed in locations in Leitrim and Dublin. The diversity of their individual backgrounds and experiences is reflected in the work each artist makes. They draw inspiration from many sources; the books they read as children, the films they have watched, conversations they have had, the environments that they have lived in and places they have visited.

Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh and Eve O’Callaghan talk about their commitment to the practice of painting and how they work with materials. Young emerging artist Jamie Cross talks about his work with camera technologies and nature. Recent art college graduates Ellen Duffy and Kate Murphy discuss their collaboration during lockdown and what motivates them to make art. Filmmaker Atoosa Pour Hosseini talks analogue films. Gemma Browne speaks about how her childhood talents have informed her practices. Ann Maria Healy has been influenced by new technologies, such as self-drive cars, and how they impact us psychosocially. Artist and filmmaker Austin Ivers has been influenced by The Cold War era and early innovations in computer design. Louise Manifold has been filming with handmade mechanical animated dolls made in the 18th Century. Sculptor Jackie McKenna talks about how her work is influenced by her time in Palestine and the issues faced by rural communities there.

The Dock and The LAB Gallery both celebrated their 15th anniversary in 2020. They have a history of working with dynamic and interesting artists, linking their work to new audiences and working extensively with schools and young people. This unique partnership between the two organisations seeks to further expand on this work by making accessible and inspirational content that benefits artists, young people and educators equally.

View artist interviews:
<https://vimeo.com/showcase/8094850>





Ann Maria Healy

‘I’m always looking for new perspectives’



The Artist

Ann Maria Healy's work expresses itself through video, sculptural and textual form. Her practice is concerned with reoccurrence, the power of history and narratives embedded within the human psyche. She seeks to co-opt the embodied meaning of material in order to unpack and subvert it. She is drawn to narrative that is connected to place and object, often acting in an absurd manner, the work seeks to employ mysticism as a tool to reconsider our present moment. Healy is an MFA graduate of The Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam, 2014 and a recipient of the Irish Arts Council, Visual Artist Bursary Award, 2019. She is also the recipient of the 2020 Insight Artist Residency at DCU. The residency has been developed in collaboration with Dublin City Council Arts Office and The LAB Gallery.



ANN MARIA HEALY IN HER OWN WORDS

‘Narratives embedded within the human psyche’

I make mostly sculpture and video and installation. I'm interested in narratives that are embedded within the human psyche. In respect to that, I'm interested in materials that might contain those things, and then I try to work with those materials and subvert them into different narratives.

‘Trying to find the joy’

I suppose I just love creativity and that's the thing that always drives me. Maybe that's what it means for me to be an artist; it's that I'm always looking for new perspectives or a new way of thinking about things and trying to find the joy in those things. I'm trying to shift it out or uncover it somehow. That's why I think some of the works are often absurd or a bit ridiculous; that's when I'm trying to shift the joy out – if that makes sense.

‘A lot of my sculptural work involves movement’

I think quite performatively, which I link back to my dance background. So, a lot of my sculptural work involves movement, or is interactive, or might end up in the video work. I think about them as props or things like that.

‘I suppose I'm thinking about addiction’

I collect materials that I find. I don't even realise that I'm doing it at the time. I just finished a residency in Fire Station Artists' Studios [in Buckingham Street, Dublin 1]. I've been living in this area for the last three years. When I moved here, I started collecting medication trays from the streets and I have been plaster-casting these trays and things like that. Drugs and medication are something that I was already interested in and they had come up previously in my work. A lot of them at the time were this drug called Zopiclone. I became interested in why people wanted to take these sleeping pills. So, I made this video work called *When Dealers Are Shamans – A Peacock*. When George (the peacock) is doing his mating ritual, he rattles his feathers, and when I slowed it down the eye-feathers were quite hypnotic. I was thinking a lot at the time about technology as well, so I suppose I'm thinking about addiction; why people might become addicted to drugs like Zopiclone or to technologies.

‘Sweat and energy’

Another sculptural work that I'm working on is, again, using George's peacock feathers and yoga mats that I've collected. I do a lot of yoga and I was interested in how mats that have been used over the course of a few years might contain, literally, the sweat and energy that people have worked out.

‘The gallery as a kind of stage’

I write a good bit as well and the writing ends up in the work, often as a voice-over or maybe on the sculptures, helping in the background of the work. There's always a film going around in the background of each body of work. I try to think about that loosely, so that they bleed into each other. I often think about how the viewer is going to come into it and how they'll be choreographed around the space. The work is often sculptural, but I think about it as installation as well, thinking about the gallery as a kind of stage.

Watch the interview:

[https://vimeo.com/showcase/8094850/
video/507466482](https://vimeo.com/showcase/8094850/video/507466482)

Visit Ann Maria Healy's website:

<http://annmariahealy.net/>



Atoosa Pour Hosseini

*'I choose to be an artist —
you have a lot of freedom in it'*

The Artist

Atoosa Pour Hosseini (b. Tehran, Iran 1981) is an artist-filmmaker based in Dublin. Her work, which is influenced by historical avant-garde cinema, explores questions about illusion, reality, and perception through the media of film, video, installation and performance art. She works with the material textures of 8mm film as well as digital processes to explore layers of space and time, superimposing imagery and creating entrancing patterns of repetition with startling interruptions.



The Commission

Atoosa Pour Hosseini's commission reflects the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the experience of self-isolation. In a meditative audiovisual reflection about our lives and the human condition, Atoosa portrays how time passes around and through her. She uses digital technology to capture a series of poetic time-lapses addressing elements such as urban landscape, nature and private spaces – mostly recorded between dusk to dawn light conditions. The lyrical and meditative views have a haiku-like quality that the artist hopes reflect her philosophical state rather than the facade of reality.



ATOOSA POUR HOSSEINI IN HER OWN WORDS

'Pushing my own boundaries'

I think art work is about shifting continuousness, slow changes. I am very interested in translation and in pushing my own boundaries. I'm from Tehran, Iran, and I moved to Ireland in 2006. I remember I was 15 when I decided to become an artist. I started my career with painting, in a traditional way and classical way, figurative painting.

'I decided to experiment'

When I moved to Ireland, everything changed. I decided to experiment with new materials and mediums; stop-motion, animation, animated drawings. After experimenting I gradually became interested in film, celluloid and analogue. It's a physical material; you can paint directly on the film strip. And also, later, in film performance. I am interested in how you get inside yourself while pretending to be something else. I think it's very useful to be in that space.

'How you interact with memory'

I am a member of the Experimental Film Society. We produce, distribute and archive films made by very radical filmmakers and artists based in Ireland and abroad. We collaborate together, for example, some colleagues went to Columbia and found some Super 8 film footage in the street. I'm very interested in memory as well, how you interact with memory. I am also influenced by avant-garde cinema and inspired by nature and everyday life.

'Fascinated by the changes of the light'

For the commission at The Dock, I worked in one room and used digital format. I set up the camera and I used time-lapses. It was very much like a painting as well. Gradually, the colours change, and the light, and the shape. I was very fascinated by the changes of the light.

'Finding those layers inside yourself'

I was always interested in thinking about limitation and not giving all the information from your work. And [how] time limitations help you to create and how it can affect you internally. I choose to be an artist because I found you have a lot of freedom in it and you are your own boss. It's very enjoyable to be creative all the time and learning from other people and yourself, and finding those layers inside yourself.

Watch Interview:

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/8094850/video/507467171>

The Dock Commission:

<https://www.thedock.ie/learning-projects/atoosa-pour-hosseini>

The LAB Gallery exhibition:

<http://www.dublincityartsoffice.ie/the-lab/exhibitions/kinetics-in-blue>

Visit Atoosa Pour Hosseini's website:

www.atoosapourhosseini.com/

Austin Ivers

*'It is not about anything, not for anything
and not for anyone'*

THE ART

The Artist

Austin Ivers is an artist and educator, currently lecturing in Contemporary Art at GMIT. He has also been a visiting Lecturer at LSAD, The Burren College of Art and the Huston School at NUIG. He has exhibited widely throughout Ireland (including the RHA, 126, Live 8), Europe (Graz, Kiev, Friedrichshafen) and the USA (Philadelphia) and has had writing published in the VAI Printed Project and Enclave Papers. Following on from his commission for The Dock, he is working towards another solo show in 2021.

The Commission

Austin Ivers' 2020 exhibition at The Dock, 'Threads', considers the aesthetics of the Cold War, the promise and disappointment of technology and cultural representations of the end of the world. One element of this show addresses the optimism of the period when progress into space was seen as a project "for all mankind". This optimism found many expressions, including 'The Race into Space', a set of cards given away with Brooke Bond tea in 1970. These cards not only documented human exploration in space to date but also described anticipated missions as if they had already happened, thus placing the audience in a promising and harmonious future which ultimately never transpired. Here, the cards have been scanned, processed, printed to 35mm positive film and presented in sequence on a Bell & Howell Ringmaster 11 Slide Viewer. This and other works are presented on The Dock Website.



AUSTIN IVERS IN HIS OWN WORDS

'Tools to look at the world'

What I like about making things is that it is not about anything, it's not for anything and it's not for anyone. It gives me tools to look at the world and, at the same time, that feeds back into a process of making. I am not really able to think about things in a hierarchical nature. There is something wrong or something good; I don't know what it is, but everything comes in unfiltered and it hits you like photons. I turn some of those things into art. I don't keep a huge amount of sketch books. I try and let something percolate around in my brain for a while, and if it's still there a week or two later, or if I even remember it, that means there is some value to it.

'The materials carry weight and carry resonance'

In many respects I see a lot of what I do, as somebody who makes time-based objects, as being an extension of my print practice. One of the good things about printing, unlike drawing where something comes in your eye and out your hands onto a piece of paper, with process-based work, you're trying to second-guess yourself eight or ten steps down into a process. There is a lot of depth, so you've got to be able to think in advance and consider everything that can go wrong during these points. I like using a certain range of pre-existing technological objects, something that is about a stage in history. It will mean one thing to someone who is 10 and another to someone who is 60 or 70. So, the materials carry weight and carry resonance. I'm not trying to make historical statements. I like to play with the weight that these things come pre-loaded with.

'I never saw an art gallery'

When I was younger, a youngster growing up in North Kerry, I never saw an art gallery until I went to art college. I didn't really know what art was. All of my visual education came from TV, bootlegged video tapes from dodgy shops. A lot of what you're consuming, which I now recognise as being art, was from what was current, contemporaneous, popular culture. There's an idea of how art history begins, the classic book is *From Giotto to Cézanne*, but I barely even knew who Cézanne was. When I was looking at album covers from Factory Records – which was like a curated aesthetic, the Factory aesthetic – I didn't know I was being subjected to the aesthetic of a curator.

'It kind of makes sense to me'

I like the idea of going from paper to digital to process, and now going back to an analogue thing that is dependent on a piece of light shining through a shiny piece of film onto a wall. This isn't about stuff, it's around stuff, which I know sounds terrible, but it kind of makes sense to me. That's what I think about things when I'm making them; I try to think around them. Every time I spend time with the things I make, I end up having a different relationship with them. But sometimes a couple of weeks later, or even sometimes years later, you're kind of going, 'oh right! That's what was going on there', but that's what was only going on there for the second you have that realisation. Then that's gone again. It's like quarks passing, you know. I'm not trying to be nostalgic. I'm not trying say things were better or worse, and I'm not even trying to talk a huge amount about utopia or dystopia. I'm interested in how we use cultural objects to describe ourselves in time. Duchamp used a toilet; I'm using a couple of old Hewlett Packard and Apple computers.

'Making art helps me look at the world'

I like making art because it helps me look at the world and helps me makes sense of what I'm surrounded by. And I think the art community of curators, gallerists, artists, people involved in the education world, I think it's quite a decent and generous community, which runs on goodwill and compassion and empathy. If it doesn't have those things, it falls down.

Watch the interview:

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/8094850/video/507467740>

The Dock Exhibition & Commission:

<https://www.thedock.ie/exhibitions/threads>

Visit Austin Ivers website:

<https://www.austinivers.com/>

Austin's Instagram:

[@austin.d.h.ivers](https://www.instagram.com/austin.d.h.ivers)





Eve O'Callaghan

'It becomes about light, the space it's in, the time of day'

The Artist

Eve O'Callaghan graduated from the NCAD Fine Art Painting and Visual Culture BA in 2017. She has been shortlisted for several important award exhibitions including the Hennessy Craig Award, RHA, Dublin (2019) and RDS Visual Art Award, Dublin (2017). She was the RHA School Peer Residency 2017-2018. She has exhibited at Pallas Projects, Dublin (2019), Draocht, Dublin (2018), and RHA Annual, Dublin (2018, 2019). She is the recipient of the 2019 Temple Bar Gallery + Studios Recent Graduate Residency Award. Eve is interested in paintings that consider the basic properties of paint, pigment and surface and how these things combine to create an image and object that relates to a wider history of painting.

The Commission

Eve's commission enabled her to create new pieces for future exhibition at The Dock. As part of the process, she documented ideas, drawings and photography as a visual diary which will also be displayed when the exhibition takes place.



EVE O'CALLAGHAN IN HER OWN WORDS

'I put a lot of effort into building a surface'

I like to work with the more basic materials in painting. I'm interested in making my own paints using pigments. Recently, I've been trying to make gesso from scratch using rabbit-skin glue, and I've been working a lot on wood. I primed the wood really heavily and then used that. I think I put a lot of effort into building a surface. The surface is like the form of the painting. The attention to surface begins before I actually apply the paint, so I'm thinking about it through the stages. Whereas when you're working with just oil on canvas, sometimes I find that a little bit limited because it's all already there.

'You build up a depth of colour and light'

I think there's enough information in one or two colours. Then it becomes about light, the space it's in, the time of day, or whatever, and the kind of idea that you build up a depth of colour and light. Every colour has its own relationship to history of art.

'More abstract and fun'

I started doing little botanical sketches using pencil in the paintings. It was like a medium itself. I like that. When I was making paintings that are like hinged together, that kind of came from icon painting and triptychs. The form of them, I think, is quite playful, so I kind of wanted to interpret that in a contemporary setting and make it slightly more abstract and fun.

'You have to keep yourself motivated'

What motivates me to be an artist is that I think you have to keep yourself motivated in a way. So, you always have to reach out and find new material that you're excited about, grab it and turn it into something as quickly as possible.

Watch the interview:

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/8094850/video/507469880>

Visit Eve O'Callaghan's website:

www.eveocallaghan.com

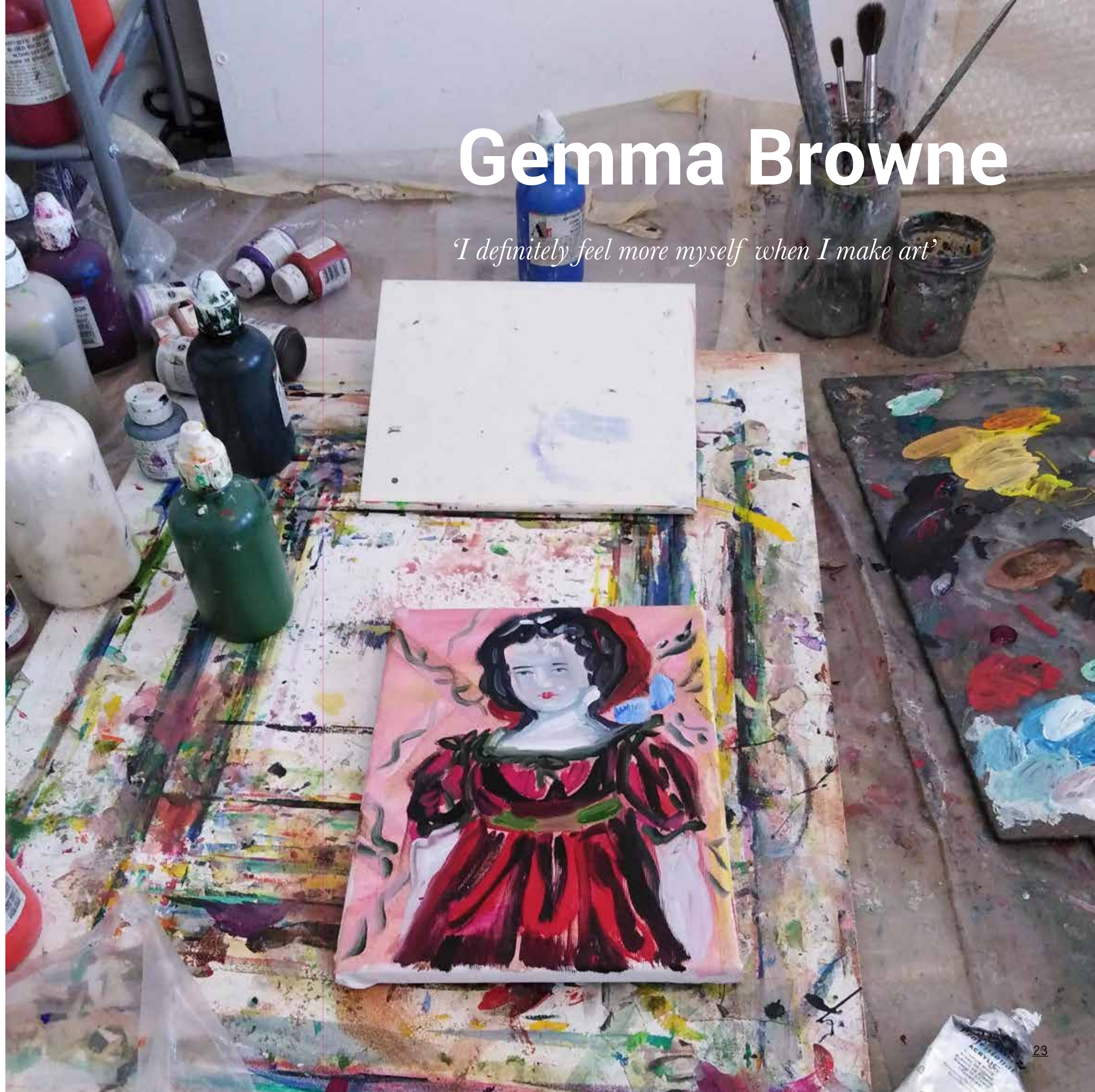
Eve's Instagram:

[@eveveveoc](https://www.instagram.com/eveveveoc)



Gemma Browne

'I definitely feel more myself when I make art'



The Artist

Gemma Browne is an Irish artist who was born in London but is based in Dublin. She attended the Crawford College of Art in Cork and has an MA from Birmingham College of Art in the UK. She has exhibited widely in Ireland and internationally and has been the recipient of many awards. Recent shows include solos shows *Queen of the Dusk* at Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, Dublin and *The Invisible Sorceress* at The Lab Gallery in Dublin; *Paper Cuts* group show at Saatchi Gallery, London; *SuprEYES* at the Lexicon Gallery, Dun Laoghaire; *Faces, Places and Spaces* at New Art Projects, London; *When Supplies Last*, Seattle; and *Got It For Cheap* at Agnes B HQ in Paris and at The Hole Gallery, New York. She has taken part in ARCO Madrid, Athina Athens, Manchester Contemporary and Atlanta Contemporary art fairs.



GEMMA BROWNE IN HER OWN WORDS

Almost a physical relief

I definitely feel more myself when I make art. I've never gone for too long without making my work. But if there's a few days or a couple of weeks where other things are being done, if I sit down and do even a drawing, I feel like there's a sort of, almost a physical relief. I feel more normal then. I kind of feel like, 'Well this is what I do', and I've never really questioned it. I mean, I know lots of people come out of art college, and I've known lots of people over the years who have some problem with it. They are embarrassed to say they're an artist or they're not owning it enough.

'I always thought of myself as an artist'

I think I was already calling myself an artist when I was aged five. I always thought of myself as an artist. I remember I got a set of Ladybird books on art. I remember I had a Gauguin, a Cézanne and a Van Gogh. And it was funny, I identified with the artists in the books, but I was more drawn to Van Gogh and Gauguin in particular; possibly the very bright colours. They may have even influenced me. But I knew they were artists. I was reading the books and I was then calling myself an artist. I was always very comfortable with it, and when I was at school, teachers, even in primary school, tended to call me the artist in the class, so it was always kind of positively reinforced.

'Painting was very much respected'

When I went to The Crawford, painting was very much respected, almost revered, at the time, large painting and, in particular, figurative painting. That would have fitted in with my interest because I did, even at school, like drawing figures. I felt comfortable doing everything on paper, so I painted on paper. Then when I wanted to go larger, I would start a painting and just add on sheets around it until I would end up with a really huge painting on the wall.

An emotional process

I went on to do my MA in Birmingham in the UK, and I'd mix drawing and painting together. Sometimes there'd be a charcoal drawing underneath and there'd be bits of linseed oil and there'd be oil paint all mixed in together. If it wasn't going well or I didn't know where it was going, I would just keep at it and actually fight with the mess that was happening there to see what was going to come out. I think painting is a sort of an emotional process, so I don't start with any intention normally. It's nice to make that mess and see what's trying to force its way through.

'The dolls stand in for people'

One of the recurring motifs would be dolls. I never want my work to be too literal, so I think the dolls stand in for people, possibly in some ways stand in for me. And I think it's even, possibly, being a bit older, more experience in life, there's more layers, things are a little bit more complicated, maybe a little bit more sophisticated, and it's good to leave all that in the canvas. There's history there. There's other stuff going on and maybe not trying to hide it all or make it all perfect.

Watch the interview:

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/8094850/video/507470466>

The LAB Gallery Exhibition:

<http://www.dublincityartsoffice.ie/the-lab/exhibitions/the-invisible-sorceress>

Visit Gemma Browne's website:

www.gemma-browne.com

Gemma's Instagram:

[@gemmabrowne11](https://www.instagram.com/gemmabrowne11)

Jackie McKenna

‘When you’re a maker, you have to make’

The Artist

Jackie McKenna is a community activist whose art practice is always about people. Most of her work is commissioned and site-specific with close community engagement. She works in prisons, and with carers' groups, Tidy Towns, local art centres and schools. Jackie has over thirty years of experience as a professional artist and tutor. She has produced large outdoor public works throughout Ireland and many gallery exhibitions. Jackie is a co-founder of the Leitrim Sculpture Centre in Manorhamilton, Co Leitrim. Her art process encourages experimentation in many disciplines with such practitioners as artisan metal workers, stonemasons, glassmakers, and light engineers.



The Commission

Jackie's commission for The Dock is a redevelopment and deepening of an exhibition she had at the Leitrim Sculpture Centre in 2018 where she created a large-scale sculptural work, a film installation and a series of workshops about Fasayil, a Palestinian village in Jericho in the West Bank. This village is largely Bedouin, and it is now disappearing to the point where it will cease to exist. The exhibition was about marking the erosion of a place, its culture, its people and their memories and identity. It also acknowledged the impact of forced migration on the lives of people in a particular woman. Her work on her commission is scheduled for future exhibition at The Dock.



JACKIE MCKENNA IN HER OWN WORDS

'Art is a very powerful medium' 'The story of displacement'

I think art is a very powerful medium to get a point across because it's a non-threatening, non-verbal medium and it can be interpreted by so many different people in different ways. I'm a sculptor and have been working in different materials for the last 36 years. I'm also a community activist and work with groups from prisons to care groups to refugees, asylum seekers and local communities.

'Stone is probably my favourite'

I work with stone, bronze, clay and plaster and anything that I can model. Stone, I think, is probably my favourite medium. Most of the work I've been doing is outdoor public sculptures. Smaller works that I'm doing at the moment are in clay, and I kind of like to use that material for more personal work, because it's more malleable, and it's more emotive. I would work on ideas that are probably based on social issues like injustice.

'I wanted to celebrate their lives'

In 2017, I travelled to Fasayil, a Bedouin village near Jericho in the West Bank, and I worked with the local women there for 10 days, mostly cooking, but listening to their stories. I was really shocked at how their lives are going to change in the next couple of years. They're slowly but surely being moved out of the place, and I wanted to, I suppose, celebrate their lives. They have a very, very hard life, but it was very rich as well.

The first part of that exhibition I had in Manorhamilton. The second part of the exhibition for The Dock has been to bring in the whole idea of The Declaration of Human Rights. I've been working on those in the hope that I can marry the two together and tell the story of displacement but also show the richness of their lives. The shelters I built are literally the kind of shelters that people live in; usually plastic covering over some metal tubing. There are no toilets, no sewage, no electricity in most of the camp. My hope with the exhibition is that people will engage with the work, that they will see or get a glimpse of life in the West Bank, a life that's fast disappearing.

'I'm not happy not making'

I did a project with asylum seekers in Manorhamilton about two years ago and we built an adobe oven and that was incredible. We just built a clay oven and then I worked with refugees and we made bread which we cooked in the oven. So, making bread to me, it was as poetic and as creative as making my little sculptures. I think when you're a maker, you have to make. And I love materials so I'm not happy not making, at the end of the day. I just have to go into my studio and make stuff. Being an artist is a way of life, I think. I don't have a choice, and I'm lucky that I can actually manipulate materials and manipulate ideas and share them, which is what I like to do mostly.

Watch the interview:

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/8094850/video/507471067>





Jamie Cross

'It's a great freedom being an artist'

The Artist

Jamie Cross is currently studying for an MA in Art + Research Collaboration at IADT Dun Laoghaire. He featured in the RDS Visual Arts Awards 2019 and was awarded joint winner of the R.C. Lewis Crosby Award. He was also shortlisted for the Ormond Art Studios Graduate Award 2019. He recently completed a BA (Hons) in Art from IADT where he was awarded the 2019 IADT Graduate Student Art Award for an emerging artist of note, sponsored by The Dock Arts Centre. Jamie's artistic approach tends to reflect an answer to a question or proposition. When does a space begin? What is on the inside? He is motivated by the need to answer such questions and portray the answers through his work.

The Commission

Jamie used his commission to explore themes in his practice and to develop and test new ways of showing this in his work. His current work focuses on uninhabitable and disused spaces, such as the micro internal space of objects in an urban apartment, or the space created by deforested woodland. Jamie collated digital documentation of open forestry spaces and the interior of disused mines and caves. He then dissected and analysed this content to create a digital product which can be shared online via video/3D tours, giving the viewer the opportunity to visit these unique spaces as though in 'real-life' but from the confines of their own home.



JAMIE CROSS IN HIS OWN WORDS

'They kind of work off each other'

It's a great freedom being an artist. Like, I can start work and have an idea of where it's going to go, but it never really goes that way. And then I'd be working on one thing but then as I'm doing that I'll notice, 'Oh, actually this over here is really interesting, and this is what I want to go with'. Five years ago, I decided to go back to college as a mature student, and I wanted to study art. I kind of had always an interest in art and maybe I think I had more curiosity of what art could be, and that's kind of what I wanted to figure out for myself. I decided to specialise in sculpture, multimedia installations. The digital part of the work talks to the sculptural part of the work and they kind of work off each other.

'That feeling of excitement when I was a child'

I'm quite interested in gadget cameras, so I have this endoscopic camera, a small camera on the end of a long wire. I can push it into an object or down a vent. What I'll do is, generally, if I take lots of photos or videos, I'll put them in one file or I'll print off all the photos, and then I go back looking over and trying to decipher really what I was interested in and what I was looking at. I really like going to galleries like around Dublin and Ireland, and I immediately know if I like a work because I can get that feeling like, 'oh, this is good', or I want to go over and investigate it. So, I think I'm trying to reproduce that feeling of that kind of excitement from when I was a child as well.

'It used to be dark and full of imagination'

I was lucky enough to be part of the commission with The Dock. The first one was 'Forest 2020'. It was from around my house in Cavan. The whole back area was covered in forestry and I'd always kind of played in it as a child. It was great for imagination, and this last time, when I had gone home, it had been cut down by the forestry. I was standing in the middle and it was this big vast open space. It was completely changed. I wanted to capture that almost post-apocalyptic [feeling] from an area like where it used to be dark and full of imagination. It just felt really empty.

'The space I'm in really influences my work'

The space I'm in, or where I'm kind of at, at that time, really influences my work. When I'm at home in Cavan or Leitrim, it's like these wide-open spaces and this vastness. But then when I'm in Dublin it's the interior of objects or my apartment block I'm really interested in. I'd been taking pictures of concrete. I was interested in how it starts off as this really flowing liquid material, and it's just like solid material that is used everywhere. I just got a cavity block and put the camera inside the block. I'd always had an interest in projection mapping, and by the end of it, I was able to project this concrete flowing down the side of my apartment block. The projection mapping, I feel like I've just touched the surface of it. It's something I really am interested in evolving.

'Aesthetic value is really important to me'

I love that feeling when my work is finished, and I stand back from it; I know it's finished because I'm really satisfied. It's doing what I kind of wanted it to do, and aesthetic value is really important to me. I want when someone walks into a gallery or a space [for] their eye to kind of be drawn to it, and they start to look at it more and spend more time with it.

Watch the interview:

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/8094850/video/507471751>

The Dock Commission:

<https://www.thedock.ie/learning-projects/jamie-cross>

Jamie's Instagram:

[@crossmjamie](https://www.instagram.com/crossmjamie)



Ellen Duffy & collaborator Kate Murphy

*'We can build a career around the idea of
having fun and creating connections'*

The Artists

Ellen Duffy lives and works in Dublin. She attended the Technological University of Dublin where she received her BA (Hons) Fine Art. She was shortlisted for the RDS Visual Art Awards in 2019. Ellen is the recipient of the RHA Graduate Studio award and bursary 2019-2020. Ellen's work sits somewhere between expanded painting, assemblage and installation. It is rooted in the idea that objects/things give power to one another by the role they play in the assemblage. Her haptic way of making is driven by curiosity, doubt and a determination to figure out possibilities and how to push beyond them. She utilises found/discarded materials, such as; steel, foam, packaging materials, and creates a dialogue between them resulting in playfully provisional installations.

Kate Murphy is a visual artist based in Kildare and Dublin. Recently graduated with a BA (Hons) Fine Art degree from Technological University Dublin, Kate received the Graduate Residency & Bursary Award in Sculpture at Fire Station Artists' Studios in 2019. Kate's practice is sculptural and deals with the construction of an installation through a number of different sculptural elements and interventions. The themes and concept of the work focus on how humans use, construct, de-construct and divide space.

The Commission

This collaborative work aimed to merge the two artists' practices and make work that reacted to the work of the other artist. Ellen planned a week-long collaborative work that was made and installed in her studio at the RHA, culminating in an open studio along with filming and photographing the process. Ellen and Kate created a series of collaborative works on paper that were completed via post due to Covid-19 restrictions on physically meeting. These works on paper and sculptural work act to inform one another loosely and don't act as direct guidelines.



ELLEN DUFFY AND COLLABORATOR KATE MURPHY IN THEIR OWN WORDS

'A way of understanding myself' – Ellen
'The potential I see in their materiality' – Ellen

I make work without thinking about it. It's a way, I suppose, of getting out of my head and into my hands, because that's when I feel like the truth starts coming out for me. If I was to think why I make art, it is to make sense of the world around me in a way that I can understand, and a way of understanding myself in the world around me. I feel like it's kind of like a tool of well-being that we use to make sense of it all.

'I get to just switch off' – Kate

For me, it's always been therapeutic. I get to just switch off and go into that place, and then, all of a sudden, your imagination is thriving, and you have no other option but to be engaged in the making. [It's] an escape, I think. Also, I think that our generation have kind of gone back to sculptural practice because we've been so preoccupied by digital and having everything constructed around us.

'My influences come from my surroundings' – Kate

My practice is sculptural and installation but it focuses mainly on the interaction with a space and the introduction of sculptural interventions that respond to that space and open up a conversation about construction, whether it's through systems of making – like architecture, engineering, sculpting – or the actual construction of an installation. I mainly use steel, plaster, wood and high-density foam because my influences come from my surroundings which are mainly industrial and construction, and living in the city, working in the city. But recently I've been in Cork and in a really rural area of Cork. And now I'm looking at landscape. I'm still attracted to these rock formations and things that are constructed, but they're constructed by land and nature rather than these systems of making like architecture or engineering.

My installations are made up of found objects, also construction materials, but I feel like the output is very different. I make quite colourful, vibrant installations that differ so much from Kate's practice. It can be anything from plastic bags, wire, insulation, pipe. What I take from those objects or materials is the potential I see in their materiality. I suppose that with the materials I use, a lot of them will have been collected over time. I might have something for two years before it ends up in an installation. It then kind of disassembles and transforms... My work kind of focuses on the ability to assemble and disassemble.

'The aspect of play and being playful' – Ellen

I think the most important part to me is the aspect of play and being playful with my work. I feel like... being able to communicate the idea of not taking things too seriously – and I feel like things can get very, very serious, and I think that that's not in my heart what is at the centre of why I make work. I make it to, as we said, get into our hands and out of our heads and just have fun with it. And the fact that we can build a career around the idea of having fun and creating connections is amazing.

Watch the interview:

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/8094850/video/507468601>

The Dock Commission:

<https://www.thedock.ie/learning-projects/ellen-duffy>

Visit Ellen Duffy's website:

www.ellen-duffy.com

Ellen & Kate Instagram:

[@ellenduffy_va](https://www.instagram.com/ellenduffy_va)
[@_katemurphy_](https://www.instagram.com/_katemurphy_)

Louise Manifold

‘That spark is the thing that keeps you moving’



The Artist

Louise Manifold works conceptually with film, photography, sculpture and text. Her multidisciplinary practice reflects upon the boundaries of neurosis and myth as a means to explore human disconnection from the lived world in favour of a private reality. Louise graduated from Central St Martins College, London, and the Galway/Mayo Institute of Technology, Ireland. She has been the recipient of awards from The Arts Council of Ireland, Culture Ireland and from local authorities. She has exhibited extensively throughout Ireland and internationally in exhibitions at Galway International Arts Festival; The Science Gallery, Dublin; The MAC, Belfast; ISCP, New York; Proximal Distances, Chicago; Supermarket Art Fair, Stockholm; Red House Arts Centre, Syracuse New York; Candid Arts Centre, London; and 411 Galleries, China.



The Commission

In spring of 2020, Louise Manifold and the singer Elizabeth Hilliard travelled to Musée d'art et d'histoire de Neuchâtel, Switzerland, the museum which houses the [Jaquet-Droz automata](#), three beautifully handmade mechanical animated dolls dating from the 18th century, and there, made a short film in response to these extraordinary creations. This project, developed with Hilliard, was presented at The Dock, along with other new and recent work, as part of the [Air Looms](#) exhibition.



LOUISE MANIFOLD IN HER OWN WORDS

'The world decided it for me'

I'm not really sure when I decided that this is what I was going to be, but I kind of felt like the world decided it for me. I remember once a curator said to me when I was quite young (it was one of my first shows), "We think that you have something interesting to say, and we'd like to give you the opportunity to say it". Then you have a spark there and then you want to follow that spark. And that spark is the thing that keeps you moving and makes you want to make, and it gives you encouragement. So, a huge amount is also this idea of being encouraged. If you're not encouraged to be an artist, it's a spark that will kind of fall away.

'Three automaton dolls'

I was working for quite a while on a project on three automaton dolls. There is the writer, there is the draftsman and there is a musician. And I spent about three years documenting them in a museum in Neuchâtel, Switzerland. The more I documented them, the more curious I became about them. Because each of these is wind-up, they rely on an assistant to wind them, and then they perform. I really wanted to find a way to involve another kind of layer of interpretation with them. I kept thinking about their performances and someone performing for them.

'I write a lot for my work'

Something I'm very interested in is collaborating with people. I was very lucky I got in touch with [Elizabeth Hilliard](#), who is an Irish singer who has an incredibly expressive range and a really strong presence. I really love how Elizabeth sings and how she can kind of shape words through music. She works very expressively through music and opera, and I wanted to try and write libretto style. I do write a lot for my work.

'Things come to you'

I think there's a way that I've learned to think about art making which is more along the lines of objective chance, kind of a more surrealist approach. I find if you are very open things come to you. The Dock Commission came at the right time for me, and it was great to have the opportunity to just focus on making.

'Noises in me that wouldn't leave'

When the lockdown came in, I live in a remote part of Galway so I couldn't get back into my studio. I had my pencils; I had my laptop, and I had a really big desire to think a bit more about sighing and these other kind of noises in me that wouldn't leave. And I was already working with Elizabeth on this idea of visual design for sound and I talked to her. We had a WhatsApp conversation and I said: "Look, do you want to try this again in a different way because I've got the opportunity to make now, and I've got the time." We had endless time that you could actually just sit down and draw again and think in this really organic way. So, I just worked with what was there and this connection I had with Elizabeth. The one thing The Dock Commission gave me was the support that I could make stuff given a really tight situation, but also kind of convinced me that you can make work, [that] some of the best work you'll ever make is when you're in a corner.

'I'm grateful to be an artist'

I'm kind of grateful that I [got to] go down the road of being an artist. A huge amount is down to the colleges you go to, the support networks within colleges. And, this is very important, that the people there see your potential and that being an artist is something you're happy to do, regardless of academic points or anything else. Making art suddenly becomes something you want to finish, and you want the artwork to be more than finished; you want it to be finished to a standard. But I do remember one curator saying to me: "sometimes being an artist is the best thing an artist can be, and that's all they can be".

Watch the interview:

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/8094850/video/507472676>

The Dock exhibition & commission

<https://www.thedock.ie/exhibitions/air-looms>

Visit Louise Manifold's website:

www.louisemanifold.com

Louise's Instagram:

[@louisemanifold](https://www.instagram.com/louisemanifold)

Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh

‘My whole identity is wrapped up in this’



The Artist

Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh is a leading painter of her generation whose work has received national and international recognition. Sinéad graduated in 2001 from Fine Art Painting at the Dublin Institute of Technology. She has exhibited extensively in Ireland and abroad at venues including Limerick City Gallery of Art, Anthony Slayter-Ralph Fine Art, Los Angeles; Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris; Millennium Court Arts Centre, Armagh; Highlanes Municipal Art Gallery, Drogheda; The Living Room Gallery, New York; and Ard Bia, Berlin. Sinéad's work is represented in numerous public and private collections.

The Commission

For this commission, Sinéad researched, read and developed new collaborations in the area of literature while continuing to develop work in her studio. Literature, particularly the works of writers of the calibre of Pádraic Ó Conaire, Samuel Beckett, Seamus Heaney and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, has been hugely influential in her work. Sinéad's interests are in the act of painting itself and in the qualities of paint as a material. She engages with painting as a language. Much like a poet, she is interested in ambiguity, and in anachronisms.



SINÉAD NÍ MHAONAIGH IN HER OWN WORDS

'Art chose me'

I often think that art chose me. I won a scholarship for business college, and I realised immediately that this was not my calling. I left the business college, and I went to the National Gallery and sat in front of a Caravaggio and realised that my calling was in the visual arts. I decided that that was what I was going to do. And that commitment is a vocation. I always say art chose me but it's a vehicle for me to understand my own self in the world and how I communicate with the world. My whole identity is wrapped up in this. I'm currently based in Bray, Co Wicklow. I have a purpose-built studio which isn't very large but it's a place of work. When I'm not there in person, I want to be there in person.

'Suddenly I had direction'

I was thinking about [the Canadian-born American abstract painter] Agnes Martin and Agnes Martin used to sit in her chair waiting for inspiration. And she had one sentence; 'What will I do next?' And then my phone rang, and it was the director of The Dock, Sarah Searson. She invited me to participate in The Dock Commission. I was speechless at the time as I had to process what she was saying. I got so excited by it. So, I was thinking about Agnes Martin and that quote and then this happened. Suddenly I had direction. I started three paintings.

'I wanted to reach out to a writer'

I was reading *Four Sides Full* by [Irish poet] Vona Groarke, and I wanted to reach out to a writer, to participate in a way with this commission. So, the paintings are now complete, and the writer will hopefully respond to these paintings (Vona Groarke and Padraig Regan did subsequently write new poems in response to the paintings). And that really made me so excited because the commission gave me the confidence to communicate with the writer.

'I reached a sense of place'

I prepared the three surfaces, I worked on the backgrounds first. There's at least sixty layers preparing in each background. I decided to complete these landscapes, if you like, I wanted to place shapes figuratively on the surface. [Art critic, novelist, painter and poet] John Berger wrote: "Sometimes a landscape seems to be less a setting for the life of its inhabitants than a curtain behind which their struggles, achievements and accidents take place. Landmarks are no longer only geographical but also biographical and personal..." And that's something I really did think about while painting these three paintings. I felt I reached a sense of place as well, and I knew I had achieved that. The three paintings were enough, they had completed my assignment, if you like.

'It's amazing how people respond to you'

When you have exhibitions and you meet the public, it's amazing how people respond to you as a person and an artist, and they respond to your practice and your work on the wall. It's a job, and I have commitments. I have to be in the studio. I have to empty my world out on the canvas, basically. There's a personal biography in the work.

Watch the interview:

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/8094850/video/507473516>

The Dock Exhibition & Commission:

<https://www.thedock.ie/exhibitions/sinead-ni-mhaonaigh>

Visit Sinéad Ní Mhaonaigh's website:

<https://sineadnimhaonaigh.com/>

Sinéad's Instagram:

[@sineadnimhaonaigh](https://www.instagram.com/sineadnimhaonaigh)

Analogue: Analogue film is the type of film that was in common usage before digital cameras were invented.
Avant-garde cinema: Avant-garde cinema is a filmmaking method that explores non-narrative forms.
Bedouin: The Bedouin is an ethnic group of nomadic Arabs who have historically inhabited the desert regions in North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, Upper Mesopotamia, and the Levant.
Bell & Howell Ringmaster 11 Slide Viewer: This is a type of projector.
Brooke Bond: This is a brand of tea.
Caravaggio: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio was an Italian painter who practised in the late 16 th and early 17 th centuries.
Celluloid: Celluloid film is a strip of transparent film base with a plastic coating.
Cézanne: Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) was a French artist and Post-Impressionist painter.
Choreographed: Of an event or course of action that is planned very carefully.
Cold War: The Cold War was the term given to the state of hostility that existed between the Soviet bloc countries and the Western powers from 1945 to 1990.
Declaration of Human Rights: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an international document adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 that enshrines the rights and freedoms of all human beings.
Duchamp: Henri-Robert-Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) was a French-American painter, sculptor, chess player, and writer.
Endoscopic camera: An endoscopic camera is a very small camera with a long cable which can be used to view small areas. Endoscopic cameras were originally only used for medical purposes.
Factory Records: Factory Records was a Manchester-based British independent record label founded in 1978.
Figurative: Figurative art is art that is clearly based on real objects.
<i>From Giotto to Cézanne:</i> <i>From Giotto to Cézanne</i> is a book about Western art written by Michael Levey and first published in 1962.

Gauguin: Eugène Henri Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) was a French Post-Impressionist artist.
Gesso: Gesso is a mixture of plaster and glue used in painting and sculpture.
Icon paintings: Icon paintings are one of the earliest forms of Christian art.
Installation: An art installation is a three-dimensional visual artwork that is often created for a specific space.
Human psyche: The human psyche is the totality of the human mind comprising the conscious mind, the subconscious mind and the unconscious mind.
Pigment: A pigment is a substance that gives something a particular colour when it is present in it or added to it.
Plaster-casting: To make a copy or mould of an object using plaster or to cover something in plaster.
Projection mapping: Projection mapping is a projection technique used to turn objects into a display surface for video projection.
Super 8 film: Super 8 film is a motion picture film format that was released in 1965.
Thinking performatively: Thinking of an artwork as a form of performance.
Tehran: Tehran is the capital of Iran.
Triptych: A triptych is a work of art that is divided into three sections that are hinged together.
Van Gogh: Vincent Willem van Gogh (1853-1890) was a Dutch Post-Impressionist artist.
Voice-over: The spoken words of a person you cannot see in a piece of film.
West Bank: The West Bank is a landlocked territory near the Mediterranean coast of Western Asia, bordered by Jordan and the Dead Sea to the east and by Israel to the south, west and north.

The Dock is a flagship arts centre in the North West offering a dynamic and exciting year-round programme of performance, art, exhibitions, commissions, projects and education programmes.

The Dock was established by Leitrim County Council in 2005 and receives additional support from the Arts Council.

www.thedock.ie

The LAB Gallery supports emerging art practices and focuses on fresh ways to develop engaged audiences for visual arts through exhibitions, projects, collaborations and learning programmes.

The LAB Gallery was established by Dublin City Council in 2005 and receives additional support from the Arts Council.

www.dublincityartsoffice.ie

