

ARTLINK

PROGRAMME REPORT

ACTIVITIES 2024



DISTANT NOT ISOLATED

We are on the periphery. But we are centred.



A WORD FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends and Supporters

It is both an honour and a pleasure to be able to support the Artlink team as they pour energy into the production and presentation of increasingly impressive programmes of work, year on year. Appreciating how Artlink builds on its strong established practices and adds new experimental activity into the mix. To experience first hand, reports of encounters with a spectrum of artists and activity that seem to touch both earth and sky simultaneously.

So it is with great pride that I present our programme report for 2024, a year in which Artlink has again continued to fulfil its mission of fostering artistic growth, nurturing creativity, and enriching communities through the arts.

Our goal is to create an environment where artists can thrive, explore new techniques and push the boundaries of their creativity. Artlink's commitment to this goal continues to shine brightly and we have provided numerous workshops, networking activities and resources, throughout the year, that engage with, empower and nurture increasing numbers of emerging and seasoned artists alike.

Artlink's artist residencies remain central to our whole programme. In attracting a variety of Artists to work on the Inishowen peninsula we are opening up possibilities for both our membership and our increasing audiences in unexpected and challenging ways. Creating a vibrant cultural environment to which our young diaspora is returning. Our residencies offer a unique opportunity for artists to connect with new environments, cultures and communities. Residency artists are also frequently returning, sharing new work, connecting with the world and extending Artlink's growing network in new and exiting directions.

MARK HILL
CHAIRMAN





INTRODUCTION

In 2024, Artlink continued to thrive as a hub for creative exchange and artistic development. Our artist residency and exchange programmes remained central to our mission, welcoming four exceptional artists: Arijit Bhattacharyya, Karolina Bregula, Neva Elliot, and Ethan Murphy. Each residency fostered meaningful engagement with the local community and contributed to the growth of the Donegal Visual Artist Network.

As part of our ongoing commitment to supporting artistic practice, Artlink developed new strategic partnerships with like-minded organisations, broadening opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

Our exhibitions programme continued to serve as a vital platform for artists at all career stages. A key element in the programme was *Meitheal*, the annual Artlink Members Show, curated by Vanessa Marsh of 126 Gallery. This exhibition featured works by fifty-four artists from Donegal and beyond, highlighting a rich diversity of voices and approaches. In addition, five solo exhibitions were presented at Fort Dunree, showcasing the work of Frank Boyce, Matthew de Kersaint Giraudeau, Pasal Ungerer, Karen Rann, and Arijit Bhattacharyya.

Work on the Artlink archive progressed steadily throughout the year, preserving our legacy while inspiring future initiatives. This process not only honours our history but also prompts reflection on Artlink's evolving impact and audience.

Our New Rhythm programme extended its reach beyond Fort Dunree to Buncrana, increasing visibility and access to the arts in the region. Through outdoor exhibitions and cultural events, we helped foster community connections and enriched the experience of both residents and visitors.

One of the year's highlights was the third edition of *Art in the Park*, an outdoor exhibition in Swan Park, Buncrana. Featuring newly commissioned works by nine artists, the show added vibrancy and creative energy to the public space.

Among Artlink's biggest successes of 2024 was *Painting in the Park*, a collaborative project with The Exchange, Buncrana. This joyful and engaging event deepened our relationship with The Exchange and demonstrated the power of cross-disciplinary collaboration to bring communities together through creativity.

In a meaningful nod to our origins, we also launched a permanent public art project involving Aileen Barr, one of Artlink's founding artists. This project connects past and present, echoing Artlink's first public art initiative and encouraging reflection on the values and vision that have shaped our identity over the years.

You will notice that a number of the pages in this report include a QR code. This leads to video documentation giving much more in depth information on the residencies, exhibitions and projects.

CIARA CHAPMAN

BRENDAN FARREN

TUNING GROUP

KEVIN HARKIN

TARA KEEGAN

LUCY MULHOLLAND

TARA EILEEN WELCH

ANNE MARIE O'HARA

HEATHER MCLAUGHLIN



PUBLIC EVENT

ART IN THE PARK III | AWAKEN

1ST - 28TH FEBRUARY

Art in the Park: Awaken brought a temporary outdoor exhibition to Swan Park, featuring works by Ciara Chapman, Brendan Farren, Tuning Group, Kevin Harkin, Tara Keegan, Lucy Mulholland, and Tara Eileen Welch. The exhibition also included participatory artworks by Anne Marie O'Hara and Heather McLaughlin.

Through the New Rhythm programme, Artlink aims to foster fresh ways of working – new routines inspired by the Celtic Agrarian Calendar – encouraging deeper connections to natural cycles, the seasons, and the unique landscape of our region.

This exhibition sought to enhance the cultural experience for both locals and visitors by making art more visible and accessible within Swan Park's beautiful natural setting. Swan Park, a treasured space gifted to the people of Buncrana by local philanthropist Harry Swan, carries a rich history linked to the town's milling heritage.

CIARA CHAPMAN | AN ILLUSTRATED JOURNEY THROUGH THE PARK





TUNING GROUP (MO LANGMUIR + SAMUEL COLLINS) | GATEWAY FOR IMBOLC





TARA EILEEN WELCH | LIGHT



KEVIN HARKIN | FOR NO GOOD REASON



BRENDAN FARREN | BRIGIT SPREADING HER CLOAK

Gateway for Imbolc by Tuning Group (Mo Langmuir and Samuel Collins) marks the seasonal shift from winter to spring. Constructed from salvaged willow, fallen limbs, and hemp string, the sculpture draws on the protective symbolism of St Brigid's Cross to create a threshold of care in the landscape. This site-specific work invites visitors to contribute their own crosses, building a collective gesture that celebrates renewal, home, and the entanglement of human and natural worlds.

Light by Tara Eileen Welch draws on Ireland's rich tradition of stained glass artistry—an art form typically found in churches, galleries, and museums, but rarely encountered in outdoor settings. In this unique work, Welch brings the ancient Celtic pagan calendar to life, illuminating a piece of forgotten heritage through both artistic craftsmanship and the ever-shifting presence of natural light.

Participatory works.

Working with the local community Heather McLaughlin led a two day making session to create a tiered chandelier with the lower tier made of bones, twigs, and dead plants, while the top burst with colourful flowers and foliage. The theme blended death and rebirth, combining dark elements with vibrant nature.

Over the course of two days, Anne Marie O'Hara welcomed local people to join her in making a five-foot-high sculpture of Brigit. The project not only resulted in a piece of artwork but also imparted valuable skills to participants, fostering a spirit of teamwork and creativity.



HEATHER MCLAUGHLIN



ANNE MARIE O'HARA

An Illustrated Journey Through the Park by Ciara Chapman offered an inclusive way to experience the park for those with mobility or visual impairments. Temporary ground decals highlighted aspects of nature, paired with QR codes linking to audio descriptions. Designed for all ages, the project used sound and visuals to help visitors connect with nature without leaving the path.

Kevin Harkin's *For no Good Reason* explores the emotional harm caused by the education system, particularly the mistreatment of children by harsh teachers in the past. Through a dark fairytale allegory - a snow leopard and swan in love with a caged, fearful snowflake - Kevin reflects on innocence stifled by fear. Rooted in memories dating back to the 1960's, the work is dedicated to those who suffered abuse.

In *Brigit Spreading Her Cloak*, Brendan Farren draws upon the ancient, traditional craft of willow weaving to create a powerful figurative artwork that pays homage to the revered Celtic goddess and saint, Brigit. With meticulous craftsmanship Brendan uses the pliant, organic quality of willow to form a dynamic representation of Brigit in the act of spreading her cloak—a symbolic gesture rooted in legend, where Brigit claimed land for a place of peace, healing, and sanctuary.

In *On the Inside*, artist Tara Keegan delves into the unseen architecture of the human body—its trillions of microscopic cells that form the foundation of all living things. Though these essential structures make up who we are, they often go unnoticed, hidden beneath the surface of conscious awareness. Keegan's work features three sculptural interpretations of human cells, created using recycled and found materials, reflecting her enduring fascination with the body's inner workings. Inspired by Brat Bríde and the Celtic festival of Imbolc—a time of fertility, renewal, and hidden potential—*On the Inside* draws a parallel between the latent life within a seed and the quiet, powerful energy held within our own cellular makeup.

Lucy Mulholland's sculpture *Upturn of Events* captures a moment of accidental transformation: an umbrella, toppled over, is reimagined in its new position. No longer serving its usual role as a shield for humans against rain and storms, it is repurposed to collect water—offering protection and sustenance to non-human life instead. This quiet, poetic gesture suggests a shift toward interspecies kinship, inviting reflection on our relationships with the more-than-human world.

ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

IRISH HOSPICE FOUNDATION SKILLS EXCHANGE

27TH JANUARY & 9TH FEBRUARY

DONEGAL CANCER SUPPORT CENTRE AND REGIONAL CULTURAL CENTRE LETTERKENNY

The Irish Hospice Foundation invited Artlink to work with them to develop and deliver a Skills Exchange in Letterkenny; two days of skills and information exchange for those working with or interested in working with people affected by dying, death, grief and loss, using creative practices.

The exchange was prompted by three questions:-

- How do we best support people who are bereaved?
- What are the roles for arts and creativity?
- How might this be offered at individual, community and systemic level?

The Irish Hospice Foundation Arts are developing a programme of training and support for people working through creative arts with people impacted by grief and loss. While small in number, there are a selection of practitioners working in this space in Ireland representing a range of both clinical and creative backgrounds. While the Irish Hospice Foundation recognise that there is need for complementary or discreet skills they know that there is limited understanding of each other's disciplines. This Skills Exchange was a first step in exploring how this diversity of practices can be complementary; to share existing practice and explore opportunities. These sessions were informal and discursive, they covered:-

- An introduction to Public Health grief pyramid
- Theories of Grief and creative engagement
- Approaches and responses to those in need from separate disciplines
- Health and care systems in Ireland
- Formal and informal provision nationally and locally

ENGAGEMENT

NORTH WEST HOME EDUCATION GROUP

23RD MAY

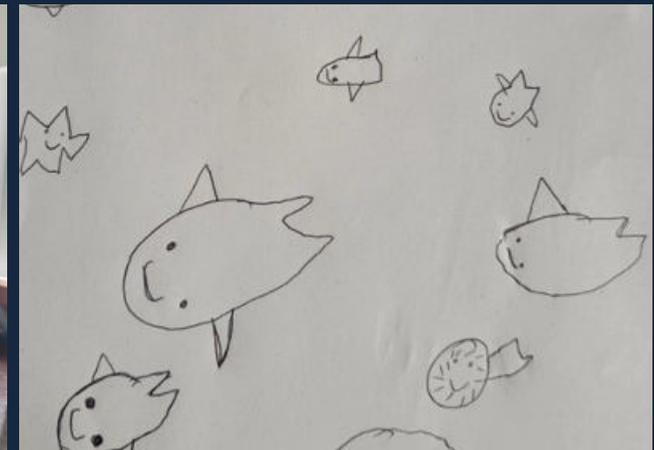
The winners of Clean Coasts Ocean Hero's youth award 2023 presented their research to the pupils of Desertegney National School at an exhibition in the Saldanha Gallery.

In a peer to peer learning session, the winners from North West Home Education Group shared the story of their question, 'What can you flush down the toilet?'

They talked about the experiments with materials that they carried out, participating in the ESB Science Blast, visits to the Mill River Conservation Trust, beach cleaning, and how they wrote letters to companies who claimed their products were flushable which were, after tests, not flushable at all.

Attendees learned about waste, water, plastic, water treatment, fungi, and worms that eat plastic, and dreamed of a world where everyone knew how to be respectful of the earth and acted in a responsible way.

Artlink and Amach Anseo are very proud of these young people and are honoured to have facilitated this exhibition and demonstration.



The exhibition *Everyday Objects Transformed by the Conflict*, hosted at Fort Dunree, focused on the personal and often overlooked aspects of the Troubles, in Northern Ireland, highlighting how ordinary objects became powerful symbols of resilience, loss, and memory for those who lived through the conflict.

Fort Dunree, just twenty minutes drive from Buncrana, located just south of the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, is a site of significant historical importance in the history of Ireland's colonisation. Its position in the border region places it at the heart of the narrative surrounding the Troubles, a conflict that deeply affected communities across both sides of the border. It was interesting for visitors to see the exhibition in the context of a military museum with its references to a much longer and wider history of conflict.

The exhibition drew a diverse audience to Fort Dunree, which is already a popular destination for both locals and international visitors. Many come to the site to enjoy its natural beauty, explore the military museum, or engage with Artlink's thought-provoking exhibitions. The exhibition provided a unique platform to gather and reflect on the reactions of this varied audience. Their responses underscored the importance of embracing multiple viewpoints in the ongoing process of nurturing peace and reconciliation.

In addition to the exhibition, *Artlink and Healing Through Remembering* organised public events to further engage visitors. An intimate creative writing workshop held on Saturday, February 10, demonstrated the power of everyday objects to inspire conversations about difficult topics. Participants were encouraged to explore the emotional and historical significance of these objects, using creativity to process and express their thoughts. The resulting creative writing pieces and conversation touched on much wider subjects related to the participants' personal stories, prompted by the objects exhibited. A guided tour of the exhibition on Saturday, February 24, also drew a diverse crowd, fostering a deeper understanding of the stories and themes presented.

EXHIBITION

EVERYDAY OBJECTS TRANSFORMED BY THE CONFLICT

PRODUCED BY
HEALING THROUGH REMEMBERING

29TH JANUARY - 6TH MARCH



Milk bottle used as petrol bomb

The glass milk bottle it was in everyone's home became a symbol of resistance – the petrol bomb – which was one of the main weapons against the security forces, who were the agents of the state that had oppressed the community and opposed the fight for civil rights. Petrol bombs were used in many other parts of the world during civil rights campaigns, as a weapon for civilians when they had nothing else other than stones against armed forces.

Label written by Frankie McMeekin, private collector

Knit Tie made from Prison Blanket

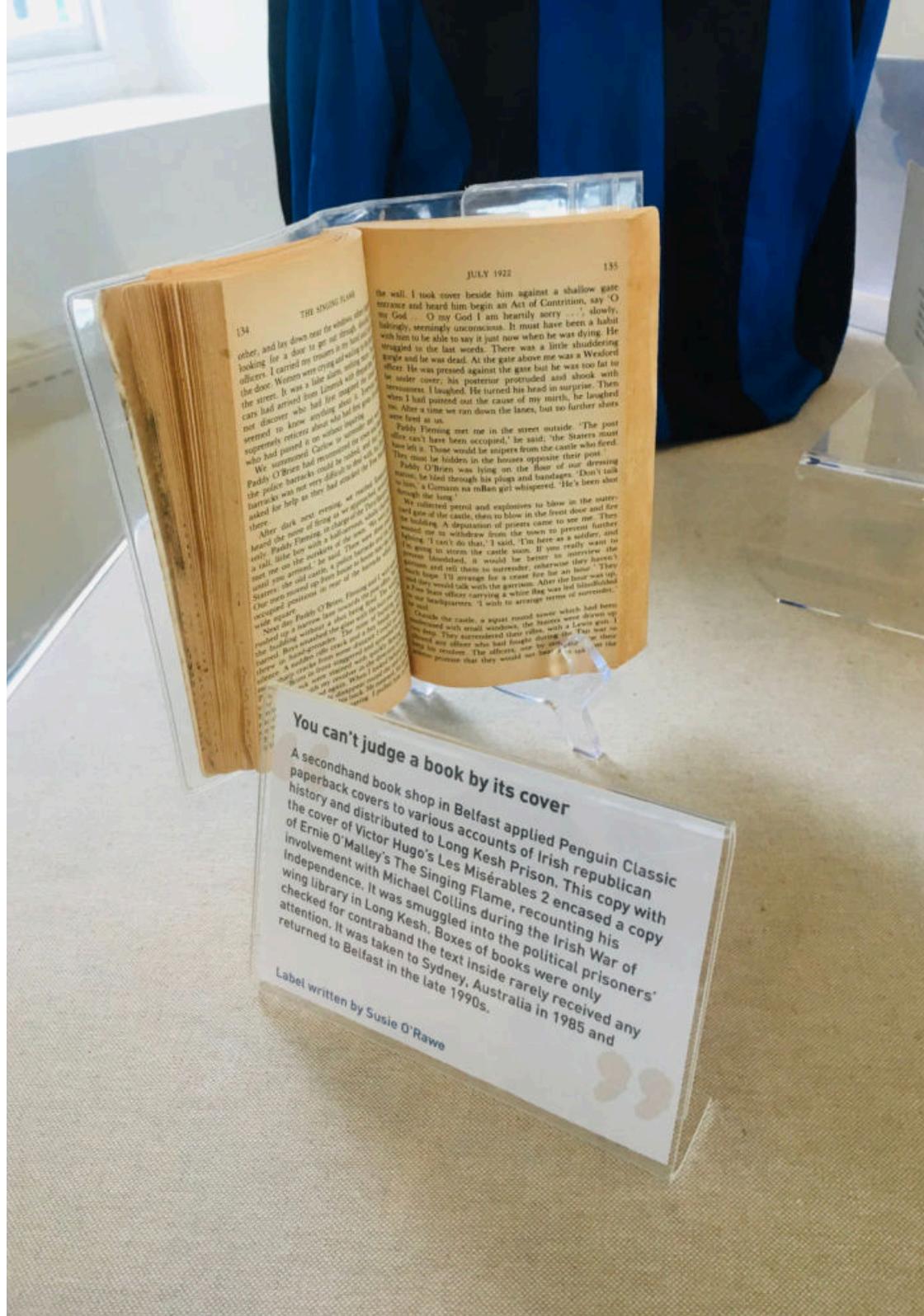
Knit ties like this one of a number of items of clothing made from the blanket were made in the 1970s. It was a long working day for the men in the prison and they had to make the ties for their own use. The ties were made from the blanket and were used as a symbol of resistance. The prison blanket was made from wool and was used for the men in the prison. The prison blanket was made from wool and was used for the men in the prison. The prison blanket was made from wool and was used for the men in the prison.



Car Part

The rail workers had withdrawn their labour in a pay and conditions dispute. Thursday 8 March 1973 was somewhat quieter and more relaxed in the City of London as a result. An air of relaxed informality had settled; luncheon parameters were stretched. At 2.41 I was having a "pie and a half pint" in the Lord Nelson, just across from the entrance to the Old Bailey with some colleagues when we were interrupted by the Metropolitan Police who ordered us out. Some minutes later as I walked along Newgate Street I heard the unmistakable sound of an explosion, or as it is known in some circles a "big smoke". This artefact is a reminder.

Label written by Brendan Moegan



You can't judge a book by its cover

A secondhand book shop in Belfast applied Penguin Classic paperback covers to various accounts of Irish republican history and distributed to Long Kesh Prison. This copy with the cover of Victor Hugo's Les Misérables, 2 encased a copy of Ernie O'Malley's The Singing Flame, recounting his involvement with Michael Collins during the Irish War of Independence. It was smuggled into the political prisoners' wing library in Long Kesh. Boxes of books were only checked for contraband the text inside rarely received any attention. It was taken to Sydney, Australia in 1985 and returned to Belfast in the late 1990s.

Label written by Susie O'Rawe

ENGAGEMENT

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES ARTISTS AND CRAFTERS: NORTH & SOUTH

WITH HARES CORNER CO-OP, GARVAGH

8TH MARCH FORT DUNREE

3RD MAY GARVAGH

Artlink hosted Connecting Artists and Crafters: North & South, a one-day site visit designed to foster exploration, collaboration, and shared learning between artists and crafters from both sides of the border. This initiative brought together Artlink in Donegal and Hare's Corner Cooperative in the Causeway Coast and Glens, providing a platform to exchange best practices, ideas, skills, and experiences.

The theme of the day was Sharing, and participants were encouraged to bring something personal to contribute—whether homemade food, plants, stories, poems, or simply a meaningful recommendation. The event opened with introductions and refreshments, followed by a presentation from both Artlink and Hare's Corner Cooperative, sparking discussions on shared experiences and approaches. A communal lunch reinforced the spirit of connection before the afternoon unfolded with a guided tour of Fort Dunree Military Museum, and a reflective closing session.



Building on the connections made in March, a return visit to Garvagh took place on Friday, 3rd May, hosted by Hare's Corner Cooperative. This follow-up gathering provided another opportunity for artists and crafters to deepen their engagement and exchange skills in a new setting. The day featured a copper etching demonstration, a guided forest walk, and a visit to the local museum, all designed to highlight the rich cultural and natural heritage of the area. After a shared lunch, participants contributed to the planting of a 'hare's corner'—a space dedicated to biodiversity and sustainability—before taking part in taster sessions including sun printing, copper etching, and the design of a 'hare's corner' sign. The event concluded with informal discussions, allowing participants to connect further and gather details for a shared directory, ensuring that the relationships and collaborations formed through this project would continue to grow beyond the event itself.

Supported by the International Fund for Ireland through the Connecting Communities: Coasts, Hills and Glens project, these gatherings strengthened cross-border artistic ties, fostering an environment where creative practitioners could exchange knowledge, develop new collaborations, and build lasting connections. The project was initiated and organised by Claire Heaney McKee of Rathmullan The Way Forward.

CONNECTED

At its heart Artlink is about people. Strangers are just people who aren't members yet

ENGAGEMENT

AMACH ANSEO

COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT

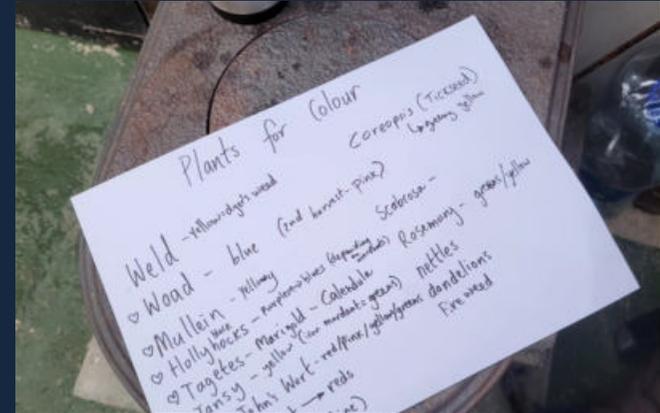
Amach means 'out' and Anseo means 'here'; Amach Anseo is Irish for 'the future' or 'henceforth'. Established in 2017 by Rebecca Strain, Amach Anseo finds its home at The Potting Shed, a space created and conceptualised by artist Christine Mackey in 2013 during the Resistance and Rebellion residency at Fort Dunree.

Amach Anseo Community Garden at Fort Dunree has been a hub of creativity, sustainability, and community engagement throughout 2024. The year saw a range of hands-on activities connecting people with nature and traditional crafts.

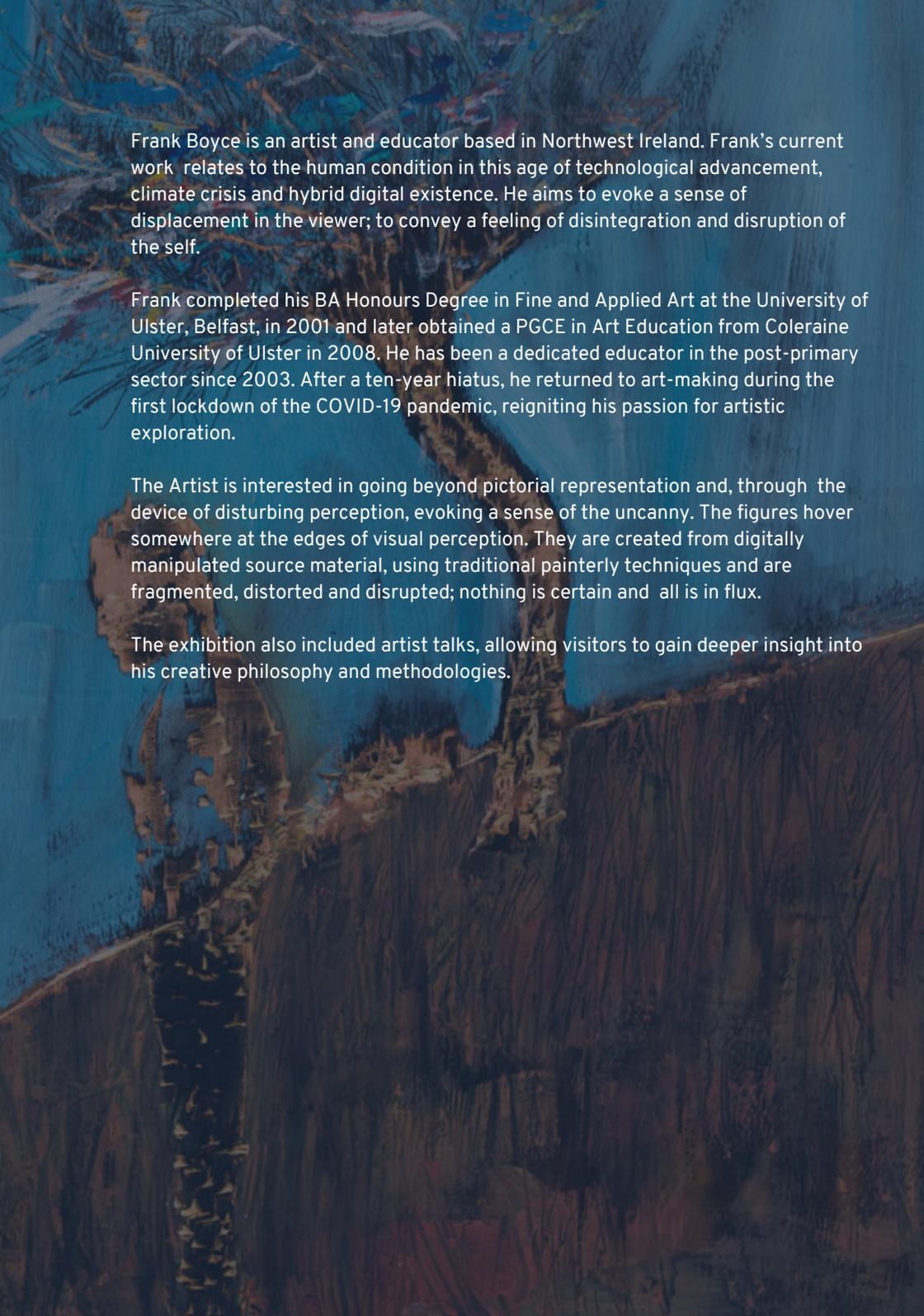
Foraging played a key role in the garden's projects, with members gathering plants for natural dyeing and materials to craft handmade paintbrushes. The garden also hosted a successful organic potato sowing initiative, planting 'Connect' potatoes sourced from a local farmer. While efforts to grow carrots faced challenges due to shallow soil, the experience provided valuable learning opportunities.

The team also focused on maintaining and enhancing shared spaces. The Garden of Reflection was tidied, signs were repainted, and the polytunnel frame received a fresh coat of paint. Creative and sustainable projects flourished, with participants dyeing wool, making glitter from dried flowers and seeds, and hosting an exhibition on water in collaboration with North West Home Education.

Amach Anseo also welcomed international visitor Yujin Lee from South Korea and celebrated the annual Women's Nature in Mind day in partnership with Women's Collective Donegal, reinforcing the garden's role as a space for connection, creativity, and ecological awareness.







Frank Boyce is an artist and educator based in Northwest Ireland. Frank's current work relates to the human condition in this age of technological advancement, climate crisis and hybrid digital existence. He aims to evoke a sense of displacement in the viewer; to convey a feeling of disintegration and disruption of the self.

Frank completed his BA Honours Degree in Fine and Applied Art at the University of Ulster, Belfast, in 2001 and later obtained a PGCE in Art Education from Coleraine University of Ulster in 2008. He has been a dedicated educator in the post-primary sector since 2003. After a ten-year hiatus, he returned to art-making during the first lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic, reigniting his passion for artistic exploration.

The Artist is interested in going beyond pictorial representation and, through the device of disturbing perception, evoking a sense of the uncanny. The figures hover somewhere at the edges of visual perception. They are created from digitally manipulated source material, using traditional painterly techniques and are fragmented, distorted and disrupted; nothing is certain and all is in flux.

The exhibition also included artist talks, allowing visitors to gain deeper insight into his creative philosophy and methodologies.

EXHIBITION

LEFT FIELD

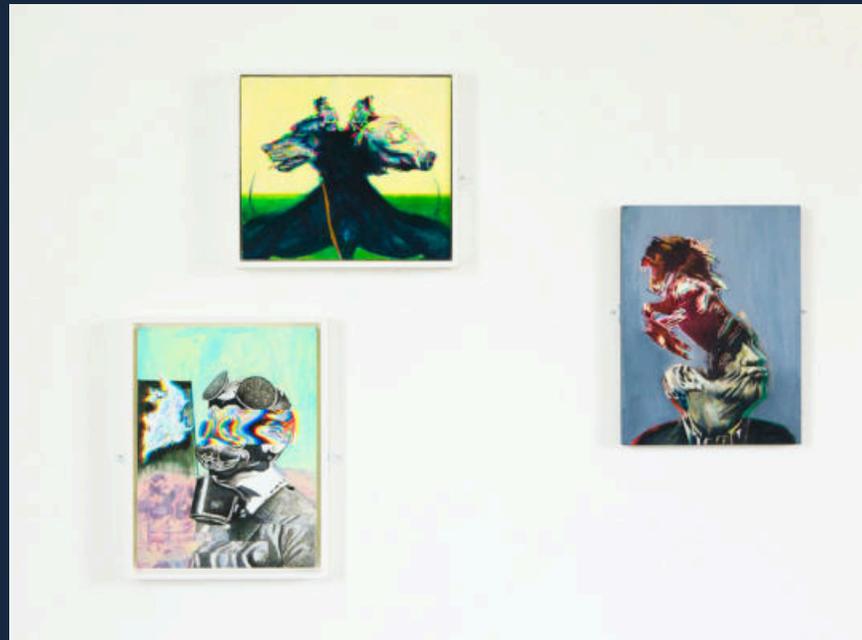
FRANK BOYCE

11TH MARCH - 7TH APRIL









RESEARCH

NORWAY RESEARCH TRIP

10TH - 13TH APRIL

Introduction

From April 10th to April 13th, 2024, two members of Team Artlink, Martha McCulloch and Rebecca Strain, embarked on a research trip to Nordland, Norway. The purpose of the trip was to strengthen cultural connections between northern Norway and Ireland, explore potential partnerships, and deepen our understanding of the artistic landscape in the region. Throughout our journey, we engaged in numerous conversations, visited key cultural sites, and met with artists, curators, and cultural leaders.

Building Connections in Northern Norway

Our trip commenced in Bodø, where we met Marie Peyre, International Communications & Relations Manager for Bodø2024. Her insights into the European Capital of Culture initiative resonated with Artlink's New Rhythm programme, reinforcing the significance of cultural exchanges between our regions.

A key highlight was visiting NØUA, an artist-run institution for photography as contemporary art. Established by Marianne Bjørnmyr and Dan Mariner in 2017, NØUA fosters collaboration between Norwegian and international artists, curators, and art historians. We attended the opening of Morten Torgersrud's exhibition, gaining valuable insights into contemporary photography practices.

At Stormen Library and Theatre, we explored the exceptional library gallery curated by artist Stian Hansen. Over coffee, we discussed the challenges and rewards of being an artist in a rural coastal community, curating exhibitions, and the library's role as a cultural hub. The library's children's librarian, Ellen, kindly captured a memorable photo of us in Stian's office.

Another significant meeting was with Maria Lyngstad Willassen, an advisor in art and cultural development and Artist in Residence Coordinator. She expressed enthusiasm for our efforts and encouraged the establishment of a reciprocal residency program between Ireland and Norway.

In Kabelvåg, we connected with Christian and Ragnhild Skagen and explored the vibrant local art scene. Christian was Artlink artist in residence in 2019. The village boasts an art school, an Italian deli, a glass-making studio, and a former courthouse-turned-community craft centre, which now offers tools and ski rentals to residents.

Engaging in Conversations on Art and Culture

Throughout our journey, we had the privilege of engaging with a diverse array of artists and cultural leaders. Discussions centered on contemporary Sami culture, the parallels between Norwegian and Irish storytelling traditions, and the significance of supporting artists in rural coastal regions.

Among those we met were:

- Ingrid Larssen, who was part of the Edge Centring residency at Artlink in 2007.
- Anette Tunheim Jakobsen, Leader of the Cultural Cooperation in Vesterålen, who provided valuable historical context on Edge Centring, the first cultural exchange project between east Iceland, northern Norway, and Donegal.
- Former Artlink artist in residence Christian Skagen (2019)
- Adriana Alves and Trond Ansten at the North Norwegian Art Centre, where Trond shared insights into his project, The Long Tree in the Ocean.
- Giovana and Lars at Kulturfabrikken Sortland, who offered us a sneak preview of Windows of the World.

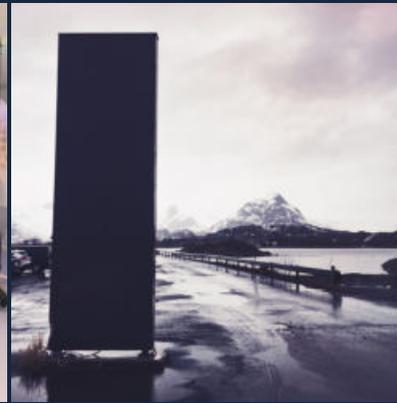
Cultural Reflections and Future Prospects

This research trip underscored the importance of fostering sustainable creative networks through residencies, exchanges, and ongoing collaboration. We observed a shared appreciation for heritage, community-driven artistic initiatives, and the role of art in shaping identity and place.

The warm reception we received throughout Nordland reaffirmed our belief in the potential for a long-term partnership between Artlink and northern Norwegian cultural organisations. The possibility of sending Irish artists to Norway and welcoming Norwegian artists to Ireland is an exciting prospect that we will continue to explore.

This trip has left us inspired, invigorated, and eager to build upon the connections we have made. We extend our gratitude to everyone who took the time to meet with us, share their knowledge, and welcome us into their creative spaces.

We look forward to the next steps in strengthening these cross-cultural ties and to seeing the collaborations that emerge from this journey.



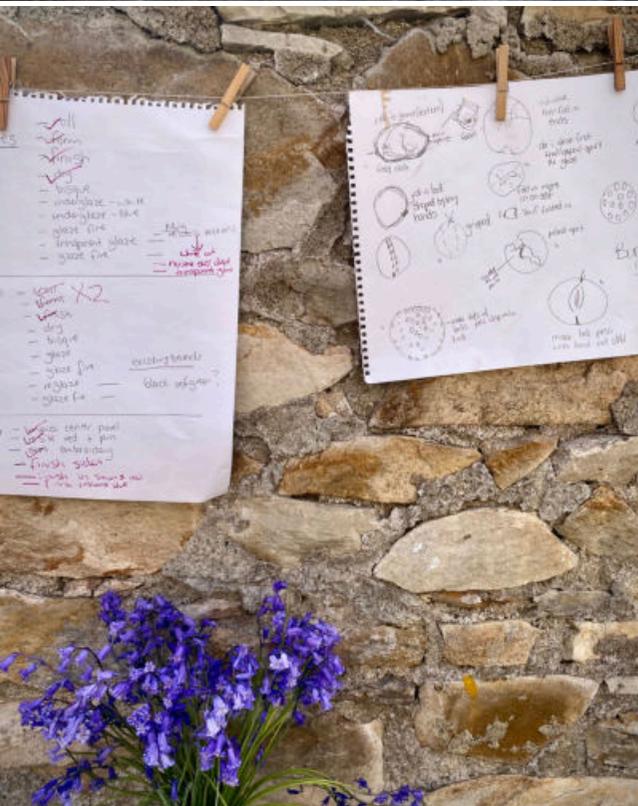
RESIDENCY

NEVA ELLIOT

MAY | JUNE | NOVEMBER

Neva Elliott's residency at Artlink provided her with a transformative period of artistic exploration and development, deeply rooted in her connection to Donegal. Over three separate visits, she engaged in an intensive creative process that culminated in the production of several new works, later exhibited in her solo show, *A Year of Making: Notes of Being Human*, at PALLAS, Dublin. The residency allowed her to immerse herself in a space conducive to experimentation, leading to the creation of *Getting out of Bed*, a piece incorporating Donegal tweed sourced from Magee and documented through photography at Glenveigh National Park. Additionally, she utilised Artlink's kiln facilities to develop *Yú*, alongside other works that emerged from research, drawing, and material exploration. This experience not only fulfilled her initial objectives but also laid the groundwork for future exhibitions, including a two-person show at the Courthouse Gallery in 2025.

Beyond achieving her original aims, the residency at Artlink facilitated a significant evolution in Elliott's working methods and artistic direction. The remoteness of the site, combined with minimal digital distractions, enabled a deep engagement with the physical act of making, shifting her approach toward a more materially and methodologically expansive practice. This newfound focus on process over presentation reshaped her artistic trajectory, fostering risk-taking and allowing for a transition into more sculptural forms of expression. The residency's impact extends beyond the work produced in 2024, influencing future experimentation and collaborations, as Elliott continues conversations with curators regarding additional showings. Her time at Artlink, therefore, not only enriched her immediate creative output but also positioned her practice for ongoing growth and innovation.





Basing herself for much of her time at Artink in The Potting Shed, and living in her camper van, Neva experienced the value of time away from technology and connectivity. This inspired her to build her own off-grid space back home.



ENGAGEMENT

CHRISTINA MCBRIDE

INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABLE PLANT & SEAWEED DEVELOPERS

22ND JULY
ARTLINK STUDIO, FORT DUNREE

This was an environmentally conscious and sustainable workshop exploring the use of local, natural materials with photographic processes. Participants gained an understanding of environmentally sustainable photographic processes and the impact that creative practice can have on the environment.

A residency in the University of Galway's Gaoth Dobhair Centre, Donegal in 2022-23 allowed Christina McBride to explore the natural and built environment of her mother's homeplace in nearby Bun an Inbhir in a series of analogue photographs developed using local fauna and peatland materials.

"My practice is embedded in the medium and processes of analogue photography. In recent years, I have worked with alternative printing processes, expanding the use and understanding of more environmentally conscious materials. During my residency I explored the plants which survive in peatland conditions to create natural and sustainable photographic developers. I also tested the properties of the seaweeds"

Christina McBride is an artist based between Glasgow and Donegal. She is part time lecturer at Glasgow School of Art, teaching in both the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) Programme and Fine Art Photography department.

EXCHANGE

ETHAN MURPHY

INTERNATIONAL ATLANTIC EXCHANGE RESIDENCY

JUNE - JULY

Ethan Murphy, a photographer from St. John's, Newfoundland, spent his residency with Artlink exploring the remote island communities of Donegal through the lens of his analogue cameras. Drawn to the connections between identity and place, Murphy immersed himself in the landscapes of Tory, Arranmore, and Inishbofin, capturing their unique character and the lives of those who call these islands home. Staying with fellow photographer Jacqui Devenney Reed, who is developing a darkroom at her home, he deepened his engagement with traditional photographic processes while continuing his exploration of rural and coastal environments.

On July 20th, Murphy shared his expertise with the local community by leading a hands-on photography workshop. Participants were introduced to the fundamentals of black-and-white film processing and had the rare opportunity to work with large-format cameras. His practice, rooted in themes of migration, memory, and the psychological impact of rural landscapes, resonated with Donegal's island communities, offering new ways to reflect on their own experiences of place and identity.

The International Atlantic Exchange Residency 2024 was organised by Artlink and CRUX, Newfoundland in collaboration with O'Brien Farm, St John's.



TORAIGH GO BRÁTH



On the west coast of the Inishowen Peninsula, just east of Fort Dunree, lies Mullagharry—a small hill with a pivotal role in the history of map-making. In 1839, Ordnance Survey (OS) hill-sketchers conducted their earliest experiments in contouring here.

For several years, Dr. Karen Rann has been researching and recreating these historic techniques through walking, sketching, and model-making. Her exhibition *Drawing with Altitude II*, invited visitors to explore Donegal's landscape through a mapmaker's eyes via walks, talks, and creative activities.

Karen first visited Inishowen in 2021 while researching her PhD on the emergence of contour lines. In 2023, she collaborated with Artlink on an art/mapping project featuring archival displays, creative responses, a festival walk, and school workshops. *Drawing with Altitude II* built on this, marking a key anniversary of OS's connection with Ireland.

The exhibition juxtaposed archival maps and sketches with contemporary creative responses, offering insight into mapping's evolution. It was part of the Earagail Arts Festival 2024 and included:

- A symposium (July 27-28) with presentations and walking talks by Karen Rann, OS200 team members, and local artists and historians.
- A pub quiz at The Laurentic Bar, hosted by quiz master Tommy McCardle, covering local mapping, oral history, and geography.
- Participatory sessions in collaboration with Feel Good Fortnight.
- Drop-in sessions, introducing OS hill-sketching techniques and exploring landscape markings.

About the Artist

Karen Rann has worked as a freelance visual artist since the 1980s, focusing on site-specific projects. A British Council-funded scholarship to the Fine Art Academy in Budapest (1992–94) deepened her interest in space and place. Since then, her work has incorporated walking and mapping, with support from Arts Council England and Creative Scotland.

In 2021, she received the J. B. Harley Research Fellowship, a prestigious award in cartography history, followed by the Helen Wallis Fellowship at the British Library in 2022. She completed her PhD at Queen's University Belfast (AHRC funded) in December 2022.

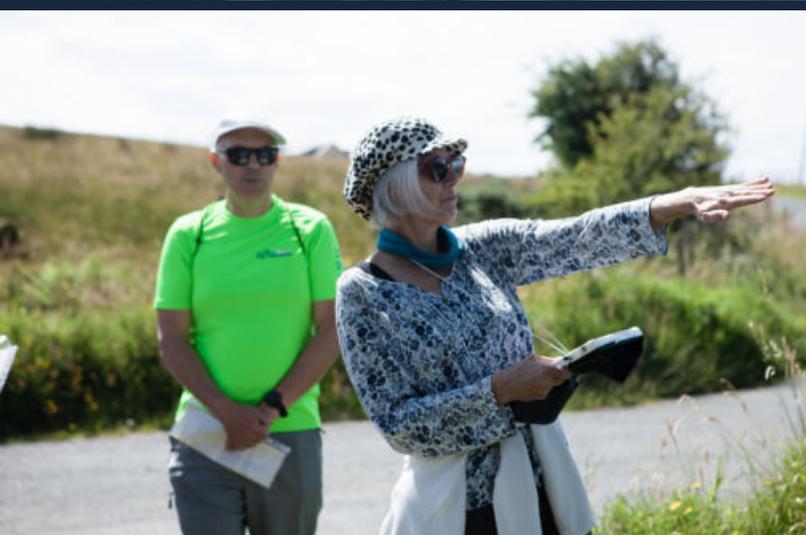
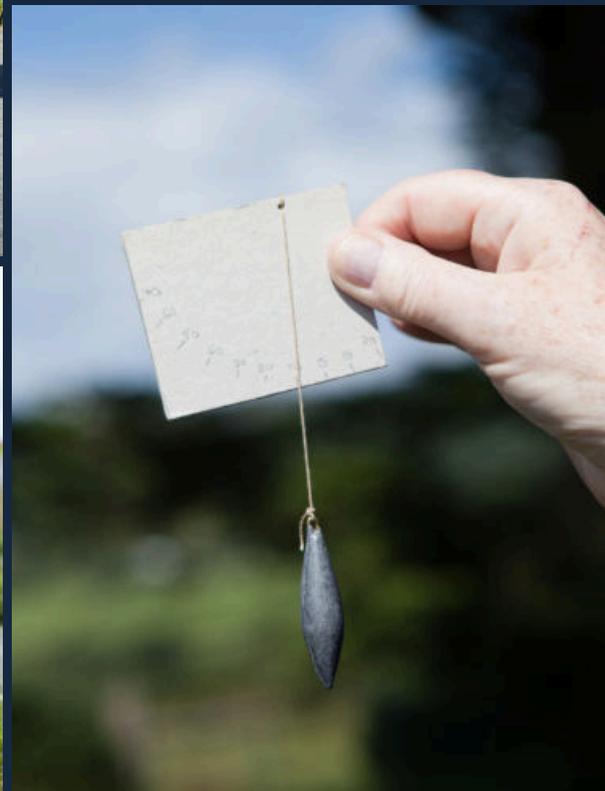
EXHIBITION

DRAWING WITH ALTITUDE II KAREN RANN

29TH JUNE - 28TH JULY









DRAWING WITH ALTITUDE II SYMPOSIUM

27TH & 28TH JULY

SEAN BEATTIE

JOHN HEGARTY

KIETH LILLEY

JOHN MCCARRON

SHARON PORTER

KAREN RANN

MHAIRI SUTHERLAND

Presentations

John McCarron: A view from the summit: the history of the geography

Keith Lilley: Surveying the Surveyors: Archaeologies of Cartography

Karen Rann: Chasing a Line: Inishowen's Place in the Story of Contour Lines on Maps

Panel Discussion: Sean Beattie, Mhairi Sutherland, John Bradley, John Hegarty, Sharon Porter.

Guided Walks

What do they call this place?

John Hegarty and Mhairi Sutherland led a walk to the Top Fort area of Dunree, combining their respective experience in local knowledge, history, drawing and conversation. This outdoors event invited people to record and share from their own perspective, using family names, nicknames and place names.

A small hill with a huge role in map-making history

Karen Rann and Sharon Porter led a walk from Green Hill to Mullagharry. Walkers surveyed the rolling hills of Desertegny through mapmaker's eyes. The walk placed the hill within its local heritage and natural environment including features from neolithic times, such as the megalithic tomb at Mullagharry's summit. On the walk Karen shared some of her findings on the ways in which hills have been flattened onto paper maps through the ages. Sharon is a local walking guide with a love of nature and the cultural heritage of the area. Sharon shared some local stories and knowledge of the local flora and landscape en route.

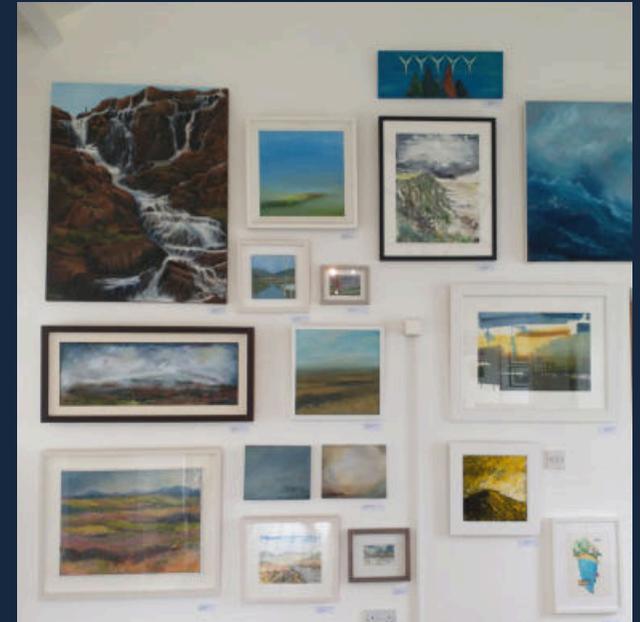
EXHIBITION

THE HILLS OF DONEGAL

28TH JUNE - 28TH JULY

The Hills of Donegal was a group exhibition designed to complement Drawing with Altitude II by Karen Rann. It explored the diverse ways artists interpret and depict hills, showcasing a range of creative approaches.

Participants were invited to engage with this theme in their own distinctive styles, using both traditional techniques—such as painting and photography—and contemporary approaches like digital art. The exhibition celebrated the rugged beauty, cultural significance, and timeless allure of Donegal's landscapes. Through an open call, it gathered a rich variety of artistic perspectives, offering Fort Dunree's diverse audience an immersive and thought-provoking experience while providing a platform for artists to share their unique visions of Donegal's hills.



RESEARCH

SHANE FINAN

THREADS: RESEARCH RESIDENCY ON SUBSEA DATA TRANSFER

SEPTEMBER

Shane Finan was invited by Crux Arts and part supported by Artlink to carry out artistic research. He traveled to Newfoundland in September 2024 for a three week research residency. He spent time investigating the place and history of the first few transatlantic telegraph cables laid in the 1850s and the current fiber optic ones that carry internet signal. He spent time with the beaches, the lichen and meeting key members of the community.

During his research, Shane visited the cable landing site and museum at Heart's Content where he began work on a video installation about subsea communications infrastructure.

Shane assembles artworks from interactive contemporary technologies, found objects and traditional artistic media. His work is based in rural environments and examines technologies in human and nonhuman entanglements.

He always collaborates. Most recently working with lichen, artists, epidemiologists, historians, gorse and fungi. As part of his practice he organizes and runs collaborative projects with artists and researchers.



ELEMENTARY

On the edge of the ocean. We look outwards.



RESIDENCY

KAROLINA BREGULA

MAY & NOVEMBER 2024

Karolina Bregula began her residency in 2023. She structured the residency over twelve months to immerse herself in the local community and develop a truly collaborative film work. She engaged with the community during two visits in June and November 2023. The initial gathering in June took place at the Bunrana cinema, where she screened her previous films and introduced the concept of her project.

In May 2024 she returned and dedicated the entire visit to filming a new five-channel piece, *The Storm*, which featured in her solo exhibition, *The Waves Are Rumbling So Loud*, at the Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art in Oldenburg, Germany in August/September 2024.

The Storm consists of portraits of five characters standing by the seaside, observing a violent storm. Their monologues describe the sea and a distant island. As the destructive wind and waves intensify, the characters' reactions reveal their deepest, hidden emotions. The threatening change in weather exposes social tensions and conflicts within the small community, which appears unprepared to face the impending dangers. The five independent yet often overlapping monologues come together to form a vocal musical piece.

Karolina returned to Bunrana in November 2024 to screen the completed film in Bunrana cinema, sharing it with the community members who had contributed to the project. Alongside this work, Karolina also continued work on a long-term project exploring women with a deep connection to the sea. As part of this, she has been collaborating with a local woman who swims in Lough Swilly all year-round. This ongoing project will culminate in both a publication and a film.





EXHIBITION

SPECULATIVE ARTEFACTS

PASCAL UNGERER

24TH MAY - 23RD JUNE

Speculative Artefacts was an exhibition of new paintings by Cork-based artist Pascal Ungerer. In 2019, Pascal relocated back to Ireland after completing an MFA at Goldsmiths University, London. Over the following five years, he developed the body of work that was exhibited at Fort Dunree.

Pascal specialises in contemporary landscape oil painting and often works on large-scale canvases. He describes his work as an 'archaeology of the recent past and a way of engaging with a specific type of peripheral topography whilst also alluding to speculative future landscapes.'

His work focuses on the in-between spaces or edgelands that lie at the intersection of the urban and rural. He has a particular interest in obsolete infrastructure on the margins of human habitation. He is fascinated by structures that are ambiguous, amorphous, or obsolete and sees them as part of an 'architecture of the periphery and an allegorical reference for time, change, and history.' He also explores this kind of peripheral environment as a way to examine the interrelationship between the built and natural world and the conflicts that sometimes arises in that space.

Pascal Ungerer is a visual artist based in Cork. His painting practice explores spatial cultures with a particular focus on peripheral topographies and speculative future landscapes. In 2016, he received a BFA from The MTU Crawford College of Art & Design, and in 2018, he completed a scholarship-funded MFA at Goldsmiths University, London.

He has exhibited work at The Saatchi Gallery (London), Roman Road Gallery (London), The Visual Centre for Contemporary Art (Ireland), CICA Museum (South Korea), Blackburn Museum (UK), and The Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre.

He has received funding awards and bursaries from The Arts Council of Ireland, Cork County Council, Cork City Council, Culture Ireland, and Goldsmiths University, London.









PUBLIC EVENTS

PAINTING IN THE PARK SWAN PARK, BUNCRANA

SATURDAY 1ST JUNE



As part of our commitment to fostering community engagement through the arts, Artlink, in collaboration with The Exchange Community Centre, hosted Painting in the Park on June 1st, 2024. Inspired by the celebrated Sondheim musical Sunday in the Park with George, this event brought together artists, performers, and local residents for a day of creativity, inclusivity, and artistic expression in the scenic surroundings of Swan Park, Buncrana.

This unique event blended a community picnic atmosphere with outdoor theatre, live music, and interactive painting sessions. By integrating performance and visual art, Painting in the Park provided an immersive cultural experience for participants of all ages and backgrounds.

Community Participation and Inclusivity

A key focus of the event was inclusivity, ensuring broad community participation, particularly among refugees and underrepresented groups. Through active engagement in painting workshops and performances, attendees were given the opportunity to contribute artistically, fostering a sense of belonging and creative empowerment.

Artistic Performances

A highlight of the event was the live enactment of scenes from Sunday in the Park with George, performed by a talented cast including professional actors:

- Glenn McGivern as George Seurat – A Ballymena-born actor trained at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, with experience in theatre, film, and television.
- Susie Garvey-Williams as Dot – A seasoned musical theatre performer who has toured extensively across the UK and Ireland.
- Andrew Tinney as the Boatman – A Donegal-based actor and playwright with work staged across the island.
- Additional cast members included Sheila Brown, Maria Fitzpatrick, Beth Fitzpatrick, Oliver Doherty, Antonia Trofymets, and Yelyzaveta Vynokurova – all accomplished performers from Inishowen.

Creative Engagement: Plein Air Painting

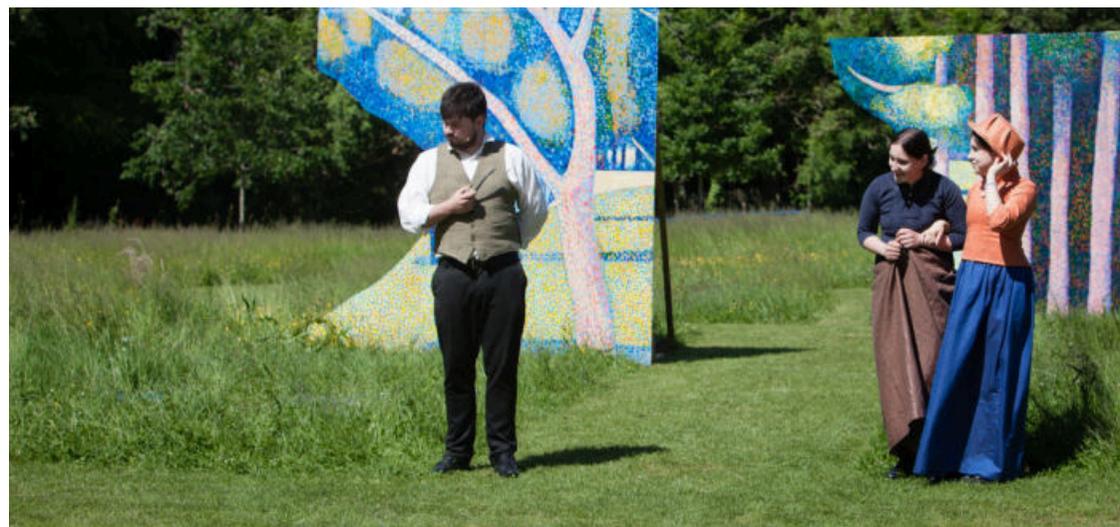
Artists and art enthusiasts were invited to participate in plein air painting, guided by respected artist Paul Kerr. Whether experienced painters or beginners, participants had the chance to explore their creativity in an open and supportive environment. Basic art materials were provided, and a special painting workshop was held for children, ensuring engagement across all age groups.

The Creative Team

The event was supported by an exceptional creative team dedicated to bringing Sunday in the Park with George to life:

- Director: Ruth Garvey-Williams – A writer, director, and choreographer with over 30 years of experience in community and professional theatre.
- Costume Design: Ruth Garvey-Williams & Afusat Motunrayo Kilani – Nigerian fashion designer Motunrayo collaborated with Ruth and a team of volunteers to recreate the iconic costumes from Seurat's masterpiece.
- Set Design: Andrew Garvey-Williams – A community artist known for enhancing Buncrana's urban landscape, Andrew led a team of volunteers in designing and constructing the set for the production.

Painting in the Park successfully demonstrated the power of collaborative, community-driven arts initiatives. The event not only celebrated artistic expression but also reinforced Artlink's mission to create inclusive, engaging, and accessible cultural experiences.







BARBARA ALLEN | FRANCES BERMINGHAM BERROW | BRIAN
BROWN | VERONICA BUCHANAN | SUZANNE BUGGY | NOREEN
BURKE | ARLENE CAFFREY | PATRICK JUDE CLAFFERTY | MARY
CROWLEY | MARK CULLEN | MARY-JOYCE DAVIS | DEIRDRE
DOHERTY | CATHERINE ELLIS | MICHAEL FRIEL | MATTHEW
GAMMON | SEAMUS GALLAGHER | UNA HEATON | NUALA
HERRON | JANET HOY | ANASTASIIA KARDINA | JOSEPHINE
KELLY | VINCENT KELLY | MOSES KIZZA | CAROLINE KUYPER |
SUSAN MANNION | VANESSA MARSH | LISA MCGILL | DONNA
MCGEE | AODÁN MCCARDLE | JOHN MCCARRON | ISEULT
MCCORMACK | JOANNE MCLAUGHLIN | KAREN MCLAUGHLIN |
KEVIN MCLAUGHLIN | AISLING MCCONVILLE | PATRICIA SPOKES
| MHAIRI SUTHERLAND | AISLING MONDS | ETHAN MURPHY |
ANNE MARIE O'HARA | SUSANNE O'REILLY | JOHN O'CONNOR |
FILIPA PONTES | NINA QUIGLEY | MICKEY ROONEY | SASH KA
SHEILS | DEBORAH STOCKDALE | REBECCA STRAIN |
GERALDINE TIMLIN | MARY TOLAND | HANS VAN MEEUWEN |
CAROLINE VESEY | AMANDA WALKER | GILLIAN WRIGHT

EXHIBITION

MEITHEAL

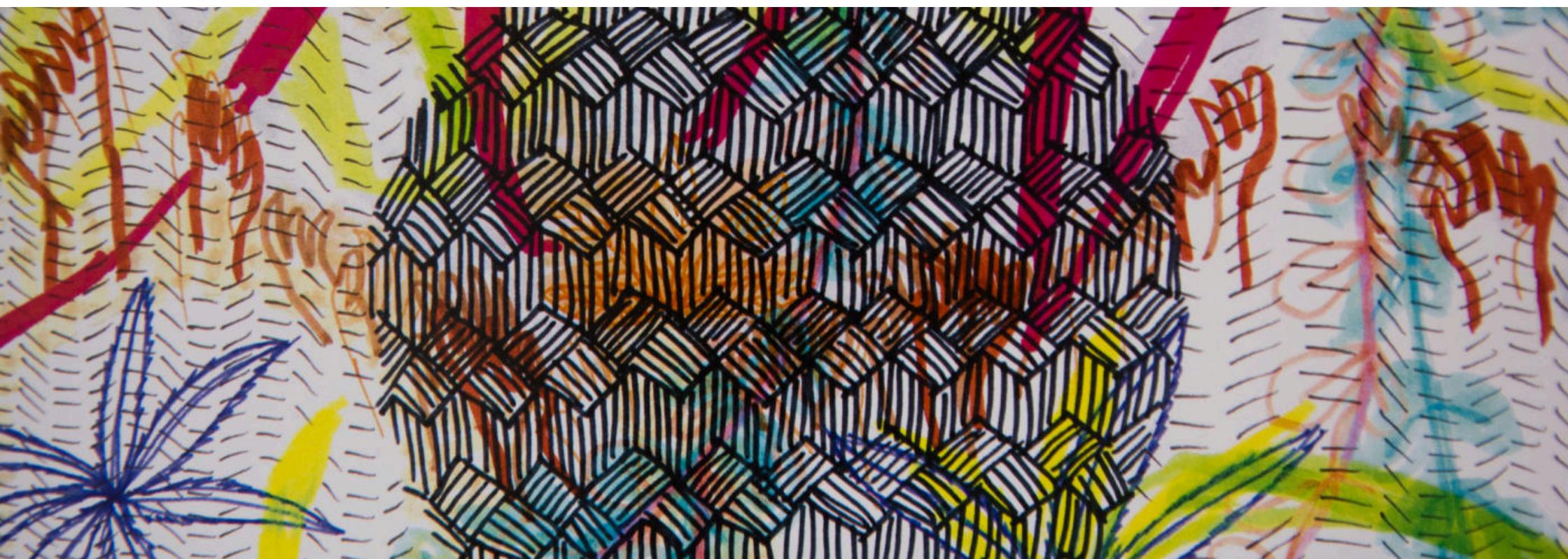
MEMBERS EXHIBITION

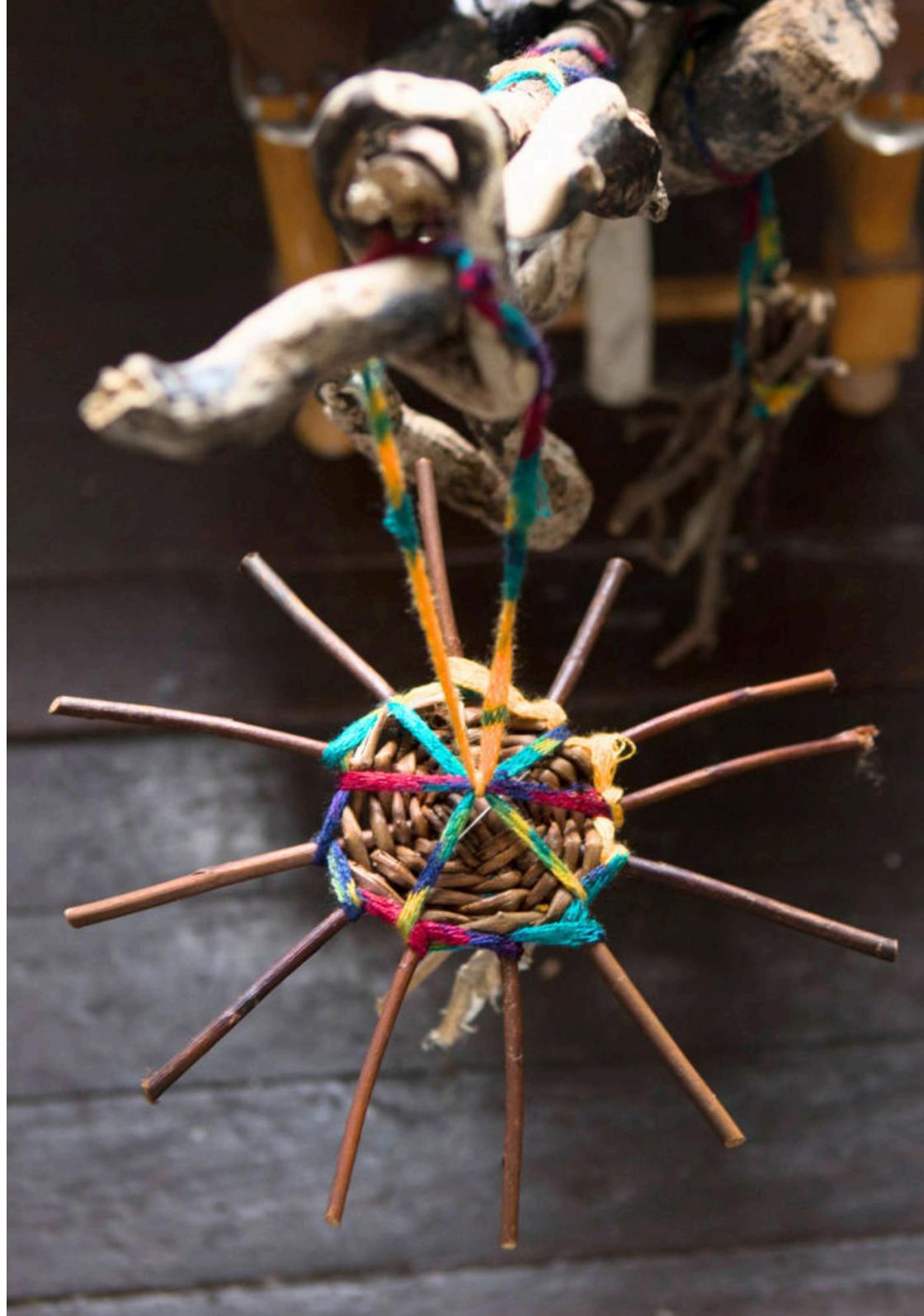
3RD AUGUST - 1ST SEPTEMBER

This year's exhibition, titled 'Meitheal', featured a vibrant and diverse collection of artworks that celebrated the themes of community and collaboration, central to Irish culture. Curated by Vanessa Jordan, a member of the 126 Gallery Board of Directors in Galway, the show brought together an impressive array of artistic expressions, including painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, performance, and film, created by both emerging and established artists from Ireland and beyond.

The theme of Meitheal was inspired by the traditional Irish practice where neighbors joined forces to assist one another during harvests, symbolizing unity and shared effort. Vanessa Jordan, the curator, explained that the exhibition had encouraged Artlink members to submit works exploring the power of collective action and the importance of fostering a sense of community. She reflected that Meitheal, once a cornerstone of rural Irish life, served as a powerful reminder of the strength and solidarity that emerge when individuals come together. Jordan noted that the concept, celebrated in the works of cultural figures like Seamus Heaney and Sean Scully, represented collaboration and resilience. She emphasized that for artists, who often work in isolation, Meitheal underscored the value of connection and the transformative possibilities of working together to overcome challenges. The exhibition demonstrated how individual creativity could thrive within a collective identity, celebrating the balance between uniqueness and community.

The range of works selected for the exhibition was a testament to the growing strength of the Artlink community. The exhibition was a celebration of creativity and connection, demonstrating the significant role art plays in building and strengthening communities.







PUBLIC ART

REVIVAL OF THE SWAN PARK CERAMIC TRAIL

AILEEN BARR & MATTHEW PORTER

24TH MAY - PUBLIC LAUNCH

Project Overview

Artlink is proud to announce the successful revival of the Swan Park Ceramic Trail, a community-focused project that celebrates the fusion of art, nature, and local engagement. Originally initiated by Aileen Barr in 1994, the Swan Park Ceramic Trail marked Artlink's first public art project. The revitalization of this cherished installation was spearheaded by Aileen Barr, who has worked closely with local artists and community members to breathe new life into the park through the creation of ceramic artworks. The project highlights Artlink's enduring commitment to community-based public art and its ongoing role in fostering local creativity.

Project Background

The original Swan Park Ceramic Trail was developed in collaboration with a local FAS scheme in the 1990s, where Aileen Barr, one of Artlink's founding members, worked to create ceramic tiles for a seating area and an environmental tile trail within Swan Park. The artwork quickly became a local landmark, contributing to the park's cultural and social identity.

Following the destruction of parts of Swan Park during the 2017 floods, Artlink recognized the importance of revisiting this project, which had deep meaning for the community. With the park's regeneration underway, the Swan Park Ceramic Trail revival was conceived as a way to honor the past while introducing new artistic elements.

Project Development

In 2023, Aileen Barr, who had relocated to San Francisco in 2002, returned to Artlink to oversee the revitalization of the Swan Park Ceramic Trail. She worked alongside local artists to develop new designs that would form the centerpiece of the project: a new ceramic seating area. Barr also organized and led a series of presentations and ceramic workshops, engaging local community groups in the process of creating tiles for the new seat. These workshops fostered public participation, allowing residents to become directly involved in the artistic transformation of their shared space.

In parallel, local artist Matthew Porter collaborated with the community to develop a new ceramic trail within the park, focusing on the biodiversity of Swan Park. His work brought attention to the park's rich flora and fauna, incorporating the ecological theme into the overall artistic vision for the park.



Research and Collaboration

The Swan Park Ceramic Trail revival project was supported by in-depth research into the park's natural history, coordinated by artist Grainne McMenamin. Artlink worked with Claire Moore (Thompson) from Keeper of the Ways (formerly Foraging Donegal) and Sue and John Shiels, who had previously conducted a Natural History Survey of Swan Park for Buncrana Tidy Towns between 2010-2012. This research provided valuable insights into the park's ecological diversity, which directly informed the ceramic trail's design.

Iconic Mosaic Recreation

One of the most iconic elements of the original Swan Park Ceramic Trail was the circular ceramic mosaic seat, which featured the theme of the Life Cycle of the Salmon. This mosaic was carefully recreated by Aileen Barr in collaboration with the community. As a focal point within the park, the mosaic continues to serve as a symbolic representation of the natural world and the deep connections between art, community, and the environment.

Community Engagement

A hallmark of the Swan Park Ceramic Trail revival project was the active involvement of local groups and artists. Aileen Barr was joined in this endeavor by two of the original Art in the Park participants, Sinead Craig and Geraldine Timlin, as well as Sue Goodwin, an artist-in-residence at Artlink in its early years. Local artist Julie Magee also contributed to the project, alongside numerous community groups such as iCare, the North West Home Education Group, the Sliabh Sneacht Day Centre, Gaelscoil Bhun Cranncha, and The Exchange Intercultural Cafe. The collaborative spirit of the project ensured that it was deeply rooted in the local community, with participants of all ages and backgrounds contributing to the ceramic pieces.

Artist Profiles

- Aileen Barr is a distinguished ceramic artist with a notable history of creating public art projects. Her work includes renowned tiled stairways in San Francisco and several collaborative projects with Colette Crutcher. Aileen co-founded Artlink and led various community-based public art initiatives in Donegal before relocating to the United States in 2002. She continues to contribute significantly to the public art landscape both in Ireland and abroad.
- Matthew Porter is a visual artist and ceramicist based in Buncrana, County Donegal. He holds a BA in Contemporary Applied Arts from Crawford College of Art and Design, Cork. In 2019, Porter was commissioned to create a tile piece for the Laurentic Memorial at Fort Dunree. As the founder of Puca Pottery, Porter has been actively involved in local educational initiatives at Artlink and has built a reputation as a key contributor to the region's ceramic art community.

Project Funding and Support

The Swan Park Ceramic Trail revival project was made possible through the generous funding and support of The Arts Council and Donegal County Council. Their contribution has ensured that Artlink could continue its mission to foster community-based art projects that celebrate local heritage, engage diverse groups, and create lasting artistic legacies.

Conclusion

The Swan Park Ceramic Trail revival project has not only reimagined a significant community artwork but has also deepened the connection between art, nature, and the local community. Through the efforts of Aileen Barr, Matthew Porter, and a wide array of local artists and community groups, the project has revitalized Swan Park as both a public space and an artistic landmark. This project stands as a testament to the power of public art to bring people together, honor the past, and inspire future generations to engage with their surroundings in creative and meaningful ways.







ENGAGEMENT

FLOW, FORM, AND THE NATURE OF WATER

EXPLORING THE INTRIGUING BEHAVIOUR OF WATER
THROUGH EXPERIMENTS AND ARTISTIC PLAY

THE ANGLING CENTRE, BUNCRANA

14TH - 23RD JUNE



Overview of the Workshop

The Flow, Form, and the Nature of Water workshop brought together participants of all ages to explore the natural movements and intricate behaviours of water. Through hands-on experiments and artistic practices, attendees examined water's rhythmic patterns and vortex formations, gaining insight into how these forms mirror structures found in nature, such as shells, conchs, and plant growth. The workshop also linked these natural phenomena to universal principles, including galactic motions and weather systems, demonstrating water's fundamental role in ecological balance and cosmic order.

Who Attended?

The workshop welcomed individuals with diverse interests:

- Nature enthusiasts – river walkers, swimmers, fishers, and rain lovers
- Creatives – those passionate about drawing, painting, or working with clay
- Thinkers – anyone with a curiosity for mathematics, science, or cosmic patterns
- The course resonated with anyone eager to deepen their appreciation for the natural world and the unique role water plays in it.

Key Activities Included:

Water Experiments: Interactive demonstrations of water's behaviours, exploring vortices and rhythmic flows.

Projective Geometry: Guided sessions connecting geometric forms with natural phenomena.

Clay Modelling: Participants created artistic representations inspired by water's movements.

Guided River Walk: Led by the Inishowen Rivers Trust, participants explored the Crana River's ecological and aesthetic qualities.

Discussions: Opportunities to reflect, share insights, and connect ideas about water's significance in nature and the cosmos.

Facilitators

The workshop was developed and facilitated by Radhildur Ingadottir and Simon Charter, who combined their expertise in art and education to create an enriching, interdisciplinary experience.

Radhildur is a Visual Artist specializing in Projective Geometry

Simon Charter holds a Master of Education (MEd), Action Research in Water Phenomenology

Radhildur Ingadottir previously completed an artist residency in Ireland in 2023 through Artlink, during which she developed her project Contemplation on Gravity-Waves. Her passion for projective geometry and water's natural beauty inspired her to propose this workshop.

Simon Charter, an expert in water phenomenology, brought his educational perspective, ensuring the workshop bridged scientific understanding and creative expression.

Participants left the workshop with a renewed appreciation for water's beauty and its vital ecological role and gained practical insights into how natural patterns inform art, science, and everyday life.



WHATEVER YOU WANT TO MAKE

You can make your mark in many ways

PAUL CAMPBELL

MARK CULLEN

MARY CROWLEY

BRENDAN FARREN

ALISON HANCOCK

CLAIRE HARKIN

SIGITA STRIKE

PUBLIC EVENTS

IN THE MAKING

AT THE CLONMANY AGRICULTURAL SHOW

6TH & 7TH AUGUST

In the Making celebrated the artistry and dedication behind creative practice, highlighting the exceptional skills of local artists and craftspeople. The event brought together seven talented participants, each sharing their unique methods and artistic insights with the public through live demonstrations and hands-on engagement.

The programme featured a wide range of disciplines, reflecting the diversity of local creative talent. Paul Campbell demonstrated his expertise in fine woodworking, while Claire Harkin introduced visitors to traditional and contemporary weaving techniques. Mary Crowley showcased her delicate and expressive work in watercolour.

Mark Cullen offered a glimpse into the world of animation and the process behind creating children's books. Alison Hancock engaged audiences with her plant-based dyeing techniques and the intricate art of shibori. Brendan Farren guided participants in the craft of basket weaving using willow and hazel rods, and Sigita Strike encouraged sustainable creativity by transforming discarded materials into beautifully handcrafted books and cards.







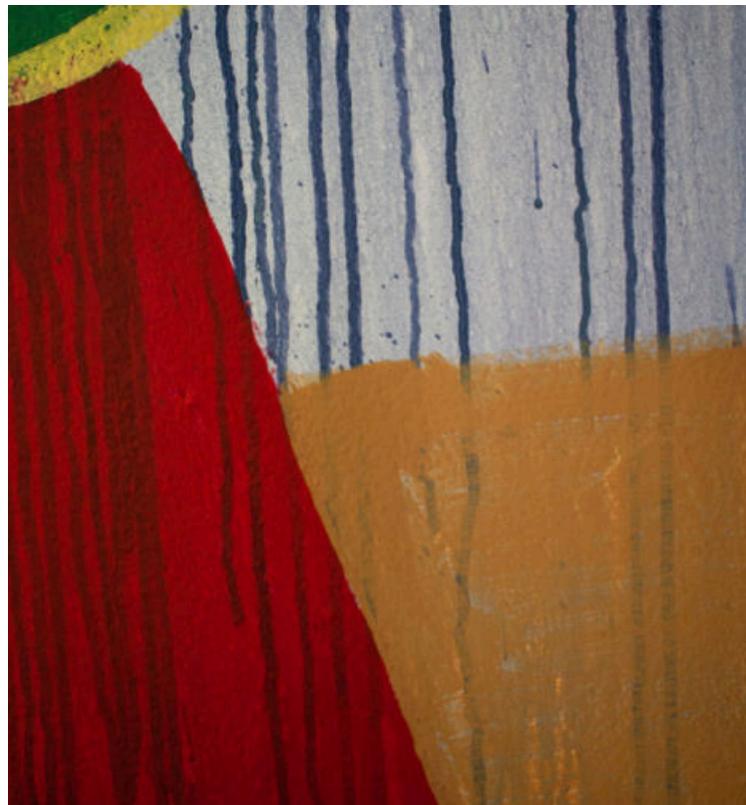
RESIDENCY

ARIJIT BHATTACHARYYA

SEPTEMBER







Arijit Bhattacharyya was International Artist in Residence at Artlink in September 2024. During his residency he engaged in dialogue with the local community and artists and facilitated a number of events, including a lecture performance *How Political is (y)our Curry?* and a walk as part of the Inishowen Walking Festival. He also completed several significant projects, including a video work, three dresses and an ambitious, immersive mural which resulted in the exhibition “Whispering Sea” in the Saldanha gallery at Fort Dunree. This exhibition reflected the conceptual premise of migration and social science fiction, which he has been exploring in his practice.

For *Whispering Sea* Arijit painted the entire Saldanha Gallery floor to ceiling in Prussian Blue. Upon this background, which was suggestive of the tide moving, he painted huge humanlike forms and installed three part-human characters in the gallery. These characters were also featured in the video which was directed and produced from start to finish, primarily in another timezone, during Arijit’s residency. The film premiered as part of the exhibition.

The exhibition and video, grounded in the postcolonial and neocolonial social resistance movements, delves into the interconnected histories of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, exploring the themes of migration, identity, and the transformative power of imagination. Through a multi-layered narrative, Arijit uses the sea as both a literal and symbolic force to evoke themes of freedom, justice, and transformation.

Arijit Bhattacharyya, born in West Bengal, India, is currently living and working in Weimar (Germany). His art practice crosses the boundaries of installations, textiles, drawings, films, publications and cooking, centering on themes of migration, social resistance, and history.



ENGAGEMENT

INISHOWEN WALKING FESTIVAL

13TH - 15TH SEPTEMBER

A number of community organisations in Inishowen came together to deliver the third Inishowen walking Festival. Artlink hosted two guided walks.

Fox's Rock & Bulba Way

This hike was a looped walk which travelled towards and just under the iconic Bulbin Mountain. Guided by Sharon Porter of Solas Ireland Walks and Hikes, this is a tranquil walk with stunning views of the Urris Hills, Desertegney, Clonmany and Lough Swilly throughout.

Whispering Sea

The International Artist in Residence at Artlink at the time of the Inishowen Walking Festival was Arijit Bhattacharyya. Born in West Bengal, Arijit spent one month in the area gathering materials for an exhibition at Fort Dunree, using the gallery space as his studio. For the 'Walking Festival' he invited the public to join him for a stroll by the sea for a collective storytelling session.



Three Years is a deeply personal exploration of art created during the first three years of Matthew's journey into parenthood. Matthew's older daughter turned three a few days after the show opened and his second daughter was be about three months old.

The Fecundity #1-8 collages feature photographs that Matthew has taken on his phone of a variety of arrangements or objects that he has seen. Some of these are things produced as byproducts of looking after a child: piles of discarded food, arrangements of toys and clothes. Pasted onto the aluminium alongside these are images made with his daughter with felt tip pens, or ink stamps featuring her favourite TV characters. Each of the collages also contains a self-portrait in the form of a photo of the sole of his foot over the months he was living with and then receiving treatment for a verruca. The collages are an attempt to capture and offer up the wildly uneven texture of the materials encountered and produced in daily life. There is always more. More mess, more toys, more food thrown on the floor, more clothes to wash, more fly tipped rubbish, more weeds, more life. Nothing can be erased but only tidied away before it all spills back out again.

The little sculptures also try to capture these noticed moments of growth or accidental creativity, but in 3D form. Made from kids' stickers, hair clips, dental floss, blu tac, dried up contact lenses and their cases, cable ties, latex gloves and wet wipes. The sculptures are minor, almost incidental in their forms. What is the minimum that an artwork can be?

There's a video called 'Minor Work', made in 2022, a year after Matthew's first daughter was born. The video tells the story of the artist's slow realisation that he didn't have any time to make artwork. It offers the philosophical basis of the show: Can you be an artist if you don't have time to make art? Is it enough just to notice things, and to be interested in what you notice?

Finally, an animation called 'In Lieu of the Work' which was made over the three months after his second daughter was born. This features a character based on the mythical figure of the Green Man walking through various landscapes. The character has Matthew's voice, and he talks directly to the audience, trying to explain why this isn't the work he wanted to make. He apologises, makes excuses, and tries to explain some of the other work in the exhibition. Then he sings a song written by the musician Nicolas Burrows, from the band Fell.

EXHIBITION

THREE YEARS

MATTHEW DE KERSAINT GIRAUDEAU

5TH OCTOBER - 3RD NOVEMBER

Finally, an animation called 'In Lieu of the Work' which was made over the three months after his second daughter was born. This features a character based on the mythical figure of the Green Man walking through various landscapes. The character has Matthew's voice, and he talks directly to the audience, trying to explain why this isn't the work he wanted to make. He apologises, makes excuses, and tries to explain some of the other work in the exhibition. Then he sings a song written by the musician Nicolas Burrows, from the band Fell.

The original drawings for this animation were made on Matthew's residency at Artlink back in 2019, but (as the Green Man explains), animation is a laborious process. "No one ever wanted to fund the development of the work, and then I had children and so this is the version of the work that could be produced under those circumstances".

The exhibition is partly about being a dad and an artist, and also expresses a looser aesthetic and philosophical approach to making art that Matthew had to develop since becoming a dad. Essentially, *Three Years* demonstrates the resilience and creativity that artists like Matthew bring to their work, even in the face of personal challenges including parenthood.









ENGAGEMENT

OVERWINTERING

JANUARY - MARCH & OCTOBER - NOVEMBER

Winter is a time for taking stock of what we have achieved for the year and making a plan for how to make it through the coming winter. As the days grew shorter and the weather got colder we looked for creative ways to be resilient.

Traditionally a time for pickling, baking, weaving, whittling Artlink nurtured a community movement to renew ourselves through slow steady restorative creativity. Over the winter months artists and crafts people were invited to share their passions and demonstrate how a novice might begin to embrace a creative project.

Overwintering was a series of workshops that invited artists and makers to share their creativity with others with the view to picking up some inspiration to keep us going over the long dark winter months.

This project grew from the Compassionate Culture Network with the Irish Hospice Foundation which Artlink developed in 2021/2022, creating nurturing, supportive spaces to help in dealing with grief and loss. In this instance we were looking more generally at the arts as a means to foster safe, nurturing spaces for wellbeing and good mental health.

The workshops took place weekly at St Mary's Hall in the heart of Buncrana, facilitating easy access for most of the community.

Creating Bookmarks with Sigita Strike

Automatic Art and Mixed Media with Lori Wiseman

Monoprinting with Matthew Porter

Sculpting with Jesmonite with Catherine Ellis

Soul Collage with Sinead Smyth

Painting Through the Minds Eye with Paul Kerr

Mask Making with Amy Carroll

Oil Painting with Lydia Jackson

Origami with Alivetina Rudenko

Resin Sculpture with Anne-Marie O'Hara

Upcycling Textiles with Marcella di Pelo

Kintsugi with Ailis Cross-Gorman

Natural Dyeing with Alison Hancock

Needle Felting with Ruth McCartney

Weaving with Johnny Shiels

Spinning with Johnny Shiels

Papercrafts with Amanda McKittrick





ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

DONEGAL VISUAL ARTISTS NETWORK

The Donegal Visual Artists Network (DVAN), established in 2021, is dedicated to fostering the growth of artists in County Donegal. Spearheaded by Artlink, the Regional Cultural Centre in Letterkenny, Glebe House & Gallery, Churchill and An Gailearaí, Gweedore, the network aims to provide a supportive platform for artist development.

The 2024 programme of artist development events was coordinated by Claire Heaney McKee.

Event 1 - Exploring Performance Art, Saturday, 10 February, Regional Cultural Centre, Letterkenny

A practical exploration of Performance Art led by artist and Vault Studios Belfast Chair, Sinéad O'Neill-Nicholl. This introductory workshop offered an insight into performance art for those considering developing this approach in their practice or those simply interested in creative exploration.

Sinéad O'Neill-Nicholl works with a range of new media to create audio installations and engages in live art performance to explore themes of gender, identity, truth and justice. Through the creation of spatial audio environments, Sinéad uses the agency of sound as a method of resistance. Sinéad is also a co-founder of Second Collective Belfast creating and promoting the art of emerging, mature, female artists.



Event 2 - Networking lunch & Workshop: Glasshammer- An Artist-led business Regional Cultural Centre, Letterkenny

Michelle O'Donnell hosted this workshop reflecting upon her experiences of founding and growing her own creative business and life as a professional artist. Michelle, originally from Donegal, is an acclaimed glass artist based in Rhode, Co. Offaly. She has been working as a professional artist for 30 years, making fused glass artworks and sculptures, in her purpose-built studio. During the workshop she discussed the lived realities of getting started and shared her organisation, communication and marketing strategies for maintaining her successful business alongside her own art practice.

Event 3 - Artist Talks/Exhibition on 30th September 2024 at An Grianan Theatre, Letterkenny

Artist talks by Neva Elliott, Artist in Residence at Artlink, Polish Artist Zofia Kuligowska, Sinead Smyth as well as an exhibition launch by Mria Gasol - 'Motherhood and Childhood: A Kaleidoscope'.

Event 4 - Financial Supports for Artists and Craftspeople Webinar on 9th October 2024 on Zoom

Online webinar facilitated by Pascal Curran from Advice First Financial, providing a practical introduction and essential advice on business set-up, taxation, artist's exemption and personal pension planning.

Event 5 - 'Moving Canvas' by Noelle McAlinden on 12th November 2024 in Regional Cultural Centre, Letterkenny

Noelle McAlinden introduced DVAN members to 'Moving Canvas', a unique initiative curated and designed by Noelle on behalf of the NI Mental Health Arts Festival, a festival now in its 10th year, challenging the stigma associated with talking about our mental health and well-being and the importance of the arts in supporting positive mental health and wellbeing.

This event invited artists to connect and reflect on their own creativity and mental health and well being and the impact on their own creative practice. It encouraged them to explore opportunities for creative and compassionate collaborations, reflect on case studies, projects and practice among artists and learning as part of NI Mental Health Arts Festival.

Event 6 - Clo & Co Printmaking Studio Visit on 23rd November 2024 in Ramelton, Donegal

A tour and hands-on workshop in Cló & Co Printmaking Studio, beginning with a networking lunch providing a chance to connect and chat followed by demonstrations and some hands-on printing trying a few different techniques. A very interesting day attended by 8 DVAN members.

Event 7 - Clinics/Workshops & Talks on 10th December 2024 in Artlink, Fort Dunree

This event took place in the beautiful setting of Artlink in Fort Dunree offering members an opportunity to take part in a range of activities including a documentation workshop by Filmmaker & Photographer, Paul McGuckin, 1-1 clinics to gain specific advice and support with Shane Kirby and Dr Marianne O'Kane Boal, a drop-in creative activity with master printmaker Tim Stampton. The afternoon session involved input by Traolach Ó Fionnáin, Donegal County Council Arts Officer and John Kerr, Arts & Culture Manager in Derry & Strabane District Council to talk about funding and work opportunities open to Donegal artists North & South. There was also a presentation by Irish Artist and Lecturer John O'Connor to discuss applying for art Commissions.

ENGAGEMENT

CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY IN ESTONIA PEETER LINNAP

21ST OCTOBER

Peeter Linnap, a pivotal figure in shaping photography education in Estonia and leading the country's artistic revolution of the 1990s, made a special visit to Artlink to deliver a talk on contemporary photography in Estonia and to forge new connections with the local creative community. This marked his first-ever visit to Donegal.

Peeter is the Head of the Department of Photography at Pallas University of Applied Sciences in Tartu, Estonia. The department is deeply integrated into the international cultural landscape, welcoming international students and encouraging its own students to participate in global exchange programs.

Born in 1960 in Tallinn, Peeter is both a media theorist and a distinguished photographic artist. He studied photography and communication theory at Tallinn Pedagogical University and Tampere University in Finland. He later earned a master's degree in art history from the Estonian Academy of Arts (2001) and a Ph.D. in semiotics from the University of Tartu (2006).

With a career spanning decades, Peeter has curated over twenty international exhibitions and published more than seventy academic studies. His influence on photography in Estonia remains profound, cementing his legacy as a key architect of the country's photographic and artistic evolution.



ENGAGEMENT

THE FUTURE IS FIBROUS GILLIAN STEEL & LORRAINE CAREY

19TH OCTOBER

Gillian Steel, ReMode Paisley & Lorraine Carey, Síoraí Carndonagh in Conversation about the role of communities and social movements in relocalising the material resources we need for bodily covering.

Lorraine Carey, Circular Economy Hub Lead at Síoraí has a wealth of experience within the textile industry and all things fabric, its use and reuse in interior projects and fashion.

Síoraí in Carndonagh is part of the award-winning Spraoi agus Spórt social enterprise. It seeks to integrate the circular economy into the local community by encouraging people to shop more sustainably.

Gillian Steel is an artist, researcher, filmmaker & design activist with specialist knowledge in textiles, sustainable design and a strong track record of connecting and engaging with communities. She founded ReMode in 2017 and held the role of Creative Director there for around eight years. She is currently a PhD researcher with Belfast School of Art - Ulster University.





PUBLIC EVENTS

HOMECOMING A WINTER SOLSTICE SPECTACLE

LUXE

21ST DECEMBER

Artlink was delighted to collaborate with LUXE for a truly magical Winter Solstice celebration at Fort Dunree. This otherworldly event brought together community, art, and the natural world in a mesmerising spectacle of light, fire, and reflection. Against the beautiful backdrop of Fort Dunree, attendees embarked on a journey of connection and renewal, marking the year's shortest day with an unforgettable experience.

Renowned for their breathtaking landscape theatre, LUXE founders Mandy Blinco and Mark Hill, alongside their talented team of performers, crafted an immersive evening rich in symbolism and artistic expression. The celebration began at Saldanah Galleries with a warm gathering, where participants engaged in a contemplative Spiral Walk illuminated by prayer candles. This serene indoor ritual set the tone for the evening, inviting moments of reflection before the procession moved outdoors.

Carrying lanterns and guided by the starlit sky, participants followed a luminous path through the landscape, culminating in the ignition of Solstice spirals—representing seasonal transitions and personal journeys. The fiery spectacle that followed was both visually stunning and deeply moving, fostering a sense of unity and renewal as attendees embraced the turning of the seasons. The event concluded with a communal feast at the Saldanah Gallery, where guests shared seasonal dishes, reinforcing themes of gratitude, togetherness, and anticipation of the returning light.







AIMS | VISION | MISSION

Artlink is an artist-led organisation, formed in 1992, run by a team of professional artists working from studios at the historic and inspiring location of Fort Dunree, Inishowen, County Donegal. It exists to support the ambitions of local, national and international artists at all stages of their professional career. Artlink makes a valuable contribution towards the creative development and wellbeing of the local community and helps build a strong sustainable culture and economy in the region. This is achieved through a programme of regional, national and international exchanges and residencies, exhibitions, practical creative workshops and participatory community events. In an area packed with ancient history and breathtaking scenery, Artlink connects and inspires people to produce creative projects uniquely rooted in 'place' and inspired by this rural, coastal context.

OUR VISION

Our vision is of a time when rural areas in Ireland will have a vibrant, sustainable art community, confident in the uniqueness of its voice.

OUR MISSION

Artlink's mission is to provide the expertise and physical resources to build a strong sustainable visual arts culture and contribute to the artistic and economic ecology of the North West of Ireland.

OUR AIMS

- To create opportunities for Irish and international emerging and established visual artists to develop their creativity and art practice.
- To create a vibrant, committed and rigorous visual art community locally.
- To creatively empower the local community and widen participation in the visual arts. To increase public knowledge and appreciation of contemporary art.
- To explore the contribution of contemporary visual arts in the social and economic development of rural places.
- To develop innovative art projects rooted in this rural, coastal context.
- To build national and international connections for the arts in the North West of Ireland. To make new opportunities for people to be involved in the arts as audiences and active participants.
- To make Fort Dunree a focal point of artistic interest along the Wild Atlantic Way. To develop premises at Dunree as a fully accessible arts facility/resource for the population of Inishowen and the wider region. To ensure long term sustainability for Artlink and all its activities

BOARD

Mark Hill

Mark Hill is a sculptor working in the public domain. He is Co-Director of LUXE - Landscape Theatre Company www.luxe.ie. He holds a BA (Hons) Degree in Fine Art from Liverpool Art College. His career in Arts and Theatre spans over 30 years. Mark enjoys long term creative relationships with artists, arts organisations, festivals and funding bodies across Ireland and Internationally. As a dedicated community artist his work engages and is enjoyed on all levels.

Martin McGinley

Music Development Manager at Donegal Music Education Partnership, part of the Donegal Education and Training Board. Former BBC NI television reporter, former editor of the Derry Journal and Donegal Democrat. Well-known traditional fiddler.

Esther Alleyne

Arts and Culture Facilities Officer at Roe Valley Arts Centre Esther was Arts Business Development Manager at Loaf Pottery in Crawfordsburn and has worked with various regional and international organisations including Echo Echo Dance Theatre Company for 6 years as well as Young at Art, Gary Rowntree Dance and LUXe

Sean Beattie

Sean Beattie is a research historian, editor of Donegal Annual, Macklin Festival and Colgan Heritage Weekend committee member, chairman of Ulster Local History Trust, author of a number of books on Donegal history, Ph.D. specialising in Congested Districts Board. .Worked as a teacher of English, History and French in St. Joseph's Secondary School, Derry, subsequently at Ballyfermot Vocational School, Dublin. In 2013 he was awarded an honorary degree by the National University of Ireland, Galway.

Sharon Porter

Sharon is an entrepreneur, educator and enterprise development consultant. She has worked with the community sector and commercial start-ups as a consultant, trainer and mentor. While employed at Ulster University, Sharon championed cross-campus innovation and entrepreneurship education within diverse subject areas and lectured in Arts Entrepreneurship. She recently set-up Solas Ireland Walks and Hikes and is a qualified hiking and a Regional Fáilte Ireland Tour Guide.

Jack Murray

Jack Murray lives in Buncrana and has been an elected member of Donegal County Council since 2011. He served as Chairperson of the Inishowen Municipal District from 2017 - 2018 and as Cathaoirleach of Donegal County Council from 2021 - 2022. He is passionate about supporting arts and culture locally and sees the local authority as a key vehicle for assisting in its development.

Shane Finan

Shane Finan, an artist and project manager, specializes in collaborative, research-based work. He focuses on critical technologies, creating interactive artworks exploring human and nonhuman relationships through myth, ecology, and digital technology. With six years of experience leading AI and machine learning projects at Trinity College, he now leads the artistic research project Púca in the Machine and co-founded the artist collective ^.





Installation photographs, events photography and documentation of artworks by: Alison Hancock, Martha McCulloch, Michael McMahon, Patricia Spokes, Caoimhe Stones, Rebecca Strain.

Artlink, Fort Dunree, Linsfort, Inishowen, County Donegal. email info@artlink.ie website <https://www.artlink.ie>