



INCARCERATION ALTARS

Artist Bernie Masterson in collaboration with residents from Mountjoy Prison Campus

The Grangegorman Development Agency (GDA), which is the statutory body set up in 2006 under the GDA Act 2005 and is responsible for the re-development of the 73 acre Grangegorman site into a new urban quarter in Dublin 7 with health, education and community at its heart. The stakeholders are the HSE, the DIT and the local community.

In 2011 the GDA commissioned the Grangegorman Arts Strategy and the subsequent establishment of the Grangegorman Public Art Working Group (PAWG) to oversee the implementation of the Art Strategy.

The Arts Strategy operates under the theme of '...the lives we live', an extract from 'Dreams of a Summer Night,' *New Collected Poems* (2011), by kind permission of the author, Derek Mahon, and The Gallery Press.

The project 'Incarceration Altars,' is partnered by the Irish Prison Service and the CDETb.

This event launches on the 11th of October 2017 in the DIT College, Grangegorman, Dublin 7, and will tour to other venues in 2018.



INCARCERATION ALTARS





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EB - Cell Door - Oil on Board - 36 x 25 cm - The Training Unit

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Context - ‘Let art work on you’¹



When the architect James Mary O’Connor conceived of an open stretched hand whose green fingers reach out to draw the community into what is now the redevelopment of the Grangegorman area in Dublin 7, he was signalling that urban regeneration ignores the human factor at its peril. Any site for change has histories, people, users, stories, perspectives. Those who conceived of The Grangegorman Masterplan went further in their planning by incorporating two hearts or activity nodes – an academic and health heart to the west and a social and cultural heart to the east, two evolving circles of energy.

The Grangegorman Development Agency (GDA) is the statutory body set up by the Irish Government in 2006 under the GDA Act 2005, which is responsible for the redevelopment of the 73 acre Grangegorman site into a new urban quarter in Dublin 7.

The Masterplan aims to create a vibrant new urban quarter to accommodate the confluence of Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), along with replacement psychiatric facilities and new primary care facilities for the Health Service Executive (HSE). In addition to a new primary school and public library, community benefits will include access to parks and associated events.

One of the earliest outcomes was the relocation of clients within psychiatric care into a new service facility in the Phoenix Care Centre. The recognition of existing life and the potential to ignite from within is a key influence in readjustment and reshaping this site for 21st century services. Grey walls which once closed off this area to the city and continue to be a signal of incarceration in cities are slowly becoming porous as history encounters life. Small groups and creative initiatives are quietly negotiating new horizons and human rights. The palm is turning and tilting towards the Dublin mountains beyond.

But not all life is visible nor wants to be nor has the choice of being. Integral to Grangegorman was the commissioning of the Grangegorman Arts Strategy in 2012. This led to the establishment of a Public Art Working Group comprising representatives from the primary stakeholders and the appointment of a Public Art Coordinator, resulting in ‘...the lives we live’ Grangegorman Public Art. This initiative seeks to recognise the complexities of residents, site, interests, memory and stakeholders.



Utilising Per Cent for Art and working in collaboration with artists, groups and agencies, six pathways to supporting arts projects were launched in 2015. The diversity of art activity is evidence of terrestrial constellations in an ever changing city.

So it is with *Incarceration Altars*, deep rooted in the insomnia of human nature and the continuously evolving creative process. In her publication ‘The Work of Art in the World’ (2014) Professor Doris Sommer urges a greater connection between arts and humanities, acknowledging how the arts and culture benefit from wider discourse and interpretation. So we are grateful for the inclusion of a dedicated text by Professor Aislinn O’Donnell, Coordinator of structured PhD. and M. Litt. programmes in the Department of Education in Maynooth University.

Could it be that Artist Bernie Masterson is able to make art because ‘the only possibility to encounter the other is as equal’?²

Jenny Haughton

Jenny Haughton is the Grangegorman Development Agency Public Art Coordinator who oversees the implementation of the Grangegorman Arts Strategy.

¹ Camille Paglia, Chicago Humanities Festival
² Extract, Thomas Hirschhorn, *Banner*, 2017. The Absent Museum, Wiels Contemporary Arts Centre, Brussels.



Introduction - Person - Place - Object

Institutions like prisons can often leave the individual searching for a sense of self in an environment bereft of personal identity. It is a culture that conceals and is intentionally hidden from society. *‘Incarceration often forces individuals to shed or suppress certain aspects of one’s personality in order to fit into the physically and emotionally aggressive environment of prison’.* (Winnicott, 1963).

As someone involved in Educational Services to Prisons for a number of years I have observed some phenomena around prison life. One being the placing of personal familiar objects on the windowsill in the rooms / cells occupied by the prisoners in the Training Unit Prison in the Mountjoy Prison Campus. The occupier of the room / cell controls the personal items displayed. These windowsills become a sort of altar, a focal point against the backdrop of prison life, a place where items of personal significance and value are positioned, becoming a type of shrine to an emotional connectedness to the Self.

These objects of importance differ greatly from one cell to another, for example, one windowsill could consist of a pack of tobacco, an item given by a child or loved one, a tin whistle, a mug, a pair of rosary beads, a pack of cards while another could consists of a table tennis bat, running shoes, a locket, stamps, or a writing pad.



According to Alison Bonds Shapiro (2009) in her book ‘Healing into Possibility’ - Once we own and live with something, the thing takes on meaning for us, becomes a part of the stories of our lives. Every thing we own has some kind of story attached to it. No possession is truly neutral.

The stories of our possessions are generally about something that has already happened. Remembering the past enriches life when it informs the present. There is a Policy Document on Prisoners Property approved by the Director of Operations updated last on the 30/1/2014.

The aim of the policy is to observe the principles of Prison Rules in the management of all aspects of prisoner property by the Irish Prison Service.

Article 4.11 states -‘Upon enactment of this policy the Governors will cause to be published and displayed in the prison a list of items permitted for cell possession of prisoners at their own risk, this list and the access to items on the list will be controlled by the guidance contained herein or with reference to earned privilege levels and differing allocations of property items allowed under the Incentivised Regimes Policy’.

Bernie Masterson

Prisoner property

Policy Document

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Related policies/standards See Section 5 of the document

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History - Mountjoy Prison Past and Present

Mountjoy Prison was opened for prisoners in 1850, twenty five years after St. Brendan's Mental Hospital in Grangegorman. It was designed and built by Colonel Joshua Jebb, an officer of the Royal Engineers, and modelled on the Pentonville prison in London. It was built on a 10 acre site on Dublin's north side, which was formally part of the estate of Lord Mountjoy. At that time Mountjoy prison was seen as the most modern prison in the British Empire under the rule of Queen Victoria.



Today the site houses a variety of prisons, Mountjoy Main Prison; Mountjoy West (formally St. Pats); the Dochas Centre (the women's prison); the Medical Unit; and the Training Unit Prison, which is currently under refurbishment to accommodate an older prisoner population. Today the site is referred to as the Mountjoy Prison Campus.



“...man’s sentimental attachment to objects is one of life’s greatest consolations.”

Orhan Pamuk, The Innocence of Objects

Description

The project ‘Incarceration Altars’, will investigate the relationship between person, place and object through a series of images and prisoners’ narratives to contextualise the different worlds of prison identity and private identity. In prison, the objective of developing this prison mask could be compared to Winnicott’s (1963) description of the False Self, whose defensive function is to hide and protect the True Self (p. 142). Objects provide links to those identities and are also used to reflect on other themes such as ‘mourning and memory,’ ‘transition and passage,’ ‘meditation and new vision,’ and how they serve as a marker in a significant life situation such as incarceration. The objects become an instrument, a channel of emotional connectedness, to a vast structure of recollection involving thought, feeling and memory.

(Turtle, 2011)

Each narrative is paired with images of the object. The narrative dictates the pace of the images viewed. Some stories are big and complex, charged with emotion. Some are small. No two voices are the same. The objects are everyday items. These altars are personal survival mechanisms for the Self, both ‘True’ and ‘False’ and for the protection of the psyche.

Working in partnership with the Irish Prison Service and the CDETB ‘Incarceration Altars,’ provides a rare glimpse into a world hidden away from society.

It overlaps between disciplines. One is a field of study and the other of practice. The experience provides a key focus, to becoming better informed about the human condition and its ability to cope with the realities of living behind bars. Art is the universal language that connects people. It can build a bridge and bring people from ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ in contact with one another through the experience of a personal interaction. The project ‘Incarceration Altars’ are personal testaments to the self, connecting the past to the present through materiality, location and duration.

Art can reclaim that which has been silenced or buried.
(Thomas-Hirschhorn)

Bernie Masterson

Pamuk, O. 2012. *The Innocence of Objects*, First Edition. ed. Harry N. New York.

Prisoner Property Policy Document PINO19 Section 4.1 Page 9
<http://www.museumoffoundobjects.com/Quotes-Thomas-Hirschhorn>.

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Anon - Writing From the Cell - Oil on Canvas - 70 x 120 cm - The Training Unit Prison

Aims

- To recognise the importance of creativity as a tool for human development and self-encounter in the context of prison and to promote the development and personal autonomy of the prisoner as person in the local environment.
- To support imaginative thinking by creating a body of work that bridges the gap between previously separate art traditions and digital media.
- To educate through an integrated and multidisciplinary project that gives the opportunity to make a comprehensive body of work, tested against the 'real world' situations of contemporary practice.

Purpose

- To increase the status of a disenfranchised group within the local community while fostering local civic engagement and inclusiveness.
- To embrace multiculturalism in the development of social change and to give voice to new and different perspectives from divergent demographic profiles, deepening awareness, knowledge and discourse.
- To work in a collegial and integrated manner complying with the commissioning principles of ambition, enrichment, and relevance, fostering new links and new possibilities within the community for the future.



McD - Mountjoy Prison - Colouring Pencil on Paper - 20 x 40 cm - The Training Unit Prison



O'C - *Between Two Worlds* - Oil on Canvas - 120 x 200 cm - The Training Unit Prison

Benefits

- To promote respect, a sense of pride and achievement for all of the participants both within the community and with other partnerships to affect positive change.
- To substantiate the prison community as an integral part of the local community by providing equality of opportunity where difference is welcomed and participation is valued.
- To share our communal experiences through the creative process of the brief by contributing creativity to the Grangegorman campus experience.

Partners

The Irish Prison Service & the CDETb

The Irish Prison Service operates as an executive agency within the Department of Justice and Equality with responsibility for 14 institutions, consisting of 11 traditional 'closed' institutions, and two open centres. Their mission is to provide safe and secure custody, dignity of care and rehabilitation to prisoners for safer communities.

Prison Education consists of a partnership between the Irish Prison Service and a range of educational agencies from the community, particularly local Educational Training Boards, the Open University and Public Library Services. Other agencies such as third level colleges and the Arts Council are also involved in education provision.

Literacy, numeracy and general basic education provision is the priority and broad programmes of education are made available which generally follow an adult education approach. Programmes are adapted to take account of the diversity of the prisoner population and the complex nature of prison life. Junior and Leaving Certificate courses are available, in addition to QQI accreditation which is widely used by the CDETb.



Fallen Bird- EB - Oil on Canvas - 40.5 x 50.5cm - The Training Unit Prison

Our Common World - Incarceration and Exile

Incantation

Human reason is beautiful and invincible.
No bars, no barbed wire, no pulping of books,
No sentence of banishment can prevail against it.
It establishes the universal ideas in language,
And guides our hand so we write Truth and Justice
With capital letters, lie and oppression with small.
It puts what should be above things as they are,
Is an enemy of despair and a friend of hope. [...]

Czeslaw Milosz

The landscapes of Dublin are dotted with institutions that have thick walls and histories of abandonment, fear, violence, and control. The ruins and remnants, physical and mental, populate Grangegorman. Their visibility is stark, their pasts dense, protruding sometimes suddenly from main streets and suburban thoroughfares, their presence intimated by the walls that hold the senses at bay. Their inhabitants, upon committal, are still rendered ghosts and shadows on the edge of public spaces, losing the sense of substance or reality that accompanies ordinary human existence, as the time of their lives is confiscated and they come to wait and live behind stone trellises. From the perspective of the wider public whose gaze cannot pierce those walls and whose understanding of such sites relies on scraps of gossip or media presentations, such people risk becoming faint outlines, generic classifications, traces of a full existence, and in the case of prisons, the undersides of binary oppositions – fallen, evil, monstrous, pitiable.

For such wider publics sometimes the sketched outlines of the retreating buildings, the enforced ignorance about their inner workings, and the caricatures of the media foster shameful desires to project fantasies about the nature of life beyond the walls as though these were the sites of self-enclosure of the super-rich. “It’s like a holiday camp...,” “It’s like a 5 star hotel...,” people say. Sometimes even prisoners themselves say such things as though oblivious to their surroundings, and co-opted by discourses that have taken a punitive turn.

And if one does pass through the gates and into its stone heart...

The bare, sterile corridors, the iron bars, the endless grey concrete, the clinical walls, the erasure of vegetal life, the razor barbed wire in the sun and rain, the endless noise, clattering, banging, echoing through the empty spaces, the thud of door after door as they close, bringing one into the depth of isolation. Other than the bodies who pass through gate after gate, there are few traces of non-human life.



Anon - Charcoal on Paper - 30 x 21 cm
- The Training Unit Prison



Human bodies were not made for tombs of metal, stone, concrete and shiny paint. Freedom vanishes and so too the senses are deprived, starved even, finding reprieve in the odd space, the art room, sometimes the cell.

It is impossible for most citizens to understand through lived experience the world of the prison and the life of the person in prison. Total institutions have no ready entry points. For many who traverse the all too porous boundary from societal marginalisation into exile – we know the areas that prisoners tend to come from are also those of greatest social deprivation and poverty – those housed within find their voices over-determined by expert discourses or the pronouncements of the media, precluding participation in the public domain, despite affirmations of their legal status as fellow citizens.

DC - D1 Landing Mountjoy - Acrylic on Canvas - 80 x 120 cm -
The Training Unit Prison

It can be hard as a prisoner to tell stories without being captured in a pre-existing framework or classification that over-determines the mode of listening. Indeed, it is forbidden to speak directly to the world or to communicate with others without the eyes of the censor scanning or recording one’s words. Those who listen carefully to the voices in these films will experience a rare encounter with the sheer ordinariness, including the banality or boredom, of the life of the person in prison.

Incarceration Altars is an unassuming and modest work in many respects that nonetheless manages to bear witness to our common humanity by showing the entanglement of all of our lives with material things, those things so ordinary to others but so precious to us, that come to house and embody our memories, our loves, our hopes, our losses, and our dreams.



Painting Study - Oil on Canvas - 51 x 36 cm - The Training Unit Prison

Things that extend our capacities for agency, expression, engagement and creativity, and that are co-constitutive of our selves. Things are elevated beyond the functionality of the quotidian, becoming vehicles for expression, mourning, imagination and engagement. Even in sites whose construction emulates the sparse homogeneity of a desert, humans create a sense of the embodied inhabitation of place through the relation to things.

“The deprivation of liberty is the punishment,” it is stated. Indeed it is the principle underpinning imprisonment that no further punishment beyond the deprivation of liberty should be sought. But this statement speaks only of and to the incarcerated individual as though he or she is the sole subject of punishment.

the person in prison, who may struggle to manage, who have to navigate the stigmas that mark the family of the prisoner. This is not to make a normative statement about imprisonment but simply to register the real effects of imprisonment on others beyond the incarcerated.

All prisoners live on that unreal gradated continuum of distance from the world and the other. At times contact is too close when one must share a small cell with a stranger for over 17 hours a day, without the privacy for the most basic of bodily functions whilst being forbidden sustained contact with loved ones. At other times, such possibilities for contact retreat when on protection, voluntary or otherwise, or segregation, and the more this persists, the more one can become undone and even unhinged.

That deprivation of liberty extends far beyond the borders of the self, severing or weakening the capacity to touch and be touched by the world and its inhabitants, and it fails to acknowledge fully the way in which the punishment of depriving liberty affects those outside who mourn and miss

Craig Haney describes with profound compassion the way in which men in solitary confinement would reach their pinkies through the iron mesh separating him and them in order to seek out the most basic and primitive form of human contact: the tenderness of touch.

Removing a human from our shared world is the most severe kind of exile. One can no longer speak, touch, move or act with autonomy. It is not just that one is cut off from the world; one is cut off from the self. For some, such forced retreat can come as a sense of relief when the world itself offers little to nothing in terms of meeting the most basic of needs, but for most the pains of imprisonment scar the self and those whom that self loves, even if some find forms of redemption, reprieve, and creativity behind those walls. There are elements of Irish prison life that can provide sanctuary and allow the walls to be temporarily suspended: the arts, education, cooking, woodwork. As with outside, the act of turning to the world through reading, painting, study, writing, or listening can bring its own epiphanies, insights, and create the conditions for transformation and opening to the world beyond the self. These activities are not palliatives but essential to sustain a life and keep open a chink of opening to the world beyond the horizons of the prison walls.

Artist/teachers like Bernie Masterson locate pathways between worlds, holding onto a sense of compassion, insight and commitment to justice whilst refusing condescension, didacticism, or simplification in her collaborative practice. This practice has consistently cleared a space for shared speech for those whom society has rendered voiceless, silent, giving form to the depth of experience that is the uniqueness of each life. It marks the capacity for renunciation that comes with years of listening and the depth of experience that comes with decades of teaching in a prison.

Works like Invocation, Impedimenta, Shrine, Remembrance, Unseen Unheard resonate and speak to and with this current work in a silent choral haunting of our repressed and wilfully ignored presents and histories. Bringing these voices into the public domain affirms the prisoner as a fellow human being and fellow citizen. Following the Derek Mahon poem that orients this public art initiative, these are stories of lived lives and our common world.

Ethical Imagination

1855 F. P. COBBE *Ess. Intuitive Morals I. 117*

The deprivation of Personal Freedom constitutes.

..an incarceration of the Soul.

When I used to come and go with more regularity from these strange institutions, I began to feel as though my sensibility was being slowly corroded like a weak acid and that my body was pleading for release from captivity, despite the temporary nature of my short experiences of confinement. It came to feel like my skin was disintegrating, like holes in transparent muslin. It wasn't so much the people - staff or prisoners - but the site itself that seemed to undo the soul. Its labyrinthine rules meant everything was prohibited unless explicitly permitted, a Kafkaesque underbelly of ordinary life. I wondered at those people who claim it is a site for rehabilitation as I underwent the crushing suffocation of its presence as an occasional visiting citizen. No exit.

Sometimes during breaks from teaching I'd lie in the grass opposite the prison and stare at the sky. One day I returned covered in stems and the men sighed their longing for the touch of the soft grass and earth. Our flesh needs the openness of materials that give and that live.

These experiences and encounters provoked my ethical imagination as I asked myself ‘how would this be for me?’. How would it be were I to feel I were still me, despite committing some offence, but nonetheless be subjected the imposition of a whole new identity as ‘prisoner’ covering me like tar such that little of my previous self were acknowledged, except labels: ‘prisoner,’ ‘offender’ and the plethora of dehumanising names that populate the media. To not be seen, to be invisible, to have no spontaneous contact, to find one’s words distorted just because of the label placed on one, to be mistrusted, to strive to find some kind of relation of equality, to be under permanent suspicion.

Prisons damage people, not only those incarcerated but also staff and the wider community. Despite the overwhelming evidence of this, to demand recognition of the humanity and citizenship of the imprisoned is seen by some as a betrayal and a failure to acknowledge crimes committed. To speak of life stories, of legacies of institutional abuse or social segregation, of personal tragedy and systemic inequality is dismissed as ‘making excuses’. It is easier to sustain the crude caricatures and the dehumanising identifications – feral, scum, lag.. – than to encounter the full complexity of the other.

Most people never encounter the person inside a prison; at most they come to the visiting spaces, but not the landings. As they never set foot within its walls, the prison risks becoming a blank canvas onto which the fears and hates of society can be projected, generally with little knowledge of the realities of the space or the lives of those housed within. As sites of exile, prisons operate at an intensified distance from the world, at least in principle.

Prisons seek to control all communication, and, wittingly or not, diminish the person through numbering systems, censorship, and phrases like ‘feeding times’. But this removal from the public gaze is also to protect those who are, for a period, wards of the state and thus particularly vulnerable to exploitation. It becomes a site of permanently exposed privacy, private in its disconnection from the public, a site of surveillance, and a space of privation, not simply because one is no longer free, but because one can no longer appear to others in the world.

The title of this work *Incarceration Altars* reminds us of the duality of the nature of the prison. On the one hand prisons are symbolic sites of exile, punishment, and resonant with rites of sacrifice, providing visible reminders of transgression of the laws of the community and seeking to appease such wrongdoing. On the other hand, within them, one finds tiny spaces of reverence, investment in ordinary things that renders them symbolic and even sacred, filaments of connection to the wider world. The voice speaking could be anyone’s voice. It transcends the walls.

Different people approach their cells differently. It depends on disposition, inclination, character, length of sentence, forms of resistance, but few cells are without some material things, however transitory, that can hold a world and that reach to the world. These things anchor existence, ground rituals, and keep alive to the texture of the world that self who is faced with the dull passage of time, sometimes years and decades, undoing somewhat with their material persistence the inevitable sense of isolation that takes hold with life in prison.



The things described in these films are common place, overwhelmingly relational in gesture, saturated with memory, effecting sites of enactment or creation, expressions of love and mourning, providing foci and tools for transformation or the renewal of life. They bring the voice of the prisoner into our world, into the public domain, and in their intertwining with ritual and practice, they bring the world into the cell and the prison.

DC- D Landing - Oil on Canvas -180 x 90 cm,
Mountjoy Prison - The Training Unit Prison

Incarceration Altars is a work of non-monumental portraiture told through the stories of things.

Ordinary Things: The Common Place

Ian Hodder notes often that we scarcely look at things: we are more interested in humans and their society. We don’t consider the ways in which things make society possible, and how society and things are co-entangled. We fail to see how things depend on and are connected with other things, temporally, in their lineages, and spatially, and how human life, including social life, depends on things. In sites of deprivation like prisons, ordinary things can take on even more profound symbolic significance (hence this powerful phrase *Incarceration Altars*) that resist the oppression of sites of confinement and sustain a lived sense of one’s being and existence, creating intimate sites of gathering and expression.

Paying even a modicum of attention to the affinities between that world in exile and the world of the everyday beyond the walls, it is easy to see how readily the most ordinary of things come to be imbued with a sense of reverence that verges on the sacred, and how things can gather and hold memories, seemingly in the very matter of their molecular structure, making tangible whilst conserving the singularity of that which is most intimate or expressive of a life. The mere act of looking with attention allows for the beauty and character of the most mundane of things to be experienced, from moss in a prison yard to the light changing in the cell over the course of a day. Memory can come to saturate bare perception in certain cases and at certain moments when the material world becomes charged with meaning, all things emitting signs.

Things themselves have a durability that means that they can be approached through all the senses, they can be given to the other, and create community: the famous Icelandic Parliament, the Althing, reminds us of the origins of the word ‘thing’ as that which gathers or assembles. They are the mediators that gather and hold the past, community, love, expression, holding the singular stories and thus the lives that cherish them. They are the tools that extend the body and mind permitting of forms of expression, investigation and enquiry. They are the gifts that sustain relationships.

Listening

The political and the aesthetic both require a form of manifestation, the appearing of something in a public domain. In *Incarceration Altars*, the sonorous texture of voice and the stillness of the image of the object offer, through an indirect gesture to public discourse and the commons, the possibility of a shared world, and this is where the power of the work lies. Fragments of stories are offered and elements of a life are told through the relation to the object described. They are understated, indirect, non-confessional, poetic and gestural. Their visual anonymity that refuses the directness of the face-to-face encounter reveals the uniqueness of each life through the timbre of the voice, ensuring listening without prejudice, the ‘stretching’ of ears to hear what the other is saying, just as the speaking reaches out to the ears of the other, the listener. Hearing (entendre) opens the possibility for understanding (comprendre), at least in being with and co-existing with the other. By passing the ordinary conventions of portraiture, the uniqueness that makes each of us different from all others, is disclosed through the voice as it tells the stories of the mute things that are precious to the life that speaks it.

*Portrait Study - Oil on Canvas - 150 x 150 cm
- The Training Unit Prison*

Adriana Cavarero writes,

The voice, however, is always different from all other voices, even if the words are the same, as often happens in the case of a song. This difference, as Calvino underlines, has to do with the body. “A voice means this: there is a living person, throat, chest, feelings, who sends into the air this voice, different from all other voices...A voice involves the throat, saliva.” When the human voice vibrates, there is someone in flesh and bone who emits it. Uniqueness is not a characteristic of Man in general, but rather of every human being insofar as he or she lives and breathes. It is worth underscoring again that this corporal root of uniqueness is also perceptible by sight—that is, by an aspect that is immediately visible to whomever looks at the other’s face.

For More than One Voice, pp.3-4.

All things have their own characters, qualities, expressiveness, history, and proto-agency, mediating the relation to self, mediating the relation to the world, including the world of the prison, opening a pathway to those outside.

The hand needs to make and touch, the eye to read and look, the ear to listen, the self to reflect and express. The senses need to find other forms of expression that materialise through the intimacy of experience, and that are creative of experience through the exploration of materiality.

We listen to the voice of the one who tells the story of this thing, and thus tells the story of both its life and his own.



Hannah Arendt writes,

Each time we talk about things that can be experienced only in privacy or intimacy, we bring them into a sphere where they will assume a kind of reality, which, their intensity notwithstanding, they could never have had before. The presence of others who see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves [...]

The Human Condition, p.50.

The plural stories of these things, and the images that accompany the stories, mean that that which previous occupied the realm of private existence, confinement, personal experience, and even isolation, are brought into shared presence, the reality of presence guaranteed by others, becoming part of and constitutive of our common world. They are still, but their temporality is sensed through the camera’s lens, and time passes.

Still, a thing or ‘ting’ draws together, gathers or assembles. It creates publics.

The Ordinary Things: *Radio, flowerpot and candle-holder, cup, bowl, and cutlery, Angry Birds painting, airfix models, prayer diary, dictionary, guitar, a model house, trainers.*

The Universal Themes: *Grief, gratitude, gift-giving, care, children, forgiveness, sanity, patience, acceptance, religion, reflection, intellect, enquiry, study, etymology, music, time, home, love, physicality, participation, time, boredom, exhaustion, aliveness.*

The Men: *Anthony, John, Paul, Paddy, Warren, Paulo, David, Mark, Chang, Robert.*

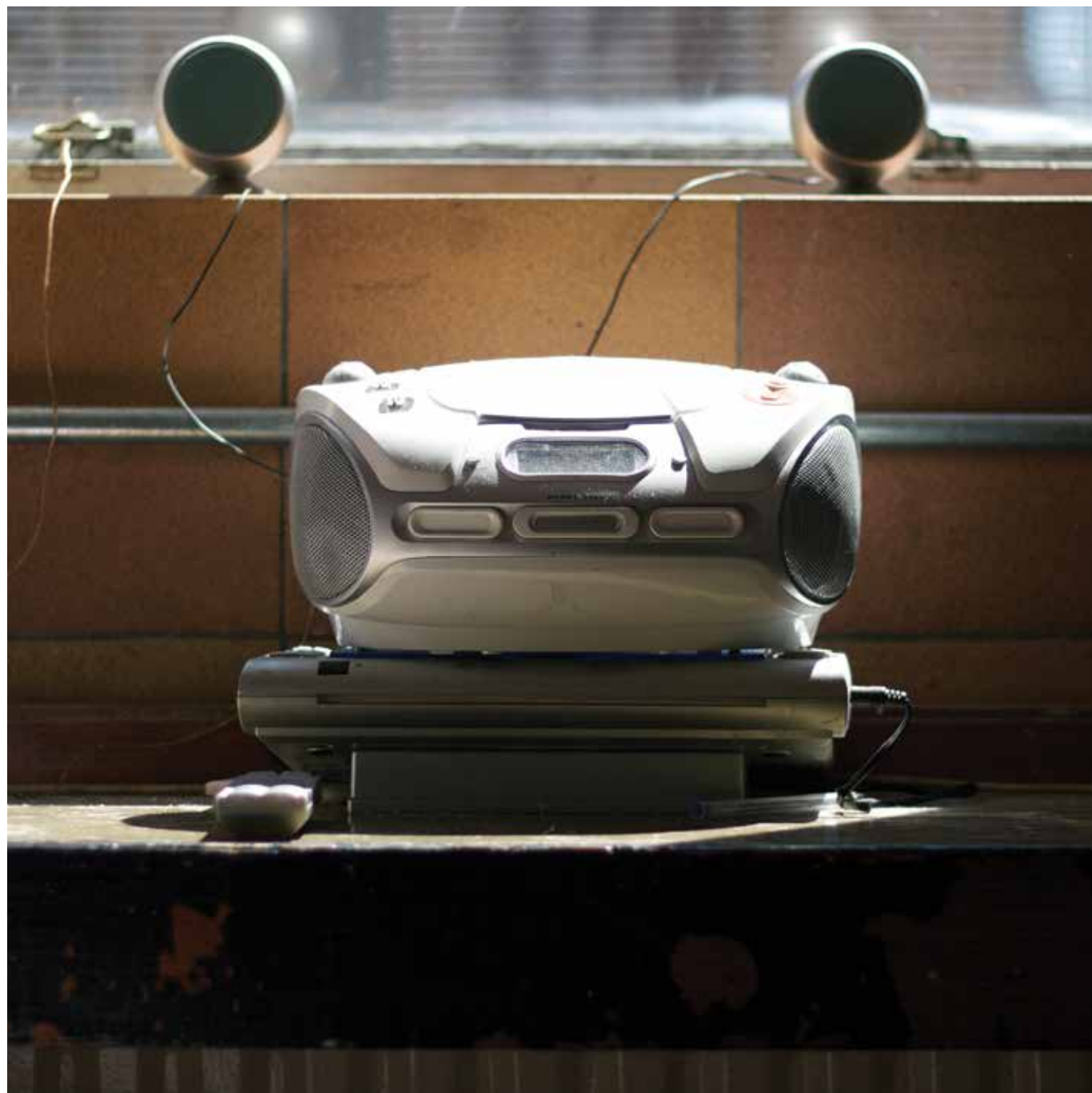
Arendt, H. (1958) *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Cavarero, A. (2005) *For More than One Voice: Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Milosz, Czesław (2006) *New and Collected Poems, 1931-2001*. London: Penguin.

Professor Aislinn O’Donnell Maynooth University, Department of Education Ireland.

Anthony

‘...because it was his,
it’s more than a radio...’

1’ 33”



John

‘...it’s just nice to think that
someone *values you* to that
extent...’

2’ 56”



Someone
Special
When I count my blessings



Paul

‘...when I was a young lad I learned
what to do in the homes,
have your own **cultery**, alway keep
them clean...’

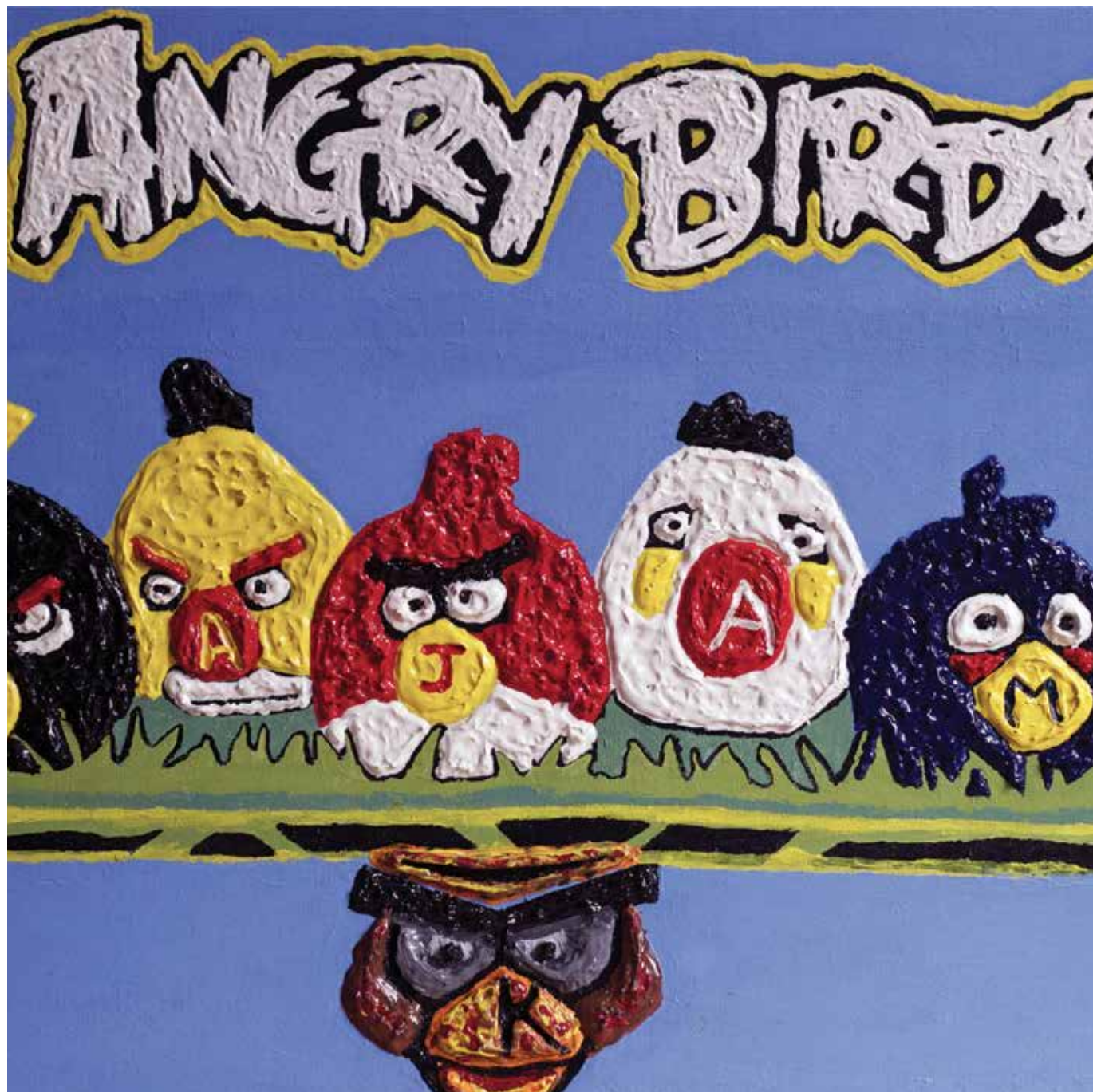
1’ 32”



Paddy

‘I see each one of me
children in each one of them...’

1’ 52”



Warren

‘I took down photographs to put
up pages of words...’

2’ 13”

mal·a·pert

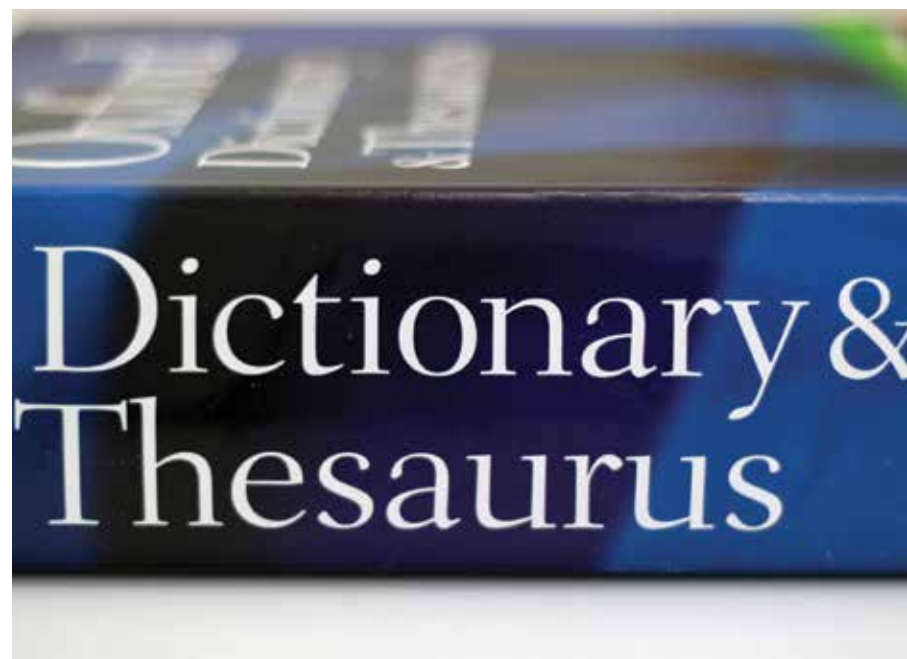
adjective

boldly disrespectful

noun

an impudent person

ORIGIN Middle



...determination to become successful or rich.

– SYNONYMS **1** young people with ambition drive, determination, enterprise, initiative, eagerness, motivation, a sense of purpose; informal get up and go. **2** her ambition was to become a model aspiration, intention, goal, aim, objective, object, purpose, intent, plan, desire, wish, target, dream.

– ORIGIN from Latin *ambire* 'go around (canvassing for votes)'.
ambitious adjective **1** having or showing a determination to succeed. **2** requiring a great deal of effort, time, or money to succeed: *an ambitious six-year development plan.*

– SYNONYMS **1** an energetic and ambitious politician aspiring, determined, enterprising, motivated, energetic, committed, purposeful, power-hungry; informal go-ahead, go-getting. **2** an ambitious task challenging, exacting, demanding, formidable, difficult, hard, tough.

– ANTONYMS laid-back.

– DERIVATIVES **ambitiously** adverb.

ambivalent /am-biv-uh-luhnt/ adjective having mixed feelings about something or someone.

– SYNONYMS equivocal, uncertain, unsure, doubtful, indecisive, inconclusive, in two minds, undecided, torn, in a dilemma, in a quandary, on the fence, hesitating, wavering, vacillating, equivocating, blowing hot and cold; informal liffy.

– ANTONYMS unequivocal, certain.

– DERIVATIVES **ambivalence** noun **ambivalently** adverb.

– ORIGIN from Latin *ambi* 'on both sides' + *valere* 'be worth'.

amble verb walk at a leisurely pace.

– SYNONYMS stroll, saunter, wander, promenade, walk, take a walk, informal mosey, tootle; informal toddle, mooch.

• noun a leisurely walk.

– ORIGIN Latin *ambulare* 'to walk'.

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• noun a leisurely walk.

– ORIGIN Latin *ambulare* 'to walk'.



Paulo

‘...it keeps your mind ticking over...
if I hadn’t got them models I’d be
really really lost...’

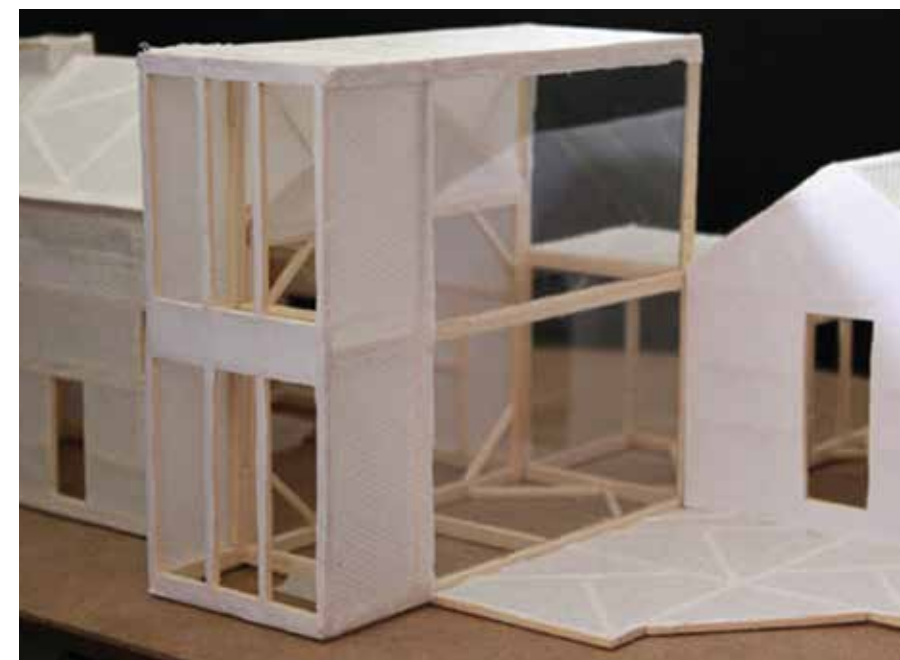
2’ 07”



Chang

‘ I hope that when I start
the building they give me a hand,
we’ll build it together and make the
perfect house...’

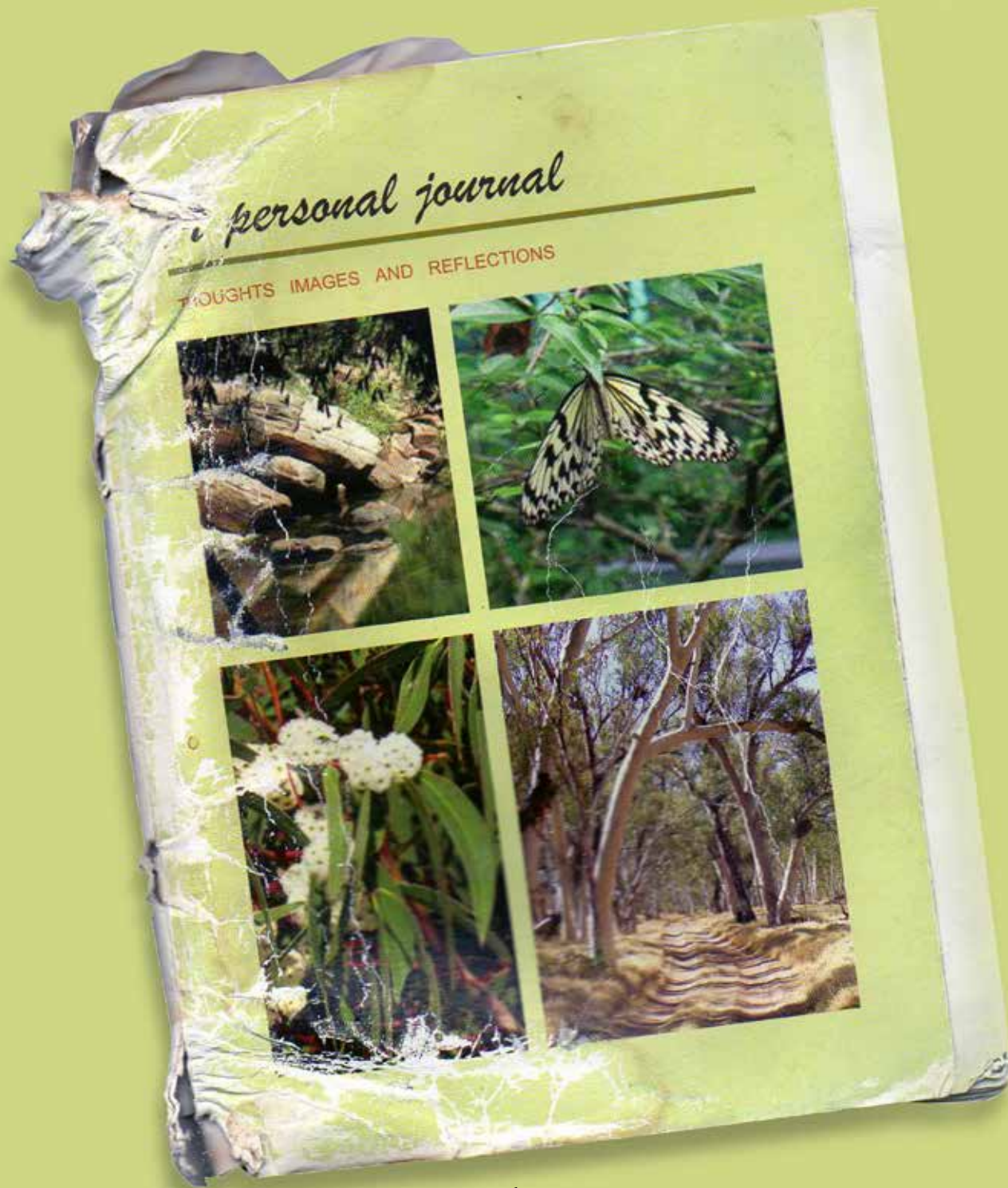
5’ 10”



Dave

‘...you want to **say** so
many things...’

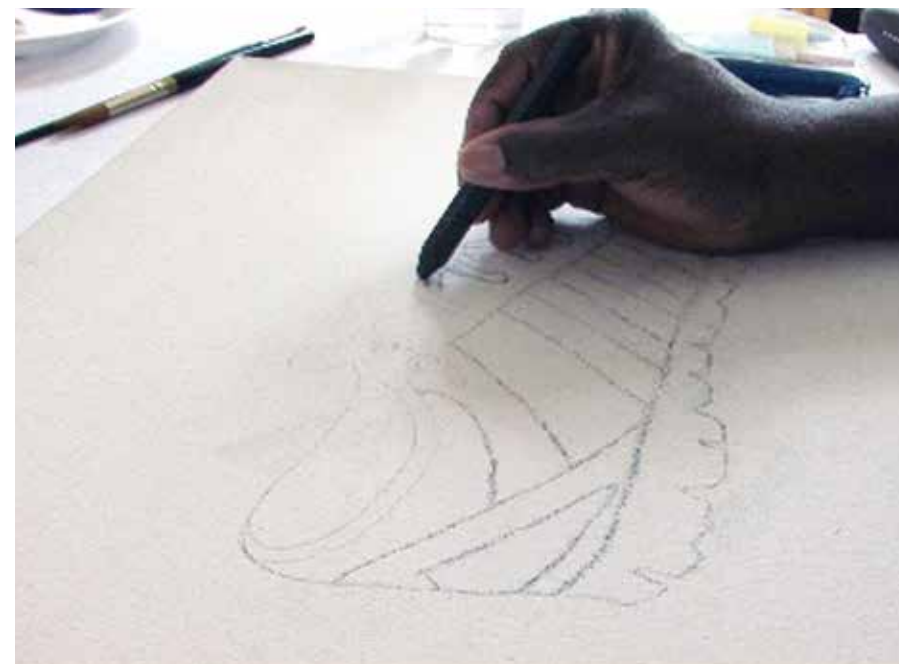
5’ 19”



Robert

‘...training is like the
stigma of my survival here...’

3’ 33”



Mark

‘I’m going to make it **count...**’

9’ 39”



About the Artist



Bernie Masterson comes from a painting background and has worked extensively with Educational Services to Prisons. Over the last few years her work has developed through a participatory arts practice. It is interdisciplinary in nature, and sometimes collaborative. Key components of her practice include research, photography, film, editing and sound design.

In this collaborative exploration with the residents form the Mountjoy Prison Campus she investigates new perspectives and makes us question our assumptions in relation to negative stereotypes. She seeks to find alternative points of view that raise questions and promote critical dialogue regarding the role of humanity as individuals, and as communities. Her work evolves as a personal response to real-life stories and situations encountered.

Studied

NCAD (National College of Art and Design)
MFA – Art in the Digital World 1st Class Hons
LSAD (Limerick School of Art & Design)

Solo Exhibitions

Awarded **Grangegorman Community Arts PerCent Project** (2017)
Invocation, Tallaght
Community Arts, RUA RED Gallery,
Tallaght, Dublin (2014)
Weather, Draíocht Arts Centre, Blanchardstown, Dublin (2014)
Drawing on the Body Exhibition,
University of Ulster,
Northern Ireland (2011)
Paper by Maebh O'Regan Ph.D. Symposium on Medicine and the Visual Arts, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland (2011)
Drawing on the Body, Waterford Healing Arts Trust (2011)
Living Landscape, Custom House Gallery, Westport (2011)
Drawing on the Body, RUA RED Gallery, Tallaght, Dublin (2010)

Landscape & Memory,
Clothworthy Museum, Co.Antrim
(2005)

Landscape & Memory,
Dralocht Art Centre,
Blanchardstown, Dublin (2004)
An Engagement with Nature 1,
Hallward Gallery, Dublin (2003)
An Odyssey, Kerry / Queensland
Works, The Hunt Museum,
Limerick (2002)

Two Painters, Rachel Kierans
& Bernie Masterson, Dun Aímhirgin Gallery, Department of Arts, Heritage,
Gaeltacht and the Islands, Dublin (2001)

A River of Images,

The Dolmen Gallery, Limerick (1997)

New Paintings, The Hallward Gallery, Dublin (1996)

Moods of a Landscape, The Dolmen Gallery, Limerick (1994)

Selected Group Shows

Impedimenta, National Open Art Moving Images,
Chichester, UK, (2017)
Crazy Jane, Group Show, The Hamilton Gallery, Sligo (2017)
Digital Traces – A Glitch Seminar, curated by Mathew Nevin and
Ciara Scanlan of MART (2017)
A Terrible Beauty is Born, Group Show, The Hamilton Gallery, Sligo (2016)
Discover Hidden Gems, MFA Group Show, curated by Sarah Durcan,
The Annex, 101 -103 James's St, Dublin (2016)
Invited Artist, 'Curator's Choice', curated by Naomi O Nolan,
The Hunt Museum, Limerick May (2016)
Gravity, MFA Group Show, curated by Lee Welch Annex,
101-103 James's St, Dublin 8 (2015)
Don't Step On The Cracks, curated by Amanda Jane Graham, Solas Art
Gallery, Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim (2015)
NCAD MFA Group Show, curated by Lynda Phelan, Emmet House, 138
Thomas St, Dublin 8 (2015)
Fermanagh Visual Arts Festival, Higher Bridges Gallery, Enniskillen,
Co. Fermanagh (2014)

Selected Group Shows

What a Harvest, Waterford Healing Arts Trust, (2012)
Ensemble, NAS Studio Group Show 2/3 Mary's Abbey, Dublin 7 (2012)
Wish You Were Here, a Postcard Project, NAS, Dublin 7 (2012)
Culture Fest, Link Exhibition, Smithfield Dublin 7 (2012)
Rua Red Winter Open Submission, Tallaght Dublin (2011)
Painting On Household Objects, The Higher Bridges Gallery,
Enniskillen (2011)
Miscellany, Culture Night Event, NAS, 2/3 Mary's Abbey, Dublin 7 (2011)
Level, Group Exhibition curated by Bernadette Madden
Dunamais Art Centre (2011)
Royal Hibernian Academy Annual Exhibition, Dublin
(2017, 12, 11, 09, 08, 05, 04, 03)
Returning, Cill Rialaig Arts Centre (2011)
20/20 Vision, NAS, 2/3 Mary's Abbey, Dublin 7 (2010)
Xmas Exhibition Custom House Gallery, Westport (2010, 09)
Xmas Group Show, Cavehill Gallery, Belfast (2010, 09, 06, 05, 04)
1 Ft Square, Visual Arts Exhibition, Higher Bridges Gallery,
Enniskillen (2009)
Anna Cheyne Visual Art Award Exhibition, Lisburn Island Arts Centre,
N. Ireland (2009, 2015)
Westport Arts Festival, Westport Co Mayo, Ireland (2009)
Hunt the Postcard at the Hunt, Hunt Museum, Limerick (2009, 06)
Dunamais Open, Portlaoise, Ireland (2009)
126, 'How Do You Know' Show, Blankspace Gallery,
California, USA (2009)
Enniskillen Visual Arts Festival (2008)
Royal Ulster Academy Annual Exhibition, Belfast,
Fenton Gallery, Christmas Exhibition, Cork (2007, 03)
Hallward Christmas Show, Merrion Square Dublin (2007, 06, 05, 04, 03, 02,
01, 99, 98, 97, 94)
Hallward Summer Show, Merrion Square, Dublin (2007, 06, 05, 04, 03, 02,
01, 99, 98, 97, 94)
Utopia Fair, Éigse Carlow Arts Festival (2006)
Vivid Visions, selected artists from the Fingal County Council Collection
(2006)
The Collection, 10 Ormond Quay, Dublin, Millcove Gallery (2005)
Iontas, National Small Works Exhibition, Ireland (2005, 03, 98,95)
Visuals, the British Embassy, Merrion Road, Dublin (2005)

Éigse, Carlow Arts Festival (2005, 03, 00)
Dialogues with Form, Canvanacor Gallery, Lifford, Co Donegal (2005)
Boyle Arts Festival, Co. Roscommon (2004, 98, 95, 94)
Currents, Art of the State, Touring Exhibition Ireland (2004)
Wexford Opera Festival (2003)
Radharc, Draíocht Arts Centre, Blanchardstown Dublin (2003)
Four Painters, Gallery One, Kilkenny (2003)
Christmas Exhibition, the Dyehouse Gallery, Waterford (2003)
The Winter Show, Dyehouse Gallery, Waterford (2000)
Microsoft, September Exhibition (2000, 98)
Aer Rianta Gateway to Art, Dublin Airport (2000, 99, 97.96, 95)
The Oireachtais Art Exhibition (1998)
The Hunt Museum, Limerick (1998)
Omagh Art Auction, National Concert Hall, Dublin (1998)
The Blackcombe Gallery, Cork (1998)
Green Thoughts, the Hallward Gallery, Dublin (1997)
The Oireachtais Art Exhibition (1996)
SIPTU Inaugural Exhibition, Ireland (1996)
Old Library Gallery, Cardiff, Wales (1995)
The Portobello Open Exhibition, Tabernacle Gallery, London,
Women's Art Festival (1995)
Monaghan Open Exhibition, Co. Monaghan (1995)
The Second International Female Artists Art Biennial,
Stockholm Sweden (1995)
International Watercolour Exhibition, Aquarelle Tregastel, France (1995, 94)
International Crossroads Symposium, Roscommon (1995)
Fe-mail Art Expo, Old Library Gallery Cardiff Wales (1995)
Art 95, New York International Art Exhibition New York, USA (1995)
Cork Arts Festival, (1994)
Claremorris Open Exhibition (1994)
Ashling, Exhibition Pantheon Gallery Dublin (1994)
- Ireland (1993)
Riverrun Gallery, Dublin (1992)

Selected Group Shows

Fe-mail Art Expo, Old Library Gallery, Cardiff, Wales (1995)
Art 95, New York International Art Exhibition, New York, USA (1995)
Cork Arts Festival, (1994)
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Riverrun Gallery, Dublin (1992)

Corporate Collections

Smith, Kline and Beecham
New Market Partnership
Office of Public Works
Fitzgerald Insurance
Dept of Telecommunication & Regulation, Government Buildings
Tyrone Productions
Limerick County Council
Norkom Technology
Microsoft Ireland
Harcourt Development
Brian Hogan Architects
Department of Finance and Personnel, N. Ireland Civil Service
Fingal Council Council
Axa Insurance
Allied Irish Bank
Garda Headquarters
BBC Public Catalogue Foundation
Fintan Wallis (Solicitors)
Private collections in Ireland and abroad

Awards and Residencies

Awarded a Grangegorman Community Arts Project
Pathway 2 Round 3 (2017)
Ballinglen Arts Foundation, Part Two of Awarded Fellowship (2017)
RDS, Visual Arts Award, Long listed, (2016)
Ballinglen Arts Foundation, Awarded Fellowship (2015)
The Tryone Guthrie Center, Annaghmakerrig, Co Monaghan (2012)
Invited Artist, Cill Rialaig Project, Ballinskellig, Co Kerry (2010)
Awarded Custom House Studio Residency, Westport, Co Mayo (2009)
Awarded a residency by the Heinrich Böll Association (2008)
Artist in Prison Scheme, HOPE, Farranferris College, Cork (2007)
The Cill Rialaig Project, Ballinskelligs, Co Kerry (2006)
Nominated by the Hunt Museum for the AIB Award (2002)
The Cill Rialaig Project, Ballinskelligs, Co Kerry (2001)
The Tryone Guthrie Center, Annaghmakerrig, Co Monaghan (2000)
Arts Council of Ireland Artflight Award (1997)
The Tryone Guthrie Center, Annaghmakerrig (1996)
The Oireachtais, Douglas Hyde Gold Medal Award for Painting (1996)
The Cill Rialaig Project, Ballinskelligs, Co Kerry (1995)

Bibliography

Our Common World, Catalogue Introduction essay to Incarceration Altars, by Professor Aislinn O’ Donnell, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-9998617-0-4
Anxious, formidable work at graduate shows, Aidan Dunne, The Irish Times: Section: Arts, Pg 12. 21 / 6 / 16
Self Encounters: Helen O’Donoghue interviews artist Bernie Masterson, The VAN, July / August Edition 2015
Weather Catalogue Review, by Brian McAvera, Irish Arts Review, November – February Edition 2015
Invocation, Catalogue introduction by Helen O’Donoghue 14/11/14 ISBN: 978-0-9569739-2-4.
Weather, Catalogue introduction by Carissa Farrell 20 / 9 /14
ISBN: 978-0-9926946-1-6.
Living Landscape, Catalogue introduction by Dr. Maebh O’Reagan 22 / 7 / 10
Drawing on the Body, Catalogue introduction by Dr. Maebh O’Regan 10 / 4 / 10

Bibliography

The Scared Landscape, essay by Jacquie Burgess 1 / 2 / 10
New Forms, Solid Values, by Aidan Dunne, The Irish Times, Arts Review, 30 / 5 / 09
Not in Alphabetical Order, Fingal Public Art Collection, Volume One 2008 ISBN 978-0-95491-038-9
Landscape and Memory, by Sara Keating, In Dublin Issue 38 2005
Landscape & Memory, catalogue introduction by Marianne O’Kane 2004
Art of the State, Catalogue 2004
Object lessons, by Aidan Dunne, The Irish Times, Arts Review 10 / 9 / 03
Magnetic quality of images, by John Fitzgerald, The Kilkenny People 11 / 7 / 03
Celebrating the beauty of Irish landscape, The Echo, 2 / 2 / 03
The Missing Heart in Group Art, Taispeántas Ealaíne an Oireachtais, Guinness Hop Store, Brian Fallon. The IrishTimes, Section: Arts; Pg 12. 19 / 9 / 96
Art Exhibition Winners Named, Brian Fallon, The Irish Times: Section: Arts, Pg 12 .12 / 9 / 96
Art of the State Catalogue, OPW 1996
Gateway to Art, by Brian Fallon, The Irish Times: Section: Arts, Pg 12. 15 / 2 / 95
Right Mix Of Many Styles, Brian Fallon. The Irish Times: Section: Arts, Pg. 12. 3 / 8 / 94
Varied art at Regional, Isabel Healy, The Cork Examiner, 22 /11 / 94
Magnificent Seven Show their artistry, The Cork Examiner: ArtFest 94; Pg 7. 15 / 11 / 94
Moods of a Landscape, Marie Hobbins, Limerick Post, Pg 15. 6 / 8 / 94

Online

Landscape and Memory, Circa on-line review by Brian Lynch, uploaded 30 /1/ 2005 (http://www.recirca.com/cgibin/mysql/show_item.cgi?post_id=1863&type=reviews)

Broadcasts – Radio

Inside Culture, in conversation with Sorcha Heron on ‘Creativity in Confinement’, 24 / 4 / 17
Arena, Drawing on the Body interview with Jacqui Corcoran in association with Waterford Healing Arts Trust
RTE Radio One 22 / 3 / 2011
The Arts Show, (International Crossroads Symposium Interview)
RTE Radio One 1 / 8 / 95

Presentations and Panel Discussions

Cruinniú na Cásca, ‘Creativity in Confinement’ panel discussion moderated by Laurence Mackin of the Irish Times 17 / 4 / 17
Don’t Step On The Cracks, moderated by artist Amanda Jane Graham, Solas Gallery, 21 / 11 / 15
Invocation Gallery 2, RUA RED moderated by Tony Fegan, Director of Tallaght Community Arts, 19 / 11 / 14
Drawing on the Body Presentation, by Dr. Maebh O’Regan, University of Ulster, Symposium on Medicine and the Visual Arts, 26 / 5 / 11
Drawing on the Body Presentation Waterford Healing Arts Trust 16 / 3 / 11

Additional information

CDETB Educational Services to Prisons
Member IPEA (Irish Prison Educational Association)
Member EPEA (European Prison Education Association)
Associate non resident member of the New Art Studio, 2 / 3 Mary’s Abbey, Dublin 7
Member of Visual Artists Ireland
Member of Create

Installation

Community-based art is any art created with the purpose of engaging a particular community (defined by any geographical or demographic boundaries) into a larger dialogue with the purpose of generating awareness and positive change.

Tim Takechi (gvisionaries.wordpress.com)

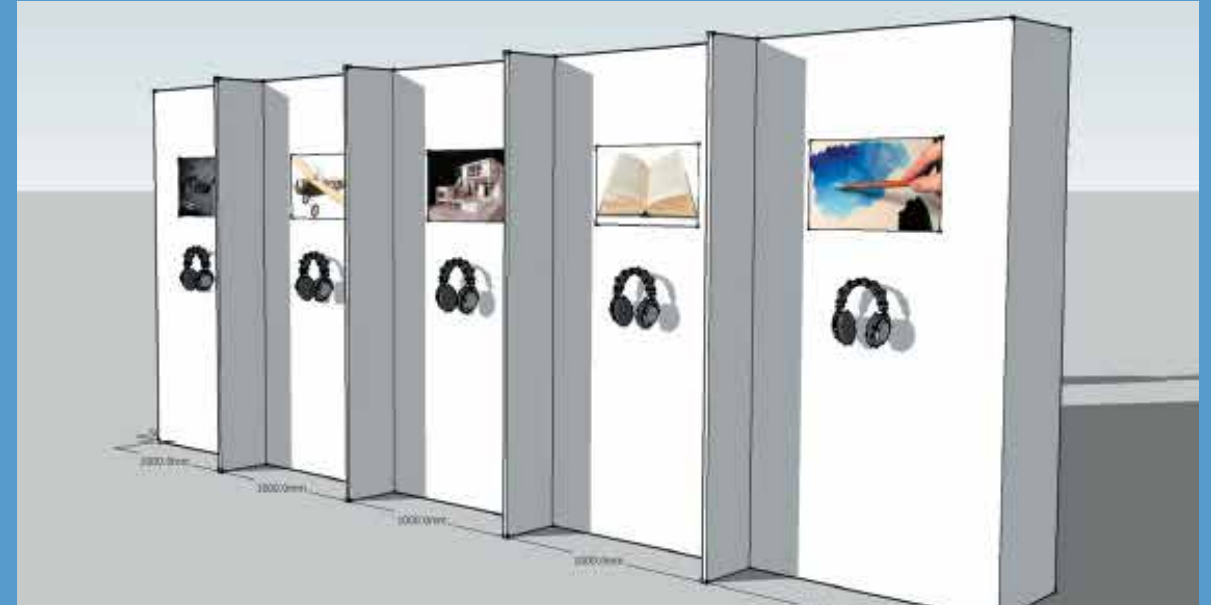
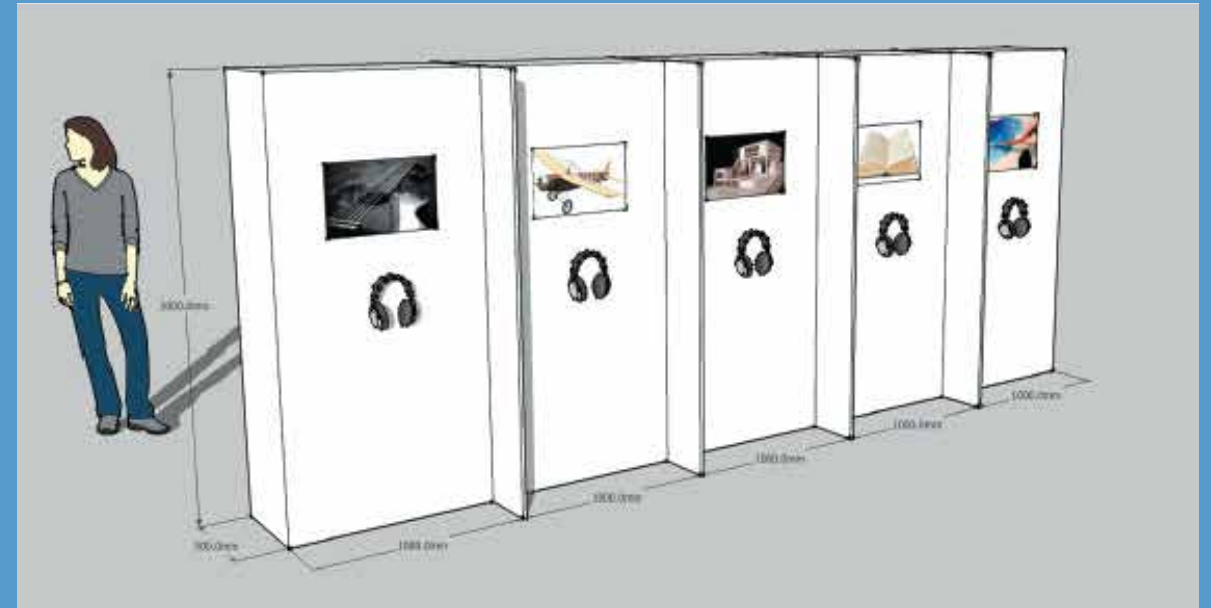


‘Incarceration Altars’ comprises of ten participants from the Training Unit Prison and Mountjoy Main Prison and is an installation piece involving standard prison TV monitors with headphones. The audio / display unit was made by Vincent Moore and his students in PACE, which is a community based agency that has been working with prison and post prison clients for over forty years.

The installation site in the DIT College, Rathdownen House, Grangegorman Campus, maximises the potential audience interaction and dissemination of the work. It is also intended to tour the exhibition, with one of the venues being the IPS Training College in Portlaoise in early 2018 with a variety of educational projects and local involvement.

Other touring venues are also being sought in collaboration with other agencies.

For further information and enquiries please email: incarcerationaltars@gmail.com



Acknowledgements

Thanks to the project participants – Anthony, John, Paul, Paddy, Warren, Paulo, Chang, Dave, Robert, and Mark.

The project partners, the IPS and the CDETB, in particular to:

The General Director Michael Donnellan of the Irish Prison Service, Fergal Black Director of Care and Rehabilitation, Kieran Moylan, Principal Officer, Care & Rehabilitation Directorate and Margaret Cafferkey Care & Rehabilitation.

Governor Brian Murphy of Mountjoy Prison Campus and Governor John Kavanagh previously of the Training Unit Prison.

A special thanks to Jenny Haughton, Nora Rahill, Ronan Doyle (Communications) Lori Keeve of the Grangegorman Development Agency for their encouragement and assistance with the project and to the PAWG (The Public Art Working Group), chaired by Ciarán Benson.

Ger Casey CEO of the Grangegorman Development Agency, Professor Brian Norton President of the DIT, Peter Heaslip, Arts Committee DIT, and to Kieran Corcoran Head of the Dublin School of Creative Arts DIT.

Mark for his extra contribution to the project.

Stephen O'Connor Organiser of Prison Education CDETB, also to Professor Aislinn O'Donnell, for her introductory essay, and to the staff of the DIT College in Grangegorman and for providing the installation site. Terry Maher and staff, DIT Estates.

Darran Cummins of Big Bear Sound Ltd for technical assistance, Vincent Moore and students in Pace Training and Employment for building and installing the audio / visual display unit.

Gery Hendrick for his support and professionalism and students for their artwork.

Arbour Hill Prison Print Workshop.

Helena Powell for her encouragement.

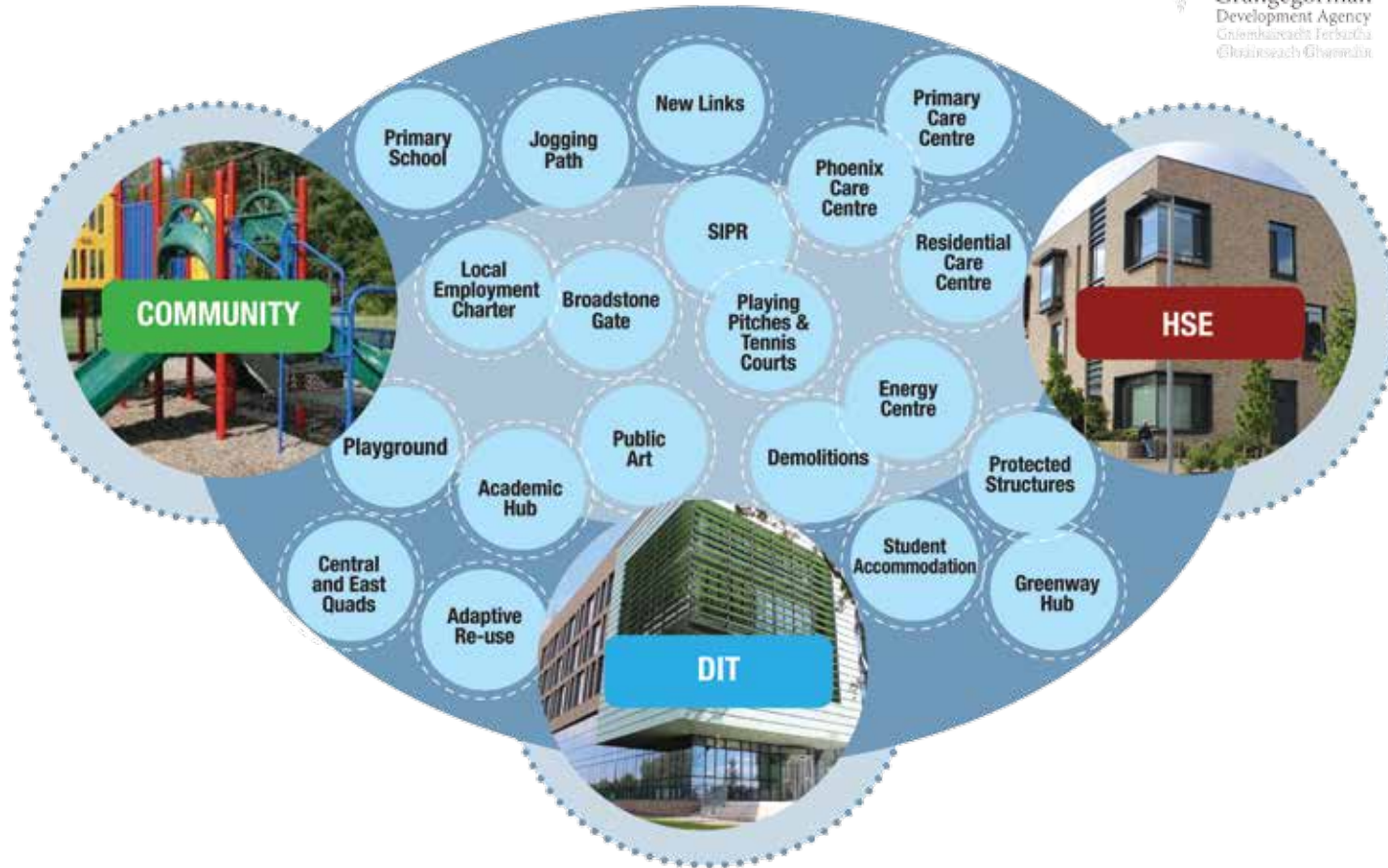
Photography by Bernie Masterson

Book Design Eamon Sinnott and Partners, Naas.



M O'C - *Between Two Worlds* - Oil on Canvas - 120 xs 200 cm - The Training Unit Prison

The Grangegorman Project | Past and Future Milestones



FC- Game On - Oil on Canvas - 14 x 51 cm - The Training Unit Prison