



## Education and Outreach Forum

Presented by the Irish Museums Association (IMA) in partnership with Ni Museums Council (NIMC) for 2021.

**18 – 21 May 2021**

### Forum Presentations

#### Day One: CO-PRODUCTION

Tuesday 18 May. 09:30 – 11:00 (1 hr, 30 mins)

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#### The *Our Irish Women* exhibition: Cultural democracy in practice

In 2018, members of the Irish Community Archive Network (iCAN) collectively co-curated and co-produced the *Our Irish Women* exhibition in commemoration of the political enfranchisement of (some) Irish women in 1918. After going on display in the National Museum of Ireland, *Our Irish Women* travelled to communities across the network to be exhibited locally, and celebrated through events and activities organised by each member group.

The interests and needs of the iCAN community groups drove all aspects of the *Our Irish Women* project and the exhibition brought previously neglected stories to the attention of a broad range of publics for the first time. To facilitate an authentically co-creative output, community participants were supported in their decision-making by a dynamic process underpinned by iCAN's core values of collaboration, ownership, empowerment, inclusivity and democracy.

This presentation will briefly review the key stages of the exhibition's development process and discuss the challenges, opportunities and learning arising from this co-creative initiative from both the National Museum of Ireland's and the communities' perspective.

Presented by **Lorna Elms**, Project Development Officer, Irish Community Archive Network (iCAN), National Museum of Ireland and **Frances Holohan**, Abbey & District Heritage Group, Irish Community Archive Network.

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#### Video, featured project: Indigenous Programming and Collaboration: Museums by the Sea and the Acadia First Nation - Mi'kmaq partnership building in Nova Scotia, Canada

##### About the project:

The community museum complex in Nova Scotia, Canada, Shelburne's Historic Waterfront – Museums by the Sea (MBTS), developed a programming partnership in 2017-2018 with Acadia First Nation for the improvement and development of Indigenous interpretation and programming expressions of the local

Mi'kmaq. Outcomes of the collaboration included updated exhibition interpretation, a special event - *A Celebration of Mi'kmaq Language and Culture*, an educational programme for high school Indigenous Studies students, and the showcasing of a local Indigenous artist. It also hosted a community wide offering of a *Truth and Reconciliation* workshop known as the *Kairos Blanket Exercise*, which examines the history of Canada from an Indigenous perspective.

Submitted by **Shauna Allen**, Museum Educator / PhD Candidate (UCC)

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### **Meitheal – Community Co-Production in the CINE project**

Donegal County Museum recently collaborated on Connected Culture and Natural Heritage in a Northern Environment (CINE) a digital heritage project between 9 partners and 10 associated partners from Norway, Iceland, Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland between 2017-2020 and funded by the Northern and Arctic Periphery Programme (ERDF)

As part of the recently completed [CINE project](#) funded by the NPA (ERDF), Donegal County Museum produced [a manual](#) for cultural heritage co-production based on case studies carried out during the project.

*Meitheal* is a practical guide to participatory engagement, collaborative creation, and community co-production in heritage and culture. This presentation will present the project and discuss the coproduction methodology outlined in the manual.

Presented by **Judith McCarthy**, Curator, Donegal County Museum

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### **TY Project at the Douglas Hyde Gallery: Young adults as creators and consumers**

In 2020 the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, established a new programme to engage with Transition Year (TY) students in a co-production, co-curation and mentoring approach. The aim of the TY Project is to enhance engagement with this target audience, whilst playing an active role in developing their skills, capabilities, and creativity.

During the first phase of the project, 10 TY students from across Ireland proposed and developed their own learning and engagement project aimed at an audience of peers, culminating in the workshop *Creative Thinking: Sharing our Stories*. With the direct involvement of young adults, the project not only hopes to create multiple sets of meaningful engagements but also, via their direct involvement, affect change in the perception of contemporary art amongst young adults.

The project also represents an attempt to engage with the concerns and interests of young adults as part of the practice of the gallery or museum. This is based on the idea that they should not be considered passive visitors arriving with schools or other organized groups, but instead, they should be thought of as active participants involved in appropriate decision-making aspects of the practices related to their engagement with the gallery or museum.

Presented by **Dr Fernando Sanchez**, Learning & Engagement Curator, The Douglas Hyde Gallery

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**Q&A (all speakers)**

## Day 2: ACCESS AND INCLUSION

Wednesday 19 May. 09:30 – 11:15 (1hr, 45 mins)

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### IMMA's Online Art and Ageing programme Spring 2021

Catherine Abbott will discuss the various elements of IMMA's Art and Ageing programme which was delivered online in Spring 2021 in partnership with Creative Ireland. This new online programme for older people offered a variety of engaging creative events, workshops and resources for both over 65's and those suffering from Alzheimer's or Dementia.

The programme delivered a range of free, inclusive arts-based activities as part of an effort to counteract the social side-effects of the pandemic. The new partnership sought to address some of the challenges around cocooning and social distancing by enabling access to meaningful cultural encounters and arts experiences, both at home and in residential settings via a range of digital and non-digital means.

Presented by **Catherine Abbott**, Curator Art and Ageing, Irish Museum of Modern Art

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### *Connecting at home: Dementia Friendly workshops*

Pre-pandemic Mid Antrim Museum delivered dementia friendly programmes on site as part of working towards becoming dementia friendly. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic the museum closed and programmes had to be adjusted. In Spring 2020 the opportunity arose to take part in a pilot online Love to Move programme. This was supported by the Northern Ireland Museums Council's Dementia Friendly Museums Programme. This programme enabled the museum to continue engagement with those living with dementia online, to enhance wellbeing through social interaction using museum collections, reminiscence activities and gentle exercise.

A further online programme Memories, Movement & Museums ran online in Winter 2020 using similar methods of delivery via zoom but also considering those who did not have access to technology through a resource pack. All online sessions were facilitated by museum staff and a Love to Move co-ordinator. This change to face-to-face engagement allowed the museum to explore new ways to adapt and to continue to provide interaction with a new audience at home.

Presented by **Elaine Hill**, Heritage Development Officer, Mid Antrim Museum

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### Q&A

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### Video, featured project: An Autism Friendly Robot Trail

#### About the project:

The Robot Trail was developed over the last two years with local artist Roisin O'Sullivan and with input from several Autism groups to provide a permanent themed trail through the Glebe Heritage Gardens. It aims to provide a safe, pleasant space for those on the Autistic spectrum by promoting healthy, self-expression and an opportunity to engage with Artwork in a meaningful way, creating an opportunity for positive interaction, and fostering a culture of inclusivity.

Each of the eight Robot Stations is handcrafted using primarily recycled car-parts and has his own conversational theme, for example friendship, relationships, transition and inclusion. Many of the Robots have interactive elements that can aid with fine motor skills in a fun way, for example The Dancing Robot and the beaded spring.

Submitted by **Jean Kearney**, Head of Education & Visitor Services, The Glebe House & Gallery (OPW)

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### **Something From There: promoting inclusion and empowerment through democratic museum practices.**

In June 2019, artist Dragana Jurišić began working in the National Gallery of Ireland with a group of people seeking asylum here. Rooted in a concept of Evgeny Shtorn's, the group considered some of the objects that they had brought to Ireland from home, and the value and meaning that these subsequently came to hold. In December 2020 the exhibition *Something From There* opened in the National Gallery of Ireland.

The Something From There project sought to give voice to people who, due to circumstances wholly beyond their control, found themselves displaced from their countries of origin and living in Ireland. In order for us to do this with integrity, a collaborative, democratic and equitable approach was imperative, and we are proud that this became a hallmark of the project.

Every aspect of the final exhibition was co-created with the Something From There Participants: editorial and production decisions on the group's short film HOME | IRELAND, the curation of the exhibition, the display objects chosen and the language used was agreed amongst all, at every stage. This presentation will explore the challenges and successes of this process.

Presented by **Brina Casey**, Education Officer, National Gallery of Ireland

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### **Improving Access and Inclusion Through Multi-User-Friendly Children's Animations**

*The Book of Kells and Old Library Exhibition Access and Inclusion Project 2020* involved the creation of two multi-user-friendly children's animations. The animations feature sign language for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and audio description for children who are blind or have low vision. Storytelling is employed to introduce children aged 2-6 to The Book of Kells exhibition and The Long Room in a simple and enjoyable manner. Serving as both a stand-alone activity and a stepping-stone to deeper engagement, the animations spark children's interest, instilling confidence and encouraging further exploration.

This presentation provides an overview of the project, which received funding from the Heritage Council. It looks at how the aim of improving access, inclusion and participation in heritage activities at our exhibition by young children, particularly those with disabilities, was pursued in parallel to the goal of creating online content to prompt meaningful interactions following the loss of access during Covid-19 closures. Working closely with the Centre for Deaf Studies in TCD, with the launch of these animations we intend to mark the occasions of both the Irish Sign Language Act coming into effect and the 20-year anniversary of the Centre for Deaf Studies.

Presented by **Sinéad Fox**, Education Officer, The Book of Kells and Old Library Exhibition, Trinity College Dublin.

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## Day 3: FROM BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Thursday 20 May. 09:30 – 11:15 (1hr, 45 mins)

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### Focusing on the silver lining: The pandemic as an opportunity for Museums to increase access and forge new partnerships

In March 2020, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht asked museums and archives to make more of their resources available to the public online. Part of the steep learning curve was the realisation that there was a need for technological upskilling as well as the necessity to join resources and forge partnerships with other cultural institutions. This necessity was soon realised as an opportunity to increase access and to foster new creative collaborations. The outcome was inspiring and re-enforced our vision to be a valuable resource for the local community.

In close partnership with the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society, the Education Centre Tralee, Kerry Library, the History Teachers Association of Ireland and other stakeholders, we launched outreach initiatives for schools and the general public with phenomenal uptake. Teachers were looking for high-quality, curriculum-based educational content. History enthusiasts were looking to actively engage in researching their family or local history but lacked the knowledge how to access sources. We were able to address both needs and, in the process, we became more relevant, connected and accessible as a cultural institution.

Presented by **Claudia Kohler and Jemma O'Connell**, Education, Community & Outreach Team, Kerry County Museum

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### Curation Simulation: using Mozilla Hubs for virtual museum workshops

The Hunt Museum's recent work using the free, open-source Mozilla Hubs platform to deliver [virtual workshops](#) for school groups opens exciting possibilities for audiences to interact with museum collections in virtual reality and to demystify the museum as an institution and the practice of curation.

Virtual Museum Workshops enable museums to facilitate a high degree of interaction and active participation between audience, workshop leader and museum objects. As with a 'traditional' school workshop, participants can gather virtually around a particular object and discuss it together in real time, but unlike a physical visit, students can take the object off the wall, change its size, turn it upside down etc. and move, delete or add to it, thereby enabling students to become curators of their own virtual exhibition.

Our work has also raised questions about the limitations of such engagement; issues such as inequality of access, sociality, digital reproduction, and the decoupling of the object from the physical museum.

This presentation will discuss the findings from the trialling and testing period of Mozilla Hubs in late 2020, as well as the Hunt Museum's ongoing development with the platform with post-primary schools.

Presented by **Adam Stoneman**, former Public Engagement Coordinator, Three Muses (currently SPICE Researcher, IMMA) and **Hannah Bloom**, Education Coordinator, Hunt Museum

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**Video, featured project: Reimagine Remake Replay: Rethinking Youth Engagement**

Submitted by **Clodagh Lavelle**, Digital Museums Coordinator for Reimagine Remake Replay, Northern Ireland Museums Council and **Niamh Kelly**, Youth Ambassador for Reimagine Remake Replay, Nerve Centre

### **About the project:**

Reimagine, Remake, Replay (RRR) is an award-winning project that connects young people (aged 16-25) with museums and their collections in meaningful ways, using the latest digital technologies and creative approaches. The Project is led by a consortium including NIMC, Nerve Centre, NMNI, and NI Screen, and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

RRR is a socially engaged project, with programmes and activities regularly addressing the issues, concerns, and passions of its participants. Combined with a strong youth-led approach, this has steered activity in lockdown towards social issues such as mental health, loneliness, LGBTQIA+ issues and domestic abuse in order to effect discussion and change. This video will showcase the project's response to the COVID-19 pandemic by demonstrating how it adapted and evolved its delivery, overcoming barriers connecting to audiences remotely and addressing issues impacting young people in lockdown.

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### **Engaging the under 5s – Empowering Children to create their own Museums experience**

The Northern Ireland War Memorial (NIWM) tells the story of Northern Ireland during the Second World War. Aspects of this subject can be complex for children, so fun hands-on exploration of the museum was crucial to the programmes for under 5s. The pandemic meant the loss of a physical family friendly space.

For several years, the museum has participated in the NIMC Playful Museums Festival for under 5s, making the Second World War accessible by concentrating on themes such as farming, evacuation, and rationing. In 2021 NIWM faced a new barrier to engagement having lost access to its physical space. Parents and facilitators needed to be empowered to interact with the museum independently through virtual and physical resources in a valuable and meaningful way. This paper outlines how NIWM adapted to meet these challenges and breaks down the critical thinking done before, during and after the Festival to meet the audience's needs.

It covers our collaborative approach with experts in Early Years, Kids in Museums and NIMC. Crucially we look at how the museum consulted with children and nursery facilitators to learn what they needed and how their input shaped the final resources and how NIWM now collaborates with audiences.

Presented by **Catherine Doran**, Learning Facilitator, Northern Ireland War Memorial

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### **An OPEN MIND Online case study: Adapting our learning and engagement programme for 240 students online**

This presentation will focus on learnings from the move of Science Gallery Dublin's interdisciplinary learning programmes to online in response to the Covid 19 pandemic, sharing 7 practical tips for online engagement for other museum and cultural institution educators who are interested in bringing their education and outreach programmes online.

The OPEN MIND Studio Online learning programme for 15–17-year-olds created an optimised online informal learning experience responding to the needs of their learners. It engaged with 240 students remotely, racking up a total of 3840 student contact hours over the course of seven weeks and enabling the programme to be accessible to learners from all across Ireland including locations such as; Inis Oírr Island,

Donegal, Sligo, Waterford, Kerry and Offaly with places reserved for DEIS School attendees and home educated learners.

In the course of developing this programme, the SGD team have summarised their findings in seven practical tips and will delve into each of these, sharing their experiences on how to engage with numerous young learners online in meaningful ways to create a lasting impact:

- Access and inclusion
- Less is more
- Be Flexible
- Not sure? Just ask
- Get up and move
- Take a moment to breathe
- Interaction is everything.

Presented by **Róisín McGannon**, Informal Learning Researcher Institution: Science Gallery Dublin

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**Q&A (all speakers)**

## DAY 4: TOWARDS A BLENDED FUTURE

Friday 21 May. 09:30 – 11:15 (1hr, 45mins)

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### Thoughts on 'What's Next?' for blended-museum learning and engagement.

Based at Ulster University, the UK Research and Innovation-funded project *Museums, Crisis and Covid-19* has been gathering museum sector experiences in response to the pandemic. Through interviews with museum staff, we are gaining a deeper understanding of how the sector transitioned from rarely offering digital engagement activities, to this being the 'new normal'.

While being impressed by how peers in museums (and in universities) transferred learning activities from classroom to the screen, we are acutely aware there is an aspect of the in-person learning experience that is hard to replicate online. Teaching and learning are recognised as social activities and classrooms can be described as 'extraordinarily complex, unpredictable and exciting places' where 'what is learnt is not reducible to what is taught' (Yandell 2020: 263). In museums, where we value the emotional, social, and physical interactions with authentic museum objects, we need to reproduce the 'pedagogy of dialogue', in a way that moves away from didactic online-teaching methods and encourages the participatory museum. This paper explores emerging findings, and suggests directions for further analysis, informing how we might adapt to the new blended learning approach anticipated as a future delivery model for museums.

Provocation by **Dr Elizabeth Croke**, Professor Heritage and Museum Studies, Ulster University

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### Developing new relationships with schools and communities at National Museums NI

Reflecting on the impact of two ambitious National Museums NI initiatives designed to connect with children, young people and those with disabilities during the pandemic, the panel will discuss how they approached creating opportunities for interactions with collections and between people, at a time of acute need for real experiences and personal connectivity.

The **Access for All** initiative put access needs at the centre of considerations around safe engagement with our museums during a pandemic. Designed with and for people with disabilities, it set out to create space that would stimulate conversation, making the engagement as much about the people that were participating as it was about the themes that were explored.

**Museum on the Move** transformed the delivery of the National Museums NI schools programme. By working with teachers as delivery partners, it succeeded in putting object-based learning, creativity and shared discovery at the centre of the learning experience for school children.

The conversation will focus on learning from the projects and sharing thoughts on how the work during the COVID pandemic has created a more responsive and dynamic relationship with children, teachers, young people and community partners.

Presented by **Cailín Lynn** Programme Development Manager, National Museum NI and **Louise Rice**, Education Manager National Museum NI.

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### Video, featured project: There is no substitute for the real!

Produced by **Gillian Lyttle**, Assistant Education Officer, Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum

## About the project:

The ethos of learning at Lisburn Museum is participant-based practice, working with real people (staff and participants), interacting with real objects in real heritage settings. This video reflects how education services at Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum were adapted to cope with the pandemic, examining the balancing of the virtual museum with maintaining sight of encouraging physical visiting experiences, by adapting the school programme to support teachers in navigating the new normal.

Covid-safe loan boxes were developed with tailored curriculum resources focussing on handling objects and support materials were directed to teachers' inboxes. A Cultural Take-Out service was also developed to address well-being issues highlighted by the pandemic; working with community partners, these resources are aimed at those without digital access/skills, care home residents and individuals living in social isolation.

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## What happens next? Virtual Museum Learning in a post-pandemic context

The last 12 months have proved to us that as Museum workers, it's possible to change our ways of working and adapt to new environments. This presents us with challenges but also with opportunities. Virtual engagement has the potential to provide easier and broader ways to connect with a range of audiences. Connecting with audiences online can allow space for more interpretation to meet a range of learning needs and styles. Contra intuitively, online engagement through a workshop, for example, might also provide closer connection to the facilitator or speaker than in a public space like a gallery.

Through a conversation with Forum participants, National Museum educators Siobhan Pierce and Helen Beaumont reflect on the key learnings of the last year and invite participants to explore with them some of these questions that have emerged over the past 12 months.

Key questions include:

1. How do we create the right online environment for audiences to meaningfully engage with the collections?
2. How can we encourage dialogue with online audiences?
3. How can we provide online platforms for diverse voices?
4. How can we make the most of opportunities to capture new audiences?
5. Is reach of engagement more important than depth of engagement?

Presented by **Siobhan Pierce**, and **Helen Beaumont**, Education Officers, National Museum of Ireland + participants.

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## Q&A (all speakers)

The IMA and NIMC gratefully acknowledge the contribution of the members of the peer advisory panel, and the support from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media and The Heritage Council of Ireland (IMA), and the Department for Communities (NIMC).